

2023 NPCR INDIANA SUCCESS STORY

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Turning Challenges into Opportunities: The Case of Indiana

National Program of Cancer Registries SUCCESS STORY

SUMMARY

Indiana State Cancer Registry (ISCR), established in 1985, is part of the National Program of Cancer Registries (NPCR) and collects data for about 40,000 cancer cases each year. Due to staff turnover, ISCR did not have a registry director for over eight months (until May 2023) and retained only one full-time state employee Certified Tumor Registrar (CTR), increasingly relying on contracted CTRs. Despite not meeting NPCR’s national data quality standards in 2022 due to the case backlog accumulated over several years, the expanded funding from the state matched federal funding at a 1:1 ratio (beginning in July 2023), allowing ISCR to work toward achieving registry program priorities. Additionally, ISCR revised its registry operations processes so that time spent per case in the quality review process decreased threefold.

CHALLENGE

- Retirement of staff and COVID-19 pandemic related turnover left ISCR with only one state employee CTR. The registry was forced to rely on vendors who are usually more expensive and less productive than in-house staff.
- The departure of the previous registry director resulted in 8 months without a fully dedicated person in charge of planning, task delegation, and follow up with reporters.
- Quality control (QC) processes were detailed and labor-intensive, containing more than 50 data items along with text to verify; some of these items were not nationally required. The manual text review process was very time consuming.
- IT onboarding of new CTRs was fragmented and delayed, lasting 3 to 6 months, which delayed work.
- The above challenges led to the accumulation of a data backlog. As of May 2023, 88,522 cases had to be reviewed and sent to the “pristine” registry database. As of October 2023, 100,912 cases were outstanding, which is 14% more cases waiting to be processed.

SOLUTION

- Use the additional state funding to increase CTR hours spent on data processing.
- Based on feedback from other states, change registry software to benefit from advanced automated functions.
- Streamline internal registry operations for maximum efficiency.

RESULTS

- ISCR has increased funding for CTR vendor contracts by 28% in 2023 compared to the previous fiscal year to help curb the data backlog. The new registry director renewed contracts in a timely manner and monitors progress with vendors weekly.
- ISCR adopted new registry software that minimizes manual processes and hired a second full-time IT programmer in June 2023 to assist with software transition.
- ISCR revised its operations and decreased the IT onboarding timeframe for new CTRs from 3-6 months to one month for all remote access to be fully set up. This was done in collaboration with the IT department and managers from vendor companies.
- ISCR worked closely with the CTR vendor and software vendor to revise its quality review process. QC was partially automated to identify areas of concern in an easy and streamlined fashion, therefore decreasing review time from about 21 minutes per case to about 7 minutes per case. The ISCR completion rate for 2021 cases jumped from 29.2% to 45.5% in the three months from July to October.
- For the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic, non-reporting facilities were identified and their leadership was contacted by the ISCR Director, resulting in more data being received.
- ISCR learned that CTRs are two times more expensive when outsourced, but CTRs in the market prefer to work remotely through vendor companies rather than being hired by the state to avoid on-site presence. More funding for outsourced CTRs did not increase productivity as expected due to indirect oversight.

SUSTAINING SUCCESS

- For the coming 1.5 years, ISCR prioritized the adoption of more efficient registry software and continuity of tasks among staff and contractors.
- Based on re-evaluated needs, ISCR plans to reduce IT consultant expenses by 25% so that more dollars can be directed to CTR hours and software transition. Solutions for more efficient CTR operations could include prompting current staff to become CTRs and strategic hiring of individual CTRs.
- Creating honest and transparent relationships with vendors helped to identify opportunities for improvement. ISCR will continue reevaluating its processes while working closely with its partners to ensure efficiency, data quality, completeness, and timeliness.

STORY QUOTE

“I was spending several weeks manually reviewing over 50+ data items from the lengthy list of QC criteria set and felt we were falling even farther behind ...Thankfully, my revised QC process using Excel functions was accepted and provided a more streamlined QC process, taking away so much of the frustration which comes from the manual work...”
– Melissa Chapman, contracted CTR-certified cancer registrar

REGISTRY CONTACT

Health: CDPC: Cancer Registry
<https://www.in.gov/health/cdpc/cancer/cancer-registry/>



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention