

PROJECT NARRATIVE

1. Project Purpose

The Office of the Chief Judge in Cook County, Illinois administers the largest unified court system in the nation with more than 400 judges and 2,500 employees. Upon taking office as Chief Judge of the Circuit Court of Cook County in December, 1994, Donald P. O'Connell quickly concluded that the Juvenile Division was in a state of crisis. Consistent with national trends, the number of minors arrested for murder, rape, robbery and assault in Cook County had increased every year since 1985. The Juvenile Detention Center was desperately overcrowded, and thousands of abuse and neglect cases were flooding the Courts. As a result, caseload burdens on Cook County judges were staggering, numbering thousands of cases for each judge and clearly affecting the Court's ability to assist children in need. Due to these unprecedented caseloads, an escalation in the severity and complexity of cases and insufficient resources, the network of public and private agencies charged with addressing juvenile delinquency and the protection of abused and neglected children was not effectively responding to the problems of the children and families who appeared before the Court. Fewer than 10 percent of the 12,000 children who entered Cook County's child welfare system in 1993 and 1994 had been returned home by March of 1996.

Recognizing that Juvenile Court was often the focal point for intervention by the government in the lives of abused and troubled children, Judge O'Connell reorganized the Division in early 1995 to provide increased resources and administrative attention for juvenile proceedings. This reorganization entailed the creation of two separate divisions; the Child Protection Division, dedicated to serving abused and neglected children and the Juvenile Justice Division for delinquent children. The reorganization has paved the way for extensive Juvenile Court reform, and instilled greater confidence in the Court's ability to protect public safety while addressing the best interests of children. Over the past two years, the Chief Judge's office has increased the number of judges assigned to the Juvenile Courts, expanded post-adjudication alternatives for delinquent minors, developed a network of community-based resources to provide mentoring for our youth, and implemented a drug treatment program for non-violent minors.

In order to facilitate still greater reform, the Circuit Court recently retained Anderson Consulting (AC) to design a new management information system at Juvenile Court, the Juvenile Enterprise Management System (JEMS). When completed, JEMS will provide accurate and timely information concerning Court wards and their families for the benefit of all agencies which comprise the Juvenile Justice and Child Protection Enterprise (the Enterprise). However, due to funding limitations, information captured in JEMS will not be available to most public and private-sector organizations outside of the Enterprise. (See Appendix A for background information concerning JEMS). On behalf of the children and the citizens of Cook County, the Court is seeking financial support to develop the Children's Advocacy Network (the Network), to electronically bridge the Enterprise to private and not-for-profit community organizations that serve wards of the Court.

The mission of the Enterprise requires a partnership with community-based youth and family service providers. The children of the Court and their families currently receive advocacy services from hundreds of local volunteers as well as 200 to 300 private organizations based in Illinois and other states around the country. These organizations and volunteers provide services

such as mental health evaluations, family counseling, therapeutic residential treatments, mentoring, parenting classes, drug rehabilitation, special education and services for the developmentally disabled, job placement, tutoring, job readiness services, emergency shelter care, transitional living facilities, and special intensive services for sex offenders and other high-risk minors. ~~As of the date of this application, approximately 80 percent of the 8,000 children under the active supervision of the Cook County Juvenile Probation Department are receiving services or awaiting services from these organizations.~~

Since the factors negatively affecting the lives of thousands of children petitioned to the Court each year are not suspended during the critical period from the point of arrest to the point of final case disposition by the Court, it is crucial that effective intervention linkages with community organizations be established early so that the treatment measures will have the greatest chance of taking root. *Unfortunately, this is not often the case at the Cook County Juvenile Court.* ~~Minors and their families are not contacted with the service providers after the arrest before being committed to the appropriate treatment provider. During that time, children are held in the Juvenile Detention Center and are not connected to the community, often without receiving necessary treatment opportunities.~~

These delays in delivering services to Court wards are, for the most part, directly attributable to the lengthy process currently necessary for Court officers to manually gather historical information on the children and families, to prepare recommendations to the Court concerning case disposition strategies, and to locate service providers with sufficient capacities. It is estimated that two-thirds to one-half of this time would be eliminated if the Court effectively maintained electronic linkages with community service organizations and health care providers. *Such linkages would profoundly expedite the case reporting and referral processes.*

The proposed extension of the JEMS network will equip assigned Court officers with tools to expedite the delivery of community-based intervention services. The Network will provide officers the capability to electronically: 1) ~~match service needs with service providers;~~ 2) ~~transmit case histories and supporting data;~~ 3) ~~receive diagnostic and treatment reports;~~ 4) ~~receive attendance and/or compliance reports using prescribed forms;~~ 5) ~~administer contractual agreements with service providers;~~ and 6) ~~provide case data to help both the Court and service organizations effectively plan to meet children's needs.~~ The Network will also include a comprehensive on-line directory of Court service providers and a bulletin board of Enterprise service needs, as well as volunteer and training opportunities. The Network will provide the means to efficiently draw upon private sector advocacy resources to help the wards of the Court.

All experts agree that early treatment has the greatest impact upon long term success with minors in need of services. The Network will provide the Court with the opportunity to significantly increase its impact upon the realities of delinquency and child neglect.

Many jurisdictions - urban and rural, city, county and state - face challenges in implementing effective juvenile information systems that are similar to those of Cook County. The project team anticipates that the planning and implementation of the Network will serve as an excellent model for replication in other jurisdictions, allowing other communities to avoid "reinventing the wheel" at considerable time and expense. Additionally, other government service organizations that require strong partnerships with a large number of small, disparate private-sector enterprises, such as state child welfare agencies and state public aid departments charged with coordinating welfare to work programs, will benefit from Cook County's proposed project. As governments continue to out-source services to the private sector or interface with

the private sector for the benefit of the citizens, the demand for such a cost-effective means to exchange information will increase for the foreseeable future.

2. Project Feasibility

The planned technical architecture for the Network will allow remote community service providers to cost effectively exchange data with JEMS. Community organizations will provide information to JEMS and receive referrals, training and technical assistance, referrals, and other information from JEMS. The design team is planning to operate JEMS using the County's existing AS/400 network. Expanding the JEMS infrastructure to connect the Court's remote community organizations would require significant investments in network infrastructure and support personnel. As an alternative, the Court is planning to use infrastructure already in place to facilitate communication. By linking the Internet with JEMS, remote community organizations would be much less costly and would require minimal maintenance. As such, the Court is planning to establish a web site through which remote users will communicate. See Appendix A for a description of the Court's proposed Network architecture, and further information concerning the Network's interface with JEMS, scalability, ongoing maintenance and upgrades, and standards. Also see Appendix B for Network diagrams.

The plan for the Network includes a six-month development period and a twelve-month period for intensive operations monitoring, and evaluation. The project team will use a structured methodology and a detailed work plan to manage each phase of development. See the budget narrative for a detailed listing of work plan steps, presented in conjunction with the cost analysis for the project.

The first phase of the project, the Development Phase, will consist of three tasks: 1) analysis, 2) construction, and 3) deployment. During the analysis task, the project team will define application requirements and develop a conceptual design of the Network. The project team will also identify outcome measures, and training needs of community service organizations that will participate in the Network through a series of focus groups. Network prototypes will be developed for intensive testing of system alternatives and options. The project team will then begin construction consisting of detailed design, programming, and integration testing of applications. After integration testing, two or more community-based organizations will be selected to participate in pilot tests. Prior to rollout of the application to all community-based organizations, the organizations that participated in pilot tests will provide feedback on the training and application components. User feedback will help the project team improve the application, training and operation procedures. At the conclusion of the pilot tests, community service organizations will be scheduled for intensive training and implementation assistance.

The project's second phase, Operation and Monitoring, will begin once the application rollout is complete and will continue for approximately one year. The second phase will also include three tasks: 1) training and technical operation support, 2) monitoring of outcomes, and 3) dissemination. It is estimated that one County employee will be required to provide on-going training, help desk operation and support for the Network. The support resource would be assigned 20 hours per week to this effort. After the first year of operation, the Court would provide on-going support. During the monitoring of outcomes task, the Court will collect outcome data and conduct a user satisfaction survey. The Court will also prepare a monitoring/evaluation report with the assistance of a selected Chicago university. In the final task of the second phase, dissemination, the Court will develop a summary of the project, to

serve as guidelines for other jurisdictions. The Court will identify and attend a minimum of three national conferences to present information about the planning, implementation, and effectiveness of the Network. See Appendix B for Network development timelines.

The Court's project team will include senior executives from the Office of the Chief Judge and the Juvenile Probation Department, who have been and will be actively involved with the design and development of JEMS. In addition, representatives from AC, as well as a renowned Chicago university, will be important partners in this initiative and will also be included on the team. The individuals from AC include the JEMS project manager and senior technical specialist. A summary of the qualifications of project team members is included in Appendix C. See Section 5 of this narrative for discussion concerning the Chicago university which will assist the Court in evaluating the Network.

In order for the Network to be sustainable beyond the proposed period of the grant, it is critical that sufficient monetary resources and on-going management support be provided to make certain that the system is effectively utilized and maintained. As to the former, it is clear by its commitment to fund JEMS, the Cook County Board of Commissioners will provide the relatively modest fiscal resources to maintain JEMS and the Network beyond the grant period. These costs are estimated at \$60,000 per year for; (1) Internet connection maintenance (\$20,000), (2) hardware maintenance and upgrades (\$10,000), (3) on-going administration, dissemination and evaluation (\$27,000) and, (4) on-going training and technical assistance (\$3,000). These costs will be more than offset by savings achieved through the efficiencies of the system. Management support for the Network to ensure effective utilization will be ongoing and unwavering. From his first day in office, Chief Judge O'Connell has made Juvenile Court his highest priority. As a result, the Circuit Court of Cook County has been a national leader in Juvenile Court reform over the past two years. Cook County Board President John Stroger, Jr. and the other members of the Board share his views and have consistently backed his efforts.

Lastly, by virtue of the County's current contract with AC to design JEMS, it is fully anticipated that AC will be partners with the Court and the County for the foreseeable future to maintain and upgrade the Network, to train Network users and to evaluate results. AC has both the commitment and the technical resources to ensure the long-term success of this project as well as to assist the County and the U.S. Department of Commerce to disseminate the lessons learned from this venture.

3. Community Involvement

The underlying principle of this grant application is the historic strong collaborative relationship between the Enterprise and community-based organizations that provide care for the Court's wards. The philosophy of Juvenile Court is to address the individual treatment and supervision needs for referred minors and family members, within a sound framework of public safety. The multiple County and State agencies that serve the juvenile justice system work in partnership with these community service organizations to provide the guidance, structure, and services for the multiple special needs population. These community partnerships are essential if the Court is to accomplish its rehabilitative mission.

As part of the reorganization of Juvenile Court in early 1995, Judge O'Connell created the Juvenile Justice and Child Protection Resource Section specifically to reach out to communities in Cook County to identify and recruit volunteers to help Juvenile Court wards. The Administrative Presiding Judge of the Section now administers a program in which 300

community volunteers serve as mentors to juveniles on probation, and to assist and mentor at-risk children before they commit violent acts. Mentors reach out to students who are on probation or are having disciplinary problems at school and meet regularly with the minors. Volunteers who take part in the program complete mentoring training to assist them in this process. Over the past two years, [REDACTED] recruit [REDACTED] staff.

[REDACTED] Court has also established working relationships with 200+ community-based organizations throughout the State of Illinois, and [REDACTED] partners with the Court to deliver services to the children. The Network will facilitate enhanced and expedited communications between the Court and these service organizations, and promote more timely referrals of children and their families from the Court for desperately needed treatment services, and enhance the quality and quantity of services available to assist at-risk children and their families.

The interaction between the Court and the community-based organizations, in terms of how services are delivered and reported, varies depending upon the programs developed for specific target populations. In most instances, the fiscal resources available to each organization from private and public sources will determine the scope and dimension of these programs. In addition, the Circuit Court has utilized grant funds to subsidize special community-based initiatives. For example, the Juvenile Court Drug Program initiated in October, 1996, (one of the few in the nation) works with a collaborative network of approximately 10-12 community-based organizations within two targeted communities that have a high referral rate for drug offenses. These organizations were identified through an open request-for-proposal process. The Chief Judge initiated meetings with members of the faith communities, bar associations, and the judiciary to discuss the scope of this project, and to identify the most complete and inclusive methodology to address this special-need population of young drug offenders. Similar steps are initiated on all other projects considered for implementation at Juvenile Court.

Organizations which participate with the Enterprise in serving Court wards must agree to submit to a rigorous background check for both their organization and the staff that will provide services. These organizations must also stipulate that they and their staff will participate in ongoing training as well as information dissemination regarding the project within their community (See Appendix A for planned training initiatives). Further, each organization is required to enter into an agreement with the Court to ensure the confidentiality of all records for minors and related family members served. These agreements delineate the extent to which information can be shared between primary and secondary service organizations and the Court.

It is essential that the community organizations that provide service to Court wards actively participate in the development of the Network. Each organization will be asked to commit modest financial resources to purchase the equipment or software necessary to provide the gateway to JEMS (See Appendix A, Network Technical Approach). The Court will provide extensive training and on-going technical support to educate the users on how to access JEMS, and best utilize the Network. The direct benefits of the Network to the community service organizations will be; faster, more efficient case status reporting, increased referrals to minimize organization downtime and enhanced communications and resource sharing among the organizations and the Court. The direct benefits to the children, their families and the citizens of Cook County, are clear based on effective, timely interventions; (1) lives saved, (2) reduced juvenile and adult crime, and (3) lower costs for public safety and health care.

To ensure that the Court's community-based service organizations would support such a venture, Chief Judge O'Connell's office contacted and received letters of support from over 100 organizations included in the Court's current directory of service providers. In addition, his office received letters of support from various public officials and Enterprise department directors. The response received by the Court for this initiative has been overwhelming. There is an absolute consensus for the need to develop this Network. (See Appendices E and F for a summary of these organizations and public officials. Also see Appendix D for selected letters of support for consideration.)

The information that is to be passed to and from the users of the Network will be confidential. The Network system will protect the confidentiality of the information by using certain encryption technologies. See Appendix A, Network Technical Approach, for further information on these features.

4. Reducing Disparities

The Child Protection Division currently has over 45,000 abuse and neglect petitions pending. The Juvenile Justice Division received approximately 19,000 petition filings in 1996 and in the past year has referred approximately 8,000 minors to active probation supervision and involvement with appropriate community service organizations. The families that appear in Juvenile Court are predominantly low-income, minorities. Gangs and /or drug abuse are involved in 70-80 percent of these cases. These people have been historically underserved in Cook County and, indeed, across the nation.

The objective of this grant application is to overcome the current information barriers between the Court and community-based service organizations as a means to expedite the delivery of services to these children and their families in Cook County, and to increase opportunities for private-sector providers and volunteers. Many of the children and families who appear in Cook County's Juvenile Court have multiple service needs that require expedited referrals and placements. The Network will help break down these barriers which have prevented children from accessing these important services.

The multitude of community-based organizations that provide the Court with a variety of specialized services varies significantly in organizational sophistication and infrastructure. We believe there are well over 1,000 such organizations in Cook and the contiguous counties in Northern Illinois that could potentially provide service to Court wards. Many of these organizations are not-for-profit enterprises, dependent on fiscal support from state and local municipalities, block grants and local fund-raising. This grant initiative will enhance the operations of all of these organizations by providing uniform training, standard reporting formats, and shared resources to reduce duplication of manual data entries on Court records. More importantly, however, the Network will provide for the efficient referral of children to receive services, in time to make a significant difference. Finally, it is anticipated that by providing an electronic medium to exchange information, the Court will broaden the existing collaborative partnerships among community organizations to incorporate secondary service groups such as the faith and education communities.

Court personnel, as well as many of the community-based organizations that will comprise the Network, have extensive experience in providing services that are sensitive to the diverse populations they serve. The professionals involved in this venture are culturally competent; many live and work in the neighborhoods in which the children they serve also live.

As indicated in Appendix A, the Cook County Board of Commissioners voted to fund approximately 90 percent of the costs necessary to develop JEMS in 1996. Although the Board recognized the importance of the project, the Court anticipates that due to the fiscal crisis in Cook County, further financial support from the County to expand the reach of JEMS beyond the boundaries of the Enterprise will be limited. In 1995, an independent group of professionals issued a report on the fiscal condition of Cook county entitled, *Financial Issues, Resources and Strategies for Transition*. The Steering Committee reported that the County is facing a significant and growing structural operating deficit, which could reach approximately \$850 million by the year 2000.

In an attempt to assist the County in financing JEMS, the Court in recent months has actively sought alternative funding from both private and government sources. On September 13, 1996, the Court submitted a grant application to the U.S. Department of Justice. The Court has not as yet received a response. In January, 1997 the Court issued letters asking for financial support for JEMS to 17 large private foundations including the Public Welfare Foundation, the Ford Foundation and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. To date, 7 of the foundations have notified us that they will be unable to support the project; no response has been received from the others. Our foundation support initiatives will be ongoing.

Although the Court is actively seeking alternative sources of funding, Federal government support will be essential for the Network and any other initiatives that expand the scope of the basic JEMS architecture.

5. Evaluation and Dissemination

Within Juvenile Court, there are multiple concurrent service programs and grant projects that incorporate broad-based community organization collaboratives. Each of these programs/initiatives has specific target populations and distinct program outcomes that are measured to evaluate program success. ~~An example would be tracking minors' participation in the Juvenile Court Drug Program for: 1) rearrest; 2) school attendance/truancy; 3) participation/compliance with clinical program; and 4) results of urinalysis/toxicology reports.~~

The Court has preliminarily identified several outcome measures which will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the Network in achieving stated objectives. The first of these is by far the most important in that it measures the reduction in juvenile recidivism achieved by providing earlier interventions - ~~The percentage of juveniles who are rearrested within a period for a given offense category.~~ Other secondary measures will be used to evaluate the success of the project in providing earlier interventions and building partnerships with community organizations:

- Time from point of arrest to the point when services begin for target populations
- Time period from point of arrest to the point of case disposition for target populations
- Percentage of juveniles achieving defined school truancy/attendance goals
- Time period for processing case reports
- Number of community organizations providing services to court wards and volume of services
- Percentage of Court wards receiving services from community organizations, relative to the eligible population
- Number of training hours provided to community organizations

- Number of community organizations and volunteers signed-on to the Network's electronic bulletin board.

All of these measurements will be derived from statistics available through JEMS. In addition, comprehensive data on these outcome measures will also be developed *prior* to the completion of JEMS. The careful, consistent measurement of improvements in communications, caseload management, community-based referrals and outcomes, and direct services to at-risk children and their families will create benchmarks to measure the overall effectiveness of the Network, as well as the need for any systems/services improvements.

Input from the stakeholders in the Network, including the organizations and agencies that comprise JEMS, is essential to evaluating the effectiveness of the Network. As such, a stakeholder satisfaction survey will be periodically conducted, and will include feedback on: 1) accessibility and usability of the Network; 2) quality of information; 3) quality of training and technical assistance provided by the Court; 4) recommendations for augmentation; and 5) opportunities for stakeholders to share their general observations. Survey data will be compiled in a summary report, reviewed and applied to improving the Network.

Responsibility for conducting the on-going evaluation of the Network goal achievement measures will be shared by representatives of the Juvenile Probation Department under the direction of Michael Rohan. Background information for Mr. Rohan is presented in Appendix C. In addition, however, the evaluation process will be actively managed by representative(s) from one of three prominent academic institutions in Chicago; 1) Northwestern University Legal Clinic, Children and Family Justice Center, Bernardine Dohrn Director, 2) University of Chicago, Chapin Hall Center for Children, Harold Richman, Director, Dr. Bennett Leventhal, Chief of the Department of Psychiatry, and 3) Loyola University, Dr. Arthur Lurigio, Professor of Criminal Justice. All three of these Universities have periodically provided consulting work for Juvenile Court. For example, Northwestern is in the process of conducting a two year study to improve permanency planning procedures. The University of Chicago and Northwestern are jointly assessing clinical evaluations and mental health services at Juvenile Court.

There are a several professional associations whose constituencies include juvenile justice, child protection, community advocacy and technology. ~~The project team will produce technical articles - tailored to specific constituencies' needs - for publication in association journals, such as Government Technology, the National Center for State Courts, Courts Technology Bulletin and the National Association of Court Managers. The Court Manager~~

~~Finally, there are 11 national organizations with interests in juvenile justice and child protection that have agreed to provide forums and venues to disseminate information about the project. A list of these organizations is included in Appendix C. Other national associations~~ whose constituencies have interest in related juvenile technologies will be identified and incorporated into the dissemination plan. A 90-minute presentation will also be developed for national conferences sponsored by these organizations. The project team will also share information and insights with other TIAP grant recipients on a continuing basis. Project team members' affiliations with offices within the U.S. Department of Justice that address juvenile justice, child protection and victim assistance, and justice technology will enhance efforts to share relevant resources about the Network. Ms. Anne Seymour, a consultant affiliated with AC will be primarily responsible for assisting the Court with dissemination (See Appendix C).