



ADMINISTRATIVE CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED STATES

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Electronic Case Systems in Agency Adjudication

What is case management?

Every federal agency involved in adjudication must have a system for maintaining official case records and tracking cases as they move through the system. In addition to maintaining an accurate evidentiary record, agencies typically record case information useful for analyzing and improving their systems, such as:

- When cases were received;
- How long they remained pending;
- When they were finally adjudicated;
- The ultimate outcome of the adjudication; and
- Other relevant information.

In the past, agencies maintained case records and other information in paper format in filing cabinets.

What are the benefits of electronic case management?

Maintaining paper records was costly in terms of storage space, mailing fees, and salaries for the large numbers of people required to store, track, and retrieve the records. Additionally, records, documents, and audio recordings of administrative proceedings were occasionally misfiled, misplaced, or misrouted, causing delays in processing and requiring the reconstruction of records or sometimes re-adjudication of issues.

A well-designed electronic case management system (eCMS) can reduce processing time, reduce overhead costs, and improve customer interactions.

What is an electronic case management system?

An eCMS usually consists of up to three distinct components:

- Electronic filing by all parties;
- Internal case management and processing; and
- Case analysis and resolution.

Characteristics of electronic filing

In part a result of requirements in the [21st Century Integrated Digital Experience Act](#), many agencies provide access to some functions of their eCMSes to public users, particularly parties to adjudications, representatives and their staff, intervenors, and other interested persons. These tools may allow users to:

- File documents, such as evidence, arguments, motions, or other materials directly into the agency's eCMS;
- Interact with the agency online and receive information, such as hearing dates, case statuses, or other key adjudication elements stored in the eCMS, as well as make changes to addresses or other key information; and
- Complete online forms and templates to enter data directly into the eCMS.

Characteristics of electronic case processing

Electronic case management and processing refers to using the eCMS for more than just holding case records, but also organizing adjudicative workflows and other internal maintenance of cases while they pend agency action.

An agency eCMS should:

- Allow access to case records for all parties and agency employees who may need to work on the case, without a single case needing to be transferred between parties or employees;
- Manage case workflow, so that the eCMS alerts agency employees when certain tasks must be accomplished; and
- Securely protect records held by the agency.

An eCMS can provide a wealth of information useful to improve the overall management and performance of the adjudicative system, increasing efficiency and timeliness of adjudication.

Characteristics of electronic case analysis

Agencies with an eCMS can collect significantly more data than just what is required for management and processing of cases. Agencies can collect records of each employee who reviewed the case, and what actions they took, as well as which adjudicators decided the case and how. Particularly advanced systems can record case issues or other key characteristics, or actions taken by appellate systems, reviewing courts, or quality assurance components.

Agencies can use this data to detect common errors, policy ambiguities, or decisional inconsistencies, which they can remedy through training, policy clarification, or regulatory change, thereby increasing quality and efficiency.

Additional Resources

ACUS Rec. [2023-4](#), *Online Processes in Agency Adjudication*
Matthew A. Gluth, [Online Processes in Agency Adjudication](#) (2023)
ACUS Rec. [2021-10](#), *Quality Assurance Systems in Agency Adjudication*
Daniel E. Ho, David Marcus & Gerald K. Ray, [Quality Assurance Systems in Agency Adjudication: Emerging Practices and Insights](#) (2021)
ACUS Rec. [2018-3](#), *Electronic Case Management in Federal Administrative Adjudication*
Felix F. Bajandas & Gerald K. Ray, [Implementation and Use of Electronic Case Management Systems in Federal Agency Adjudication](#) (2018)