#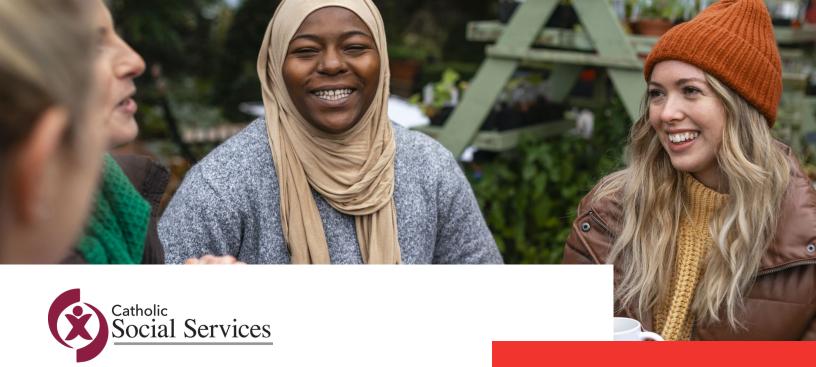 Catholic Social Services of Anchorage, Alaska, knows robust data and powers stronger outcomes for vulnerable populations

Catholic Social Services

Bonterra Program Management's (formerly Social Solutions) data management solution helps CSS to standardize case management, meet compliance, requirements, and to pull vital data quickly.

CUSTOMER

Catholic Social Services - Alaska

VERTICAL

Housing and community

PRODUCT

Bonterra Case Management [Enterprise]

Homeless individuals. Refugees and immigrants. Families in crisis. People with disabilities.

These are just some of the vulnerable populations Catholic Social Services (CSS) serves from their headquarters in Anchorage, Alaska. Citizens and leaders across the world often have questions and opinions about how to serve people in need. And for CSS, hard data has become a powerful tool in demonstrating the impact of their compassion-centered work and the need for that work to expand.

CSS' overall mission is to serve Alaskans in need throughout the state. The organization's main goal is to help build permanent stability in people's lives. They do this by providing emergency shelter, case management, homeless and supportive family services, and more.

Notably, Bonterra Program Management's Case Management [Enterprise] data management solution supports critical programs including:

- **Supporting family disability services** by helping to manage an essential Medicaid waiver program.

- **Helping to facilitate hospital referrals** as part of their medical respite program— Brother Francis shelter—one of the largest night-by-night individual shelters in the state. This program also provides respite care for clients who are being discharged from the hospital and need somewhere to go.

- **Providing key data management** and intake support for their refugee and immigration program, which helps transition new members of the community.

CSS' homeless family services program helps move people from homelessness to housing and offers homeless prevention initiatives. They're now expanding services to "light touch" case management and using the Bonterra Case Management [Enterprise] solution to document these outcomes. With Case Management [Enterprise], all client data can be more easily accessed to meet the Homeless Management Information System's (HMIS) complex reporting requirements and coordinate with other providers. HMIS is an Office of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)-mandated database that organizations with homeless programs must use.

Like every service-based organization working hard to improve people's lives, CSS depends on efficiently accessing accurate and timely information about every client who comes to them for the quality services CSS provides. Data can tell a powerful and unique story about what CSS is accomplishing in public health and social services. Hard facts can show what's working, what needs improvement and outcomes that prove CSS is vital for the community.

Their heart-centered work is guided by:

- **Reverence for humanity.**

- **Striving for excellence.**

- **Empowering personal fulfillment.**

- **Strengthening community through collaboration.**

They strive to provide dignity to vulnerable people and call on the community to support their efforts and participate in the success of CSS clients. They seek to provide options for the poor, support workers' rights and provide caring and loving respite—a safety net of programs aligned with Catholic teachings. They are there to help with body and mind.

CSS has been able to reduce some report time from

20 HOURS

to

5 MINUTES

Challenges

Catholic Social Services can handle multiple aspects of a participant's transition to stability, including anything from securing housing to accessing mental health services. Everyone has a different story and a unique set of needs. That's why it's essential to be able to carefully and accurately track, share, and report information across multiple channels quickly. As the organization has grown, CSS knew it needed to level up their data management protocols in order to serve people better, secure more funding, and remain compliant with outside agencies tracking their progress. So they turned to Bonterra Program Management to help with this unique set of challenges.

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JUGGLING MULTIPLE CASE MANAGEMENT FILES TAKES TIME

CSS needed to create a standardized case management system that they could apply across multiple programs. Before, the organization had not been able to electronically document their case management work which made tracking outcomes extremely time-consuming and difficult.

With the adoption of the Bonterra Case Management [Enterprise] solution, CSS can better manage refugee, immigration and housing programs and process data points that demonstrate if participants meet specific requirements for accessing those programs. Case managers are required to collect an individual's data at each stage of service. With Case Management [Enterprise], CSS can now customize a solution to collect the information they need based on how each department operates. Administrators no longer have to track down, collate, cross-reference and rifle through endless files to build an accurate picture of a participant's status, progress and outcomes. Enrollment in programs is easier, more uniform, and data is simple to access—especially when decisions need to be made quickly. Case Management [Enterprise] is flexible and able to deal with complex data, which enables its seamless support of six different programs within CSS.

> " Strong data goes a long way in telling our impact story. We strive to show supporters, public officials and donors how our programs are changing people's lives and what that means for the community at large. This is data that is actionable and can pave the way for program expansion, community support, policy changes, and more funding to provide services for vulnerable populations."
>
> — Molly Cornish | community engagemet director

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Privacy and dignity are also important when serving participants. With Bonterra Case Management [Enterprise] solution, permissions can be set that allow specific staff members and administrators to access only the information they need to make time-sensitive decisions and long-term strategies. While all team members can see which services are being provided, confidential information is protected on a case-by-case basis. Case managers and administrators can assign different workflows depending on the program and the level of visibility necessary for various team members.

MEETING VARIOUS COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENTS IS COMPLEX

In order to provide family disability services, CSS needs to carefully track case notes and the information about services to remain compliant with Medicaid requirements. CSS wanted to expand participation with Medicaid, so data reporting became even more important than ever.

CSS has been able to use Bonterra Case Management [Enterprise] solution's highly customizable features to support exactly what they need on a daily basis. This includes seamlessly accessing information when federal reporting requirements change—including data required for Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and Health and Human Services (HHS). Case Management [Enterprise] supports those data standards so CSS can confidently update that data when those changes occur.

PULLING DATA FOR STORYTELLING, PROGRAMMING AND FUNDING IS CUMBERSOME

The ability to pull data quickly has been a game-changer for many departments at CSS. Bonterra Case Management [Enterprise] has empowered staff to access accurate, timely information on program impact, community outcomes and more to tell the story of how CSS is making a difference every day. When the media has questions, public officials need facts, funders want information, or partners request insights, Case Management [Enterprise] is the engine that helps effortlessly pull relevant information together.

MEDICARE REPORTING TIME REDUCED BY 75%

This has enabled CSS to now bill more than $1 million annually for Medicaid services.

Internally, quickly accessing information helps inform CSS leadership on ways to improve programming, empower and motivate staff, and make important planning decisions for the organization. Data-driven processes and leadership decisions that used to take a month can now be completed within a week. Saving administrative time allows for more strategic implementation of programs, more time serving participants and better visibility for leadership.

Solutions

Bonterra Program Management has helped Catholic Social Services to:

- **Customize configurable dashboards and program features** to gain end-to-end views into meaningful data, pivot quickly to participant needs and stay in control.

- **Track participant data**, case information and planning, and delivery in one place while applying confidential protections when needed.

- **Report critical outcomes** that they can edit as needed for both internal and external stakeholders, including funders, public officials and members of the community.

- **Comply with requirements** set forth by government agencies.

> " What we really appreciate about Bonterra Case Management [Enterprise] is that this is a living, breathing system with real people behind it, ready to constantly grow and improve the system to meet our needs. With other databases, there's no customization. The people at Bonterra Program Management know this space very well and understand hownonprofits use data to accomplish their goals. That really stands out."
>
> — **Susan Lukowski | data administration director**

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Impact

As a result of using the Bonterra Program Management solution, Catholic Social Services can purposefully work directly with more program participants by leveraging data efficiently. CSS can easily pivot priorities, stay compliant with government agencies and proudly share their success stories with funders and other stakeholders that bolster their mission to serve.

Catholic Social Services staff, administrators and leadership are experts in providing compassionate care to the most vulnerable people in their communities. Their heart will always be in working one-on-one with individuals who need support in getting back on their feet or moving into their next chapters. CSS deeply understands that data is an essential aspect of getting the organizational support they need to do the hard work.
Data tells their story.

Being in control of data has enabled CSS to show how they successfully transition adults and families to more stable futures. In addition, it allows the organization to align information across multiple channels while meeting the stringent reporting requirements of government agencies.

Reporting for funders has also become easier. CSS has been able to submit more grant applications, increasing funding possibilities that include two new grants related to education around COVID-19 and health. These are grants they were not able to previously pursue.

Prior to working with Bonterra Program Management, CSS had issues tracking their medical respite program participant activity. CSS is participating in a research study with Notre Dame looking at the efficacy of a medical respite program like the one currently being used.

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CSS' Bonterra Case Management [Enterprise] implementation allowed for a successful FY20-21 audit for their Refugee and Immigration Services program, supporting continued ORR investment and partnership.

> " Previously 30 people entered data into the HMIS system. Now, we just need one. That means new staff members no longer need two weeks of HMIS training, saving valuable time that can be shifted to providing services. In addition, moving from many people to one allows us to improve our data quality for our agency. As the largest provider of homeless services in Anchorage, we see our investment in Bonterra Case Management [Enterprise] as helping improve the data quality for CSS, Anchorage and Alaska."
>
> — Susan Lukowski | data administration director

CSS has been able to make fast decisions that were not possible when they had depended almost solely on spreadsheets. Before, it might take two weeks to assemble data manually. But now that their data is standardized across all clients— even as far back as three or four years— information can be accessed literally within minutes, and case file visibility is crystal clear. This new level of fast, flexible and customizable data management has, in turn, greatly benefitted their relationship with Notre Dame researchers and improved the quality of data going into the study.
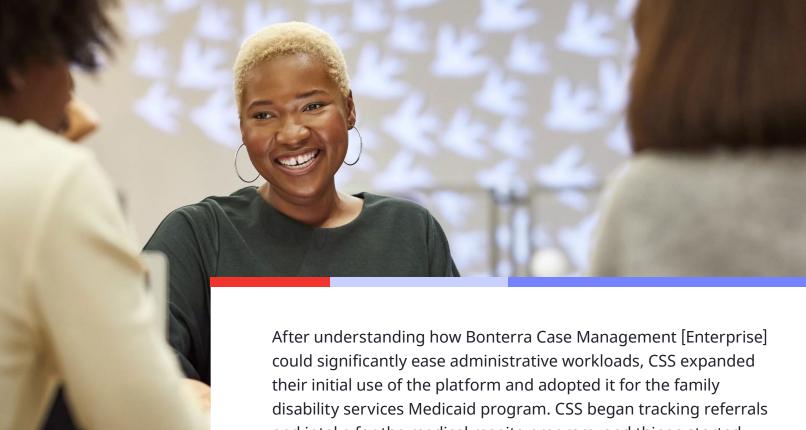
But it gets even better. Staff members who work in CSS' refugee and immigration services program were not always tech-savvy. Their expertise is working with clients with English as a second language, so they needed a system easy to adopt with as few technical barriers as possible. By working closely with Bonterra Program Management, they were able to customize design features that make work easier, allowing them to focus on clients. For CSS, a major success indicator is how happy end users are in using the platform. The results were significant. In fact, the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) gave CSS a glowing review of their data tracking in the Bonterra Case Management [Enterprise] solution. As a result of a significant return on investment (ROI) for ORR, the relationship with CSS is stronger and will likely lead to more agency investment.

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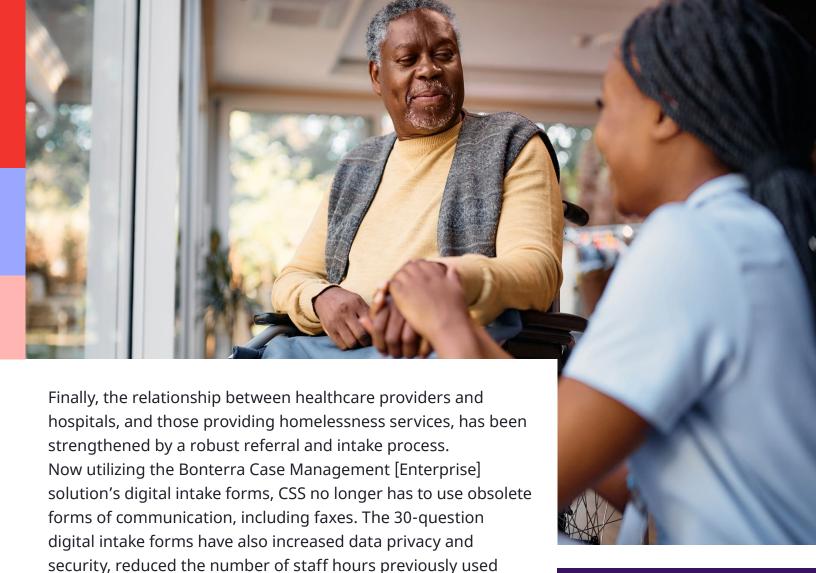After understanding how Bonterra Case Management [Enterprise] could significantly ease administrative workloads, CSS expanded their initial use of the platform and adopted it for the family disability services Medicaid program. CSS began tracking referrals and intake for the medical respite program, and things started clicking. Also, CSS no longer has to depend on their HMIS system to provide housing numbers which may change faster than the technology. CSS can provide accurate numbers and demonstrate their expertise in documenting exactly how adults and families are transitioning to stability with ease and confidence.

This year CSS met their overall data-based goals for the first time. One of their goals was to improve client-level data in their reporting—and they did just that. In addition, because of Bonterra Case Management [Enterprise], CSS was able to draw important distinctions in the comprehensive case notes that are required in the audit. In short, CSS was able to create a database that was exactly what they needed for a fraction of the cost.

Being able to share results in real time has helped build trust with funding agencies so that they can do great things for more people. For multiservice agencies like CSS, change is the journey. And having a customizable solution with a partner that understands the nonprofit landscape has been instrumental in fueling growth and success.

HMIS DATA ENTRY TRAINING REDUCED BY 72 HOURS.

Instead of 2 weeks of training, new staff can enter data on day one thanks to CSS's Bonterra Case Management [Enterprise] implementation.

Finally, the relationship between healthcare providers and hospitals, and those providing homelessness services, has been strengthened by a robust referral and intake process. Now utilizing the Bonterra Case Management [Enterprise] solution's digital intake forms, CSS no longer has to use obsolete forms of communication, including faxes. The 30-question digital intake forms have also increased data privacy and security, reduced the number of staff hours previously used to transfer data, and made the process more streamlined for people who need services in areas like Juneau, which are far from Anchorage offices.

CSS is the biggest provider of homelessness services in Anchorage and, with the improved quality of data, this is great news for statewide efforts to improve as well.

Ready to create lasting social change? Get in touch today.

See our solutions →

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