

Stronger connections for caseworkers, children and families

Put technology to work for child welfare professionals

Liz Schnitter,
Senior Project Manager, Social Program Management, Merative
Joseph Castro, MA, LCSW, PMP,
Solution Strategist, Government, Social Program Management, Merative

merative

Contents

03

Introduction

04

The human cost of paperwork and lost data

05

By child welfare experts, for child welfare experts

06

Social work-specific modules supporting every step

07

Dashboards and reports: for the caseworker and the agency

Focus on technology that can impact the future

08

Learn how Merative can help your organization

Introduction

"For the child welfare professional, everything you do depends on collecting and reviewing data in a way that gives you confidence to make good decisions."

— Social worker with 25 years of experience

Does this sound familiar?

Ryan, a long-time child welfare intake worker, receives a call just as he starts to shut down his laptop. It's a neighbor concerned about potential child neglect regarding eight-year-old Daniel.

Making just a few clicks within the state's comprehensive child welfare information system (CCWIS), Ryan finds detailed records from years past. They include police reports of domestic violence, school interventions, temporary housing and prior child welfare interactions with family.

Ryan adds notes to the intake form as the neighbor shares her concerns.

What happens next?

Ryan thanks the neighbor for her information and completes the intake form. He applies the state's screening tool, which helps him conclude that an investigation should be the next step. He submits the form, which includes his decision, electronically for approval by Elisa, his supervisor. She agrees.

Within the same CCWIS platform, Elisa reviews up-to-date details about her staff's specialized skills and caseloads. She finds that José has completed domestic violence and de-escalation training. He also has the fewest active cases. Still within the CCWIS, Elisa assigns him as the investigator for Daniel's case.

The system immediately updates Jose about the case. He reviews the details in Daniel's record, calls Elisa with a few questions and adds comments that she sees in real time. Elisa heads home, confident in José and the team's ability to support Daniel and his family.

This is what a modern, comprehensive child welfare information system CCWIS looks like in action. Does this look like the software system your social workers use?

With stronger tools, caseworkers can do more good

Few jobs are more important than keeping children safe. When children and families depend on the government for help, they deserve quick, efficient support. The caseworker is the professional ready to offer this support, for the child and for their family.

A child welfare caseworker must be many things: a project manager, an intermediary, a translator of government bureaucracy, a guide through a complex system. They must also be resilient, patient, compassionate and observant.

With these sometimes competing demands, providing caseworkers access to comprehensive, organized data is a gift. Caseworkers deserve tools that can streamline and enhance data so the team can do the work that best protects those most vulnerable.



The human cost of paperwork and lost data

"The more technology we can create that allows workers to stay in the field, meet with the families and still meet federal requirements, the better. This use of technology is critical. And today, child welfare professionals know it's possible."

—Child welfare professional

For many child welfare departments, valuable data lives in siloes that perpetuate inefficient processes. And it doesn't have to. Studies illustrate the importance of relieving caseworkers of paperwork burdens and of making data more accessible. Both can improve job satisfaction and children's outcomes.[1]

In one study, every single caseworker said that paperwork demands more than 70% of their time. This administrative burden takes time away from families that are desperate for help. Another study reports that social workers routinely retrieved and documented case notes in up to seven different systems simultaneously.[2]

But when data is accessible and navigable, a better way of working becomes reality. The result brings high value to the caseworker, the child and the family.

– The child and family feel heard.

– Caseworkers spend more of their valuable time and energy engaging with everyone concerned.

– Caseworkers can make immediate decisions to resolve issues.

– Each member of the agency is more effective, because they share the same information.

Further, with the right tools and technology in place, caseworkers are in a better position to ensure that vulnerable children and their families no longer need to revisit trauma with each retelling.

The "Family View": When data becomes a valuable aid, not more work

How would your team's child welfare efforts change if every one of your caseworkers could use a single software platform that holds the complete family story, all in one place? It's possible today.

Good reports give actionable insights. A review of social work statistics in Texas revealed that almost half of their caseloads were in just five counties. With that information, managers analyzed staffing and office locations to maximize the time caseworkers spent with children and families.

Here's what can happen using the Merative™ Child Welfare software solution. Within a single application, social workers access the full range of case activities—from a child's intake to permanency. And the ease of use empowers stakeholders towards better communication and collaboration across multiple agencies.

For example, when a child's serious situation needs prompt attention, automation helps make sure that happens. The solution automatically alerts a supervisor if a caseworker does not act on a new child protection case within 24 hours.

The caseworker can easily access supporting information, such as a police report, and forward it to the appropriate department.

The Merative solution is built specifically for social work professionals. This advanced platform defines and maintains workflows–based on best practices in child welfare–to improve speed, consistency and quality of care. It helps the caseworker with better outcomes for children and their families, plus greater job satisfaction for the entire team.

1. California Child Welfare Co-Investment Partnership. Winter 2017. Balancing Head & Heart California's Child Welfare Workforce.
2. Rizvi, Rubina, et al. March 2021. The Perceived Impact and Usability of a Care Management and Coordination System in Delivering Services to Vulnerable Populations: Mixed Methods Study.

By child welfare experts, for child welfare experts

"The Family View includes visual displays of information—genograms, timelines, maps of a child's involvement with child welfare professionals. We believe this helps tell the story of a child and family better than a simple list of facts on a page."

—Licensed social worker involved in developing the Merative CCWIS

Merative's team of child welfare professionals and health technology specialists focus on the data challenges that your team faces. The result of our efforts isn't just a simple dashboard. It's an approach to case management that allows caseworkers, supervisors, multidisciplinary teams and reviewers to see the entire family story, in what we call the "Family View." And it can make this CCWIS the strongest tool in your team's toolbox.

The Merative platform is far from a generic CRM. It's child welfare-specific, so your team of caseworkers can:

1. Gain quick, efficient and thorough access to each child and family's information—even in the field, in real time. With its consolidated information, the Family View can tell the complete story of a specific family all in one place. It shows the evolution of the family, flags potential safety threats and provides a history of past interventions with child welfare professionals and others.

2. Build trust with the family to foster effective engagement and help minimize the risk of their experiencing trauma again.

3. Rely on efficient workflows critical to the caseworker's success in supporting the child and family.

4. Create flexible, custom and mandated reports. Easily create mandatory federal and agency-specific reports that come pre-populated in the software. Both the agency and the caseworker can surface details on caseload by zip code or severity, for example, and on specifics such as caseworkers' training.

60%+

increase in processed cases

The Hamburg, Germany Authority of Labor, Family and Integration implemented Merative's Solution for Child Welfare to better serve the needs of the region's abused and neglected youth.

Their results over five years include:

– More than 60% increase in processed cases

– Complete elimination of faxed police reports

Read more in their case study at **merative.com/government**.

Social work-specific modules support every step

"This tool was built by and for child welfare caseworkers. It's not a generic database."

– Feedback from a Merative child welfare user group

Intake worker, reporter, investigator, supervisor, child, family: caseworkers need each perspective. And they're all part of the Merative workflow.

Intake: Streamline workflows to improve the process for all

Legacy child welfare information systems often force intake workers to follow a rigid and cumbersome process. The reporter's main goal is to share concerns about a child, and the fixed processes of legacy systems and required fields can frustrate them. Inexact workarounds are common, and some reports simply aren't possible even with creative workarounds or screen exits and restarts.

Because it's designed for the child welfare professional, the Merative Solution for Child Welfare has everything the intake worker needs. Plus, it's all in one view. They no longer need to switch between multiple screens or worse, different systems. This gives them confidence that they lose no detail.

For the person who makes a report of possible neglect, the design of this platform makes their difficult task a little easier. The Merative platform streamlines the process of collecting data in a way to make the reporter feel comfortable. This can help ensure they share all information to help the child welfare team make the best decisions. The platform also helps the intake worker accurately record the reporter's story.

Further, all notes and reports remain accessible on the Family View for others who might work with the child and their family in the future.

Investigation: Help maintain that delicate balance

Often in an investigation, children want their situation at home to change, but they don't want their family to feel betrayed or be broken apart. This reality creates a challenge for the investigator, who must help a child feel and stay safe while also understanding the severity of a situation. The Merative platform's investigation module helps maintain this balance.

The Family View gives the investigator a comprehensive record of insights and interactions, all in one place. This means investigators can limit questions to unknown or unclear details, minimizing the risk of re-traumatizing the child or family.



Dashboards and reports: For the caseworker and the agency

With its consolidated information, Family View helps child welfare professionals assess the needs and strengths of the family. It helps them quickly understand what worked in the past, so they can make the best possible decisions for the future.

Caseworkers no longer need to face the additional task of gathering data into a manageable format. And no one needs to be a technical or analytical expert.

The Merative platform uses a structured data model to capture and organize data to help make more informed decisions. To pull the data, child welfare professionals can type questions in the search bar.

- Need statistics on caseloads? Type: *How many active cases does José have today?* No need to use quote marks or check boxes.
- Need to create a specific report? Ask: *What is José's monthly caseload in Tempo County?*
- Want to view another report you've created? Just ask for it by the name you chose.

When all the data is available in a way that's accessible, caseworkers can focus energy on improving the lives of children and families. It's the reason many joined the profession in the first place.

Focus on technology that can impact the future

The right data analysis can drive us to a healthier, safer future not just for a single child or family. It can reveal effective ways to impact entire communities.

For example, we know that poverty is tied to neglect. During COVID-19, risk factors for child abuse and neglect increased due to financial hardships, housing stress and poor mental health.[1,2] Helping families access the right services could alleviate some stressors and thereby reduce child abuse or neglect.

Agencies can use reporting dashboards that bring in data from other agencies, such as Medicare or Medicaid, to identify and connect families with benefits like food stamps or postnatal care.[3] In a similar way, coupling academic or government research with a specific geographic population could point to places for proactive efforts.

In considering the role of technology and child welfare, UNICEF also looks to the future. The organization calls us not to use data to simply measure, but to proactively create "effective, personalized and user-centric delivery"[4] of services to children. Only when we see the big picture can we act on it effectively.

"When you provide innovative technologies to dedicated child welfare professionals, you're not only improving the lives of your community members, but the lives of your caseworkers too," says one Merative child welfare expert. "We are committed to working with these professionals to pioneer that transformation."

"When you provide innovative technologies to dedicated child welfare professionals, you're not only improving the lives of your community members, but the lives of your caseworkers too. We are committed to working with these professionals to pioneer that transformation."

—Merative child welfare expert

1. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. January 2021. Child protection in the time of COVID-19
2. Welch, Morgan and Ron Haskins. April 30, 2020. What COVID-19 means for America's child welfare system
3. Evidence of Poverty, child abuse and neglect. March 29, 2022. University of Huddersfield, as reported in Phys.org.
4. Pelter, Zoë and Jasmina Byrne. January 2021. Government services and children: Pathways to digital transformation. UNICEF; Morten Meyerhoff Nielsen and Mercy E. Makpor, UNU-EGOV

Learn more about Merative

See how Merative Social Program Management can help your organization.

Visit **merative.com/social-program-management**

Merative provides data, analytics and software for healthcare and government social services. With focused innovation and deep expertise, Merative works with providers, employers, health plans, governments and life sciences companies to drive real progress. Merative helps clients orient information and insights around the people they serve to improve decision-making and performance. Merative, formerly IBM Watson Health, became a new standalone company as part of Francisco Partners in 2022. Learn more at **merative.com.**

© Merative US L.P. 2022. All Rights Reserved.

Produced in the United States of America September 2022

Merative and the Merative logo are trademarks of Merative US L.P. Other product and service names might be trademarks of Merative or other companies.

The information contained in this publication is provided for informational purposes only. While efforts were made to verify the completeness and accuracy of the information contained in this publication, it is provided AS IS without warranty of any kind, express or implied. In addition, this information is based on Merative's product plans and strategy as of the date of this publication, which are subject to change by Merative without notice. Nothing contained in this publication is intended to, nor shall have the effect of, creating any warranties or representations from Merative, or stating or implying that any activities undertaken by you will result in any specific performance results. Merative products are warranted according to the terms and conditions of the agreements under which they are provided.

Any customer examples described are presented as illustrations of how those customers have used Merative products and the results they may have achieved. Actual results and performance characteristics may vary by customer.

SPM-3245884374 Rev 1.0