Introduction

The prevalence of child abuse and neglect is a major problem in Germany. An estimated three children die in Germany each week from the effects of physical abuse, according to Germany’s Federal Criminal Police Office, and many cases go unreported. Experts in child protection at the Koblenz University of Applied Sciences state that for each victim of abuse recorded in official statistics, there are another five that are not recorded.

Overview

The need
Government agencies (Jugendämter – Youth Welfare offices) in Hamburg, Germany sought to improve speed, efficiency, transparency and collaboration in handling allegations and managing cases of child abuse and neglect.

The solution
IBM® Watson Health™ provided integrated case and social program management functionality supporting end-to-end processes to help unify critical data, streamline client intake and case management, and improve organizational effectiveness and communication.

The benefit
The implemented system, called JUS-IT, has enabled more standardized and controllable processes and workflow for social workers, better management oversight of social worker processes, greater cooperation between child welfare and police authorities, and improved adherence to regulations.

Hamburg Authority of Labour, Family and Integration

IBM Watson Health helps Hamburg government improve interdepartmental connectivity to safeguard children and families.
Change needed to better protect and serve

In the City of Hamburg (also a federal state of Germany), the responsibility of protecting this vulnerable population falls to the seven local Jugendämter (Youth Welfare offices) in the seven districts of Hamburg, with approximately 40 local agencies and two special organization units for the whole city area. The Hamburg Authority of Labour, Family and Integration (Hamburger Behörde für Arbeit, Soziales, Familie und Integration [BASFI]) is responsible for the definition and monitoring of the policies and provides the financial and technical resources for the local agencies.

To better serve the needs of the region’s abused and neglected youth, the City of Hamburg wanted to drastically improve the processes for client intake and case management, as well as overall organizational effectiveness and communication. Specific business needs included:

- **Improved speed and efficiency:** Social workers received police reports containing allegations of child abuse and neglect by fax — a process that was often slow and difficult to manage.
- **Enhanced collaboration:** Existing systems did not adequately support the timely communication of case data and insights among various district and specialist authorities.
- **Data integration:** Multiple legacy systems were in use that did not communicate effectively with one another, leaving a gap in critical information.

Customized solution designed and deployed

To address these challenges, the organization partnered with IBM Watson Health to design and deploy an outcomes-based solution that would help standardize processes and automate workflows. The result was JUS-IT, a business application based upon the IBM solution for Child Welfare, which includes components for social program management, support, verification, provider management, social enterprise collaboration and appeals.

The solution was implemented in two stages over four years:

- In Stage 1, standards for the JUS-IT solution were determined and IBM Watson Health modules were deployed for general social services, including foster care, nursing care services and youth welfare financial expenditures. An interface between JUS-IT and SAP enables all expenses and claims for youth services to be fully settled.
- In Stage 2, BASFI’s inventory procedure system PROJUGA was replaced by additional IBM Watson Health modules to support the areas of alimony, custody, guardianship, maternity leave and juvenile court assistance.

JUS-IT provides the local and special agencies of youth and family welfare with extensive integrated case management capabilities, allowing them to better document their interactions with children and families as well as information related to services, contacts, worker visits and judicial processes. Case workers can easily view and manage the information they need to help clients. And because rules and regulations frequently change, the ability to submit electronic rather than paper files helps BASFI improve its regulatory compliance.

The solution also enables better collaboration between case workers and departments across multiple agencies. The social workers can access a single application that supports the full range of case activities — from the point of initial receipt of an allegation or other contact through to a final conclusion of reunification, adoption or independent living. For example, when a child neglect allegation is made, the details of the initial intake assessment immediately lead to the creation of a child protection case. Supporting information, such as police reports, is imported directly from the police department into the system and forwarded to the appropriate department for processing. The system is then used on an ongoing basis to manage all aspects of the child protection process, leading to greater system efficiency and helping ensure that children are put first.
Using IBM® Watson Health™ Workflow Management, BASFI defines and maintains workflows to ensure that best practices are followed and to improve the speed, consistency and quality of their business processes. For example, when a child protection case is raised, a workflow is set in motion that automatically alerts a supervisor if the case has not been selected from the work queue by a case worker within 24 hours. This ensures that serious child protection issues are dealt with promptly. Other business-critical workflows manage the handling of cases from initial task assignment right through to case closure and conclusion, as well as the automatic generation of letters and case correspondence. JUS-IT is also fully integrated with Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg’s existing financial systems, and an interface to the CareCost-Manager supports the settlement of medical services.

Results benefiting workers and clients

By enabling multidisciplinary collaboration and innovation, the JUS-IT solution is helping the Jugendämter and police authorities make informed decisions as they interact with children at risk of harm and families in crisis. Implementation has resulted in a significant decrease in time required to bi-directionally exchange data between social workers and police. Since BASFI first implemented JUS-IT, it has seen over a 60 percent increase in cases processed over five years compared to the legacy system.

Today, the JUS-IT system is fully operational with 1,300 users, more than 200,000 cases — about half of which are in active status — more than 370,000 clients and approximately 50,000 transactions processed per month. Ongoing enhancements continue to be made to the system in an effort to further streamline processes and increase efficiency in the end-to-end management of Hamburg’s youth welfare services.

For more information

Visit ibm.com/watson-health/government
Notes

1 Luyken, J. Three children are killed every week in Germany. The Local de. Jun 1, 2016. Available at https://www.thelocal.de/20160601/three-children-are-killed-every-week-in-germany-police.


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