eWiSACWIS Communications Audit

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Background

An outcome of the eWiSACWIS end user site visits conducted in July and August 2005 was to conduct a Communications Audit focusing on the information flow between the eWiSACWIS technical staff and end users in four key communication scenarios: day-to-day inquiries, new releases, new users and system outages. In addition, the readability of system generated documents was assessed. This report outlines the audit findings (see Communication Audit Plan for details).

Key Findings and Recommendations

Key Findings

- The responsibility for communication is decentralized; there is no explicit communication lead or individual with communications expertise.
- Communication to front-line staff is largely dependent upon supervisors.
- Email list management (outside of system-generated communication) is a decentralized and manual process.
- Communication is geared toward super-users and technical staff.
- Communication focuses primarily on responding to system issues, but in order for users to be effective in their positions, they also need to understand the policy.
- Communication is event-driven and reactive.
- It is important to continue to deliver information through multiple channels due to the diversity of users.
- In-person, face-to-face communication by both county and state staff is perceived as high value; it is the preferred method of getting inquiries resolved and receiving training.
- The credibility of communication increases when the source of the communication is closest to the user.
- The readability of system-generated documents is not effective for end users including county staff, clients and judges.

Recommendations

- Identify a communication lead to coordinate a multi-channel communication program on an ongoing basis.
- Move toward an automated, user-driven communication model, based on a users' role, security profile and individual needs.

- Structure communication to provide “need to know” information first. “Nice to know” information should be offered as an optional link or positioned further down the message.
- Identify web metrics to monitor online resources to better understand user behavior and measure progress in enhancing the ease of use of the communication resources.
- Develop online resources that are user focused.
- Schedule and deliver refresher training and system updates on an ongoing basis.
- Support workers need to understand both the policy and the system.
- Use face-to-face communication (e.g., in-person training) to deliver high value communication and reinforce written and online communication.
- Leverage the credibility of county technical staff, super users and county contacts.
- Establish a team and a process to revise system generated documents to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of end users while achieving program objectives.
- Consider alternative communication tools as new options arise and needs change.