

Summer 2010

## EHR Collaborative Comes to New Jersey

**N**JAMHAA is delighted to announce that it has entered into an agreement with Qualifacts Systems Inc., a longstanding member of NJAMHAA's Technology Council, to offer Qualifacts' CareLogic Electronic Health Record (EHR) solution as a choice for its members. This partnership represents the start of NJAMHAA's initiative to develop additional business opportunities by partnering with vendors who desire to collaborate with NJAMHAA members to bring about lower cost though joint implementations of software and services.

Recognizing that the mental health and substance abuse providers it serves must implement a certified EHR by 2015, and consistent with its ongoing commitment to provide innovative, cost-effective solutions, NJAMHAA selected Qualifacts as its first EHR partner. The decision to partner with Qualifacts was based on Qualifacts meeting four criteria: (1) proven success with electronic health record implementations across the country, (2) the ability to deliver a core New Jersey system that could be configured to meet each provider's unique program needs, (3) experience and a track record of success in New Jersey, and (4) a collaborative implementation model that ensured members could get a true enterprise solution at a substantial costs savings versus what they would incur if they implemented an EHR independently.

"NJAMHAA's members face extraordinary challenges in attempting to meet the increasing needs of their consumers and to comply with state and federal regulations. By working collaboratively, seeking guidance and support from NJAMHAA and finding the right technology solutions, they will be better equipped to respond to these challenges," said Debra Wentz, PhD, CEO of NJAMHAA. "Electronic Health Records will prove to be a money and time saver, while enabling our members to operate more efficiently and effectively."

June Noto, Director of NJAMHAA's Information Technology Project states, "Over the last several years, Qualifacts has been a very active member in our association's Technology Council. They have had numerous opportunities to demonstrate their software which has garnered the attention and interest of our provider members. We believe that an EHR collaborative provides cost saving opportunities for our members and this seemed like the next logical step in assisting them."



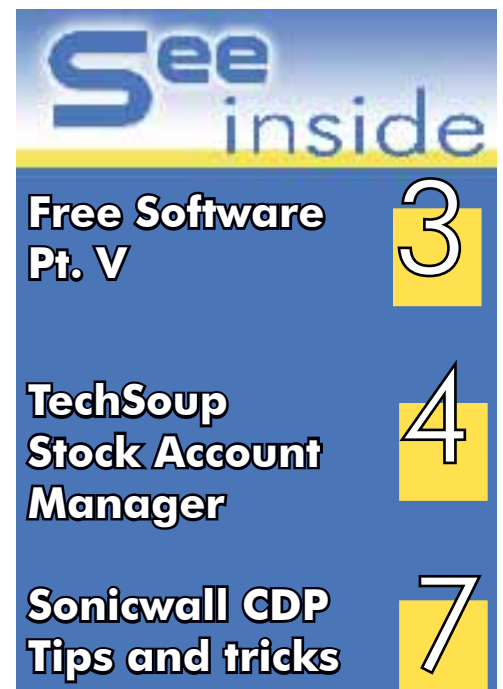
## Unlimited Opportunities for Collaboration between IT Vendors with EHR Software and NJAMHAA Members

**I**n addition to NJAMHAA's development of a business relationship with Qualifacts Systems, Inc., the IT Project has conducted significant outreach to other EHR software vendors and has extended invitations to these vendors to partner with us and create opportunities to bring affordable enterprise level software to the small and mid-size community mental health and addiction treatment providers. For example, in recent weeks NJAMHAA has entered into discussions with DeFran Systems, Inc. and Foothold Technology about collaborative opportunities that may benefit NJAMHAA members. As active members of the Technology Council, both vendors have witnessed the slow adoption of EHR solutions in New Jersey. NJAMHAA is hopeful that with collaboration, significant progress will be made in strengthening our EHR systems.

As recently covered in NJAMHAA Newswire, DeFran Systems, Inc. has extended special pricing on their Evolv-CS to all NJAMHAA members. Additional discounts are available for multiple agency purchases. For more information, please e-mail DeFran Systems, Inc. at [info@defran.com](mailto:info@defran.com).

Foothold Technology has also joined with NJAMHAA to create opportunities for members. Foothold Technology's AWARDS Homeless

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From the Director - Bits and Bytes

When I starting working for NJAMHAA eight years ago as the Director of the IT Project, my goal was to carry out the mission of the project and ensure that providers who needed technical assistance had an objective venue to seek guidance and support.

Over those years, the IT Project has grown and increased services to more provider agencies and other non-profits struggling to implement technology. Our staff has become an integral part of the successful operation of many organizations. Some of our agencies have no technical staff, and thus, rely on the IT Project for guidance and effective implementation of technology solutions.

The IT Project has helped agencies with operating systems, the implementation of local and wide area networks, virtual private networks, upgraded and supported staff through numerous versions of MS Office, recommended and installed hardware and backup solutions, website development and much more. The IT Project has become a valuable resource for finding cost effective solutions for all NJAMHAA members who choose to utilize our services. We have been able to create partnerships with IT vendors to ensure that our providers receive the best prices and highest level of customer service. We also regularly outreach for vendor participation on NJAMHAA's Technology Council, which allows us to be an even more valuable resource to our providers by familiarizing ourselves with a greater number of products and services.

As our providers continue to implement new technologies, they are learning first-hand about the efficiencies and long-term cost savings that can be realized. The latest technology to be highlighted as an efficiency builder and cost saver would be the electronic healthcare record (EHR). Numerous articles in magazines, blogs and newspapers, all reference the benefits of EHRs; however, the same articles also reference the high-cost associated with EHR implementation.

A 2009 survey of over 500 agencies and organizations in the human services field cited cost as being the main barrier to EHR implementation. Less than half of all behavioral health services providers surveyed were using EHRs. The survey found that the human services sector was not implementing EHRs at the same rate as those organizations in the primary health field. The survey also showed that the primary healthcare field generally spends twice as much as behavioral healthcare on Health IT services and three times more on IT employees.

When NJAMHAA was presented with an opportunity to assist with implementing EHR software for our providers at a competitive price, we determined that the development

of such business relationships with our IT vendors would result in significant advantages for our members.

The IT Project is very excited about these new opportunities, including the recently announced agreement between NJAMHAA and Qualifacts Systems, Inc. to offer CareLogic software in a collaborative purchasing model to members looking to reduce their cost and risk by sharing implementations among themselves. By sharing implementation costs and some processes, providers can reduce their costs significantly. We believe that the IT Project will be instrumental in assisting our agencies with the implantation process, especially for smaller providers with very limited resources.

Please review this issue's cover story to learn more about the NJAMHAA/Qualifacts collaborative and others that will present new models for cost effective EHR adoption and implementation



June A. Noto

**“ As our providers continue to implement new technologies, they are learning first-hand about the efficiencies and long-term cost savings that can be realized.”**

# The IT Project Offers Unbeatable Values!

## Rate Card

### Bundled Services

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Web site development	Call us for pricing
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# “Freedom and Flexibility”... Journey or Destination?

By Kaitlyn T. McCarthy

IT Project Software Trainer / Computer Specialist

## Microsoft Releases Office 2010 Beta



Microsoft Office just celebrated a major birthday and chose to celebrate its quarter century mark by announcing and releasing its beta version of the 2010 Office Suite (also known to some as Office 14, going right from 12 to 14 for ‘obvious’ reasons). Office 2010 promises improved compatibility, workability, the nurturing of teamwork,

utilization of the power of web applications and expanded functionality.

After reviewing the promises offered and balancing them against the realities experienced in practice, I found a number of the changes to be of value and worth considering.

### Overview

A beta version of Office 2010 is available at [www.microsoft.com](http://www.microsoft.com) for free, the actual release date of 2010 is slated for June. Please be aware that the download is slow, even over the fastest Internet connections, and the installation can be a bit cumbersome. Additionally, in order to make my system ready to run Office 2010, I had to install an extra gig of memory. However, the download includes a “slick” tool, which scans your system for hardware and software compatibility issues.

Office 2010 is being made available in four retail versions, as noted in the chart below. Something new in this version is the offering of “product keys,” which are more cost effective than the full product and only work to ‘unlock’ preloaded versions of Office 2010 on newly purchased computers. This concept makes an assumption that computer manufacturers will install Office 2010 on new purchases.

### Getting Started

If you are installing Office 2010 beta for the first time, the default settings will upgrade your existing copy of Microsoft Office. You can, however, customize this setting and install Office 2010 alongside an older version of Office. This is something new and I plan to test this and back out 2010 to see what affect it has on prior release files; this will be part of the next article.

### Basic system requirements

The requirements for Office 2010, as shown below, are basically the same as for Office 2007, with a few modifications. Again, if you run the built-in checker from the Microsoft site when you download the Beta version, it will do much of the compatibility scanning for you.

### Common Improvements and Changes

Many items have been improved, re-vamped, or introduced in Office 2010. In this section, I will review the major changes and upgrades that affect the entire product suite. In subsequent issues of *Bits and Bytes*, the IT Project will review each application and component within the Office 2010 suite.

- **Versioning** – Available in both a 32- and 64-bit version – this takes advantage of processing speed, which is most evident in Excel when working with large spreadsheets.
- **‘Ribbon Interface’** – The interface, introduced in Office 2007, is now available across all applications and can be customized and minimized.
- **PDF support** – all programs include built-in PDF writing capabilities.
- **Printing enhancements** – the dialog box has been improved to allow changes to page set-ups on one screen.
- **New fonts** – made just for Office 2010.
- **Image Editing** – Directly edit images within Office applications, without any intermediary applications.
- **Windows Live SkyDrive** – Online availability to access documents “in a cloud” and via mobile devices – upload documents to a Windows Live SkyDrive account and access them from any computer, including Macs (SkyDrive offers 25GB of free online storage).
- **Web Apps** – Businesses can host web apps on SharePoint servers, which can be fully featured on any browser.
- **Free online versions** – Free online versions of Word, Excel, PowerPoint and OneNote, which work with Internet Explorer, Mozilla Firefox, Google Chrome and Apple Safari .
- **Office Mobile 2010** – will also be released for Windows Phones running Windows Mobile 6.5
- **Corroboration** – Allows staff corroboration and information via SharePoint infrastructure as well as many social networks.
- **‘Role’ centric functionality** – In lieu of feature centric functionality, “roles” are considered – e.g. if you are an accountant, you will need tools to best explain your data graphically to a non-accounting audience.
- **‘Backstage’** – This view replaces the “File” button and gives expanded functionality and control over most aspects of files, including sharing and security. This view provides a visual outline of your file so you can browse, sort and find what you need quickly. It is designed with three panes to provide file management, design and preview options.
- **Graphic Enhancements** – Background removal tool for graphic objects across the suite.
- **Letter styling** – Applications have features to utilize font ligatures and topography tools.
- **SmartArt templates** – across all applications
- **Screen capture** – a sophisticated screen capture tool is built in.
- **Collaboration functions** – great file sharing, permissioning and other collaborative tools are available within each application ensuring that functions are in place to encourage team projects and input.
- **Administrative functions** – recover work that was never saved and thought to be “lost.”
- **Translation Tools** – Translation is now available in Word, Excel, PowerPoint and OneNote with a nice little ‘mini-translator’ box, which completes “on-the-spot” translations. Microsoft partnered with over 175 vendors to make the most assistive tools possible, with high-visibility color schemes and special keyboards.

# Hard Drive Architecture:



A Primer

*IDE, SATA, SCSI, ATA, and SAS are the main terms that are used when referring to hard drives in computers. As IT professionals, we use these terms all the time, but how many of us know what each term means and what the differences are between each acronym. After reading this article, you should have a better understanding of each term and how each relates to your IT system.*

To begin, these terms can be broken down into two types of connectors – serial and parallel. The parallel connectors are IDE (which is also known as ATA or Parallel ATA) and SCSI. This leaves SAS and SATA as the serial connections.

## **The Parallel Connections**

For a long time, the only way to connect a hard drive was through a Parallel bus using the SCSI (Small Computers System Interface) and IDE (Integrated Drive Electronics) interfaces. We use the term parallel because each interface transfers bits from a word of data across the bus at the same time. This may seem efficient, but each interface has serious limitations.

### *IDE*

The IDE connector is familiar to almost everyone. It is a 40 pin ribbon cable that was originally designed in 1986 by Western Digital. It is still used today, even in computers that have more up-to-date connectors, mostly for CD-ROM and DVD Drives.

The IDE interface is limited to 18 inches of cable, so an IDE drive would be most useful in internal drives (HD, CD-ROM, DVD, and tape). An IDE device can transfer at speeds up to 100 MB/S in newer versions. Another serious limitation is that an IDE device can handle only two devices per channel. With many computers utilizing IDE technology, this limited the computer to four- total devices.

A major pitfall when setting up an IDE device was that a jumper had to tell the computer how to address the device. This means that you had to physically insert a jumper to set the device for master, slave, or single operation. Later devices had a cable select option, but to use this you had to make sure that you had the cables set properly.

### *SCSI*

The SCSI (Small Computer Systems Interface) is a set of standards used to transfer data between computers and peripheral devices. The SCSI interface has definite advantages over IDE. Most notably that it can transmit data over much longer distances – up to 9 feet in later versions – and it can support 8 devices per channel. Because of the cable distance it allows and the number of devices that it can support, SCSI is much more suited to connecting external devices and hard drives in a server, which was the primary use for SCSI devices. Transmit speeds run from 80 MB/S up to 640 MB/S for Ultra 2 Wide SCSI devices.

The major pitfalls with SCSI are related to addressing and termination. When setting up SCSI devices, you must be sure that no two devices on the same channel have the same identification. This can be accomplished by the use of jumpers or switches. Because it uses a daisy chain principle, the last device must have a terminator connected to it in order to tell the computer to not look for any further devices. On later devices the daisy chain principle was replaced, to some extent, by autosensing the termination. Unlike IDE, which as we discussed earlier is still being used, the introduction of the newer technologies is limiting the usefulness of the Parallel SCSI Bus.

## **The Serial Interface**

The limitations of the parallel interface led to the development of two new technologies beginning in 2003. These newer technologies, SATA (Serial ATA) and SAS (Serial Attached SCSI), utilize a single data stream to move packets across the bus. Because of this data transfer ability, these devices can move data much faster on a smaller cable. The other advantage of this technology is that SAS and SATA, in native mode, are hot swappable. They also are easier to configure because you do not have to choose device numbers, master and slave identifications or terminations.

### *SATA*

Serial ATA has rapidly become the dominant interface on new personal computers. The transfer rate of SATA starts at 1.5 GB/S, which compared to an IDE device's top-end of 100 MB/S, is significantly faster. Higher throughput speed means that data can be delivered to the CPU and to the user much more efficiently.

The SATA interface uses a smaller cable. At first, this may not seem significant, but as we all know, the enemy of a computer is heat. By having a smaller cable airflow in the computer is increased and heat can be dissipated much more efficiently. The maximum cable length for SATA disks is approximately 3 feet and because it is hot swappable, it is better suited for external use than IDE (parallel ATA).

# Windows 7 Upgrade Help

As you may know, Microsoft recently released a new version of its operating system (OS) called Windows 7. Like you, I was curious why it is named Windows 7. Well after a bit of research, I learned that years ago Microsoft decided it would be a good idea to name products after the year the product was released – Windows 95, Windows 98, Office 2003, Office 2007, etc. However, Microsoft came to the realization that after a few years you may ask yourself something like: Self, it's 2010 and I'm still using Office 2003, maybe I should upgrade?

As a result, Microsoft tried to change this line of thinking, beginning with Windows XP –

the XPerience – followed by Windows Vista. So, we now have Windows 7. Why 7, you ask? Well, perhaps it is because Windows 7 is the 7<sup>th</sup> generation of the Windows OS. First, there was Version 0 (V0) DOS, followed by V1 Windows, then V2 Windows 286, followed by V3 Windows 386 and the birth of Windows NT – Networking Technology, then V4 – Windows 9x and ME, followed by V5 Windows – 200x and XP, then V6 – Windows Vista, and finally V7 – Windows 7. So, there you have it a little walk down Windows memory lane. Now if I could only go back to the time when Version 1 was released and invest a few grand in Microsoft... By the way, go to the start button click on run and type CMD, click ok and look at what is above the “C:>.” Did you notice what version of Windows you are using?

Now, let's take a quick look at what Windows 7 offers. Among the benefits of Windows 7 are improved program and hardware compatibility, it is optimized for multi-core CPU's, it is more stable and faster than Vista and XP. Windows 7 also contains improved search functionality, more flexible security options, customizable and more controllable settings for pop-up notifications as well as improved power management for laptops and easier wireless setup. For remote computers or stand alone systems, Windows 7 includes a better backup and restore tool and a new feature called “Problem Steps Recorder.” Check out <http://windows.microsoft.com/en-US/windows7/How-do-I-use-Problem-Steps-Recorder> for more information about this feature.

Before you run out and purchase a computer with Windows 7, or upgrade your current computer to the new OS, remember that this is a complex undertaking. You will need to review your needs to find out if changing over to Windows 7 offers enough benefits to make it worth the expense. You will need to plan your change over and invest time in researching whether implementing Windows 7 makes sense for you. You should take the time to test it out and determine if it is worth it to you and your agency. This article may not give you all the answers, but hopefully it will provide a starting point and direct you to resources that you can utilize in your analysis.

First, you should know that there are three major flavors of Windows 7 – Home Premium, Professional and Ultimate. Businesses users should not consider the home addition, just like XP and Vista home additions. Based on the type of computer on which you plan to install Windows 7, there are two choices to be considered, the 32-bit version or, if you have a 64 bit processor, you can install either the 32 bit or 64 bit version.

Second, the minimum hardware requirements for Windows 7 are: a 1 GHz, or faster processor; 1 GB of RAM for the 32 bit version or 2 GB for the 64 bit version; and you will need at least 20 GB of free hard disk space to install Windows 7. To check your hardware to see if it meets the minimum requirements for Windows 7,

you may download the Microsoft upgrade advisor tool, which is available at <http://www.microsoft.com/windows/windows-7/get/upgrade-advisor.aspx>, which will test your hardware and advise if you require any hardware or software upgrades.

Third, you will need to research all the applications that your agency staff utilizes to be sure that each application will run on the Windows 7 platform. The Microsoft advisor tool will let you know about most of the software that is installed on a particular computer; however, unless the computer is running all software your agency uses you may need to conduct a software inventory by talking to staff members. Another way you can get an inventory is to use a free tool called Spiceworks IT Desktop, available at <http://www.spiceworks.com>.

Once you have a complete inventory, you will likely need to do a little research to see if the software you are running will work with Windows 7, to see if it needs to be upgraded, or if will run under a feature of Windows 7 called “XP Mode.” XP Mode takes advantage of Microsoft's workstation virtualization, which is built into Windows 7. To run XP Mode, you will need a computer that supports virtualization and RAM. To find out if a computer supports virtualization, you may utilize the Windows 7 advisor tool, but be sure to run the XP Mode test at the end of the report that the advisor will create. To learn more about XP mode visit <http://windows.microsoft.com/en-us/windows7/products/features/windows-xp-mode>.

Finally, as part of your decision-making process, you will need to research which type of upgrade you will be able to complete. In Windows 7, you have the option of two upgrade installations, either the in-place upgrade or the custom upgrade. The in-place upgrade simply upgrades you current system preserving all of your data, applications and user settings. If the computer is currently running Windows Vista you will likely be able to choose to do an in-place upgrade. However, if the computer has XP or any other OS, you will likely need to complete a custom installation. Once again, the advisor tool's report will let you know if in-place upgrade is possible.

A custom install is basically a fresh clean install of the new OS. If there is data on a local drive in the My Documents folder, it should be preserved as well as any users settings in a folder called C:\Windows.old; however, do not count on this alone. Be sure to backup your computer, data, user setting, and document each step that you have taken. Applications will need to be reinstalled once the upgrade is complete and you many need to download new drivers. If you are required to upgrade via a custom installation, or if you simply choose to do so, and if your hardware will support the installation of the 64 bit version of Windows 7, you should do so and take advantage of the full power of Microsoft's newest OS.

This may appear to be a huge undertaking, and you wonder why bother with the hassle if Windows XP is working fine, but remember, when XP was released everyone asked themselves the same questions. After a short time, most organizations made the change, and if you were still running Windows 95, you fell behind the technology curve and could not run the newest software that required XP. In summary, you do not have to be at the forefront of new technology, but now is the time to investigate and plan. Most IT experts, who have reviewed Windows 7, like the OS and it seems that it is here to stay.

# How to Increase the Runtime Length of a UPS Battery

By Robin Bostic, Technical Engineer



In the not too distant past, the computing and storage capacity of your laptop required enough space to fill a large room. Over the years, technology has improved exponentially. Today, a terabyte of storage can easily fit in a ladies' handbag...with room to spare. However, what has not changed is the fact when you lose power, data can be corrupted.

Protecting your computer system with Uninterruptible Power Supply (UPS) hardware is a necessary part of a total solution, but power management software is also needed to prevent data corruption after an extended power outage.

Many people mistakenly believe that a UPS is just a glorified surge protector; however, it is much more than a surge protector. An Uninterruptible Power Supply (UPS) can protect your system from damage-causing power problems as well as improve server availability by allowing users to continue working without interruption during short power outages when there are no local electricity outages or when desktop systems are also protected by a UPS.

If a server is equipped with UPS shutdown software, during an extended power outage the server can communicate with the UPS and perform a graceful, unattended system shut down. PC and server operating systems are not designed to support abrupt losses of power, known as hard shutdowns, but rather rely on a set of built-in processes that prepare a computer to shut down, such as saving memory, stopping applications and services, etc. Shutting down a system in a graceful shutdown is preferred over a hard shutdown due to a power failure, as it is generally the hard shutdowns that lead to lost and/or corrupted data.

Shutdown is the traditional method whereby a computer's operating system receives a shutdown command from UPS shutdown software, which begins a sequence of closing active processes before exiting. Shutdown and "off" are similar to the standard shutdown method; however, an extra process is utilized wherein the operating system tells the computer to turn off and enter a state that no longer draws power. This is great if the UPS software allows you to shut down minor systems connected to the UPS to increase runtime for the most critical systems. This process is also known as "load shedding."

Hibernation is yet another option. First the computer's desktop state, including all open files and documents, are saved by the system to a large RAM file on the hard disk; then the system is

shutdown and powered off. When the power is restored and the operating system boots up, the RAM is reloaded from the hard disk and the desktop is restored to its existing state prior to hibernation. Hibernation only works on a laptop/desktop; servers running databases usually do work well with this process.

Standby mode is yet another option. When standby mode is utilized, the computer is not completely turned off, but placed in a low power state wherein certain components like the monitor, I/O chips, etc. are powered down; however, DRAM continues to be refreshed and when the computer is taken out of standby mode, it typically reverts to the previous state very quickly. If you select a standby setting for your computer, it is important to make sure that the UPS you select can "wake" the system in the event of an extended power outage so that a graceful shutdown can be initiated. Otherwise, the system may stay in standby state until the UPS battery is completely drained, the power to the system will be dropped and a hard shutdown will occur.

## **Now that you know the various states of shutdown, what can you do to improve your runtime battery life?**

You can consider purchasing a UPS with an extended runtime capability and a generator, if necessary. In making such a decision, you should know that nearly 16% of power outages sufficient to cause IT malfunctions are less than five minutes in duration. Additionally, 99% of power outages are less than one hour in duration. In total, cumulative power outage duration is approximately 100 minutes annually. However, weather is a major cause of extended power outages. Downed trees and flooding will more than likely create an outage that lasts longer than your UPS battery runtime life and should be considered during your disaster recovery discussions. Determining what is "mission critical" will help determine if a need for a generator exists.

While you are protecting your computers and servers, you must think about your other network equipment. Power protection for hubs, routers, and switches are essential, but sometimes overlooked when ensuring the availability of applications. Additionally, if computers are running UPS shutdown software, the software will require that the network be running during the power outage in order to communicate properly. If the network is unprotected, a graceful shutdown of the computer will not be completed. Each server has its own time requirements for shutdown. You must include these requirements in the design of your UPS. This may require that you bring in multiple UPS devices to accommodate all shutdown time requirements and allow the entire system shut down properly.

Without shutdown software installed on a protected computer, the UPS will simply delay the inevitable. Ultimately, we would love to have our IT systems up 100% of the time. If we examine our systems and install the UPS systems that will keep our data and equipment up and running as well as utilize software to allow for graceful shutdowns, we will be well on our way to 99.9% up time.


# EHR Collaborative Comes to New Jersey

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“Qualifacts is proud to partner with NJAMHAA in offering CareLogic to its members”, said David Klements, President and CEO of Qualifacts. “New Jersey’s Behavioral Health providers are looking for technology partners, not just more software, and our collaborative implementation approach saves providers money and time while giving them the opportunity to be part of a strong, state-wide user community.”

New Jersey behavioral health providers interested in implementing the CareLogic system can contact either partner, at [newjerseyehr@qualifacts.com](mailto:newjerseyehr@qualifacts.com).

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# Unlimited Opportunities...

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Management Information System (HMIS) platform is already in use by many of New Jersey’s housing providers. However, the AWARDS platform can do much more. AWARDS is an integrated case management and client tracking software platform that all human service agencies can utilize. Foothold Technology is committed to working with NJAMHAA to make their software even more affordable. For more information, please e-mail Foothold Technology at [info@footholdtechnology.com](mailto:info@footholdtechnology.com)

NJAMHAA remains hopeful that members will look first to utilize the services and products offered by our Council members and approved vendors. NJAMHAA looks to our member organizations for guidance and advice. If you have worked with a vendor that has served your organization well, we kindly ask that you refer the vendor to NJAMHAA and encourage the vendor to join NJAMHAA’s Technology Council or participate in NJAMHAA’s approved vendor program. Together we can create opportunities that result in lower costs and higher satisfaction for all participating organizations.



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Call Rob Molinaro for all your data and telecommunication needs.  
Tell him that the IT Project referred you!  
215-922-1862

# What Do You Do If Your Internet Connection Goes Down?

By: Kurt Wurmser, LAN/WAN Engineer

Today, access to the Internet has become a necessary part of every agency's infrastructure. E-mail, web, Virtual Private Networks, video conferencing, all require Internet access, and agencies that have Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) systems need the Internet in order to have access to telephone service.

Internet providers do their best to make sure that your service is connected and fully functional, but service interruptions do happen from time to time. If your Internet service goes down, what can you do? One answer is to set up a second Internet service provider and set-up an infrastructure that is configured to handle failover, which in this situation is a system that has the capability to automatically switch over to a standby Internet access system upon the failure of the primary Internet access provider. A cable modem, DSL line, or other similar high-speed Internet access provider offer inexpensive failover options.

Cisco ASA firewalls, along with many other higher-end firewall devices, support failover. In order to set-up a system with failover, you must configure your firewall to use both Internet providers. One will be the main provider and the other will be

the back-up provider. You must also set-up a Service Level Agreement (SLA) monitor. An SLA doesn't actually agree with anyone, it simply monitors an IP address on the Internet of your choice. The SLA will monitor the IP address around the clock – twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. If the SLA cannot access the site it is monitoring, it will automatically switch, or failover, to the secondary ISP. At this point, your network traffic will automatically start going out through the secondary ISP seamlessly with no need to do anything, network users will not notice any difference. The SLA will continue to monitor its target IP address, and once it detects restored connectivity with the primary ISP, it will switch back automatically.

If your agency considers Internet access critical for your operations, perhaps you should explore setting up a failover system.

## Hard Drive Architecture: A Primer

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The limitation of a SATA disk is mostly related to compliance issues with Windows operating systems. The Windows XP operating system does not recognize SATA in its native mode. This requires either a driver or downgrading the device from the AHCI compliance in order to work as a standard IDE device.

SATA has a sister protocol called eSATA, which is the same protocol, but it is optimized for external disks.

SAS

The final interface that we will discuss is SAS (Serial Attached SCSI). SAS uses the Same Command set as SCSI but it has major improvements. The first improvement is in the number of supported devices. As noted earlier, parallel SCSI can support 8 devices; however, SAS can support up to 128 devices. This is a major advantage in servers, where hard drive space is a major concern.

The next advantage over traditional SCSI is in the cabling. SAS uses similar cabling to SATA, so it has the same benefits in cooling;

however it has a range of 24 feet. This is even longer than USB 2.0, which as a maximum length of 16 feet. The cable length advantage and the fact that it is hot swappable, just like SATA, make SAS ideal for external devices.

SAS devices can communicate with both SATA and SCSI devices because the backplanes of SAS devices are identical to SATA devices. However, a key difference between SCSI and SAS devices is the addition in SAS devices of two data ports, each of which resides in a different SAS domain. This enables complete failover redundancy. If one path fails, there is still communication along a separate and independent path. The final and most important advantage is speed. The original SAS bus was able to transmit at 3 GB/S, but beginning in 2009, it was increased to 6 GB/S.

### Conclusion

As you can see the new serial interfaces are a major improvement over the older parallel devices. They allow for greater speed, enhanced cooling, hot swapping, long ranges, more devices, better redundancy, and easier configuration.



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