



State of Illinois Department of Corrections

Illinois reforms criminal justice with cloud-based information system

Illinois Department of Corrections (DOC) protects the public from criminal offenders through incarceration, supervision, and rehabilitation. Originally designed for 34,000 inmates, the system now handles more than 49,000. The DOC is continually striving to improve recidivism rates by offering rehabilitation programs to inmates and helping the 28,000 parolees under its watch make a successful re-entry into society.

It will save Illinois' taxpayers millions of dollars while increasing public safety throughout the state.

Pat Quinn
Illinois
Governor

Governor Pat Quinn has promoted a vision for reforming the DOC to improve public safety and criminal justice in the state. He has signed legislation that aims to amend sentencing credit guidelines and enhance programs for assessing and reforming inmates.

Implementing these statutes would have been extremely difficult using existing technology systems. The DOC used offender management technology from the 1980s that consisted of a mainframe system and 41 disparate applications. The system didn't conform to modern corrections science practices. It also didn't allow users to run aggregate analyses, for example to discover likely candidates for transfer in order to free up beds in the minimum security block. Such analyses required submitting a request to IT. Fulfilling the request could take a month or longer, by which time the population had already turned over significantly, with 200 to 500 intakes and releases occurring daily statewide.

The system had also become unreliable and extremely costly to use and maintain. This, combined with the fact that critical offender information was scattered across so many different applications, put inmates and staff at risk.

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Herbert Quinde, Chief of IT Policy and Planning for the state of Illinois, elaborates: “Our number-one concern in a prison environment is the safety and security of offenders and staff. Continual turnover in our population keeps prison staff in constant learning mode. Gaining a snapshot of a particular inmate and whether they posed a particular threat or were vulnerable in some way required guards, medical and administrative personnel, counselors, and other staff to access 17 mainframe screens and numerous other applications. Managing the movement of hundreds of inmates safely was like a contest of multi-level chess.”

In the 2009–2010 timeframe, the state evaluated its technology landscape with the goal of significantly modernizing the DOC’s offender management capabilities, ensuring stable corrections operations, and earning public trust.

Fulfilling the mandate for reform and modernization

After evaluating 20 possible solutions, the DOC selected Microsoft Dynamics CRM Online to manage its offender population statewide. The DOC’s offender management solution, called Offender360, centralizes all information and intelligence on offenders to help staff make better, more informed decisions regarding placement, rehabilitation, and release. Offender360 relies on Microsoft Dynamics CRM Online and Microsoft SharePoint.

Customer relationship management (CRM) software from Microsoft is a great match for the DOC’s requirements. “Our needs come down to case management, essentially, tracking an offender through a process during and after their incarceration,” says Quinde. “Microsoft Dynamics CRM supported case management without the need to code a lot of integrations. Within just a few weeks, we build the pilot prototype.”

Full access to offender information

To help reduce the maintenance and storage burden that paper-based forms and records cause and to further centralize information access, the DOC integrated Microsoft SharePoint for document management. Says Steven Matthews, Chief Information Officer for the DOC, “The integration lets us store, access, and manage records and forms easily from within Microsoft Dynamics CRM.”

2 Choosing Microsoft Dynamics

Besides considering Microsoft Dynamics CRM, the DOC evaluated more than 20 criminal justice and prisoner management software suites.

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Because statute-driven policies and practices vary by state, these suites “only covered about 40 percent of our needs and were extremely cost prohibitive,” says Quinde. “We couldn’t justify buying an expensive prebuilt suite and then doing huge amounts of customizations. Instead, we wanted to buy something that gave us core case management capabilities and the flexibility to do rapid application development with a focus on the data. We selected Microsoft Dynamics CRM because it’s an application development platform that provides tools that make configuration and development easier at a fraction of the cost of alternatives.”

Going with the cloud

Originally, the DOC planned to host Microsoft Dynamics CRM in the state’s data center. But when budget shortfalls deprived the agency of the technology infrastructure and staffing resources needed to operate Offender360 reliably, the DOC instead selected Microsoft Dynamics CRM Online. Matthews remarks, “This solution is the first state-sanctioned, successful cloud project. Microsoft Dynamics CRM Online provides the autonomy, resiliency, and uptime we need and pretty much ensures our success.”

Modern, cloud-based solution puts corrections staff in control

With Offender360 powered by Microsoft Dynamics CRM Online, DOC staff gain the tools they need to support modern offender reform practices and improve safety, security, and efficiency. The DOC can efficiently implement new statutory requirements while reducing technology costs.

“This cutting-edge technology will give Illinois one of the most advanced criminal justice information systems in the country,” says Governor Quinn. “It will save Illinois’ taxpayers millions of dollars while increasing public safety throughout the state.”

Increased safety for inmates and staff

The constant flux of offender intakes, releases, and transfers will continue, as will similar turnover and transfer of security and other staff. Through it all, DOC can rely on Offender360 and Microsoft Dynamics CRM to keep important information at the forefront. Equipped with easy access to offender information in Microsoft Dynamics CRM, staff can become instantly familiar with the prisoners under their care.

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“We can quickly review an inmate’s security threat level in Offender360,” says Matthews. “Our people can analyze the variables and see in one screen what they need to make informed decisions.”

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Offender360 running on Microsoft Dynamics CRM helps us manage day-to-day activities so that offenders, staff, and state citizens are safer.”

A complete solution at a lower cost

Alternative solutions, including an option that would have cost taxpayers upwards of \$100 million, were simply cost-prohibitive.

Quinde remarks, “The open architecture in Microsoft Dynamics CRM enabled us to create a solution that supports the way we manage offenders. Most important of all, Microsoft Dynamics CRM, at only 15 percent of the cost of the most expensive alternative, fits well within our budget.”

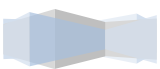
Matthews adds, “Microsoft Dynamics CRM Online is an inclusive package. With the technical expertise, software, and hardware upgrades built into the monthly service, we get Microsoft Dynamics CRM Online at a very affordable price comparable to an on-premises implementation.”

Streamlined legislative compliance

Periodically, the state changes its laws regarding sentencing credit guidelines. “Analyzing and evaluating a population exceeding 49,000 for eligibility would have taken an inordinate amount of time and probably would have resulted in a greater risk factor,” says Gladys Taylor, Assistant Director of the DOC. “By designing a pipeline analysis for Microsoft Dynamics CRM, we quickly determined that only 46 percent of our population is even qualified for the credit.

Based on other exclusion criteria that mitigate our risk factor, we’re only going to evaluate 9 percent of the population. And we arrived at this using Microsoft Dynamics CRM.”

Counselors use Offender360 to quickly and accurately determine which prisoners are eligible for a review of sentencing credits. They also rely on it as they conduct and document the evaluations. Microsoft Dynamics CRM guides counselors through the process, ensuring compliance with predetermined standards, processes, and protocols. “What would have been a very lengthy, drawn-out process under our old system we’ll complete in a day or two with Offender360,” remarks Taylor.



Reporting to empower people's decisions

Previously, running a report required submitting a request to IT. Now, corrections professionals have the reporting capabilities at their fingertips to extract and manipulate data at will and make an informed decision on the spot. Taylor says, "Speed of reporting went from a 30- or 60-day turnaround to on-demand." Matthews adds, "Microsoft Dynamics CRM is architected in such a way that it helps us easily manage information for an individual inmate and aggregate offender information to derive analytics from it."

Superior ease of use

The user base for Offender360 ranges from older employees approaching retirement to younger employees new to the workforce. Matthews found that the latter group expects modern technology at work. "They're accustomed to smartphones and touch screens, so the young people balked at working from a mainframe green screen," says Matthews. "With the implementation of Offender360, we expected pushback from the more experienced employees. What we got, instead, was enthusiastic adoption of Microsoft Dynamics CRM across the board."

Solution to benefit even more agencies

The DOC is working with county jails to spread the value of its investment in Microsoft Dynamics CRM Online. "We plan to share the development and design with our largest committing county for starters," says Taylor.

"We'll be able to share and easily transfer records electronically and avoid duplicating the data entry as the inmate makes the move to DOC jurisdiction."

Ease of development

The simplicity and familiarity of the architecture of Microsoft Dynamics CRM Online helped the DOC use trained and certified union members to configure and develop Offender360, significantly reducing solution cost and the deployment timeframe. The use of union workers helped Illinois avoid hiring contractors and gave union employees advancement opportunities.

"The time and monetary investments were fairly minimal, and the return on training investment was great," says Matthews. "The Microsoft Dynamics CRM application platform enables organizations that are similarly challenged with resource and staffing constraints to develop applications at this caliber without hiring an army of contractors and consultants."

Taking Offender360 to the next level

The DOC anticipates developing additional functionality to further extend the capabilities of Offender360 within and beyond the DOC, including:

- Integrating a risk assessment tool.
- Transferring inmate electronic medical records from the committing county.
- Developing discharge and parole oversight, including sharing records with local governments and court systems.
- Further automating decisions related to the movement and placement of offenders across 26 facilities.
- Automating sentence calculations. Illinois will be among the first states to design and develop this capability.

