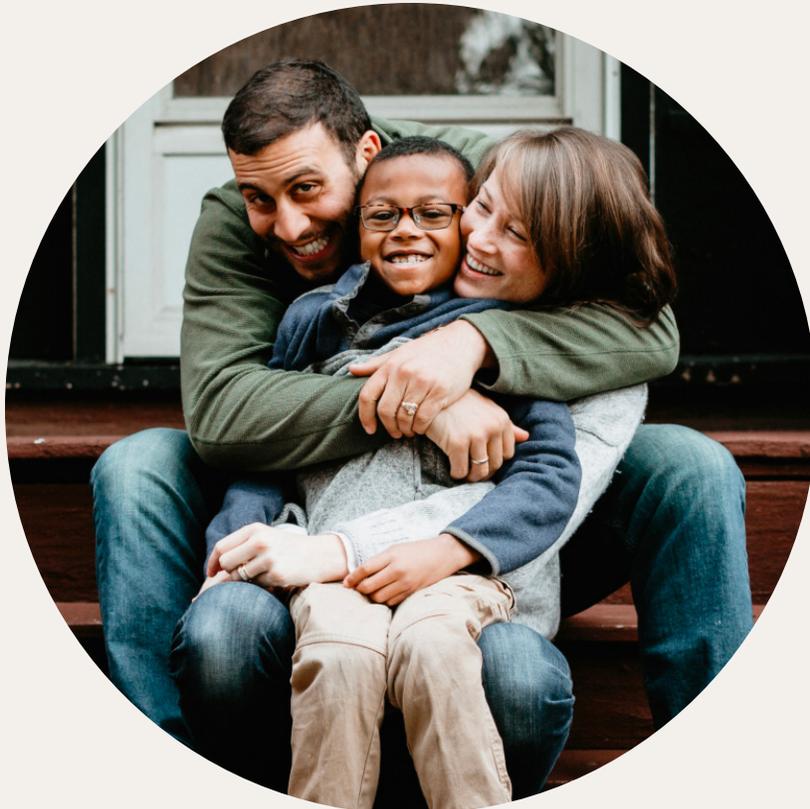# Cúram and AI:
How we're making ambitious use cases attainable

Liz Schnitter
Product Lead, Cúram

Mark Curtin
Software Engineering Leader, Cúram

In an era marked by complex challenges, health and human services (HHS) agencies are navigating everything from the lingering effects of public health crises to evolving work requirements for programs like SNAP and TANF. Against this backdrop, the transformative potential of artificial intelligence (AI) is becoming increasingly evident, as new applications like generative AI emerge with the potential to offer unparalleled opportunities for efficiency and personalization. Given these circumstances, agencies are wondering how they can harness the power of AI to help navigate these complex times.

The evolution of AI in HHS and child welfare

The application of AI in HHS, particularly in Child Welfare systems, has evolved at an astonishing pace. A concept that was largely theoretical just a few years ago is now actively marketed as a tool to aid social workers, healthcare providers, and policymakers in making more informed and timely decisions.

While AI can provide valuable insights and assistance, it is important to say upfront it must not replace the human touch and empathy that is critical while providing compassionate services to those in need. The importance of human oversight and ultimate decision-making can't be overstated and should not be replaced by AI. Helping improve people's lives is what government is all about, and any new technology should only support that mission.

Integrating AI into agency workflows and processes is more than a technical exercise. It brings to the forefront complex ethical, regulatory, and operational dilemmas that require nuanced consideration. Navigating this transformative landscape, HHS business and technical leaders must have a holistic understanding of AI's strengths and limitations.

Technological innovation should not divert focus from the pressing human needs that HHS agencies aim to address – rather, it should look to supplement or accelerate existing processes to drive improved outcomes for the people the agency serves. Generic solutions may not deliver the best results for government agencies. In partnering with technology vendors to implement AI, teams can always refer back to the core mission: to provide equitable, effective, and compassionate services.

Though the potential for AI is dazzling, this innovation is not without its pitfalls and needs to be managed with care. As we prioritize addressing real-world needs over being early adopters of new technologies, agencies should be mindful of common pitfalls such as data privacy, algorithmic bias, AI hallucinations, and the imperative for human oversight. And as AI matures, HHS and Child Welfare systems can expand upon the potential use cases, invest in ethical frameworks, and prioritize continuous education for both business and technical teams to improve prompt engineering skills. This approach will ensure that AI implementation is responsible, effective, and trustworthy.

It's exciting to consider how AI has already transformed other industries and imagine its impact in human services with the right planning and partnerships.

The Cúram ethos: Traceable, auditable, and targeted for casework productivity

Cúram's approach to AI is one we've taken with all new innovations: embrace the potential, advise caution on the inevitable risks, and work out the bugs through rigorous testing to ensure it's ready and validated for use within Health and Human Services.

The Cúram ethos is centered around "care and protection"; that's what our name means in Old Irish. Our approach to AI aligns with this ethos—to ensure that no harm comes to the people in need whom we serve. We're taking a measured approach to AI, starting with thinking through how it can be most impactful for government programs and agencies, from developers to caseworkers to citizens.

The principles we insist on for AI—traceable, auditable, and explainable—are the same principles we've always considered in Cúram. Our eligibility and entitlements engine, the heart of the Cúram platform, is reliable due to its traceable and explainable outputs.

Users must be able to review the factors that influenced an eligibility determination or an AI-generated insight equally; without this trust, the AI would sow confusion and uncertainty. When delivering social services, managing the sensitive care required in child welfare, or navigating the end-to-end benefits journey for vulnerable populations, neither caseworkers nor citizens should be uncertain about why critical decisions are made. Data integrity is paramount.

Given our focus on incorporating trustworthy innovations to support agencies, Cúram's priorities for AI include narrow but impactful use cases for caseworkers, agencies, and citizens: day-to-day administrative support, reducing implementation costs, and minimizing bias in data—all to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of benefits delivery and child welfare programs. We aim to create AI applications that carry less risk for you while still making the social services more efficient and valuable for everyone.

Use cases for now and tomorrow

We are working internally to develop realistic, value-adding applications for AI, particularly generative AI, that we aim to pilot with agencies in the future. Some of these use cases are applications we already support; others are more forward-looking and aspirational.

All use cases would be supported by Cúram's traceable, explainable AI principles. Currently, we are excited about the following near-term use cases while continuing to explore additional ideas with our AI workgroup, which includes legal, security, privacy, business, and technical leadership:

– **Practice Help in Context:** Providing a summary of policy and practice guidelines as they apply to specific cases or process steps. This application integrates with the UI and offers context-sensitive policy query suggestions. For example, when a user is scheduled for a monthly contact, Cúram can automatically provide a summary of related policy items.

– **Training Materials:** Generating and summarizing job training materials. This enhances the content development and delivery process to make creating training materials from custom code and changes to policy and practice artifacts more efficient.

– **Peer Review:** Reviewing case notes for adherence to practice guidelines. This aspirational use case could position the AI as a peer review guide for caseworkers' notes before supervisor review. By providing early feedback, the AI can help train new social workers, reduce feedback cycles, and avoid the need for building purpose-specific wizards for different types of case notes.

– **Key Concepts:** Summarization of intake reports to surface key concepts such as alleged perpetrators, victims, reporters, and collateral contacts, to ensure the caseworker does not miss any key information captured in the unstructured notes.

Conclusion

AI is here to stay. Now is a great time to explore its benefits for social services: to speak with trusted partner about how to best deploy it in targeted ways that can improve outcomes while taking a balanced approach to minimize potential risks. Let's discuss the most impactful opportunities for AI but also allow time for the technology to mature to be able to address the more ambitious use cases. Mistakes in human services are costly, often impacting the lives and well-being of children and families. We are planning for the future, and we hope you will join us on this AI journey.

About Cúram

Cúram, offered by Merative, has over 25 years of experience helping national, regional, and local governments transform the delivery of social services, empower caseworkers, and help individuals and families access the programs they need to achieve better outcomes. Used in 12 countries and jurisdictions, available in 7 languages, and supporting over 970 government programs, the Cúram platform connects benefits administrators, social services agencies, and case managers, to serve and protect 187 million citizens annually.

Learn more at merative.com/curam.

About Merative

Merative is a data, analytics and technology partner for the health industry, including providers, health plans, employers, life sciences companies and governments. With trusted technology and human expertise, Merative works with clients to drive real progress. Merative helps clients orient information and insights around the people they serve to improve decision-making and performance. Merative, formerly IBM Watson Health, became a new standalone company as part of Francisco Partners in 2022.

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