No-Touch Processing: The Next Generation of Cost-Efficient, Citizen-Centric Services
Today, leading state agencies are using no-touch processing to deliver better and more comprehensive services to citizens at lower cost and with fewer resources. In the future, these technologies will support delivery of integrated, cross-agency services, address root causes of people’s needs, and help to generate better outcomes for families seeking assistance.
No-touch processing has become a holy grail for health and human services agencies. Why? Because it represents the next generation of cost-effective, efficient, citizen-centric technology solutions.

One feature of the present IT generation in public service—citizen portals that provide front-end web access to benefit systems—has been a tremendous technical step forward, to be sure. With such technologies, people can apply for benefits and perform many other tasks on their computers or mobile devices that used to require time-consuming and often frustrating visits to an office.

But portals by themselves have not been able to significantly affect something equally important: easing the administrative burden on caseworkers. The manner in which information comes to a case worker is now different, but the steps required to process that information in many cases are not.

That administrative need highlights the promise of no-touch processing solutions—to help agencies perform benefits administration and eligibility determination without the need for a caseworker to “touch” the process at all. Citizens can apply for assistance, have that information validated and receive benefits—all with no, or very little, caseworker intervention.
An Accenture client has been a trailblazer in this area, recently implementing a no-touch, near-real-time eligibility system supporting more than 50 health and human services programs. The first state to accomplish such a feat, the state went into action quickly to support its Medicaid expansion program under the Affordable Care Act, which was to increase the eligible population by more than thirteen percent. The new system was developed, tested and implemented in only eight months.

The automation of the solution is impressive. The system can automatically process applications created by citizens on a self-service portal, create cases, and use state- and federally-defined program rules to determine eligibility. Then, built-in federal hub interfaces enable real-time data verification, and, when verification is received, the system authorizes citizens to receive benefits.

The technology enabler for this pioneering state is a service-based, pre-configured human services platform from Accenture (see sidebar on page 7). The platform integrates (1) workflow applications for the various approval steps; (2) business rules containing eligibility logic; and (3) interfaces and connecting points to third-party data verification including IRS databases, state unemployment registries, and so forth—functionality that traditionally has been especially difficult for agencies to implement.

The state is already processing tens of thousands of benefits applications that have required either no intervention at all or only one final verification check. Its new eligibility system has helped streamline case management and enable the higher caseload that comes with Medicaid expansion, while maintaining strict eligibility criteria. Equally important, the solution is enabling highly trained caseworkers to focus on the needs of state citizens rather than on administrative busywork.

The solution is now poised for expansion. Citizens will soon be able to use the system to apply for other social service programs that rely on an income test—programs including Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and welfare, as well as Women, Infants and Children (WIC).
As revolutionary as this no-touch processing solution is, it is really just the beginning of delivering better value to citizens and, by extension, to society. With technically current and more reliable systems in place, and with integrated workflow and rules-based solutions that automatically apply complex eligibility rules to data about benefits requests, a floodgate of opportunities can now open.

For example: Although processing new requests is important, the greater part of the average caseworker’s day is actually focused on renewals of existing coverage. Processing renewals and re-verifications in a no-touch manner—especially for those types of benefits that need to be reworked as frequently as every six months—will free up enormous amounts of time for caseworkers and their agencies and improve citizen service even more.

Moving up the value chain, no-touch solutions will enable more efficient, integrated services to citizens with systems that cross traditional agency boundaries, expanding to include no-touch referrals for service in addition to eligibility. That kind of coordinated approach will then help caseworkers understand individual cases in more depth and align resources to address the root causes of people’s needs and problems.

An application for food stamps, for example, might ultimately be linked to a recent job loss, generating a referral for unemployment assistance or job training. Or, a request for Medicaid might be found to have an underlying cause of a non-custodial parent who has failed to provide court-ordered medical coverage, triggering a referral for child support enforcement actions.

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Technology solutions such as no-touch processing ultimately have a very human face. The IT dimension is sophisticated and complex, but the real goal is simple: increasing the attention devoted to the needs of citizens and decreasing attention to paperwork.

In the end, it’s about generating better outcomes for the families being served. When technology becomes the enabler of that service instead of the barrier to service it has historically been, then families, the workers who support them and the network of stakeholders who provide the social safety net are all better off.

What's Next?
Moving up the value chain
The Accenture Human Services Suite provides a complete software foundation for integrated service delivery, helping agencies provide better citizen service, handle higher caseloads and improve efficiencies. Combining an integration platform with a benefits management system for caseworkers and a self-service portal for citizens, the Accenture Human Services Suite offers a proven, integrated eligibility solution that helps states reduce risks, lower costs and deliver compliance at speed.

Product features include:
• No-touch processing
• Single streamlined application
• Real-time eligibility determination
• Pre-built interfaces with the Federal Data Services Hub and other state and federal systems

Learn more at: www.accenture.com/HHSsoftware
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