



STREAMLINED HCM PROCESSES

Make Life Easier for Employees and Administrators at the Community Mental Health Authority of Clinton, Eaton and Ingham Counties

The Community Mental Health Authority – Clinton, Eaton and Ingham Counties (CMHA-CEI) in Michigan provides mental health and substance abuse services to the community's residents. Its more than 1,000 staff range from medical and clinical personnel to clinical services employees, administrative teams, technical teams and more.

With aging legacy systems and numerous paper-based processes, the CMHA-CEI leadership team recognized the need to undertake a transformation. The organization's future state solution needed to support a complex environment for timesheets, payroll, absences and benefits due to its large workforce, with five collective bargaining agreements (CBAs), and its reliance on multiple funding sources. Amid the unprecedented challenges of the pandemic and transitioning 60 percent of the workforce to remote work, organization leaders embarked on an ambitious overhaul of CMHA-CEI's human capital management (HCM) systems to address these and other issues.

Eliminating Paper-based Processes

Sharon Blizzard, Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO) for CMHA-CEI, describes the organization's paper-based payroll process. "More than 1,000 staff members were completing paper timesheets, which were then approved by their managers and forwarded to the payroll office for manual data entry — biweekly," she says. Performance evaluations, absence management and longevity bonus calculations were also manual, paper-based processes.

The nearly 20-year-old legacy HCM software did not integrate internal HR processes or coordinate well with finance, making it time consuming to manage leaves and validate balances.

"We worried every time something went wrong. If the system failed, it would have put us at risk of having to deploy business continuity plans to pay staff, suppliers and providers," says the organization's chief financial officer (CFO).

Requirements: The Right Technology and the Right Relationships

To begin, CMHA-CEI leaders developed an extensive requirements list and went through a full RFP process before choosing Oracle's HCM, ERP and EPM SaaS solutions.

"We were eager to improve business performance, make employees' jobs easier, standardize business operations and have better integration with our systems across the agency," says Blizzard.

Built-in best practices, workflow automation, a secure system of record with disaster recovery capabilities, room to grow and technical support were critical differentiators for the project team — as was cloud-based software.

"Oracle is an international software developer, so we were quite confident that its cloud-based software would be more secure than anything we could possibly house on premises," explains the CFO.

To implement the Oracle system, the project team selected Metaformers.

"This is a once-in-a-career initiative and the most expensive software we have ever purchased," says Blizzard. "Metaformers' approach best aligns with our vision. They also have a strong cultural alignment with CMHA-CEI in terms of diversity, equity and inclusion. Over time, they've proven that they're absolutely committed to getting us where we need to be."

Saving Time, Reducing Errors, Simplifying Compliance

The Oracle HCM solution connects every human resource process in the employee life cycle. It includes modules for workforce planning, recruiting, talent management, time tracking, payroll and more.

Blizzard says: "Hats off to our team and Metaformers for their tenacity, patience, grace and creativity."

With the teams' skills and effort, the department has already launched payroll, recruitment, benefits, absence management, grievance and discipline management, position management and employee performance management, with more coming in later phases.

Cloud-based connectivity enables employees and administrative staff to perform HCM-related tasks from virtually anywhere, which has become essential now that the organization plans to continue with a hybrid onsite/offsite work model for some employees. Policy-driven processing simplifies the management of CBAs and other agreements, while a single underlying data model and system of record ensure information is both current and accurate.

The Payroll Journey

With the new system, verifying and approving timesheets, applying time and labor rules properly, and performing other payroll processes is more convenient and efficient. Employees can now access and submit timesheets through their personal phones. The automated online process has eliminated 1,000 paper timesheets that had to be touched three times and required manual data entry. The system verifies the timesheets and also ensures time and labor rules are applied consistently.

"By reducing the paper-driven process and related administrative functions, we've decreased the payroll turnaround cycle tremendously," says Blizzard.

Rules engine simplifies absence management and compliance

The solution's configurable rules engine has also made it much easier to manage leaves and other absences. Blizzard adds: "CMHA-CEI has five different collective bargaining agreements and a non-represented group, and we probably have more time and labor rules than you will find with any other organization. The system automatically applies rules for the various groups, which has been very helpful."

Another advantage is that Oracle regularly updates the system's rules as federal legislation (e.g., Fair Labor Standards Act) related to payroll, timekeeping and other details change.

Automated recruitment processes save time

Automatic notifications, prompts and guidance have made recruitment processes easier and more effective for the hiring team. An HR leader from the organization says, "As a hiring manager, it's great to be able to just sit in front of my computer and have the notifications that I need right there. I can log in from home and quickly see every applicant, and there are prompts and guidance for how to work through the hiring process. That is going to save a lot of time as HR managers learn about the system and all its capabilities."

Self-service is a win for employees and managers

Besides time savings and other efficiencies, self-service access to employee data is an important win for both managers and employees. Employees can more easily access personnel and employment data, which creates a greater sense of transparency, autonomy and control, and saves employees from having to schedule time with management to review information.

Looking Forward to the Future

Undertaking a system overhaul of this magnitude is an intricate and sometimes overwhelming project under the best of circumstances. COVID-19 and a shift of 60 percent of employees to remote work made change management even more challenging for the project team. Despite a significant learning curve, the project team has remained positive and anticipates adding data analytics and other functions as time allows.

In the meantime, the team is looking forward to open enrollment later in the year. "Before the Oracle solution, the benefits process was totally manual. In November, the biggest challenge will be getting people to understand what they're seeing, but the end result will be a much smoother open enrollment period for our employees," Blizzard says. And in the end, making life easier for CMHA-CEI employees is an organizational goal.

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