

# Implementing WITS

The WITS system is a web based application with extensive security and privacy controls built-in. WITS provides a role-based authorization mechanism so users can be granted access to the components necessary to perform their job, but not let them into other application functionality which may compromise sensitive data. The WITS application also includes reporting so a provider and the State can extract pertinent information from the system to support the management of programs at various levels. In addition, the WITS application has a fee for service billing module, which allows a provider to perform HIPAA billing transactions. It does not, however, support general ledger and actual general accounts receivable that would be of interest to many provider agencies. The WITS application currently contains approximately 240 application screens to support the listed application functionality

To support maximum tailoring to State needs while preserving reuse and compatibility, the WITS was designed around the following high level requirements:

- Flexibility
- Ease of Use
- Security
- Privacy
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Best Practices
- Scalability
- Maintainability
- Reliability

By using these requirements in the application design, the WITS team has specifically created ways of giving a State an application environment that lets it tailor WITS to its own needs while maximizing the potential for collaboration. The WITS application has evolved into a very capable Client Treatment System which utilizes current industry best practices to provide the highest levels of treatment services to clients. The WITS application is a state of the art treatment tracking system built on an extensible framework, which provides the infrastructure necessary to deploy a consistent treatment model statewide.

## Configuration

The base system and its supporting framework have been designed to allow a State to configure the system to meet its specific needs. Any state deciding to use WITS will have some configuration activities to perform. Aspects of WITS needing basic configuration include:

- The general look of the data screens, including a unique name for the State system,
- The designation of permitted values for many data fields,
- The designation of which fields are required and under what circumstances,
- The help messages for fields,
- The incorporation of various rules governing the parameters of the treatment process.

The WITS application uses a master style sheet to define the general look for screens. Manipulating the master style sheet will change the overall look of the application. A State may want to name its application based on an existing system and have that name appear on all screens, etc. Although the current color scheme for WITS screens is designed to support the usability of the interface, some changes could be made to preserve the look and feel of an existing system. This would be accomplished through modifications to the style sheets that define the basic parameters of the user interface.

The WITS application has more than 160 code tables defined, which gives a State considerable flexibility in defining State data values. There are of course restrictions on what changes a State should make in some of these areas when using standard SAMHSA codes would be preferred, cutting down on the need for cross-walking data between classification schemes. Data is automatically captured to support the Treatment Episode Data Set (TEDS), and also for the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) program for GPRA grantees. The WITS application allows providers to collect GPRA data at intake and follow-up for clients that are serviced through a GPRA grant.

The WITS application includes a System Data Dictionary which also allows the State to configure the designation of fields as required, help messages for fields, and field definitions. The application framework creates the database definition through the Data Dictionary to define required fields for the WITS application. At execution time, the framework determines which fields on a screen are required, and enforces required fields across the application. Help messages are also defined in the Data Dictionary, and are used at execution time to supply those messages to the end user. The message text associated with help messages can also be modified by each State.

There are also system level configuration parameters that can be changed like user session timeout length, file paths, and available system services. A State might configure session timeout to a particular value that reflects the usual circumstance of physical security for its providers. With shorter timeout lengths, security is heightened for those times a user is away from their workstation.

An important part of the review process for deploying WITS involves the configuration of the business rules. The WITS architecture includes an integrated rules management capability. As an example, the system is set to generate an automatic administrative discharge after a certain number of days with no client contact or treatments. A State using WITS would need to review its business processes in this area and supply a number of days to be used in enforcing the rule. Most of the business processes built in to WITS reflect rules that incorporate best practices when they have been identified. Still, variations in State regulations and laws, the particular approach taken to managing SA fund distribution (e.g., grants vs. slots), and the nature of the relationship between the State AOD Agency and its providers are all types of factors that contribute to variations in how the business of treatment is done and is managed.

The other important recommendation in the review of business rules is to determine what new practices should be implemented at the time of WITS deployment. This is especially true when a State has not had a process that is covered by one of the best practices in WITS. Deciding to add processes that are not in WITS is covered below.

One other set of choices is required assessment tools. WITS is constructed so that some standard SA assessments (e.g., ASI DENS) are built it at the individual question level. A State may choose to configure the standard menu for requiring or offering various different assessment tools. Configuration of the menu is done easily by turning on or off options for the typical State user.

## **Adaptation**

The WITS application uses the current best practices for substance abuse treatment. It is most cost effective when a State uses the WITS application as is, making only those changes necessary under the pre-identified configuration options. However, in some circumstances more modification is required. These circumstances would generally be considered to be an adaptation of WITS. Adaptation is used to refer to the refinement of functions in WITS, in contrast to adding new functions through customization. The WITS deployments underway at the end of 2003 generally all have some modules where each State has asked for an adaptation of the base system.

For example, adaptation may be needed when a State has had a system of data collection that includes fields not contained in the standard WITS modules performing a particular function. The State may want to continue collecting these data for purposes of trend tracking or because they are an underlying part of business practices. In this case the structure of the system will not change, but additional screens may need to be added that allow provider staff to put in those other data not included in WITS.

Minor additions to the flow of screens within a module or, if necessary, of fields to a screen are generally accomplished easily, but do represent a deviation from the base system. States that do not need these features would not have to use them. They may consider adding innovations done through an adaptation process as their State moves to a treatment model closer to that of the a State already using an instance of WITS.

In addressing co-occurring disorders and the need to provide clients with both substance abuse and mental health treatment, a State may want WITS to allow for more mental health information to be included than has been designed in to the system. In Alaska, the WITS implementation has led to the modification of basic screens to accommodate more mental health information in support of a co-occurring disorders treatment initiative. It should be reassuring to a State to know that the WITS application is flexible enough to accommodate their needs for implementing best practices across the State.

Another place where adaptation is likely to be selected is the circumstance of a State wanting to use an assessment or other tool which is not available on line. When other assessment/assignment approaches that are not built in to WITS are needed, appropriate screens can have a field added to allow for direct entry of assessment scores. This type of adaptation is not likely to disrupt the basic WITS system because such fields are mostly additional attributes of basic system objects (e.g., a client diagnosis). If added fields are meant to be more involved in the logic of workflow or of record indexing, they are potentially disruptive to the reusability of the impacted modules.

## **Customization**

The WITS application was developed using a collaborative approach between several States, CSAT, and the contractors responsible for building the solution. The WITS project team worked with State personnel, and industry experts from BGR and TRI. These experts contributed intellectual property, as well as, project personnel to help develop the WITS program. There are, however, functions and organizational systems that have not been covered in the current version of WITS. In a field that faces as much transition and change as substance abuse treatment, there will always be forces for adding new functionality or modifying the WITS system itself with evolving practice.

In keeping with the WITS Collaborative Model, a State would provide more value by contributing new application functionality than by modifying existing functionality. Although WITS includes a significant amount of functionality, there is room for adding new content to the application. For example, the University of Maryland Bureau of Governmental Research is currently developing an end of month closing process for its data reconciliation efforts. In addition, they have an interface for Criminal Justice that must be written, as well as an interface for linking drug testing equipment directly to the Maryland HATS system. Because Maryland is moving to the WITS architecture, these innovations that are currently customized work will become available to States participating in the collaboration project.

The State of Alaska WITS implementation (AKAIMS) did a customization to add an entire module for input of screening information for substance abuse, mental health, and traumatic brain injury to support the treatment of co-occurring disorders. This supports collaboration, since all States will have access to these screeners. When these application components are added to WITS, they benefit States using WITS by enabling each State to take advantage of the investments of other States. As a general principle, what is customization to the current WITS becomes a configurable system component in a future version.

## ***Implementation Strategy***

The conversion of a State's information management system to a WITS approach requires the State to make decisions or take action in a number of areas. Those areas include:

- Policy and Planning Issues
- Process Documentation and Change
- Treatment System Coordination
- Technology Support for WITS
- Communication, Education, and Training
- System Implementation and Support

Each of these areas has a number of sub-issues that when addressed properly will greatly increase the success of a State implementation of WITS and help realize its full benefit. The following sections detail the questions and issues in each area. In many cases the decisions made in addressing these issues will impact the scope, pace, cost, and success of a State's implementation of WITS. The cost impacts are described elsewhere in this transmittal.

## **Policy and Planning Issues**

### Defining State System Functionality

States must decide their scope of offering, i.e., WITS supports reporting only versus offering support for Providers business processes and treatment management. Relevant issues include:

- The basic system will support clinicians for treatment.
- States must decide if this is consistent with policy and resource availability.
- The logical organization of functions into modules helps with this decision, i.e., it is possible to turn menu items on and off.
- Pioneer States have found that offering additional treatment support functions increases the overall use of the system.

### Deciding Whether the Use of the State System is Mandatory or Optional

States must decide if all providers must use system or it is optional. Relevant issues include:

- Some Providers already have clinical management systems.
- These systems can co-exist with a State WITS system.
- WITS is then mostly used for Providers with less complex needs.
- If Providers already have them existing Behavioral Health MISs that are sold commercially, they may already have sufficient coverage of the basic processes and elect to use an extraction approach for reporting client management data to the State.

## **Process Documentation and Change**

### Process Capture and Customization - Business Process Changes

- All States have some specific process/rules that need to be validated in the WITS workflow. The following considerations must be addressed:
- WITS comes with many rules, but a State must still review those to fit its own methods and constraints.
- A State's business rules need to be reviewed and captured for use in configuring WITS.
- If processes are to be changed, an analysis would need to be done to determine what level of modification would need to be made to WITS (process not in WITS now but State wants) vs. what changes would need to be done in the States traditional way of doing business (process in WITS now but State is not doing).

### Process Improvements

If changing system, a State also has an opportunity to realize process improvements in the treatment and service delivery areas. A State should:

- Identify any treatment process improvements to deploy.
- Review the WITS built in best practices.
- In most cases, a State will need to consult with Providers to balance the amount of change they can absorb with the deployment of WITS.
- States need to decide how much change to push as part of the overall transition to WITS.

One issue most States have is whether to replicate existing forms or screens vs. going with a different web look. A State would need to:

- Determine which forms need to be preserved.
- Determine which forms can be modified.

A major benefit of using WITS is the opportunity to increase data comparability and value. Issues to address include:

- State data definitions should be tuned for comparability with national uses.
- Issues may arise if changes are made to data definitions that reduce comparability.
- A State should review their codes and value options and determine how their use will be enforced in the system.

WITS has a wide variety of built-in reports. A State needs to review those vs. its existing reports to determine what to add or whether to change to other formats. This would include the need to:

- Examine what existing reports are available from the WITS system.
- Establish what new and useful reports need to be created for State, Provider, and Practitioner use.
- Clearly define what existing reports need to be added to a State's deployment of WITS.

## **Treatment System Coordination**

### Coordination with Other Agencies

With a more robust data system, a State AOD Agency can automate data sharing and services coordination, e.g., with Medicaid. A State must:

- Decide which agencies are possible coordination points (e.g., other behavioral health, criminal justice, or related substance abuse programs).
- Select required coordination agencies to actually work with .
- Determine how data will be exchanged and/or shared, especially in the context of privacy and confidentiality agreements.

### Use of System for Quality Assurance and/or Inspection Functions

A State will want to determine how the system could or should be used to promote quality of treatment and provider management. Possibilities to consider include:

- Documenting the relevant critical business rules.
- Selecting what data are optional versus required.
- Informing users who can complete which types of data screens.

It is possible to do electronic auditing of case records via a WITS system.

- There are changes to procedures and regulations that must be made to accomplish this.
- This area creates incentives/benefits for users of WITS.

## **Technology Support for WITS**

### Hosting the Application - State vs. Other Hosting

The State must identify hosting responsibility early in the planning process. Among the issues to be addressed are the need to:

- Resolve any legal or policy decisions that must be addressed in having a central database of identifiable client information.
- Determine if there are technology resource decisions, e.g., Departmental IT approval or support.
- Determine the best business model for a State in terms of finding a viable hosting partner.

### Roles for System Control

A State needs to focus on its own goals while supporting provider process. Issues include:

- The State must control data definitions and values where standardization is important.
- Local customization can be done to minimize process change or enhance system attractiveness, but not to the extent that it reduces comparability of data needed to manage the treatment system.

### User Support Planning - User Help Desk

Some provision must be made for support and help desk functions. A State should address:

- An adequate level of support and hours of operation for the help desk.
- Selecting staff for a help desk with the right level of experience and expertise.
- Identifying funding for this function and if necessary, obtaining other forms of support
- Establishing an outline of what will be offered during implementation.

## **Communication, Education, and Training**

### Communication Plan for Provider and Stakeholder Support

A State needs to plan on how it will inform providers and other stakeholders about its plans for using WITS. Considerations include:

- Help providers make informed decisions about how to participate in using the system.
- Capture information on desired features.
- Be clear on what is required of system users.
- Include methods of communication, messages, audiences, schedule coordination.

### Develop Plans for System Training

Training is a mandatory function. The State should examine possible training strategies and resources:

- Train the trainers versus do the training.
- Using multiple methods of training delivery.
  - Live training, either specialized or in conjunction with other events.
  - Web-cast or other Internet distributed training sessions.
  - Interactive user driven delivery – e.g., CD ROM.

Training plans must be built around how providers will be engaged.

## Create Implementation Program for Provider Transitions

The involvement and education of system users needs to be a formally executed process. Considerations include:

- It needs to be based on communications and change effort.
- It will be more successful if worked in coordination with provider associations.
- The State should consider adding provider representation to workgroups and steering committees.
- Efforts a State can use in this transition include:
- Conducting site visits.
- Making presentations at provider meetings.
- Providing on-line commentary.
- Using custom walkthroughs and website content.

## **System Implementation and Support**

### Rollout Planning

A State must plan its implementation effort based on available resources and provider readiness.

The planned schedule should consider:

- Rollout include all providers at once or a using a sequentially staged implementation
- Deciding if there are any special considerations to be given during the transition

Resources can the state invest are quite varied:

- Technology resources for computing or connecting.
- Policy or process decisions to promote provider usage.
- Provider participation can make them eligible for other kinds of support or considerations.

### User Acceptance/Testing

Each State will want to have a well crafter testing program. How this is done is:

- Partly influenced by degree of customization.
- Deciding who will supply the resources and do the acceptance testing prep.
- What the method will be used for resolving acceptance issues.

### Ongoing System Management and Enhancements

A State needs a robust system management capability to support further enhancements done locally or being made available as part of the collaborative effort. Issues to consider include:

- Plans for adding features/enhancements.
- The process for defining new needs.
- Who will be involved in adding new capabilities.

## ***Need for Collaboration***

There are a few simple features of a good collaboration that need to be addressed. These include rules of participation, governance mechanisms, and continuing support.

Rules of participation have been focused to this point on the agreement of participating States to share technology among collaborating States. A number of participating States have already made contributions of intellectual property copyrights by various participants. In most cases, these States and their partners are willing to provide functionality to the base system on the condition that it not be copyright or sold commercially. If participating States do make investments in new functionality that can be shared by all, then these conditions of sharing will provide a synergy to continuing the collaboration. Other forms of restriction on use required by some contributors include sharing only among participating States with the understanding that States may use their own contractor personnel as long as the collaboration conditions are still met in that work.