

Arkansas Specialty Courts Solve Problem with SCALES

Arkansas Specialty Courts had a problem. They wanted to measure the effectiveness of their specialty courts across the state to highlight success and to identify opportunities for improvement. The problem, a lack of consistent data collection across the statewide programs, was brought to light by an NCSC Impact and Outcome Evaluation commissioned by the Arkansas Specialty Court Program Advisory Committee (SCPAC) in 2017.

In October 2018, the NCSC identified four recommendations to strengthen the specialty courts in Arkansas, specifically, ensure all adult drug courts adhere to the National Adult Drug Court Best Practice Standards, Volume I and Volume II; adopt a statewide risk-needs instrument; develop and operationalize a case management system for specialty courts; and explore attributes of high performing drug courts to improve outcomes.

In November 2018, they selected RANT®, a nationally validated risk and needs assessment by Public Health Management Corporation (PHMC). In January 2019, the Arkansas Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) was awarded a BJA grant. A significant portion of this grant was allocated to aid the AOC in establishing a statewide automated specialty court data system, deploying RANT statewide, and improving, enhancing, and expanding specialty court programs.

In early 2019, the Arkansas Specialty Court Coordinator and Business Analyst began visiting specialty courts to observe how the teams worked together, how well they adhered to the best practice standards, and how they collected data about their programs. Based on these observations, the recommendations from the NCSC evaluation, an analysis of existing court technology, and a review of other state data collection systems, a high-level vision and plan was established for the Specialty Court Application and Data Exchange System (SCALES).

In September 2019, a developer was identified for the project. Working with the AOC CIS department, the three-person specialty court team adopted the Disciplined Agile Delivery (DAD) approach to technology delivery solutions. DAD is centered on meeting user needs and enables users to realize value from the initial release. From there, bite-sized development of just-in-time functionality is delivered as quick releases to the users to optimize the value delivered and improve the application's acceptance rate.

Development of SCALES began in November 2019. The initial release rolled out in May 2020 to two pilot courts. The initial release focused on enabling the team to initiate a referral application, gather data necessary to determine eligibility, and capture the decision. Any user with access to SCALES for a given court can initiate the referral and enter data. SCALES is connected to the state court database. Users search for and select the referring case for the individual being referred. The application is pre-populated with details from the referring case in the court database. Users collaborate to complete the application with data necessary for the team to determine applicant eligibility during staffing.

The next round of development focused on incorporating RANT into SCALES instead of requiring users to access the assessment from an additional application, improving user experience. It also helped mitigate security and privacy concerns by allowing data to remain within the state's system. The second release with RANT functionality rolled out in August 2020 to 19 pilot courts at both circuit and district levels across the state. The programs onboarded included Adult Drug Courts, Veterans Treatment Courts, Mental Health Courts, DWI Courts, HOPE/SWIFT courts, and Alternative Sentencing Programs. This rollout also expanded team members' ability to collaborate within SCALES to include judges, specialty court coordinators, probation officers, and treatment providers.

Building on that momentum, the focus of the next release, rolled out in November 2020, was to lay the foundation for case management of accepted participants, including the ability to capture docket notes, incentives and sanctions, and supervision notes from probation officers and treatment providers.

With the baseline of functionality in place, the team increased the cadence of releases from quarterly to monthly. Each month new functionality was released to build out case management further and to address user enhancement requests. Between December 2020 and March 2021, the team seamlessly deployed five releases. The primary focus areas of the releases were substance screens, phase management, status management, case history, and a program dashboard.

In February 2021, new legislation was passed allowing the intrastate transfer of a specialty court program participant to another specialty court program. The DAD approach allowed the team to pivot their development in April 2021 to focus on building out the transfer functionality within SCALES. The team deployed the transfer functionality to production before the legislation going into effect in late July 2021.

In addition to development, the team has onboarded additional programs across the state. As of August 2021, a year after the initial rollout to 19 pilot courts, 54 programs have been onboarded to SCALES with 250 users. Over 600 RANT assessments have been completed. While the team is well on the way to achieving the goals outlined in the NCSC recommendations, there is still much work to be done. Future focus areas for development include expanding SCALES to Peer Recovery Specialists, substance screen randomization, exit interview, judicial bench card questions, and incentive and sanction matrix, to name a few.

The team is currently working on statewide reports to be published to the specialty court judges and the SCPAC monthly going forward. This is a significant milestone in the project as it provides evidence that data is no longer a problem for the Arkansas Specialty Courts.

SCALES

Arkansas SCALES
Specialty Court Application & Legal Exchange System

GENERAL INFORMATION

	NAME ELLA SELF	DOB/AGE 09-06-1997 / 24
<input type="button" value="Choose File"/> No f	PHASE PHASE 2	STATUS ACTIVE
	ADDRESS 456 WONDER LN BENTONVILLE AR	PHONE (555) 555-5555
	EDUCATION 11TH GRADE	EMPLOYMENT PART TIME (< 32 HRS)
	REFERRING CASES 99CR-21-34	

NOTES **PASSED GED EXAM**
REQUESTING PERMISSION TO TRAVEL TO GRANDMOTHER'S 80TH BIRTHDAY PARTY ON 10/16.

Q v Go Actions ▾ Download Excel

NOTES TYPE	HEARING DATE	NEXT HEARING DATE	INCENTIVES	SANCTIONS	NOTES	DATE
PHASE NOTE	-	-	-	-	MOVED TO PHASE 2 - MET ALL REQS OF PHASE 1. PROMOTED AND GIVEN GIFT CERT AND FISH BOWL DRAWING.	09-16-2021
HEARING NOTES	09-15-2021	09-22-2021	APPLAUSE; FISHBOWL DRAWING; GIFT CARD (= \$25.00); CERTIFICATE OF ACCOMPLISHMENT/PHASE PROMOTION; VERBAL PRAISE	-	PRESENTED WELL IN COURT. JUDGE ASKED ABOUT GED PREP. SHARED SHE IS SCHEDULED TO TAKE THE EXAM ON 09/28. SHE IS A LITTLE NERVOUS BUT ALSO EXCITED. PROMOTED TO PHASE 2. GIVEN CERTIFICATE AND FISH BOWL DRAWING - DREW \$25 GIFT CARD.	09-15-2021
PROBATION OFFICER MEETING	-	-	-	-	CONTINUES TO TEST NEGATIVE ON SCREENS. ON TRACK WITH FINES AND FEES. ON TRACK WITH GED PREP. SCHEDULED TO TAKE EXAM ON 09/28. ALL REQS MET TO PROMOTE TO PHASE 2.	09-14-2021
INDIVIDUAL COUNSELING	-	-	-	-	ON TRACK WITH TREATMENT GOALS FOR PROMOTION TO PHASE 2. EXCITED ABOUT PROMOTION.	09-14-2021
GROUP COUNSELING	-	-	-	-	PARTICIPATED IN GROUP ON 09/09 AND 09/13	09-13-2021
HEARING NOTES	09-08-2021	09-15-2021	APPLAUSE; CANDY/COOKIES/SNACKS; VERBAL PRAISE	-	PRESENTED WELL IN COURT. ON TRACK WITH GED PREP. ON TRACK TO PROMOTE TO PHASE 2 AT NEXT HEARING.	09-08-2021

SCALES

SPC Referral

Specialty Courts Referral Form

Applicant ID 31855	Applicant Name BEN BERRY
Application Status ACCEPTED	Referral Date 09-30-2021
Court ARKANSAS	Location CIRCUIT
Preliminary Prosecutor Approval <input type="radio"/> YES <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO	

Show All Party Information Referring Cases **Assessments** Substance Use Additional Notes Court Type Team Decision

Assessments

RANT

APPLICANT ID	INTERVIEW DATE	END DATE	ASSESSMENT	STATUS	SCORE	USER ID	ACTIVITY DATE
31855	09-23-2021	09-30-2021	RANT	COMPLETE	HIGH RISK, HIGH NEED	USER	09-30-2021

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OTHER

ASSESSMENT	ASSESSMENT DATE	RESULTS	USER ID	ACTIVITY DATE
TCU 5	09-27-2021	SEVERE (6 OR MORE SYMPTOMS)	USER	09-30-2021
ARORA	09-23-2021	MEDIUM	USER	09-30-2021