

Ken Stark Interview, July 2006 – TARGET System

Then all of a sudden I was under legislative oversight just to try to build a new system. So it took virtually months and all kinds of pain and agony getting the process to allow us, with great political oversight, to build this new system, but we did it right. So we finally got the political and management oversight approval, we pulled together a group of providers and counties and legislative staff and all kinds of other players, brought them all together, and we created the system together. So that there was buy in, so it had the kind of data that they felt was important, and that we felt was important, and it had the data that I demanded be in there because it was important to the people who gave us money and we had to please them or we didn't get any money. And so that happened, a very tight time line, we were using this very risky new technology called client server technology, but we had some dynamite consultants, and we had essentially one year to make a buy/build decision, and then if it was to build – to build it and to test it and to have it operational – one year, that's a very short time frame.

We went from a 1-800 dial up, which was a real pain in the butt but that was the technology of the time, to now its web based. And that we had not only built the output into the data system, but a variety of what we called milestones or outcome measures so that we could track clients through treatment. And we also did something else that was unique around the country in that we actually had the providers report the real names of the clients on the TARGET form. So we had actual names and birthdates, race, ethnicity and a number of other things. And with that data, we were then able to use that data base later, as technology increased to match up with those other data bases that I talked about, to help databases, medical data bases, the criminal justice data bases to do research.