

In early 2006, the NYS Legislature and the NYS Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) initiated a pilot program to test how portable information technology could be used in child protective services (CPS) casework. The pilot program was aimed at evaluating whether such devices facilitate increased efficiency and effectiveness in CPS investigations. The portable information technology project included three successive efforts, the **NYS Portable Information Technology Pilot (2006)**, The **Extended Pilot in New York City's Administration for Children Services(2007)**, and the **Demonstration Project in 23 NYS Local Departments of Social Services (2008)**. This report focuses on the **Demonstration Project**.

The **Demonstration Project** was a collaborative effort among the NYS Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS), 23 NYS Local Departments of Social Services (DSS), and the Center for Technology in Government (CTG) at the University at Albany. The focus of this effort was to learn more about the conditions and efforts needed to deploy mobile technologies statewide, as well as to investigate the impacts on CPS work and work processes.

The **Demonstration Project** was administered differently from the first two mobile technology efforts. In this effort, districts were asked to submit proposals to OCFS for mobile technology funding. OCFS then selected districts and centrally procured the devices. OCFS led the statewide deployment with some assistance from the districts. Local connectivity contracts were under the purview of the districts to select and procure, as well as training and selecting CPS staff to participate. CTG conducted an independent assessment of the use of the technology within and across the districts .

The focus of the assessment for the **Demonstration Project** was to learn how mobile technology affects CPS caseworker productivity, mobility and satisfaction. The following categories frame the core areas of investigation:

- **Efficiency/ Productivity** - measured by factors such as changes in number and timeliness of documentation (i.e., progress notes, safety assessments), change in the number of cases closed, and reports of ability to use time differently and/or more effectively.
- **Types and Locations of Work** - the types of work activities the laptop computers were used for and where they were being used most frequently. It also contains investigation of barriers/issues encountered by CPS workers in specific locations.
- **Effect on Current Work Practices and Policies** - how work practices changed with the introduction of technology and how policies and management practices may impede or promote the use of laptops.
- **Overall Opinion and Satisfaction** - effect of laptop use on workers' overall job satisfaction, work-related stress levels, and satisfaction with using the laptop, including willingness to recommend the laptops to other CPS workers.

The mobile device deployment started in late-October 2007 and was completed by mid-December 2007. For the assessment, 464 Dell Latitude D620 laptops and 53 HP Compaq tc4400 Tablets (see Appendix A for device specifications) were deployed to 484 CPS staff in 20 local districts throughout New York State (see Appendix B for table of districts, technology, and participation). It is important to note that all access to the State network was through a virtual private network (VPN) that secures the transmission to and from the portable device and the network.

All of the districts participated in at least three of the four data collection activities 1) online surveys, 2) data analysis from CONNECTIONS (central child welfare information system), 3) district teleconferences, and 4) district questionnaires (see Appendix C for data collection methods, tools, counts, and response rates and Appendix D for summary of the district teleconferences). Official data collection time lines for each of the districts started from the date of deployment and ended on January 9, 2008.

Of the original 23 local districts that obtained funding for mobile technologies, 20 were able to successfully deploy and participate in the assessment. As such, individual profiles for each of the 20 districts detail their assessments findings (at the end of this report are profiles for the participating districts). Subsequently, since not all districts were able to deploy in time, assessments for Westchester County Department of Social Services, New York City's Administration for Children Services, and Erie County Department of Social Services were not conducted and are not reported in the profiles.