

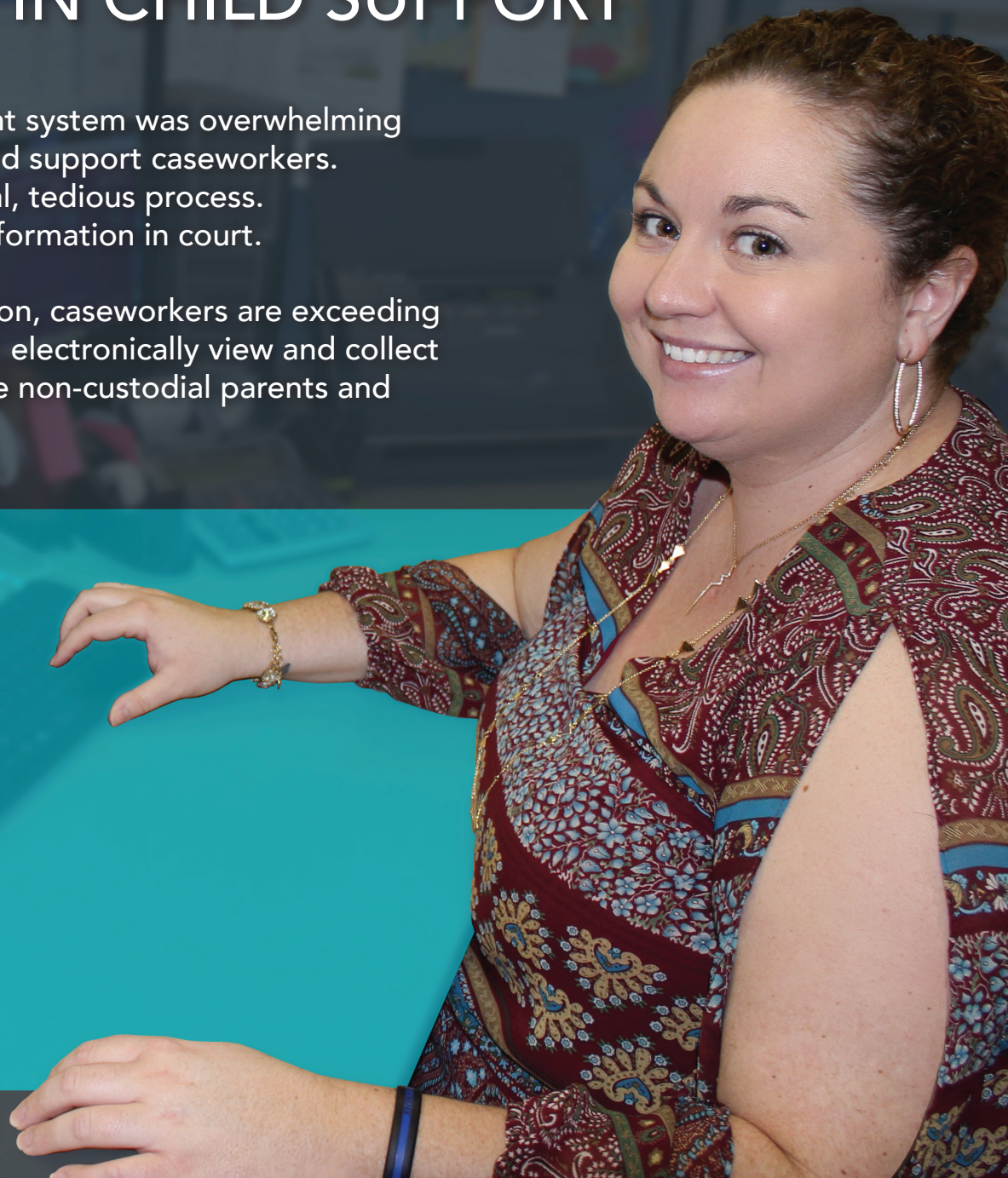
# LENOIR COUNTY BOOSTS PRODUCTIVITY AND CLIENT SERVICE IN CHILD SUPPORT

A high caseload and antiquated case management system was overwhelming Lenoir County Department of Social Services' child support caseworkers. Producing court orders and motions was a manual, tedious process. Caseworkers also lacked access to critical case information in court.

With Northwoods' document management solution, caseworkers are exceeding timeframes for case closure and court orders, can electronically view and collect documents in court, and have more time to locate non-custodial parents and interact with clients.

## PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

- Processing timely court orders, motions, show causes
- Electronically viewing and collecting documents at court
- Exceeding timeframes for case closure, court orders
- Saving up to 2 hours per day, per worker
- Spending more time locating noncustodial parents



## LENOIR COUNTY DSS REDUCES STRESS OF MEETING TIMEFRAMES AND COMPLETING PAPERWORK



Caseworkers were frustrated with previous imaging systems, which were difficult to navigate, scan, and retrieve information.



Lenoir County DSS combined Northwoods' Compass® software and Laserfiche Rio® to logically scan, store, and retrieve critical data.

"Child support folks have been through two data management systems before Northwoods, and that's not something they've been real pleased with. It was more work and very cumbersome to use. It was just easier to stick a piece of paper in a folder than it was to go through all that and not know how to retrieve it. Northwoods solved that problem for us."



– Susan Moore  
Director

### CASEWORKERS FRUSTRATED BY TIME-CONSUMING PROCESSES

Relying on manual processes frustrated Lenoir County DSS child support caseworkers who worked hard to meet mandated timeframes.

"It can take its toll on the workers. They just really want to meet their timeframes so they look good on paper and we look good to the director and everybody across the state," said Melissa Kennedy, Child Support Program Manager.

The overarching issue was the inefficient way caseworkers had to capture and retrieve case documentation through previous imaging systems that were not designed specifically for human services.

Scanning and indexing documents required numerous manual steps. While not complicated, indexing was so time-consuming that supervisors were scanning documents for the caseworkers. If a document was incorrectly indexed, it was very difficult to re-index.

Viewing a document was problematic as well. Documents were tagged to a client, but were not organized by document type. Caseworkers had to wait for all documents associated with a client to load, then sort through multiple documents to find the right one. It could take four or five minutes to pull up one document.

Caseworkers felt stuck trying to manage paperwork when they wanted to do real casework: locate noncustodial parents, return phone calls, or create show causes to get clients in court. Frustrated, caseworkers regularly reverted to using hard copies of case documents.

"I'm thankful that we do have an imaging system, but I still think there's a more productive way to do things. Once we get the whole program in place, it will save us a lot of time and so many people won't have to touch that same piece of paper," Kennedy said.

Worst of all, they felt like they were letting down the families they work to help.

"It's just so much paperwork. It's hard on me because you know that the families aren't getting the money they need for that month," said Tammy Baldwin, Child Support Agent II.





"Saving time on paperwork will allow me to feel like I'm not drowning. There's so many files that take so long to get to, because you spend so much time on paperwork and typing orders and doing things that can be streamlined by Northwoods. I want to feel like I'm getting it all done: getting phone calls returned and putting more time and attention into cases individually that I don't have time for now."

– Jordan Jones  
Child Support Agent II

## SOLUTION DESIGNED FOR HUMAN SERVICES BOOST PRODUCTIVITY

Lenoir County DSS combined Northwoods' document management software and Laserfiche's enterprise content management system to intuitively scan, store, and retrieve critical data.

Northwoods' Compass software is the user interface caseworkers use to manage case information and documents, and Laserfiche Rio is the centralized document repository that electronically stores the documents. The combination allows caseworkers to easily and securely index and retrieve documents and notes.

Documents are organized in a child support-specific taxonomy, so caseworkers can look up a client and quickly see categories of documents to find the right one.

"You can look at specific documents whether it's medical or income. You don't have to look at 100 documents when you're looking just for his employment information," said Jordan Jones, Child Support Agent II.

Indexing documents to a specific client and type is automated and saves so much time, caseworkers are scanning in their own documents rather than relying on supervisors.

It's all having an impact on timeframes. The case closure rate increased from 94.4% in March 2015 to 97.5% in June 2016, well above the 75% required closure rate.

"They are able to process their cases faster. Giving the workers the tools they need helps. They are not having to guess 'Where do I find this? Or where do I find that?' It's all right there at your fingertips. Overall, it's helped the staff's morale and their stress level," Kennedy said.

**"Timeframes are a big, big part of child support. So any system or anything that we get to help us streamline that process and help us meet our timeframes, the better off we are. And the better we'll be in meeting what the state and feds require from us."**



– Melissa Kennedy  
Child Support Program Manager

# LENOIR COUNTY DSS SIMPLIFIES AND AUTOMATES COURT ORDERS



Manual process to create court orders and motions created frustration and delays.



With Northwoods, the agency is creating court orders and motions days faster than required.

## MANUAL, TEDIOUS PROCESS TO CREATE COURT ORDERS

When North Carolina's case management system for child support, Automated Collection and Tracking System (ACTS), first rolled out in 1997 caseworkers could easily create and manage their cases, including creating court orders and motions. However, the system has not been updated to conform with changes in the law.

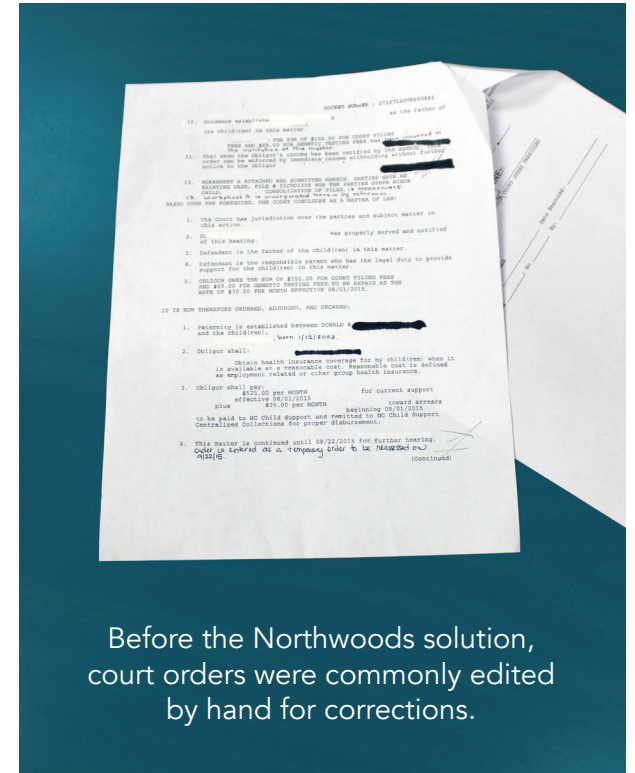
"ACTS is a wonderful program, it's just dated," said Melissa Kennedy, Child Support Program Manager.

As a workaround, child support caseworkers would create a case in ACTS, then typed a court order in Microsoft Word® and printed it for a long line of reviewers – supervisor, paralegal, and attorney – who would handwrite or cut and paste changes onto a hard copy of the court order. If the agency's attorney requested changes to the language before heading to court, caseworkers started the tedious process over, sometimes multiple times.

"It's like cutting out paper dolls to piece it together. It's time-consuming," said Charmin Smith, Child Support Establishment Supervisor.

The manual process meant court orders could take months to complete internally. This jeopardized the agency's ability to fully establish cases within the required 90-day time frame after locating the noncustodial parent. It also fell short of Lenoir County DSS' requirement to get court orders to the judge in 5-7 days and signed by the judge in 30 days.

Motions were another issue. Caseworkers were left guessing what language to include, and they were so cumbersome to create that supervisors would often create the motions themselves and field complaint calls when late motions impacted clients' payments.



Before the Northwoods solution, court orders were commonly edited by hand for corrections.

"It can take anywhere up to an hour to fix orders. These documents, once workers print them out of ACTS, are not saved anywhere. So they need to manually fix the information."



– Melissa Kennedy  
Child Support Program Manager

## CASEWORKERS CREATING ACCURATE, TIMELY ORDERS

To overhaul the process, Lenoir County DSS implemented Northwoods' document management software, Compass® Pilot, to create template court orders and motions with current legal language, which can be updated as the law changes.

Now caseworkers can autofill basic client information, select the correct legal language, and add case-specific details into an electronic form, which can be saved, reviewed, and modified by anyone involved at any step.

The new process has reduced the number of court orders being returned to caseworkers because the supervisor, paralegal, or attorney can easily make modifications without re-starting the process.

"Before Compass Pilot, I would probably get back a third to half of my orders with a request to tweak the language in the order. Now I rarely see any of my orders come back. If there is a correction to be made, typically my supervisor will catch it, or the attorney will just fix it herself because it's so easy for her to do it in Compass Pilot," Jones said.

With an average of 60 court orders per month and 15 minutes of correction time per order, Jones conservatively estimates that not getting a third of her orders back saves her 5 hours per month just in correction time alone.

"I had one worker that got the same order back three or four times. She was about to explode. And finally (the staff attorney) told her to go into Northwoods and do this order. And it was like her stress level went from up here to down here," Smith said.

In addition, caseworkers have more time to focus on doing casework, not paperwork.

"Now they can focus on locates, or generate more show causes. It's freeing up a little more time to be more productive in their caseloads, which is what we want," Smith said.

The process is also better for supervisors, who used to review orders one at a time. Now caseworkers can create batches of orders, save them in a feature called Form Favorites, and electronically notify the supervisor when they are all ready for review.

In addition, caseworkers are completing their own motions quickly and easily.

"We were so behind on typing motions because nobody wanted to do the motions. Now, workers generate four and five motions a day because they are so easy. They are current on all of their motions, which is helping the clients and we're getting them on the calendar quicker. I get less complaints that the motion hasn't been filed because now they are filed usually within a day after they come in," Smith said.

"We have to have court orders done within 5-7 business days and they are getting them done in a day."



– Charmin Smith  
Child Support  
Enforcement  
Supervisor



"The process is streamlined and it's more efficient. It makes it easier to correct things; it makes it faster to get orders to the judges."

– Cheryl Spencer  
Staff Attorney







## ACCESSING DOCUMENTS IN COURT IMPROVES PRODUCTIVITY, CLIENT SERVICE



Accessing and collecting documents and information in court was a challenge for child support caseworkers.



Today at the courthouse, caseworkers can electronically view and capture documents and information, boosting caseworker productivity and morale.

### LACK OF ACCESS IN COURT SLOWED PRODUCTIVITY

Accessing and collecting information in court was a challenge for establishment and enforcement caseworkers.

The agency stored laptops in the clerk's office in the courthouse, but caseworkers could not quickly find or pull up case documents or information using previous document management systems.

"It's frustrating whenever you don't have your information there in front of you. You don't feel as prepared when you go to court if you don't have your documents or at least access to your documents," said Edna Futrell, retired Child Support Program Manager.

Caseworkers tried taking hard copy temporary files to court, which they destroyed after the hearing, but the temporary files did not always

contain all the necessary documents a judge might ask for.

"It's just embarrassing for me when I can't provide information when the judge is asking for it. It's very stressful. I don't feel like I can get anything accomplished," said Debbie Martin, Child Support Supervisor.

After court, caseworkers returned to the office with a stack of client documents or signed court orders to scan and index, which was another cumbersome, time-intensive process.

"The time it takes to come back from court and get everything in the system that needs to be in the system, and prepare an order that is satisfactory, is very time-consuming," Kennedy said.

## CASEWORKERS IMPROVING CLIENT SERVICE IN COURT

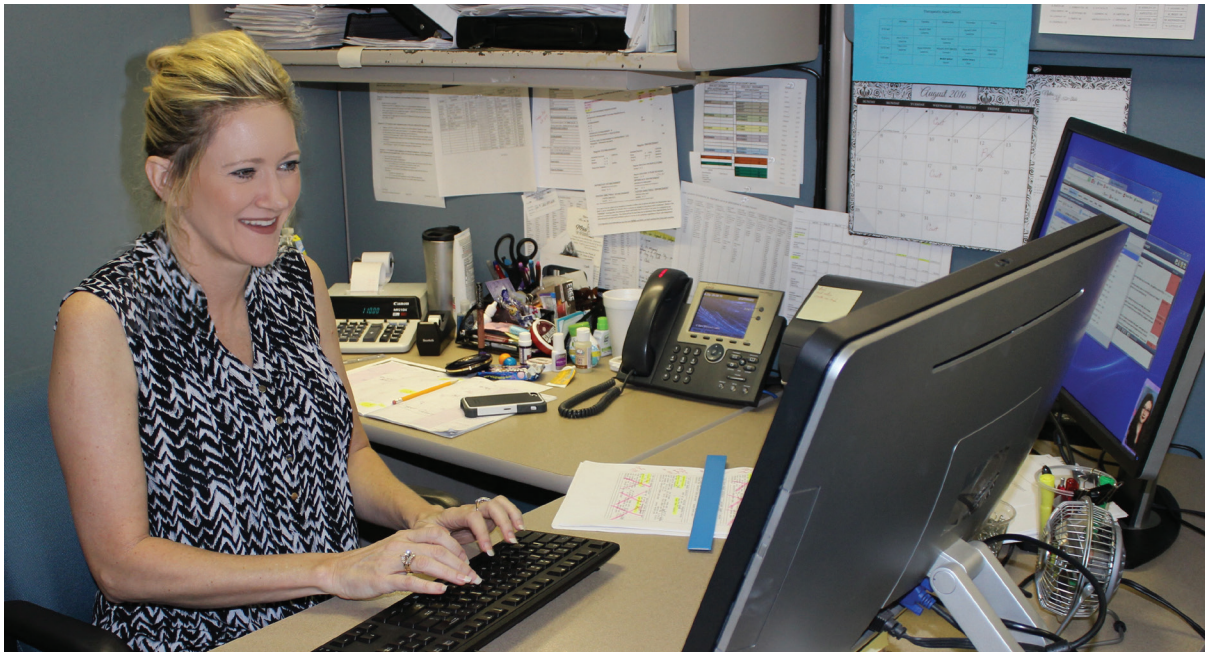
Now at the courthouse, caseworkers and supervisors have access to a laptop with Northwoods' software to electronically view every document, form, and piece of information related to a client or case. They can print the information out if requested by the judge.

They can also use a scan station stored in the clerk's office to immediately scan and automatically index clients' documents, signed court orders and motions, or signed support agreements.

By scanning documents electronically in the courthouse, caseworkers can continue working on their cases as soon as they return to the office.

"We can do a lot of court orders in court and we're able to get them signed by the judge and scanned in. When the workers return to court the next day a lot of the orders that they typically wait for sometimes weeks at a time are already available so they can process those," Kennedy said. "The workers are coming back, the documents are sitting there waiting for them, and all they have to do is process them and get them out the door." Ultimately, the biggest benefit is to the custodial parents who need financial support for their families.

"The sooner we can get the orders signed, the sooner we can get them keyed into the system, the sooner families can get their money," Jones said.



"This agency made the right decision and the right investment at the right time. It was right for the community. That's the biggest takeaway from all of this."



– Jeff Harrison  
Deputy Director

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"I've always been a very big advocate for Northwoods, for Compass Pilot. I would not do this job I'm in without it. It has been a huge timesaver. Even though I'm still crunched for time, it hands down makes this job as easy to do as it is."



– Jordan Jones  
Child Support Agent II



"Hands down it's worth the money. I can only foresee it helping us more and more and more in the future. I would definitely hate to go back to where we were before we got the program in place."

– Melissa Kennedy,  
Child Support Program Manager



## CONCLUSION

Since Lenoir County DSS implemented Northwoods' document management solution with Laserfiche's enterprise content management system, child support caseworkers have the tools they need to produce timely documents and access critical information in the office or in court. Caseworkers are less stressed and have more time to focus on casework; not paperwork. The improved productivity ultimately helps the families Lenoir County DSS is dedicated to serve.

## ABOUT NORTHWOODS

Northwoods only focus is helping state and county human services agencies increase client service levels and productivity while cutting costs — allowing them to do more with less. Northwoods' human services software solutions are designed around caseworkers and social workers, not data. Our Compass® products automate the flow of client and case information based on how caseworkers throughout the agency need to use it. To learn more, visit [teamnorthwoods.com](http://teamnorthwoods.com).



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