Modernization Efforts in UI Appeals

2015 National Association of Unemployment Appeals Insurance Professionals

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Features Of A Modern System

- Customization – configure your system to best suit your organization

- Communication – keep all users apprised of pertinent information without interrupting their day-to-day activities

- Accountability – hold your staff responsible for knowing their job functions and their actions

Features Of A Modern System

- Consolidation – multiple independent scheduling functions being located in a single screen

- Planning – immediately take action to handle future events

- Internal Validations – ensure the system functions as it was originally intended

- Reports – predict, react, and adjust how you run your division based on trend analysis

Appeals Scheduler Overview

- The Connecticut Appeals Scheduling system is a robust, web-based program that allows for the centralized scheduling, maintenance, and monitoring of unemployment appeal hearings.

- The system is designed as a relationship database that evaluates multiple factors when assigning unemployment appeal hearings to the appropriate hearing officer.

Background

- 2009: SBR awarded to Connecticut in the amount of $3 million.
- 2009 – 2013: Requirements gathering and system design.
- 2013 – 2014: System construction and testing.

- September 2014 : Appeals Scheduler went live
- November 2014 – March 2015: Training and pilot program
- March 2015: Division-wide implementation

Customization

- The ability to configure the system to mirror your organization's goals, both short term and long term, through the modification of multiple variables.

- Customization and configurability extends the product life cycle of your system through the removal of hard coding scheduling requirements.

Sub-Issue Customization

Sub Issue Code	Sub Issue Name
00	GENERAL
01	PERSONAL REASONS
02	MEDICAL / HEALTH REASONS
03	QUIT TO RELOCATE
04	QUIT TO CARE
05	QUIT DUE TO LOSS OF PERSONAL TRANSPORTATION
06	TRAILING SPOUSE / MILITARY SPOUSE
07	DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
08	COMPELLING ECONOMIC NECESSITY
09	QUIT DUE TO HARRASSMENT
10	GENERAL
11	GENERAL
12	TRIAL PERIOD QUIT
13	CHANGE IN HOURS, WAGES, OR WORK CONDITIONS
14	QUIT TO ACCEPT ANOTHER JOB
20	POOR PERFORMANCE / NEGLIGENCE
21	ABSENTEEISM
22	TARDINESS
23	RULE VIOLATION / VIOLATION OF COMPANY POLICY
24	DELIBERATE MISCONDUCT
25	LARCENY
26	FELONIOUS CONDUCT
27	LOSS OF OCCUPATIONAL LICENSE
28	FALSIFICATION OF JOB APPLICATION
29	ALCOHOLISM / SUBSTANCE ABUSE
30	LEAVING WORK EARLY

- A method of streamlining an appeal hearing by focusing the referee on the specific reason for separation.

- Two-digit representation later used to link an issue code with a sub-issue code.

- List is fully editable, allowing for the addition or subtraction of sub-issues based on trend analysis.
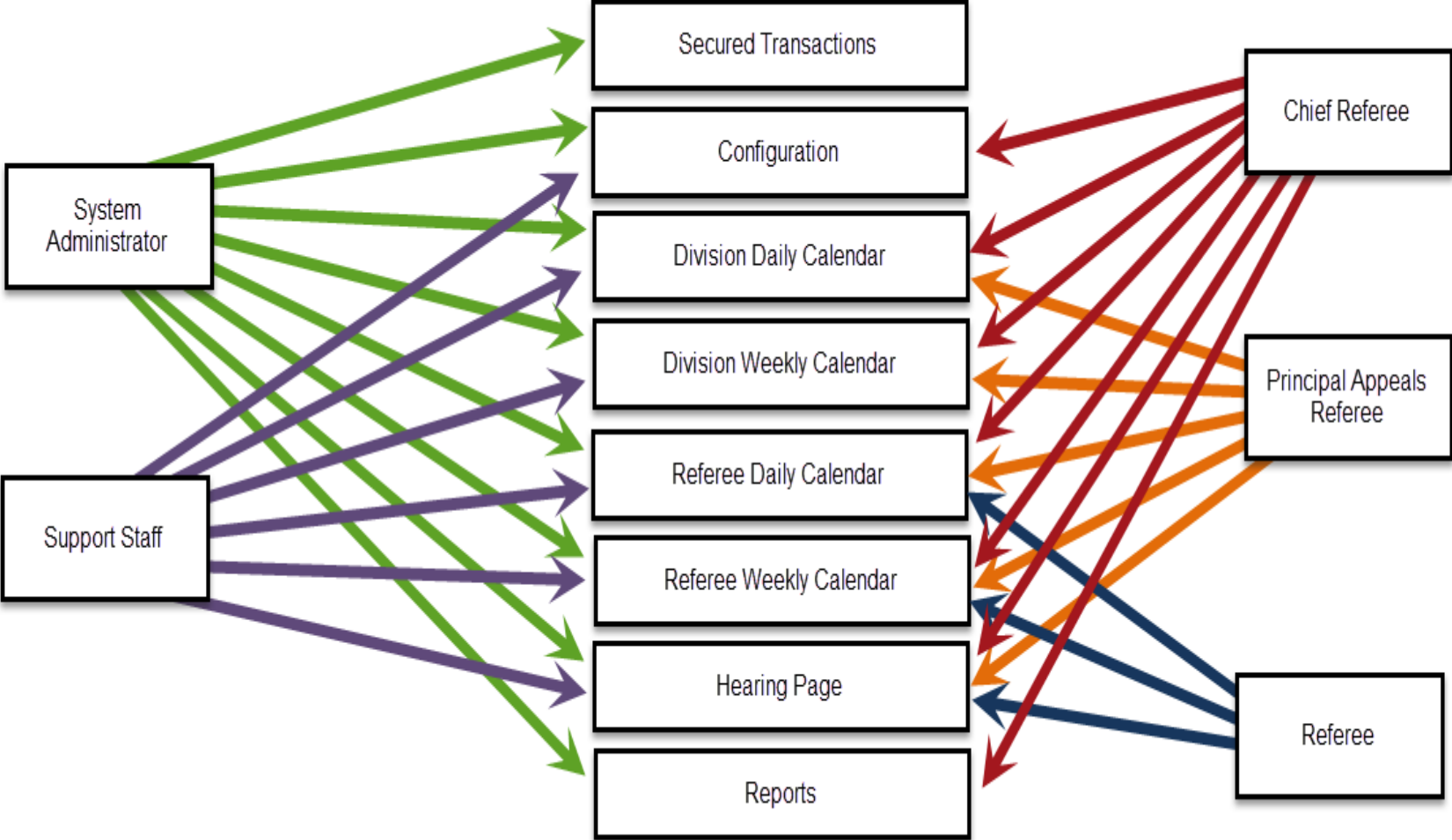
Issue/Sub-Issue Customization

- Minimum Skill Level
  - Three levels defined by experience
    - 0 – 6 months;
    - 6 months – 2 years; and
    - 2+ years
- Minimum Notice Period
  - Ranges from 5 days to 30 days
- Hearing Duration 1, 2, and 3
  - HD 1: Claimant v. employer
  - HD 2: Foreign language
  - HD 3: Legal representation
- Default Hearing Times
  - Ranges from 30 minutes to 90 minutes

Add New Issue Combination ✕

Issue Code
-----Please Select----- ▼

Sub Issue Code
-----Please Select----- ▼

Minimum Skill
◉ A
○ B
○ C

Minimum Notice
5 ▼

Hearing Duration 1
45 ▼

Hearing Duration 2
45 ▼

Hearing Duration 3
45 ▼

Auto Schedule
☑ Auto Schedule

Status
◉ Active
○ Inactive

Cancel   Save

Customization Through Role-Based Access

User Customization

- Role
  - Defines the user's capacity within the system
- Skill Level
  - Three levels defined by experience
    - 0 – 6 months;
    - 6 months – 2 years; and
    - 2+ years
- Office Assignment
- Number of Hearings Per Day
  - Ranges from 0 to 12
- Number of Hearings Per Week
  - Ranges from 12 to 36
- Maximum Number of Sub-Issues per Hearing
  - Ranges from 1 to 6

Work Schedule Customization

- Weekly Calendar
  - Work Start/End
  - Hearing Start/End
  - Lunch Start/End
- Duration of Calendar
  - Can be 1 day or 365 days
- Reason for Creating Calendar
  - Allows for categorization of schedule for historical records and sorting
- Default Calendar or Temporary Calendar

Communication

- System is designed to automatically send email notifications to all appropriate users when activity occurs with their particular hearing(s).

- Movement away from the hand-written notes and methods of communication that have repeatedly proven themselves to be areas of concern.

Communication

- System will notify all necessary Appeals Division individuals when a case is postponed, continued, withdrawn, or reassigned.

- System will automatically clear out/open up space on a referee's calendar when a hearing is postponed, continued, withdrawn or reassigned.

- Continued:

From:	DOLLogin@ct.gov
To:	Parico, Nicholas; Sledge, Kathy
Cc:	
Subject:	Hearing is Continued for Case No. 0412-AA-15

0412-AA-15 has been continued to the following date: 04/09/2015 at 02:00 PM for the duration of 90 minutes.

- Postponed:

From:	DOLLogin@ct.gov
To:	Parico, Nicholas; Sledge, Kathy
Cc:	
Subject:	Hearing is Postponed but not scheduled for Case No. 0280-AA-15

0280-AA-15 has been postponed. No new hearing date has been set.

- Withdrawn:

From:	DOLLogin@ct.gov
To:	Parico, Nicholas; Sledge, Kathy
Cc:	
Subject:	Hearing is Withdrawn for Case No. 3612-AA-14

3612-AA-14 has been withdrawn.

Communication

- System allows all users to record notes and comments within a specific hearing file.
  - Notes and comments are internal to the Appeals Division and do not get printed on any hearing notices or externally pointing communiqué.
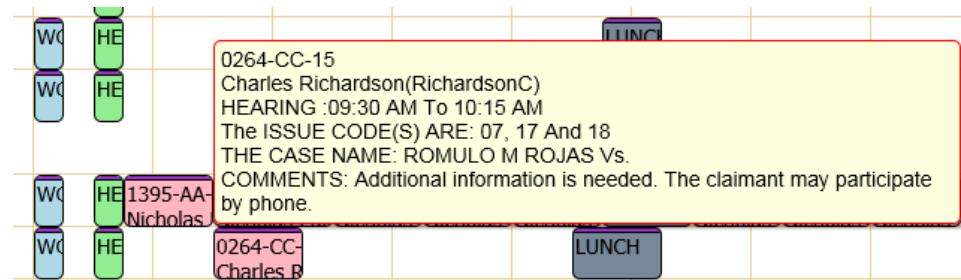
  - Allows users to keep notes that may not appear in hand-written documentation, e.g., a prohibition on additional postponements or available dates for continuance.

Accountability

- Any change to the status of a hearing, from the initial scheduling through issuing a decision, is permanently recorded within the system.

Date	User	Changes
2015-05-15	Nicholas Parico	· Changed Status from Continued To Scheduled. · Changed Status Date from 5/15/2015 To 5/15/2015. · Changed Hearing Date from 4/7/2015 To 6/2/2015. · Changed Hearing Time from 13:15:00 To 09:30:00. · Changed Hearing Duration from 75 To 45.
2015-05-15	Charles Richardson	· Changed Status Date from 3/19/2015 To 5/15/2015.
2015-05-15	Charles Richardson	· Added Issue(07) AVAILABILITY FOR WORK. · Added SubIssue(56)-ALIEN.
2015-03-19	Charles Richardson	· Changed Status from Scheduled To Continued. · Changed Status Date from 3/5/2015 To 3/19/2015. · Changed Hearing Date from 3/19/2015 To 4/7/2015. · Changed Hearing Time from 11:45:00 To 13:15:00. · Changed Hearing Duration from 45 To 75.
2015-03-05	Elizabeth Faircloth	· Row Created

Accountability

- The system's ability to maintain a historical log of all hearing-related activity means the staff can be held accountable for their actions.
- System removes the ability to "finger point" or avoid responsibility.
- System provides a starting point in a "worst case scenario" where an entire file disappears or the content of a file goes missing.

Consolidation

- The consolidation of multiple internal functions into one fixed location promotes efficiency and expediency in the scheduling process.

    ▫ All scheduling capabilities now reside in a single location.
    ▫ All case search capabilities now reside in a single location.

Scheduling Consolidation

Old System	Current System

Old System

- From initial scheduling through final decision, a single hearing can require anywhere from 1 to 6 screens to schedule and complete.

- Scheduling requires constant floating between multiple screens to ensure all required information is properly inputted.

Current System

- Approximately 90% of appeal hearings require 1 screen for scheduling and completion.

Hearing Search Consolidation

- Basic information regarding any **<u>scheduled</u>** case can be found by using one page rather than cross-reference multiple pages.

Hearing Search

SSN		**Claimant First Name**		**Claimant Last Name**
ERN		**Employer Name**		**IBM Case #**
Referee	Please Select....	**Hearing Date**		

Search   RESET

Planning

- Modern systems permit users to block out pre-scheduled events - meetings, vacations, holidays, etc. - so that no cases are scheduled in those time slots.

- Regardless of when the event is scheduled to take place within a calendar year, you can address it (or plan for it) immediately.

Planning Through "Blocks"

- Blocks are the primary method for preventing the scheduling of hearings at specific times.

- User can create a block that lists the reason why a hearing officer is not being scheduled.

- Provides historical records that allow management to track trends within each office or for each hearing officer.

LUNCH

DOCTOR'S APPOINTMENT
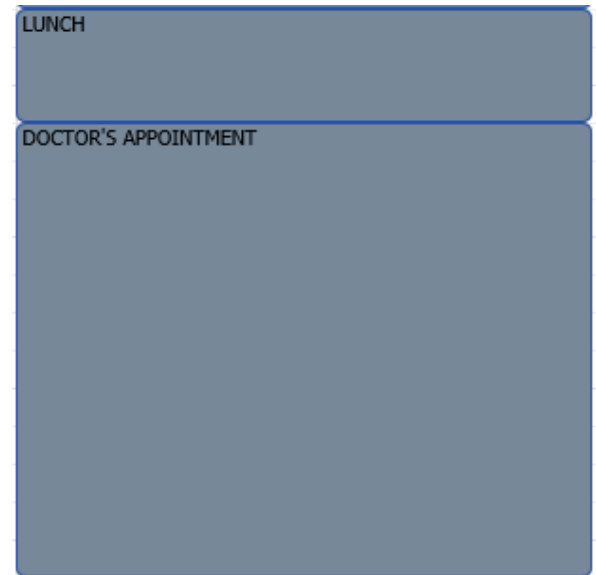
Planning Through Continuances

- System allows for a case to be continued immediately or held in abeyance.

- Cases can be continued by both the secretarial staff and the hearing officer.

- Fields that can be manipulated for planning purposes
  - Date
  - Hearing Duration
  - Hearing Method
  - Hearing Officer
  - Location

Internal Validations

- Many "older" systems currently being used to schedule unemployment appeal hearings have minimal internal validations, which results in improper or inaccurate scheduling.

- Modernized systems provide multiple levels of internal validations that ensure accuracy and proper scheduling.

Examples Of Connecticut's Layers Of Internal Validation

- Calendars
  - Referees can only be assigned a hearing if they have a calendar for a given day.
  - Referees can only be assigned a hearing if there is an available time slot.
- Minimum Hearing Notice
  - System will not permit scheduling with less than the minimum legal notice.
- Duration of Hearing
  - A 45-minute hearing will not be scheduled in a 30-minute slot.
- Decision Table Search
  - A case cannot be scheduled if a decision has already been issued.

Reports

- Multiple functions and variables within the Connecticut system can be synthesized in various managerial reports.

- Management can review reports to:
  - Adjust default hearing times for specific types of cases
  - Provide focused training in various areas
  - Gain insight on cases that are most frequently heard
  - Monitor hearing officer time away from the office, e.g., personal, vacation, medical appointments

Issue/Sub-Issue Report

Sub Issue	Team	Hearing Count
20-POOR PERFORMANCE / NEGLIGENCE	Hamden	2
20-POOR PERFORMANCE / NEGLIGENCE	Hartford	1
20-POOR PERFORMANCE / NEGLIGENCE	Norwich	11
20-POOR PERFORMANCE / NEGLIGENCE	Waterbury	2
21-ABSENTEEISM	Hamden	11
21-ABSENTEEISM	Hartford	4
21-ABSENTEEISM	Norwich	13
21-ABSENTEEISM	Waterbury	2

- Management now can see how many poor performance and absenteeism cases were scheduled between June 1, and June 9, 2015.
- Reports can be exported to Excel for distribution and offline analysis.

Report In Excel

Time Blocks Report

Criteria ==>> From : 6/1/2015 To : 6/9/2015 Team : ALL Referee : ALL

Office	Team	Referee	Block Type	Total Time Blocked (Minutes)
Bridgeport	Bridgeport	Dwayne Miller	Hearing	90
Bridgeport	Bridgeport	Dwayne Miller	No Cases	405
Bridgeport	Bridgeport	Eric Beckenstein	Hearing	90
Bridgeport	Bridgeport	Eric Beckenstein	No Cases	285
Bridgeport	Bridgeport	Lakeisha Singleton	Hearing	90
Bridgeport	Bridgeport	Lakeisha Singleton	No Cases	360
Bridgeport	Bridgeport	Scott Madeo	Hearing	45
Bridgeport	Bridgeport	Scott Madeo	No Cases	1140
Bridgeport	Bridgeport	Scott Madeo	Vacation	720
Middletown - Hamden	Hamden	Jill Sizensky	No Cases	225
Middletown - Hamden	Hamden	Michaela Rosenberger	Hearing	120
Middletown - Hamden	Hamden	Michaela Rosenberger	No Cases	720
Middletown - Hamden	Hamden	Neal Kline	Hearing	165
Middletown - Hamden	Hamden	Neal Kline	No Cases	525
Middletown - Hartford	Hartford	Matthew Wynne	Hearing	315
Middletown - Hartford	Hartford	Matthew Wynne	No Cases	630
Middletown - Hartford	Hartford	Miguel Rivera	Hearing	90
Middletown - Hartford	Hartford	Miguel Rivera	No Cases	735
Middletown - Norwich	Norwich	Brian Cutler	No Cases	210
Middletown - Norwich	Norwich	Charles Richardson	Hearing	180
Middletown - Norwich	Norwich	Charles Richardson	No Cases	255

Connecticut Appeals Scheduler

- Cases requiring specific time slots are manually scheduled.
- All other cases are assigned after comparing the issue/sub-issue skill level with the available hearing officer skill level and selecting the earliest available time slot for a qualified hearings officer that meets the hearing duration requirement.
- Information generated from the scheduling of a hearing is stored and used to generate the available reports.

Lessons Learned

- Design
  - Include all critical parties, particularly the primary end users, throughout the product life cycle. Individuals need not be involved from inception through implementation, but their input is vital to a successful end product.
    - JAD sessions are not enough.
  - Leverage the institutional knowledge within your organization, even if the end product represents a drastic change from the way your division currently operates.
  - Analyze your current system to determine the areas that may lend themselves to a modernization effort.

Lessons Learned (cont'd)

- Construction
  - Ensure the team gathered to build the program understands the work flow and nuances of your business model.
  - Flush out the functional requirement documentation to the most granular level. Do not assume that anyone, including in-house IT, understands how your division operates.
    - Outline what each function should do when activated.
    - Determine what upstream information is necessary to properly run the system.
    - Determine the downstream results upon completion of a function.

Lessons Learned (cont'd)

- Flexibility
  - Unexpected events will occur, and things will change. You must be willing to change your requirements and design if and when it is necessary.

- Post-Implementation Support
  - Where possible, keep members of the development team on board for the first few weeks after implementation.
  - No test environment or testing effort is perfect
  - Bugs will first surface when a system is moved into the production environment.

Where Does The "Modern" System Go From Here?

- Move away from direct control over all aspects of appeal hearings to a system focused on oversight and problem resolution
- Simplification and consolidation of unemployment appeal scheduling process
- All electronic records
- Decrease/eliminate manual scheduling processes in favor of fully automated scheduling