

**JOINT LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON
REVIEW OF RECORDS ACCESS OF CIRCUIT COURT DOCUMENTS**

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CCAP, originally known as the "Circuit Court Automation Project" was created in 1987 in the Director of State Court's office. Its purpose was to ensure that all circuit courts, regardless of size or local resources could implement technology solutions to automate the labor intensive paper-based processes in the county courts. Since its inception CCAP has been a voluntary program, meaning that counties could choose whether to opt in and participate with the state funded system or they could opt out and choose a reimbursement to maintain a system that was developed and funded locally.

In 1991 Marathon and Iowa counties became the first counties to adopt the CCAP case management system. Throughout the 1990s additional counties chose to implement CCAP for their circuit court record keeping system and by the end of the decade, 68 of Wisconsin's 72 counties had adopted CCAP for managing their court records. At present, all 72 counties have fully implemented the CCAP system except Portage County. Portage County uses CCAP to manage its probate and juvenile cases, but plans are underway to convert the remainder of their civil and criminal cases to CCAP in the last half of 2011.

CCAP's main function is to provide technology solutions to the circuit courts and their local court staff for the purpose of efficiently managing court case records. We provide each county with computer hardware, software, classroom and on-site training and call center support for court staff. The software applications used to manage the circuit court records are developed in-house by CCAP staff and customized for the state of Wisconsin's laws.

The CCAP application suite has grown over time and is continually enhanced to provide circuit court staff with the tools they need to manage their court records. In the early 1990's CCAP offered counties a case management system which integrated the basic case file and calendar information and created notices and documents that would be mailed to litigants. A jury management system was also in place that provided a random list of prospective jurors to summons, created juror panels, assigned jurors to cases and recorded juror service and expenses. Public access computers were installed in each court house to allow members of the public to access information about circuit court cases without requiring clerk of court staff to pull the paper file for them.

Throughout the past two decades the CCAP system has been expanded to add additional efficiencies for the circuit court staff. A financial management component was created which tracks all money received by and owed to the Clerk's office. It is integrated with the case management system and assures that all money received for fines, forfeitures, fees and surcharges is paid out to the county, state, municipalities and other entities according to statutory

hierarchies. Electronic data exchanges have been created with justice partners like district attorneys, law enforcement, and the departments of revenue, justice and transportation to reduce the amount of redundant data entry that takes place in the clerk of circuit courts' offices and other justice agencies. The information that is exchanged is also available in a timelier manner. An integrated document management system has also been implemented which allows court staff access to court documents that have been scanned or electronically filed without requiring access to the paper file folder.

There are over 2000 CCAP users in the circuit courts that spend much of their work day using the CCAP applications. The majority of CCAP's staff and fiscal resources are dedicated to ensuring that the hardware and software applications installed in the counties work effectively so the circuit court staff can efficiently manage their case workload.

The paper case file still has the greatest amount of information, but virtually all electronic documents and information about circuit court cases, financials and jury management can now be accessed by court staff through the CCAP system installed in the county. This eliminates the need for them to locate and pull the paper file to find information or documents. Exhibits, transcripts and un-scanned paper documents are examples of information that is not stored in the CCAP system. The public access computers installed in each county provide the public with access to all of the electronic case information, scanned and electronically filed documents that are open to public inspection. Cases that are confidential by statute are not accessible on these computers.

In 1999, CCAP developed the Wisconsin Circuit Court Access (WCCA) web site. The reason the web site was developed was to provide a means for various justice partners like the district attorneys and state public defenders to access circuit court data without requiring them to walk down to the clerk's office to request access to the record. The CCAP Steering Committee, which is a technical advisory board to the Director of State Courts, recommended that; because the WCCA data was open to public inspection - that the web site should be made accessible to the public as well. This decision ultimately resulted in a time savings both for the clerks' staff and the public.

The WCCA web site has been in production since 1999. Justice partner agencies, businesses, and members of the public that have access to a computer with a connection to the internet can access this site to gather information about cases that are open by statute.

Historically, frequent statewide data requests have been made upon CCAP. In order to reduce this workload for CCAP staff a data extraction option, called SOAP, was added to the web site. The cost for this service is \$500 per month or \$5000 annually. Subscribers to this service include title companies, rental screening agencies, data resellers and newspapers. This service allows these companies to gather the data without requiring a visit to each courthouse in the state to manually type court case information into laptop computers and then download that information to their information repositories. The SOAP subscriptions have access to the exact same information as the general WCCA web site. There are currently 19 companies that subscribe to this service. Eight government agencies also use this service free of charge. Examples of government agencies using this service include the Office of Justice Assistance, Milwaukee County, US Department of Homeland Security, Departments of Administration, Corrections and Justice.

Overall with the bulk subscribers and the public searches that are performed, the WCCA website receives between 3 and 5 million page views each day. A page view is not the same as a search. For example, entering data for a search and getting back a list of cases would be a page view. Looking at the first case would be a second page view, and clicking on additional information and links on that case would also be additional page views. So looking at one case could result in 4 or 5 page views depending on the case type.

The WCCA website is not the official court record. That official record is still housed in each clerk of circuit court or register in probate's office in the paper file and on the local CCAP database. The clerks and registers are the official custodian of the court records. All of the data that is available on the WCCA web site is a redundant copy of the authentic data that they utilize each day to manage their records. CCAP staff does not enter or modify any data on the WCCA web site or the data repositories in Madison. As court staff makes changes and additions to the court records in the CCAP database in the counties, the updates are automatically transferred and redundantly stored on a central repository in Madison. This repository is what the WCCA application uses for WCCA record searches. The repository currently houses over 21 million cases, however not all of these cases are available on WCCA. For example, cases that are confidential by statute like adoptions, juvenile cases and guardianships cannot be accessed using WCCA. Additionally, there are many cases that have met their minimum retention requirement as set by Supreme Court rule. Cases that meet this requirement are no longer available on the WCCA web site.

For those records that are available on WCCA, the data that is available is a subset of the data that is entered into the case management system by the court staff in each county. In addition to confidential cases and cases that have met their retention requirement, there are other aspects of the record that are not available on the web site such as:

- Personally identifiable information like as phone numbers, social security numbers and driver's license numbers
- Petitioners' names on domestic violence and harassment cases
- Sealed case records
- Additional financial information about payment history, payment plans and collections
- Litigant demographics
- Information about jurors, victims, and witnesses

CCAP also supports a WCCA restricted access site. This web site provides access to confidential case information for justice partners with statutory authority. Child support workers have statewide access to child support information, some district attorneys have access to juvenile cases filed in their county, and corporation counsel has access to mental commitment cases filed in their county. Each user is assigned a user name and password and access is limited to what is statutorily allowed to their justice agency.

CCAP's ongoing success as a case management system for the Wisconsin circuit courts can be attributed to many factors. Perhaps the most significant is the strong partnership that has developed between the state and the local circuit court staff. Since its inception, users have been actively involved in the software design process to ensure CCAP software is easy to use and

functional. They have also set priorities for new functionality and enhancements of the CCAP system. In closing, as a state-initiated and funded program that supports joint state/county responsibility for the court system, we in CCAP are proud to be one of the state of Wisconsin's technology success stories.