



Tech Tools for Child Welfare Virtual Casework

Free and low-cost software & technology solutions

Introduction

Child Welfare Departments across New York are faced with extraordinary challenges today because of restrictions related to Covid-19. Many counties have had to make major adjustments to casework practice and protocols to match quarantine requirements; have had to quickly develop telework or work-from-home policies for staff; and are now facing the financial fallout from county and state budget cuts. At the same time, local districts are having to manage layoffs, furloughs and unfunded or unfilled vacancies, which put a tremendous stress on the remaining staff to complete the work responsibilities of missing staff. Reduced numbers of staff must continue to meet the many state and federal requirements, even with increased caseloads.

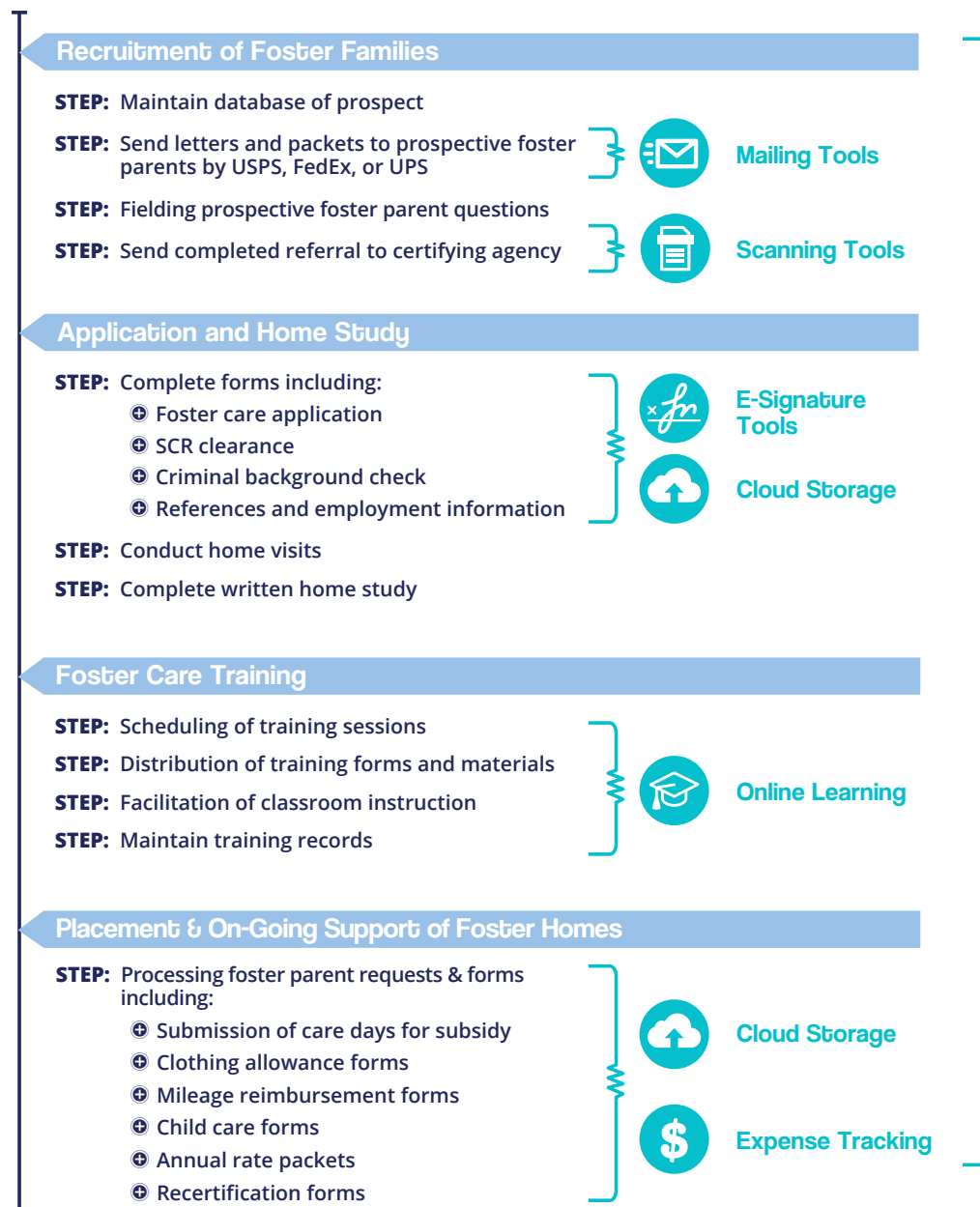
While these new challenges are real and difficult, they also represent an opportunity to improve child-welfare casework to be more efficient and client friendly.

The Redlich Horwitz Foundation recognizes that while there are large-scale technology solutions that would better support staff and families to make casework processes more efficient, undertaking a major technology upgrade can be time intensive and distracting from daily responsibilities, causing additional unnecessary burdens on staff during such challenging times.

This report features simple and easy technology solutions to ease challenges faced by a virtual workforce. It assists counties in developing new work processes that are not labor intensive, are free or low cost, and create efficiencies to maximize workers' time so they can better support the children and families on their caseloads.

Example Process: Foster Care Recruitment, Training & Licensing

Process



Foster Care Certification Software / Tools

Specialized foster care certification software often handles everything from recruitment to certification and licensing.

We Recommend:



Binti builds software and uses technology to re-invent foster care and adoption.

Technology Solutions for Foster Care Recruitment, Training and Licensing



ELECTRONIC SIGNATURE TOOLS reduce trips to and from the home and reduces the amount of time it takes to get forms completed and signed.



ONLINE TRAINING & REMOTE LEARNING TOOLS provide supports that foster parents can complete when it is convenient for them.



SPECIALIZED FOSTER CARE RECRUITMENT & LICENSING SOFTWARE will increase efficiency of home study process.



COLLABORATION TOOLS provide prospective foster parents with live progress tracking of licensing requirements completion, including a To-Do List accessible by any electronic device.

Example Process: Reviewing Foster Care Youth in Congregate Level Care

Process

Meeting Notification and Gathering Information

STEP: Set up meeting and notify required parties

STEP: Keep track of attendees and RSVP

STEP: Completion of review narrative or referral form

STEP: Collection of critical information on the child (reports, education, medical, assessments, etc.)

STEP: Distribute information to all parties for review



Scanning Tools



E-Signature Tools

Facilitating Meeting

STEP: Conduct meeting, take notes and review information

STEP: Make action commitments, discuss follow up actions (who, what, by when)



Collaboration Tools

Tracking Follow Up and Action Commitments

STEP: Send out summary of meeting to all parties

STEP: Parties share progress updates via email

STEP: Maintain a log of updates and progress on commitments

STEP: Document challenges encountered by team

STEP: Send out commitment update reminders



Collaboration Tools

Keeping Data and Tracking Progress

STEP: Maintain data & track:

- ⊕ Number of meetings held
- ⊕ Disparity information
- ⊕ Children stepped down or discharged
- ⊕ Reasons/issues youth still in level of care



Cloud Storage

Technology Solutions for Reviewing Foster Care Youth in Congregate Level Care



MOBILE SCANNING TOOLS easily share the critical documentation needed to help plan for children transitioning out of congregate care.



COLLABORATION TOOLS allow congregate review teams to share information, assign critical tasks, track accountability and progress, and share progress with the family. Additionally, these tools increase communication and allow all parties to stay in the loop in-between meetings, increasing productivity and making meetings more solution oriented rather than just updates.

*I WANT TO
GO HOME*



Example Process: Staff Expense and Mileage Reimbursement

Process

Staff Requesting Funds/Approvals

- STEP:** Accessing printed or digital forms, printing and filling them out
- STEP:** Submitting forms to supervisors for signature and approval
- STEP:** Notification sent back to staff



Cloud Storage

Staff Tracking Expenses and Mileage

- STEP:** Staff keep a copy of receipts
- STEP:** Staff verify mileage by maintaining travel logs, saving toll receipts, and map directions



Scanning Tools

Staff Completing Reimbursement Forms

- STEP:** Staff complete forms detailing all travel and expenses to submit to supervisor for review and approval
- STEP:** Forms must be signed and have copies of receipts and travel details attached



Cloud Storage



E-Signature Tools

Staff Submitting Reimbursement Forms

- STEP:** Supervisors sign and approve completed forms and send to finance for payment to staff



E-Signature Tools



Expense & Mileage Tracking

Expense & mileage tracking tools often handle everything from scanning, saving receipts logging travel, and creating reports.

We Recommend:



Expensify is an expense management system that creates approval and reimbursement workflows using GPS mileage logs, digitized scanned receipts, and by automatically generating reports.

Technology Solutions for Staff Expense and Mileage Reimbursement



EXPENSE & MILEAGE TRACKING TOOLS reduce time spent by staff completing travel reimbursement and mileage forms.



SCANNING TOOLS help staff collect and save receipts efficiently as well as copies of paperwork.



CLOUD STORAGE TOOLS help staff organize receipts reports, and forms and easily share them when submitting paperwork to supervisors.

Additional Ways Technology Can Increase Efficiency:



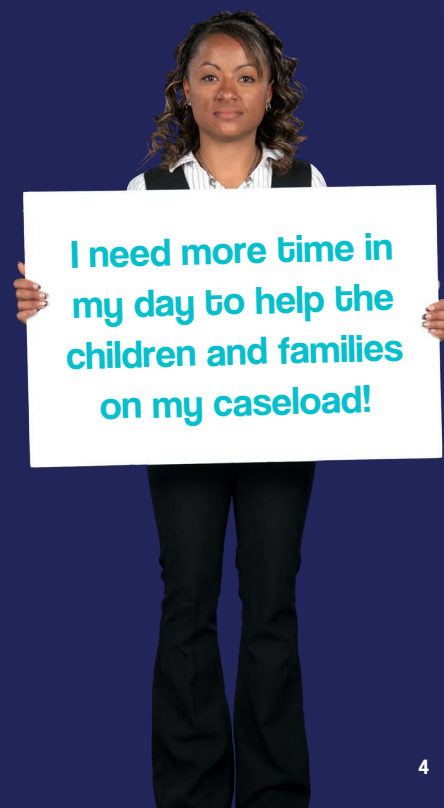
ELECTRONIC SIGNATURE TOOLS reduce number of trips to and from families homes to complete paperwork.



ONLINE TRAINING & LEARNING TOOLS provide flexible solutions for employees to participate and complete trainings without traveling to the office and allows better time utilization and efficient scheduling.



COLLABORATION TOOLS support a remote workforce and provide a space where staff can communicate and supervisors can assign tasks and track progress.



Identifying County's Specific Challenges

Methodology

The technology tool recommendations herein are gleaned from conversations held with three upstate counties - Monroe, Onondaga, and Erie – to identify key challenges faced by all counties during their certification, homefinding, and placement processes.

To best utilize this guide, we recommend all counties have the same conversations to identify key challenges to their certification, homefinding, and placement processes.

Current context within the counties:

1. There is huge variation in the combinations of devices and solutions in use by any staff member in any county at any one time, and most of these devices and solutions do not integrate with one another. As a result, web-based application recommendations will be the easiest to implement.
2. The counties are struggling to move to paperless processes.
3. The counties may need to work with the state to ensure integration between the state's VDI environment and the various conferencing tool solutions being implemented at the county level.
4. Cost is a factor.

Based on our conversations, we explored the following types of technology tools and services and how they could impact the processes of case workers and agencies:



Cloud Storage



E-signatures & Forms



Mailing



Collaboration & Project Management



Faxing



Mobile Scanning



Expense & Mileage Tracking



Foster Care Certification



Online Training & Learning



Supporting our foster and kin parents during these challenging times is more important than ever and we need to be quicker and more efficient in getting them what they need. Technology solutions can cut wait times in half and make all the difference to a child and family.

Tool Recommendations

The following tool recommendations are grouped into two workstreams:

1. Suggestions to support a mobile workforce and to utilize technology to increase productivity.
2. Suggestions for technology solutions that assist with improving foster parent certification.

Click on the icon below to jump to a specific category:



Cloud Storage



E-signatures & Forms



Mailing



Collaboration & Project Management



Faxing



Mobile Scanning



Expense & Mileage Tracking



Foster Care Certification



Online Training & Learning

Electronic Signature Tools

Electronic signature tools add trusted, legally binding e-signatures to any workflow and document, replacing the process of having to print it out, sign it, scan it, and send it back.

Top 3 recommendations:



Adobe Sign

Supports a paperless process?
Works across large variety of devices and operating systems?
Web-based option?
Cost Per User

YES
YES
YES
\$179.88/yr

LEARN MORE

DocuSign

YES
YES
YES
\$120/yr

LEARN MORE



HELLOSIGN

YES
YES
YES
\$180/yr

LEARN MORE

Scanning Tools

Scanning tools use devices with cameras to convert content into digital format by capturing images clearly, making the text searchable, and helping to save the finished files in the right places. These tools replace the process of using a physical scanning machine.

Top 3 recommendations:



Genius Scan

Supports a paperless process?
Works across large variety of devices and operating systems?
Web-based option?
Cost Per User

YES
NO: REQUIRES SMARTPHONE WITH CAMERA
NO
FREE VERSION

LEARN MORE



Adobe Scan

YES
NO: REQUIRES SMARTPHONE WITH CAMERA
NO
FREE VERSION

LEARN MORE



ScanPro App

YES
NO: REQUIRES SMARTPHONE WITH CAMERA
NO
FREE VERSION

LEARN MORE

Collaboration & Project Management Tools

Collaboration tools help people get work done together by emphasizing productivity and teamwork, and replace collaboration through popping into someone's office, sending multiple emails, and leaving voicemails.

Top 3 recommendations:

			
Supports a paperless process?	YES	YES	YES
Works across large variety of devices and operating systems?	YES	YES	YES
Web-based option?	YES	YES	YES
Cost Per User	FREE VERSION	FREE VERSION	FREE VERSION
	LEARN MORE	LEARN MORE	LEARN MORE

Expense & Mileage Tracking Tools

Expense and mileage tracking tools facilitate accurate reimbursement tracking and have the capability to work within an organization's established financial systems. These tools replace hand tracked expenses and mileage estimates.

Top 3 recommendations:

			
Supports a paperless process?	YES	YES	YES
Works across large variety of devices and operating systems?	NO Camera Required	NO Camera Required	NO Camera Required
Web-based option?	YES	YES	YES
Cost Per User	\$8 / MONTH	\$5 / MONTH	\$5 / MONTH
	LEARN MORE	LEARN MORE	LEARN MORE



Many case workers can spend up to a day a month just completing expense forms to get back money they spent doing their job... often they lose receipts, and it comes out of their own pocket. There must be a better way to be reduce the time spent by case workers so they can focus on their families, and ensure that they are fully reimbursed for the money they spend doing their job.

Faxing Tools

Faxing tools provide a fax number for sending and receiving faxes through a web portal, replacing the process of using a physical fax machine and a dedicated landline.

Top 3 recommendations:

	 FAX.PLUS	 HELLOFAX	 faxZERO[®].com
Supports a paperless process?	YES	YES	YES
Works across large variety of devices and operating systems?	YES	NO Not Mobile Friendly	NO Not Mobile Friendly
Web-based option?	YES	YES	YES
Cost Per User	FREE VERSION	FREE VERSION	FREE VERSION
	LEARN MORE	LEARN MORE	LEARN MORE

Mailing Tools

Mailing tools print and mail letters, replacing the process of staff printing and mailing letters from office-based mail rooms.

Top 3 recommendations:

	 PostalMethods	 switch	 LETTER HUB
Supports a paperless process?	YES	YES	YES
Works across large variety of devices and operating systems?	YES	YES	YES
Web-based option?	YES	YES	YES
BASE PRICE	\$1.02 / LETTER	\$1.29 / LETTER	\$1.00 / LETTER
	LEARN MORE	LEARN MORE	LEARN MORE

Cloud Storage Tools

Cloud storage tools facilitate access to all files from any device and secure storage and replace storage on physical servers.

Top 2 Recommendations:

	 OneDrive	 Google Drive
Supports a paperless process?	YES	YES
Works across large variety of devices and operating systems?	YES	YES
Web-based option?	YES	YES
Cost Per User	FREE VERSION	FREE VERSION
	LEARN MORE	LEARN MORE

Online Training Tools & Learning Platforms

Online learning platforms facilitate the creation, storage, and controlled access to web-based employee training courses and content and replaces in-person classroom training and printed training materials. These recommendations assume that counties already know that most paid conferencing tool accounts provide the ability to record meetings and offer limited storage capacity – usually around 1 GB.

Top 3 recommendations:

			
Supports a paperless process?	YES	YES	YES
Works across large variety of devices and operating systems?	YES	YES	YES
Web-based option?	YES	YES	YES
Cost Per User	See Website	See Website	See Website
	LEARN MORE	LEARN MORE	LEARN MORE

Foster Family Certification Tools

Foster family certification tools facilitate the web-based recruitment and certification of foster and adoptive parents, and replaces in-person, paper-based, and manual tracking processes.

Top 2 Recommendations:

		
Supports a paperless process?	YES	YES
Works across large variety of devices and operating systems?	YES	YES
Web-based option?	YES	YES
Cost Per User	See Website	\$29
	LEARN MORE	LEARN MORE



Reviewing youth in care requires the coordination of a lot of people who have critical tasks that need to be done to assist getting kids out of placement or in the right placement. It is imperative that systems begin using technology to increase effective communication and accountability so that children do not stay in unnecessary levels of placement a day longer than they need to.

About the Redlich Horwitz Foundation

The Foundation believes children do best when they are raised by their families of origin, where they have a strong sense of love, belonging and community. We believe children should remain with their families whenever possible, and that all caregivers—birth, foster and kinship—should have access to the same types and levels of support, including financial, programmatic, and therapeutic.

Every child who must enter foster care should live with a well-supported family—preferably with kin relatives or someone they know—and should leave foster care to a stable, permanent family as soon as is safe. While short-term residential placement is a necessary part of the continuum of care for some high-needs children, it is rarely an effective long-term solution. When we value our foster and kinship parents as the heroes they are, and provide the financial and therapeutic services they need to care for children who have experienced trauma, we will not have a system dependent on institutionalizing children, and families will be able to reunite and thrive.

The Foundation works to accelerate change by partnering with county and state leaders, the courts, nonprofits, foundations and grassroots advocates. We seek to improve practice and policy in support of increasing preventive services, reducing residential placements through kin-first practices, improving supports for all foster families, increasing community-based services for children and families, and implementing other strategies proven to keep families safely together or expedite the path to permanency.

