

Plan for Data Collection, Analysis of Accuracy And Report Distribution

Introduction

The courts must have a plan for the ongoing collection of case management data and a means to validate the quality of the data. Without the on going collection of data it is impossible to populate the data base with current information. Without current case information, it is impossible for court executives to know if they are making progress in improving case management. The courts must also have a way to systematically validate the data. Without this validation step the data can easily become corrupted. Corrupted data will compromise the efforts to manage the case load. This is especially serious for the court which has a fiduciary responsibility to maintain accurate records. The court must also be conscience of how the reports generated from this process are distributed. The reports should be considered internal working documents that should not be distributed outside of the judiciary with out careful consideration.

Background

The Nepalese currently use a manual system of recording case information. The information is kept in several logs and in the case docket. At this time, the courts in Nepal lack the computer resources, to install a semi automated system to help them in this effort. The courts are in the process of acquiring computers, and have started a model court program with case management software. Software, properly designed offers the opportunity to give the court executive tools to perform various case management tasks. This plan is designed to be use in semi-automated courts.

Plan for Data Collection

Step 1 - Planning

The court must have a clear definition of exactly what it expects from this process. The court must be ready to give exacting detailed description of its data needs. The courts must describe each in lay man's terms the meaning of each piece of information, and where in the record system the data point is located. It is impossible to successful design data collection system without these points decided in advance.

Step 2 - Collection

The data collection as well as quality assurance must start at case initiation. Once a case is received, it must be examined to determine that all the necessary information has been included. After this review, the basic case must be entered into the system. At subsequent points in the life cycle of the case additional pieces of information may be called upon to add to the data base. The quality assurance must be conducted by a different individual than the one who does the initial data entry. This is because it is difficult for the person who entered the data to spot his own errors.

Step 3 – Feedback

Feedback is an important step throughout the life of a reporting system, but especially important when the system is new. The court must be mindful that the data collection system is giving them the necessary information to manage cases. Feedback among users, judges, court executives and other court officers may disclose that the reporting system is not providing them the information they need to perform their tasks. When that information comes to light, the court executive needs to have the reporting system modified to satisfy users' needs.

Step 4 – Analysis

The court must examine summary data on a scheduled recurring basis. Reports should be reviewed on a weekly and monthly basis. Weekly reports should address critical high-volume court functions, such as case opening, scheduling and disposal and those that merit special interest from the judges. Monthly reports should function as a “roll-up” of past weekly activities so the court can get a broader picture of what is happening. Infrequent events can be reviewed on a monthly basis.

The court must be prepared to respond to the data exhibited in the reports. The court needs to ask questions about what the data is telling them and take timely action. Cases that are on the top of the case aging report need follow-up. If it is a single item, the court must work to remove the delay. If the report shows systemic problems, the court needs to address why the delay is happening and take necessary action. The court must be mindful of patterns or trends the data is revealing.

Quality Assurance

Quality assurance is critical to each step. If the quality of the information is poor, or the court executive does not have confidence in the quality of the data, the information collected may lead to incorrect conclusions, or simply not be utilized. For these reasons, quality assurance must become incorporated into the data collection. As discussed above, quality control must be become ingrained into each facet of data collection and analysis.

Report Distribution Procedures

The court creates two main types of reports. One type is for routine distribution to superior courts. These reports have been prescribed by the Supreme Court. The second type of report is for internal use. This addresses the second category of reports.

The reports generated by the case management system are internal documents of the courts. They are designed to provide necessary information to assist in managing the

court and its cases. The reports are tools of the judges and the administrative support staff in performing their ministerial duties. For these reasons the reports should not be distributed outside of the court with out prior approval of the Chief Judge.