

Video Communications Help Sierra Nevada DCSS Provide Faster and Better Service to Customers



Challenge - Streamlining processes in a complex system

The well being of millions of children across the nation depends on delivering child-support collection-and-enforcement services effectively. It is a highly complex undertaking and faces several unique challenges:

- As states struggle with limited resources, caseworkers and administrators must deal with many policies, time-consuming processes, and outside parties including the courts, attorneys and associates in other jurisdictions
- Uniform training on child support establishment, enforcement and accounting is State-mandated and a well-planned and executed training program contributes to the success of a child-support collection-and-enforcement program. But providing such training to remote counties can be expensive and time-consuming

California's six-region Department of Child Support Services (DCSS), committed to extensive training, has been selected by federal officials to pilot a national modeling program for child-support staff, including the possible establishment of a certification program for professionals. For remote counties in the Sierra Nevada region, the DCSS needed to locate an easier and more affordable access to training but, at the same time, it wouldn't sacrifice the effective learning that face-to-face communications delivers.

The DCSS, which continually examines new methods to enhance service, improve efficiencies and better use staff time, decided to adopt videoconferencing at its Sierra Nevada regional office. Located in a remote area of northern California, the office represents two counties and operates as the Regional Training Center for California's Eastern DCSS Region, which embraces 12 counties. The regional office conducted a thorough review of video products, seeking a system that delivers excellent picture quality at manageable bandwidth and also is user-friendly, easy to manage centrally, interoperable and expandable. "It was also critical that the system translate seamlessly between Internet Protocol and ISDN networks - and be competitively priced," says Ken Osborn, Regional Training Coordinator.

Solution

The DCSS tapped TANDBERG's video-communications technology, and now the region develops, tests and perfects video applications that eventually could be rolled out across the state. Video systems were installed in the regional office, Regional Training Center and the 12 field offices. The state DCSS office joined by installing the same systems in the state training room and, from there, video-based training sessions began.

"We've been delighted with the results - the picture quality and the effectiveness of the communications," says Osborn. "It's critical that our training programs maintain the collaborative, personal, and high-retention aspects of visual communications. That knowledge is just too important to our success."

Within a few short months of employing the video systems, the Sierra Nevada counties participated in the DCSS's first statewide training initiative, which included 600 participants from 23 counties at 22 video sites. Videotapes of those sessions were distributed to an additional 400 people to view. "The cost for that training initiative was about \$4,000, compared to the \$12,000 to \$15,000 we would have spent delivering that same content via in-person classrooms," says Kathleen Hrepich, director of the Sierra Nevada Regional DCSS.

The Future

The adoption of videoconferencing continues. The Sierra Nevada County Regional Office, in a pilot project with three of the state's superior courts, conducts family court hearings via video communications. Now in a matter of minutes, instead of two months, a family court session and the resulting court order are completed. "Our staff saves very valuable time and families get the resolutions they need quickly and without the stress of long waits," says Ms. Hrepich. "We believe video communications eventually will be as prevalent as the phone and e-mail."



California's Department of Child Support Program - Nevada County pilot program makes use of video communications in the courts