Public Defense Case Management System (PDCMS): An Overview

Introduction
The New York State Defenders Association (NYSDA) has developed an automated Public Defense Case Management System (PDCMS) for public defense and legal aid offices. It is the most widely used system in New York State and has proven to be a powerful tool to help defender offices efficiently manage cases and serve clients more effectively.

The system is flexible, easy to use and provides quick access to important client and case information. It allows staff to enter a full range of data on each client and case or basic case information, depending on office resources and needs. The system also saves staff time by using templates and data merge capability to automatically generate standard letters using the office's existing word processing software.

The PDCMS was designed by NY defenders specifically to meet the needs of their high volume practices. Since all cases, opened or closed, for each client are displayed on a single screen, attorneys representing a client in separate cases in different courts (e.g., superior, local or family court) can quickly get a full picture of their client's pending cases to facilitate comprehensive packaging of plea dispositions. The system immediately identifies possible conflicts of interest, which would otherwise delay case processing. It also automatically produces many reports including the mandatory UCS-195 Report as well as an array of reports and data extracts required of the NYC providers and reports to track average time until disposition, percentage of cases disposed at arraignment, number of court appearances, etc. Users can also build their own powerful reports using Report Builder which allows them to specify their own data fields and search criteria.

NYSDA works closely with each new office site to determine its needs and ensure the system is successfully implemented. We also provide on-site training and data conversion services. For more information about the PDCMS or to schedule a demonstration contact PDCMS Director, Darlene Dollard, at (518) 465-3524 or email her at ddollard@nysda.org.

History
NYSDA was funded by the NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) to work with Public Defender offices to develop a design document for a Public Defense Case Management System. In 1994, NYSDA worked with Public Defender offices in Monroe, Schenectady and Rockland Counties to develop a beta version of the PDCMS. NYSDA installed the PDCMS beta version (version 1.0) in the Monroe County PD office (50 Users) and the Rockland County PD office (15 Users) in 1996 and supported the application for three years (1996 – 1998). NYSDA developed version 2.0 in 1998, by adapting and extensively modifying a case management system developed by Westchester County Legal Aid Society (LAS). LAS staff members John Ryan, Sara Kahn and Marcos Leite developed the LAS application using a rapid application development (RAD) system. In 1998-1999, NYSDA installed version 2.0 in the public defender offices in Rockland, Schenectady, Genesee and Chemung Counties. In 2000, the PDCMS was upgraded to a later version of the development software (v8.3) and version 2.5 was completed. In 2008, the PDCMS was ported up to eDeveloper v10 and version 2.72 was completed. In 2011, the PDCMS was ported up to uniPaaS and version 3.0 was created.

Currently, the PDCMS is installed in 67 New York public defense offices: Albany County PD Office, Albany County Conflict Office, Albany County Family Court, Brooklyn Defender Services, Broome County PD Office, Cattaraugus County PD Office, Center for Family Representation (Manhattan & Queens), Chautauqua County PD Office, Chemung County PD Office, Chemung County Public Advocate Office, Chenango County PD Office, Columbia County PD Office, Cortland County PD Office, Dutchess County PD Office, Erie County Legal Aid Society (both PD & Law Guardian units), Essex County PD Office, Franklin County PD Office, Franklin County

Conflict Office, Franklin County AC Plan, Genesee County PD Office, Greene County PD Office, Jefferson County PD Office, Livingston County PD Office, Madison County PD Office, Monroe County PD Office, Monroe County Conflict Defender Office, Legal Aid Society of Nassau County, Neighborhood Defender Services, New York County Defender Services, Niagara County PD Office, Oneida County Public Defender Office, Ontario Public Defender Office, Ontario County Conflict Defender Office, Orleans County Public Defender Office, Otsego County PD Office, Putnam County Legal Aid Society, Queens Law Associates, Rensselaer County PD Office , Rensselaer County Conflict Defender, Rensselaer County Family Court, Rockland County PD Office, St. Lawrence County AC Program, St. Lawrence County CD Office, St. Lawrence County PD Office, Saratoga County PD Office, Saratoga County CD Office Schenectady County PD Office, Schenectady Conflict Office, Schenectady County AC Plan, Schuyler County PD Office, Seneca County PD Office, Steuben County Family Office, Steuben County PD Office, Legal Aid Society of Suffolk County, Suffolk County AC Program, Tioga County PD Office, Ulster County PD Office, Warren County PD Office, Washington County AC Program, Washington County PD Office, Wayne County PD Office, Westchester Legal Aid Society, Wyoming County PD Office, Yates County AC Program and the Yates County PD Office.

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Features

ONE CONSOLIDATED DATABASE

All names entered into the system (including clients, aliases, co-defendants, complainants, witnesses, informants, experts, etc.) are entered into one database and displayed on one screen (*Name Search* screen) (Fig. 1). This offers two advantages: it helps **prevent the duplicate entry of names** and allows users to immediately determine if an individual associated with a particular case (e.g., co-defendant) represents a possible **conflict of interest** (even before a case is entered into the system).

Fig. 1: *Name Search* Screen

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ONE CENTRAL SCREEN FOR EACH CLIENT

The system allows the user to track an unlimited number of cases for a client and displays all of the cases for each client on one central screen (*Main Screen*) (Fig. 2). The *Main Screen* displays all of the pertinent information for each of that client's cases including all charges, case players (e.g., co-defendants, complainants, etc.), both court events and non-court events, disposition and sentence information and open or closed status. This information can be recorded on a variety of case types, including: criminal, family, parole and appeal. The information contained on this *Main Screen* is printed on the *Case History Report* & *Event History Report* and allows attorneys a comprehensive view of each client's case history.

Fig. 2: *Main Screen*

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CLIENT INFORMATION

The system allows users to enter an unlimited number of addresses and phone numbers for the client per case and displays the history of all addresses on the *List of Addresses* screen. (See Fig. 3.) As a time-saver, a list of Reusable Addresses can be maintained to quickly fill in the address with the name of a facility or shelter where the client may be living.

Fig. 3: *List of Addresses* screen outlines the history of all clients' addresses

It also allows the user to enter multiple DOBs and SSNs for each client and displays a history of each on the *Name Search* screen. (See Fig. 4.)

Fig. 4: Pop-up *DOB* window

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The top part of *Main Screen* displays general client information including race, sex and NYSID. An additional screen (*Client Info* tab) can be readily accessed from the *Main Screen* and displays further client information (Country Born In, Immigration Status, Marital Status, etc.).

ABILITY TO IDENTIFY SPECIAL NEEDS FOR A CLIENT
The system allows users to track if a client needs an Interpreter (and even allows users to print correspondence in Spanish). Demographics allow users to keep track of client traits or special needs to alert all those working on the case (e.g., Non-English Speaking, Not U.S.-born, etc.).

ALIAS
The system allows users to enter an unlimited number of aliases for a client (including street names). Both the original name and alias names will be listed, and can be searched for, in *Name Search* screen. All cases associated with that client will be listed under both the original name and all alias names.

CASE INFORMATION
The *Main Screen* contains all of the vital case-related information for each case including all charges (Top Charge, Lesser Charges, Original Charge (if reduced by GJ), Final Charge), Open Date, Court, Atty, Judge, DA, Disposition and Sentence information, Status (Open or Closed) and Custody Status (both current custody status and a history for each case). The system also allows users to enter any type of case number the office deems important to track (e.g., Indictment#, Docket#, Index#, DIN, etc.) on the *Main Screen*. Additional screens allow the user to enter Arrest Information, Bail Information, Memos pertaining to the case and all individuals associated with a particular case (Case Players i.e., co-defendants, complainants, witnesses, etc.). By recording the Case Players, an office will be able to identify potential conflicts of interest they may have in future cases.

EVENTS
Case-related events and notes can be added to specifically describe all aspects of a case from arraignment through disposition and sentence. In the PDCMS, an event consists of two parts: a **Purpose** (a code which describes a scheduled event such as Preliminary Hearing, Conference, Trial, etc.) and a **Result** (a code which describes the outcome of that event such as Adjourned PH until 12/08/10, Offer/Promise made, etc.). All events (both court events and non-court events) are displayed for each case on the *Main Screen* and can be added, modified and deleted on this screen. Additionally, users can record miscellaneous event information for each event which is displayed below the Events section when that event is highlighted. (See Fig.5.)

Fig. 5: The note "Attorney Tomas Luiz....." is recorded for the 08/30/10 event.

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SIMPLIFIED DATA ENTRY SCREENS
We worked with several New York public defense offices to design the PDCMS data entry screens. These screens were designed specifically for the high case volume of public defense offices and make use of several time saving features for quick entry (hot keys) and data quality (drop down lists, pop up boxes, etc.). Additionally, several functions have been built into the system to facilitate data entry. For example, once client data is entered into the system for one case this data is automatically displayed on the *Initial Entry* screen the next time the user adds a case for that same client. Therefore, basic client data does not need to be re-entered into the system for each new case. The system also contains a feature to "Maintain For Next Entry" which allows the user to more quickly enter multiple cases from the same court or for the same attorney. You can also minimize the entry screens and look up other information, if needed.

ALLOW ONE TIME DATA ENTRY
To accommodate the fact that all PD offices receive information at various stages of the case, information can be entered either on entry screens (when opening the case) or later on the *Main Screen* (when viewing client/case/event information). If information is entered on an entry screen when opening the case, it is later displayed on the *Main Screen*. Therefore, information only needs to be entered into the system once.

ABILITY TO SEARCH FOR CASES BY CASE NUMBER, CLIENT NAME, ETC.
The system allows the user to retrieve cases by Client Name, Alias Name, DOB, SSN, NYSID, Alternate ID, Case# or any additional case-related numbers assigned to the case such as Docket#, Indictment#, Index#, etc. It also allows users to retrieve a certain "range" of cases such as all clients with Last Name beginning with CON and First Name beginning with TON to see all variations of spellings (Tonia Conners, Tonya Connors, etc.). Additionally, the system allows users to search for a case using any combination of search criteria including Attorney, Judge, DA, Court, Open Date, Close Date, Top Charge, Disposition Charge, Case Type, Case Detail, Disposition, Sentence Type or Events.

ABILITY TO IDENTIFY CLIENTS WITH OUTSTANDING WARRANTS
Users can immediately identify clients with outstanding bench warrants (and see the specific Case#) as soon as the client is highlighted on the *Name Search* screen (See Fig. 1.) as well as on the client's *Main Screen*. (See Fig. 2.)

ABILITY TO IDENTIFY CLIENTS NOT BORN IN U.S.
Users can immediately identify clients that are not born in the U.S. as soon as the client is highlighted on the *Name Search* screen as well as on the client's *Main Screen*. Easy access to this information can help staff determine if additional services may need to be provided.

Fig. 6: Not U.S.-born message is listed both on *Name Search* screen and *Main Screen*.

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GENERATE DOCUMENTS THROUGH DATA MERGE

The system can generate documents (letters, motions, etc.) by a data merge with word processing software (Word or WordPerfect). To do this, templates of your standard letters are created with data merge fields inserted in the areas where information would be inserted from the database (e.g., next court date, next court location, client address, judge, attorney, etc.). This feature saves support staff a significant amount of time and can keep clients informed of the progress of their cases. Also available is **View Docs** which allows users to view all documents related to each case (including pictures and other investigative materials) from the *Main Screen* of PDCMS.

GENERATE REPORTS

❑ **Unified Court System (UCS-195 Report)**

Public defense offices are required to file an annual report (UCS-195 Report) with the NYS Office of Court Administration. The system can generate the **UCS-195 Report** in its current form. The **UCS-195 Report** produced by the PDCMS prints each question as it appears on the UCS-195 Report Form, performs all necessary calculations to tally the number of cases to respond to each question, and prints the result to each question.

❑ **Aid to Defense (ATD Report)**

The NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) requires each county receiving Aid to Defense (ATD) funding to file an Aid to Defense (ATD) Report quarterly. The PDCMS has been updated to allow each site to customize this report by entering the specific criteria they are using to determine ATD-eligible cases. The updated ATD Report now takes that information into consideration when creating the report for that site, and the report output now includes new data elements recently requested by DCJS.

❑ **Average Time Till Disposition (by Penal Law) Report**

This report outlines the average number of days cases were open during the requested date range, broken down by Penal Law charges (e.g., Avg. for Assault 3 cases was 6 days, Avg. for Robbery 3 cases was 28 days, etc.).

❑ **Arraignment Percent Disposed Report**

This report outlines the percentage of cases disposed at arraignment (broken down by type of case: F, M, V, O) for each attorney who handled cases during the requested date range.

❑ **Attorney Caseload Report**

This report outlines the caseload of each attorney broken down by felony cases versus non-felony cases (and the ratio of each). It also displays office-wide totals such as the number of attorneys who worked exclusively on felony cases, the number who worked exclusively on non-felony and the number who worked on a mix of both as well as the average number of cases for all attorneys who handled only felony cases, only non-felony and a mix of both.

❑ **Court Appearance Report**

This report tallies and displays the number of court appearances broken down by Top Charge Class (Felony, Misdemeanor, Violation, etc.); Case Type (Criminal, Family, VOP, etc.); Court or Intake Type.

❑ **Data File Report**

This report is run by Disposition Date and crates data extracts (in .csv format). The Case extract outlines which cases were disposed during the requested date range, the type of disposition, the type of case (felony, misdemeanor, other) and whether the case was

assigned to the office post arraignment. The Attorney extract outlines the case attorney for each of these cases and the number of appearances made before case disposition.

❑ **Report Builder**
This feature allows end users to build their own reports. These reports can be viewed exclusively by that user (saved as Personal Report) or by everyone (saved as Office Report). Users can determine the search criteria, sort order and which fields will be displayed on the report. They are also able to decide if the report should contain tallies, sub-tallies, page breaks, etc. Reports can be designed to display only Totals instead of including case details and all reports can be printed, saved as a PDF or exported to Excel. Users can also design "aging" reports to find all cases that have not had activity in a certain period of time and can view the latest activity on the case. Report Builder is a very powerful feature that also allows users to create Grid reports as well as Table reports (4 fields can be broken down & tallied by multiple columns and data can be saved as .csv). (See Fig. 7 & Fig. 8.)

Fig. 7: This *Attorney Weekly Schedule* report is defaulted to always run for "Next Week."

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Event Report

Attorney Weekly Schedule

Printed on Wednesday, November 17, 2010

Open Status: Any
Closed Status: Still open
Event Range: Specific   **From:** 11/15/10 **To:** 11/19/10

Page: 1

Griffin, Catherine

11/15/10 — Monday

Nassau County Court

Purpose	Time	Top Charge	Case#	Client Name	NYSID
Motion Due	9:00am	ATT MURDER 1 (AFV)	10-45	Loking, Christine	11225478Q

Total for Nassau County Court: 1

Town Of Beekman

Purpose	Time	Top Charge	Case#	Client Name	NYSID
Conference	9:00am	ROB 1 (BFV)	10-37	Connors, Victor	66599897W
Next Court Date	9:00am	AUO 2 (UM)	10-22	Coose, Joseph	8833948W

Total for Town Of Beekman: 2

Total for 11/15/10: 3

11/16/10 — Tuesday

Long Beach City Court

Purpose	Time	Top Charge	Case#	Client Name	NYSID
Next Court Date	9:00am	PETIT LARCENY (AM)	10-74	Green, Nathan R.	0188347Y
Next Court Date	11:00am	RAPE 1 (BFV)	10-10	Kulbido, Jonathan	55221257Q

Total for Long Beach City Court: 2

Total for 11/16/10: 2

11/17/10 — Wednesday

D2

Purpose	Time	Top Charge	Case#	Client Name	NYSID
Hearing	9:00am	GRAND LARCENY 2 (CF)	09-8	Volk, Mariah	88774451Q
Hearing	10:00am	ASSAULT 1 (BFV)	08-321	Kelsey, George	77441121Q

Total for D2: 2

Long Beach City Court

Purpose	Time	Top Charge	Case#	Client Name	NYSID
Conference	9:00am	PETIT LARCENY (AM)	10-33	Dols, David	9885247Q

Total for Long Beach City Court: 1

Total for 11/17/10: 3

Fig. 8: This is the display of the first page of the *Attorney Weekly Schedule* report . This can be printed or a PDF can be created to email to the attorney.

❑ **Advanced Search Report**
This Report offers broad searching capabilities to find cases by any combination of fields, including: Open Date, Closed Date, Event Date, Status (Open or Closed), Case Type, Case Detail, Top Charge, Disposition Charge, Disposition, Sentence Type, Event (Purpose, Result), Court, Attorney, Judge, DA, Custody Status, Sex, Race or Ethnicity. This Report can be run based on Open Date, Closed Date or Event Date and, since it allows users to search by any combination of fields, it can help users identify patterns and trends in the data. For each search, the report displays the number of days each case has been opened, the average length of time for all cases found in that search, the total number of Cases found and the total number of Clients found. (See Fig. 9 and Fig. 10.)

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Fig. 9: Advanced Search, Case Report

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Fig. 10: Advanced Search, Event Report

- **Attorney Reassignment Report**
  This Report allows you to quickly reassign an attorney's entire caseload (or entire caseload in a particular court) to another attorney. It displays all open cases for a specific Attorney, Court or Judge (or any combination) and allows you to select some or all cases and then reassign them to another attorney or to several other attorneys.

- **Scheduling Report**
  This Report can help you to quickly assign an attorney's cases to one or several other attorneys if an attorney is sick or unexpectedly out of the office for the day. First it will display all of the cases for the sick attorney and will allow you to drill down to determine what other attorneys are also covering cases in those courts, and will even show you how many other cases each of the other attorneys are covering that day to help you determine which attorneys may be able to take these additional cases.

- **Client Report**
  This Report allows you to find and tally clients based on the Client's age (either as of Open Date or Current Date) as well as Demographics (Veteran, Non-English Speaking, etc.).

- **Caseload Summary Report**
  This Report allows users to compile case statistics not found in the **ATD Quarterly Progress Report** and **UCS-195 Report**. For example, it calculates and prints totals for all open cases (type of case), all plea cases (by whether they began as felonies and then were reduced to lesser felonies or misdemeanors, etc.), all trials (by results), all conflicts, etc. It can be run by any date range.

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❑ **Word Search Reports**
This Report allows users to use word string search to find all cases with the same Arrest Location, Memo information and/or Sentence Notes information. (See Fig. 11.)

Fig. 11: A word search report based on memos, searching for the word "gun."

❑ **Appeal Reports**
The Appeal Reports include different variations of Aging Reports (by Conviction Date, Assignment Date, Transcript Filed Date) and various combinations of Master List Reports (Alphabetical Listing of All Open Appeal Cases [Brief Not Filed], Alphabetical Listing of All Open Appeal Cases [Brief Filed], Brief Attorney Assignment Reports, etc.).

❑ **Dashboard**
At the click of a button attorneys can quickly see their upcoming events (top of screen) and pending cases (bottom of screen) on one screen without having to run a report. (Fig. 12 was run on 02/09/16.) Users can double click a case and go to the *Main Screen* to see all of the details regarding the case. All columns can be sorted. Both sections can be printed.

Fig. 12: Dashboard screen lets attorneys quickly see pending caseload and upcoming activities.

DATABASE CLEANUP/MODIFICATION

❑ **Move Cases**
If users determine the same name is displayed in the database more than once (due to duplicate entry), users can move all cases and case-related information (players, etc.) from one of the names to the other and then delete the duplicate name.

❑ **Delete Name**
Users can delete a name from the database after all of the cases associated with that name have either been moved to another name or deleted from the system.

❑ **Change Codes**
Users with administrator rights can globally change codes throughout the database.

❑ **Link Names**
Users with administrative rights can run programs to clean up the database using Link Names to automatically link client names based on matching DOB, SSN or other criteria.

SECURITY OF DATA

The PDCMS allows an office to assign a level of security to each user. The system has been designed with five easily customizable levels of security (described below). The program can dictate which screens, and even which fields, can be viewed on each level. Additionally, another level of security is used to access the data tables.

Level 1
With this level of security, users are allowed to view, edit, add, and delete information on all screens in the application. They can also maintain the database by utilizing all features in the Control menu (e.g., Link Names, Delete a case from the database, etc.). In addition, users can maintain all dropdown lists and are allowed to edit, add, and delete codes on all Maintenance lists as well as modify system defaults by accessing the Settings screen. Users with this level of security can also assign User Groups and ID's. This level of rights is usually given to the Systems Administrator.

Level 2
With this level of security, users are allowed to view, edit, add, and delete information on all screens in the application. They can add names, cases, events, memos, and players to the database as well as create and print letters and all reports. This level of rights is usually given to staff that will be entering the majority of information into the database but will not be maintaining the database.

Level 3
With this level of security, users are allowed to view and edit information on all almost all screens in the application. However, they cannot add names or cases to the system. Users are allowed to add and edit Events, Memos, and Case Players but cannot delete Players. They can access and utilize all options on the Schedule screen as well as create and print letters and most reports. This level of rights is usually given to staff that will mainly enter Events and Memos into the system, and view and/or print other information in the database.

Level 4

This level of rights is usually given to employees that will mainly enter Memos into the system and view all other information. With this level of security, users are allowed to add, edit, and delete Memos. They may also print letters, create and print designated reports.

Level 5

This level of rights allows users to view information in the system. These users cannot add or modify information. They also don't usually have access to run any reports.

USE OF SUPPORT TABLES FOR MOST OR ALL MULTIPLE ENTRY FIELDS

A single table (divided into titled sections) holds all administrative aspects of the system and can easily be accessed by the system administrator if modifications are necessary. This table controls the settings for the automatic generation of letters, label preferences, Appeal and UCS-195 Report settings, etc. Additionally, all dropdown lists can be maintained (add, modify, delete items) in one central location (Maintenance).