DURHAM
Children's Aid Society

CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY ACCELERATES DIGITAL STRATEGY WHILE IMPROVING WELFARE SERVICES' RESPONSIVENESS

"We're now able to reduce risk and improve child protection through faster access to case records and better inter-agency information exchange."

Michael Morris, Information Systems Manager, Durham Children's Aid Society

CHALLENGE

DCAS wanted to modernize and accelerate digital file storage on the Child Protection Information Network (CPIN), enabling staff to stay informed and access child welfare records securely and quickly from anywhere.

SOLUTION

Combining planned and on-demand document imaging with effective retention policies, Iron Mountain® Backfile Scanning provides a fast, efficient process for converting legacy paper documents into digital records.

RESULTS

DCAS can cost effectively transition to digital records at its own pace. Staff search for and recall files in a fraction of the time compared to before, while adhering to data privacy regulations and best practices.

Reduced risk
through better cross-agency collaboration

Simpler compliance
with robust destruction policies and audit trails

Continuous access
to records for remote workers during pandemic

Space and productivity gains
for records management staff

IRON MOUNTAIN®

CHALLENGE   SOLUTION   RESULTS

BUILDING HOPE AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

"Although we have a retention and storage policy, we realized we needed to bring in outside expertise to make it more manageable."

Michael Morris, Information Systems Manager, Durham Children's Aid Society

ALWAYS THERE AT THE POINT OF NEED

Digitizing child welfare systems

Leading Canadian agency Durham Children's Aid Society (DCAS) has been supporting families and protecting children in the community for over a century. As well as providing financial support, it helps investigate allegations of child abuse and neglect, protecting against risk of harm.

Digitization of paper records is one of the agency's top priorities and biggest challenges. Not only to make sure employees always have access to the latest case files, notes, and financial information, but also to benefit from Child Protection Information Network (CPIN), a province-wide database.

Created by the Ontario government, CPIN collects and tracks child welfare information on a wider scale than ever before. In so doing, it prevents situations where multiple physical files for one family could sit at different agencies, impeding decision-making and inadvertently placing children at risk.

Making better use of resources and space

DCAS had been looking for a partner to accelerate its digital strategy for some time. It also wanted to solve other common challenges. "Managing onsite archives and constantly having to retrieve paper files took loads of time," says Information Systems Manager, Michael Morris. "Although we have a retention and storage policy, we realized we needed to bring in outside expertise to make it more manageable."

DCAS successfully joined the Child Protection Information Network in 2020

IRON MOUNTAIN®

CHALLENGE   SOLUTION   RESULTS

UNLOCKING THE VALUE OF STORED INFORMATION IN PAPER RECORDS AND DOCUMENTS

"Digitizing all our paper files in one big bang would have been a huge logistical challenge and didn't make financial sense. This way we can work out what files we need to hold and migrate in controlled phases, at a pace that's right for us."

Michael Morris, Information Systems Manager, Durham Children's Aid Society

DESIGNING THE RIGHT DIGITAL SOLUTION

Best-fit migration plan

Tendering was greatly simplified by the Ontario Vendor of Records framework of approved government suppliers. "Cost is always important, but it wasn't the overriding factor," adds Morris. "We'd had good experiences before using Iron Mountain for storage and shredding. Added to that was a pretty comprehensive digital offer and their renowned reputation for data privacy and handling sensitive information."

Now, with the Iron Mountain® **Backfile Scanning** service, DCAS has a fast, efficient process for prioritizing and converting legacy paper documents into digital records that can be uploaded to CPIN. "Digitizing all our paper files in one big bang would have been a huge logistical challenge and didn't make financial sense," says Morris. "This way we can work out what files we actually need to hold and migrate in controlled phases, at a pace that's right for us."

Flexibility to meet planned and unplanned requests

In the first phase, Iron Mountain collected and scanned 100+ boxes a week over a three-month period. This was followed by a similar-sized project, this time picking up and consolidating legal paperwork from previous DCAS storage suppliers. Every document is carefully indexed and scheduled for retention or flagged for destruction as appropriate.

"We've already converted more than 16,000 unique case files, totaling seven million-plus images," notes Morris. "In urgent cases or where we receive a disclosure request from other agencies, we can also order images on-demand. Using the Iron Mountain Connect portal, they are usually delivered next business day."

📋 **6,000+ unique case files processed, totaling more than seven million images**

IRON MOUNTAIN®

⚙️ CHALLENGE   💡 SOLUTION   👍 RESULTS

SUPPORTING FAMILIES AND KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE

"Enabling our home workers to securely access case notes and vital information made a huge difference during the pandemic and meant we could continue to deliver support at a time when it was especially needed."

Michael Morris, Information Systems Manager, Durham Children's Aid Society

Improved efficiency and decision-making

Unlike before, DCAS staff can search using keywords and call up digital records in a fraction of the time compared to when they had to wait for paper files to be tracked down and retrieved. This makes it easier to stay informed of child welfare cases and make quicker decisions and interventions if required. While all the time adhering to data privacy regulations and best practices.

"We're now able to reduce risk and improve child protection through faster access to case records and better inter-agency information exchange," says Morris.

Better organizational agility and information governance

Fortunately, the agency had already begun to transition to digital records when COVID-19 struck. "Like many organizations, we had to close our office and pivot overnight to remote working," Morris recalls. "Enabling our home workers to **securely** access case notes and vital information made a huge difference during the pandemic and meant we could continue to deliver support at a time when it was especially needed."

Released from cumbersome archiving processes, records management staff work more productively and are free to focus on other tasks, such as working on information retention schedules. The agency is seeing other advantages too. For example, in the past the same paper file might have needed to be recalled several times. Now, once it's been converted to PDF, that ongoing time and cost drain is eliminated. DCAS also benefits from robust destruction policies and audit trails, simplifying compliance.

Morris sums up: "We're now able to push ahead with our digital strategy. If we'd attempted this in-house it would have been a lot harder and, quite frankly, I don't know when we'd have got it done."

Improved decision-making and cross-agency collaboration

Effective solution for remote workers during the pandemic

Less time spent managing compliance and preparing for audits

Reclaimed space and time savings for records management staff

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