

# IMPROVING CHILD WELFARE OUTCOMES WITH DATA

*Public Sector Case Study*

## CLIENT SITUATION

Modern child welfare agencies have access to a large quantity of data that can be used to inform and drive practices and policies designed to prevent harm to the children they serve. Many agencies, however, find it challenging to derive insights from their data to enable proactive, data-driven decision-making. This was the case for one agency, which was tasked with developing a results-oriented accountability initiative to more effectively use data to proactively aid at-risk children. The agency hadn't quantified the risk factors that contribute to harmful situations, and the volume and varying quality of data from internal and external sources made it difficult to identify which sources were important to decision-making. The agency needed to determine what, if any, data gaps existed and develop a plan to continually improve its ability to use data over the next three fiscal years.

The agency partnered with North Highland to develop a model for its data analytics program and create an implementation plan that would help it intervene and mitigate risk to ensure that every child would be placed in a safe, healthy, and stable environment.

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A state agency charged with ensuring the safety, well-being, and permanency of children wanted to leverage internal and external data to shift its practices from reactive to proactive. North Highland empowered the agency with an analytic model, roadmap, and implementation plan that provided the accurate data and insights needed for evidence-based decision-making.

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## OUR APPROACH

North Highland worked with the agency to develop a vision statement for future program objectives—creating a cycle of accountability that would constantly improve outcomes—and build a foundation for long-term planning. North Highland partnered with the agency to identify high-quality internal and external data sources to build accurate models for measuring and monitoring the agency's outcomes. The team uncovered existing gaps in data and determined which missing data could be accessed using current sources.

A tailored master data management, data governance, and data quality plan empowered the agency with an enterprise approach that enabled interoperability with partner health and human services organizations. This enabled the agency to seamlessly exchange information and gather critical data about the child as well as any perpetrators—using, for example, data from the Juvenile Department of Justice, the Department of Corrections, or local school systems—for a holistic, encompassing view of the factors affecting children under the agency's care. It also ensured that the agency could base its practices on evidence drawn from well-designed studies and clean data, driving decisions founded in the most accurate available data.

Armed with this new approach and improved sources of data, North Highland developed an expanded analytic model that included data on child fatality. The model quantified risk factors that children face and identified the specific groups that are at greater risk.

In total, North Highland delivered 15 short- and long-term initiatives enabling the agency to create the infrastructure, organization, and processes required to implement the program and enable continual improvement.

WITH THE INSIGHTS FROM NORTH HIGHLAND'S ANALYTIC MODEL, THE CHILD WELFARE AGENCY CAN DESIGN SPECIFIC SERVICES AND INTERVENTIONS TARGETED AT THE CHILDREN WHO ARE MOST AT RISK AND PREVENT FATALITIES.

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## VALUE DELIVERED

The newly enabled interconnection of high-quality data moved beyond child-focused information to also give the agency insight into perpetrators of harm, empowering the agency to make more proactive interventions. North Highland's analytic model confirmed that the two groups of children at greatest risk of death are those that have experienced multi-generational maltreatment and those who are less than four months of age. With this knowledge, the agency can design services and interventions specific to these issues and the needs of these groups. This model can be utilized as needed within the agency.

North Highland equipped the agency with a more proactive system to improve children's lives and achieve better outcomes and provided an accountability model that allows it to monitor its progress against its goals. North Highland closed out the project with a pilot to bring the model's predictive capability to life, enabling the agency in the long term to identify potential issues before harm occurs.

## ABOUT OUR PUBLIC SECTOR SERVICES

North Highland understands the unique challenges of the public sector, and specializes in mitigating risk and delivering value that positively impacts both the agencies we serve and society at large. With 23 offices across the United States, we have served more than 300 individual federal, state, and local agencies and organizations in the last five years. In this time, we have successfully completed more than 1,100 public sector consulting engagements.

## ABOUT NORTH HIGHLAND

North Highland is a global management consulting firm known for helping clients solve their most complex challenges related to **customer experience, performance improvement, technology and digital, and transformation**. We add value and support our clients across the full spectrum of consulting, from strategy through delivery. We bring the big ideas, then we make them real.

North Highland is an employee-owned firm, headquartered in Atlanta, Ga., with more than 3,000 consultants worldwide and 60+ offices around the globe. The firm is a member of [Cordence Worldwide](#), a global management consulting alliance. For more information, visit and connect with us on [LinkedIn](#), [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).