

Common Problems With Current Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS) Systems

System Security Aspects & Common Security Problems

According to U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau (ACF), who is responsible for reviewing and assessing the relevancy of each state's SACWIS system... there are problems that exist within SACWIS systems that are common to each state.

In order to ensure you continue to receive funding on your SACWIS project - these issues need to be tackled. Obviously, knowing up front what some of the more common problems are - will help drive you in the right direction.

Feel free to use this document as a security review checklist for your own system.

During an ACF review... each item in the list requires a written SOP, a detailed comparison against your State's regulations (to make sure they match) and a walk-through of your system to check for compliance.

- **Levels of security** – system access, user security, physical security, infrastructure, databases, code modules (and who can get to it...)
 - Are the servers located in a secure facility?
 - Are the databases encrypted?
 - Is the code to the software locked up and secure?



- **Who has access?** – as compared to the State’s documentation
- **Who has permission to view cases?** - both internally and externally from a system. Example – if the information resides at a private provider, can a county review the case? If the documentation says so – then the system functionality should support that.
- **Is caseworker access different than supervisor access?** – if the process dictates –then the system should support that.
- **Permissions** - Are there different permissions granted for caseworkers, groups, form access, etc.,? Are there different roles that need to be set up and defined?
- **Passwords** - How often are users required to change their passwords or ID’s?
- **Record Freezing** - Are records ever sealed or frozen (as in the case of a child adoption...)? – If so, what is the process of retrieval later and by whom, if at all?
- **High Profile or Restricted Case Access** - Can certain records or cases be designated as “high-profile” or “restricted” to certain individuals? – as in the case of a celebrity, etc., where there may be caseworkers who are tempted to take a look at the file.

ACF’s review includes a walkthrough of the system (demonstration), the server facility and interviews with the people that are responsible for the security and integrity of the servers and the system, etc., All observations (security holes) are noted and included in a report. ACF makes recommendations as to whether or not these items meet SACWIS requirements.

[SPECIAL TIP] Whatever your state policy is – your SACWIS should support it.

Common Security Problems

- **Sharing userid’s and pw’s** – system should have the ability to re-assign roles so that you can give access to a user for a certain case when needed.
- **A lack of a clear and clean disaster recovery and/or business continuity plan**
 - Do you have hot/mirrored site capabilities?
 - If a disaster strikes what is the plan for business continuity so access to the system is continual for the State’s, agencies and caseworkers?
 - Has it been tested?

- **Seal /purge or archive** based on State's requirements (after 90 days / 2 years, etc.,) and does the system support this?

- **Freezing data and can system support this?**
 - Can an Intake be frozen after a certain period of days or time if your State requires that? – until the supervisor makes their decision on the case and either approves/denies the screener's decision?
 - Can contacts be frozen? Most states require regular visits with family members and other contacts.
 - Court documents and case plans – can they be frozen?
 - Case Notes – the "narrative" section is what typically gets frozen. Any discreet data fields should be frozen as well.
 - Frozen data needs to be immediately accessible by those with proper system access (administrator, supervisor, etc.,) in the event they need to review a file, court reports, evaluations or case notes. Access cannot be granted solely through a system administrator who needs to access the data via SQL tables (behind the scenes). Must be retrievable via the front end.
 - Freezing vs. Deleting Records – how is this done?
 - Delete buttons on an Intake form or a case note are flags. Important information that may have been signed off by a supervisor – cannot be lost through a deletion process or button on a form.


- **Word templates** - being used as forms, court reports etc., (a letter or form)
 - Word templates don't "pre-fill" from SACWIS - so information can be different, can be changed without going into the database, which equal big problems
 - Critical information gets updates on the WORD doc, but never makes it back into the database.
 - Information must be made available statewide, not just locally on your PC
 - Information located on a desktop is not secure. Anyone can sit at your computer and gain access to those case notes.

The Keys to Avoiding These Issues...

KNOW THE MOST COMMON PITFALLS TO AVOID - there are many issues listed here and on the accompanying documents that are common problems to most SACWIS systems. Read them, understand them and incorporate solutions to these problems into your plan.

FORMING A STRONG, SUBJECT MATTER TEAM (ADVISORY BOARD) - it's important to form a team of internal and external "experts" when designing your system. Your staff must be experts in SACWIS or have a close relationship with experts in SACWIS policy, regulations and requirements.

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 Your development team must be experts in web-based, enterprise-level case management design (5,000 or more users). An expert development team can help guide you in system interaction and workflow, but more

importantly help to ask the right questions - how should this work, how the fields and forms relate to each other, If/Then scenarios... if this happens, then what should happen next..., for example.

DON'T START FROM SCRATCH - leverage a vendor with a development platform that allows for rapid configuration and development to occur - and supports end-user staff collaboration/issue management with other members of the project team and development/vendor staff.

Starting with a development platform like the [Visions Server Development Framework](#) will save many hours of development over using raw Java and HTML, which can equate to thousands of dollars in savings.

