

Family Service of Eastern Nova Scotia Sydney, Nova Scotia, Canada



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Introduction

With eight locations spread across Nova Scotia and Cape Breton, and a large rural client base to serve, Family Service of Eastern Nova Scotia (FSENS) knows the importance of having a cloud-based client information system to let staff communicate securely, while allowing them to access client files wherever and whenever they need.

Founded in 1969, the nonprofit organization was using paper files and filing cards to track client information when they selected Penelope as their case management system in 2011. Since then, Penelope has been implemented agency-wide, and has helped FSENS improve internal communication and culture, easily track statistics for program management, and find significant time savings for staff in multiple areas.

We spoke with Bridget Revell of FSENS to learn more about the organization’s experience working with Athena Software, using Penelope across multiple sites and programs, and how the system has helped the organization reach its initial goal of having a “secure, effective, electronic way to store client information.”

What was your deployment experience like?

Penelope integrated fairly smoothly into our organization’s work. We developed a plan that allowed a slow transition from paper to Penelope, with a target date by which all client information was managed in Penelope. Over time we made adjustments in how we used the system to meet agency needs. The help services offered through Penelope have been invaluable in allowing us to grow and develop with Penelope as new needs emerge at our agency or new features are added.

What issues has Penelope helped your organization solve?

We are an agency with eight main office locations located over a large geographic and mostly rural area. In addition, we have staff who work off site in other locations.

Penelope has allowed us to standardize practice and increase communication between locations. Easy communication between staff across the agency facilitates development of a single, supportive agency culture.

In addition, it has allowed us to locate some services in specific locations while continuing to make them available throughout the large area we cover. Being able to access Penelope means that staff can provide coverage for each other between locations without needing to bring in additional supports.

Penelope has allowed us to simply collect robust statistics that can guide program direction, staffing, and have contributed to research. Using Penelope creatively has also allowed us to build in several human resource functions, which has again simplified and centralized processes, easily making information available for all that need it.



Family Service of Eastern Nova Scotia has been using Penelope to help families across Cape Breton and Eastern Nova Scotia since 2011.

How would you explain Penelope to someone who has never used it?



Penelope is a computerized database that allows for creation, management, and storage of client data across the organization. Penelope is a robust framework that can be tailored to an individual agency's specific needs. While allowing for complex set-ups and processes, Penelope is also simple and self-evident, allowing for easy use with minimal training.

What measurable benefits have you seen since implementing Penelope?

Bringing in Penelope allowed us to centralize our intake processes, reducing staff allocations to that service by about 25% and allowing us to reallocate those services to direct client contact. The agency has also been able to stop using Clerical Relief when the Administrative Assistants are out of office, leading to savings which can again be allocated to other program needs.

Would you recommend Penelope to other organizations?

Absolutely! Penelope offers a secure, simple, effective way to support work with clients. It has allowed us to standardize processes and allows offices and workers to support the work across our agency in a way that was not possible before. Features such as building form letters within Penelope and Feedback Informed Treatment processes facilitate effective communication with clients with the goal of improving the service we offer them. Creative use of Penelope has allowed us to integrate human resources tasks, creating a further time savings and paperwork reduction.

Having Penelope available within our agency has allowed us to support an agency identity and culture across all offices in a very large geographic area.

A few key benefits

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