

## CSAC 2018 Executive Summary

**Program Title:** Electronic System (JELS) to Distribute Court Documents

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**Overview-** Child Welfare Services (CWS) developed a system to distribute electronic court reports to eliminate waste, reduce travel and improve delivery time.

**Challenge-** In December 2017, there were 2,842 dependent children and non-minor dependents active to Child Welfare Services (CWS). At a minimum, each child would have four court hearings during the first year of dependency and two hearings in subsequent years. CWS submits approximately 1,200 court reports and other documents per month to the Juvenile Court. Before we implemented JELS, CWS prepared copies and distributed all documents through the County Mail system or by hand delivery. One court report for one child with two parents requires 10 copies. The Welfare and Institutions Code (WIC) requires all court reports to be filed in the Juvenile Court 10 days before the court hearing. The timely and accurate distribution of all documents from eight CWS regional offices to three Courthouse locations, five law firms and any other entities involved, is challenging and often resulted in late and/or missing court reports. Unsuccessful delivery of court reports can result in continued court hearings, delays in critical information being unavailable to all parties, and affect the reunification of children with their parents, families and communities.

**Innovative Solution-** The County of San Diego HHSA, CWS has developed a SharePoint site that efficiently distributes court reports electronically and is accessible and user-friendly for staff and stakeholders. JELS distributes court reports and other documents electronically to separate, secure JELS stakeholder sites including: County Counsel, Dependency Legal Services, Children's Legal Services, and Voices for Children Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA). The documents are electronically distributed to each stakeholder site simultaneously and time stamped allowing each party to see when the documents are received. By interfacing with the Superior Court Juvenile Dependency Data System, JELS receives notification of which parties are entitled to a report. JELS then distributes the reports electronically, eliminating the need for CWS workers to research and determine this information. JELS also keeps an electronic copy of each CWS report and Minute

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Order in its “vault” for future use. Authorized parties can retrieve and view court documents in preparation for any subsequent hearing.

**Originality-** The primary goals of CWS are safety, permanency and well-being for children. To carry out those goals, CWS works with and relies on a legal system that supports the protection of children and their families. Several County departments and juvenile justice partners now use JELS, including the Probation Department, the District Attorney’s Office, the Public Defender, the Alternative Public Defender, Optum Health and the County of San Diego Office of County Counsel..

**Cost Effectiveness-** The JELS infrastructure is already in the County’s operating budget but additional costs for CWS to utilize the system costs the County \$215,000 per year with \$93,923 of that specifically for CWS. CWS estimates that each office spends at least two hours per day processing, distributing, and driving reports to court. JELS eliminates the costs of paper, printing and staff time saving approximately \$256,000 annually.

**Results-** The long-term goal of JELS is to eliminate the use of paper copies of court reports altogether, reduce waste and print costs, avoid delays in court hearing, and allow critical information to be available to all parties in a timely manner, ultimately reducing delays in reuniting children with their parents. This aligns with the County’s *Live Well San Diego* vision by ensuring that children and families receive efficient and accurate services that protect and support well-being. CWS staff and stakeholders note that the system allows them to focus time, energy and resources on more meaningful duties, such as working with children, families and community.

**Supporting Materials:** JELS Distribution Diagram (attached)