



# CSSD Chronicle



A regular publication of information and news about Court Support Services Division

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## CSSD VIDEO CONFERENCING PILOT PROJECT SAVES TIME AND MONEY

*A Probation Transition Program (PTP) officer at the Middletown Adult Probation office sits down at a Polycom video terminal just before 9:00 am and scrolls through a menu of correctional facilities. With a click of the mouse, he is visually connected to Osborn Correctional Institution in Enfield, 38 miles away. The officer watches as a Department of Correction officer escorts a split-sentence client into a secure interview room at Osborn. The DOC officer checks the sound and connection between terminals before leaving the room. At 10:20 am, the probation officer has completed the client interview for the Level of Service Inventory (LSI) and walks back to his desk. At 11:00 am, he is able to return and interview another client, this time at Garner Correctional Institute in Newtown, 41 miles away.*

### USING TECHNOLOGY TO INCREASE EFFICIENCY

CSSD has recently joined the Judicial network of users who are utilizing video conferencing (VC) as an alternative to actual face-to-face interviews with incarcerated inmates. Adult probation offices in Middletown and New London were recently outfitted with a video terminal and participated in a program, coordinated by CPO I Mark Rogers, to pilot VC for split-sentence clients. Rogers, along with PTP probation officers Will Deluca and Craig Bonatti from the Middletown office, worked successfully with the Department of Correction during this pilot program period to establish protocols for conducting PSIs and LSIs for CSSD's Probation Transition Program via video conferencing.

### VC ALSO USED BY OTHER AGENCIES

The use of VC technology may be new for CSSD, but it has already been firmly established for specific court cases in family civil courtrooms in Rockville, New Haven, Waterbury, Hartford, and Bridgeport. It is also being utilized for INS (immigration) hearings, support enforcement cases, parole hearings, and parental termination cases. The DOC has embraced the new technology as an alternative to prisoner courtroom appearances. Each correctional facility has a secure room that is equipped with VC units and can be easily accessed by the courts via recently installed high speed networks.

A designated DOC appointment coordinator is responsible for arranging the conference time (usually in two hour blocks) for agencies and courts. It has now expanded this coordination to include CSSD.

### IMMEDIATE BENEFITS

Although still new, CSSD's pilot VC program has already identified a cost reduction, as well as an employee time benefit, especially for the PTP interviews. PTP officers can now conduct several interviews in a day without leaving their office. In the past, an officer might spend a good part of the day traveling to an outlying correctional facility for just one interview. As an example, a cost analysis of a PO's round trip drive time and mileage from Middletown to the Corrigan/Radowski Correctional Center in Enfield is approximately \$99.00 versus \$26.00 for a video conference.

### FACE-TO-FACE INTERVIEWS ARE STILL AN IMPORTANT TOOL

Video conferencing is not appropriate for all interviews. Barriers include client hearing impairments, vision limitations or blindness, as well as language issues. An interpreter is allowed to be present during a video conference if arrangements can be made in advance. And, according to PTP officer Will Deluca, "A PO should conduct several face-to-face interviews before using video technology." Probation officers should understand and be comfortable with interpretive body language, protocol, and procedures—and observe a VC interview—before conducting one remotely.

### WHAT'S NEXT?

During the months of May and June, CSSD is setting up video units in New London, Waterbury IAR, Hartford Supervision, and New Haven Supervision and training officers on its use. Bridgeport probation staff will have access to VC equipment already available in their building. Based on the success of these sites, the project will be expanded to other offices. For those offices that do not have the appropriate technology infrastructure, local courthouses will offer their VC equipment to CSSD officers. The viability of webcam technology on laptop computers is also being researched and tested.

**For further information**, please contact Sara Barron, Program Manager I at [Sara.Barron@jud.ct.gov](mailto:Sara.Barron@jud.ct.gov).

**SUGGESTIONS? QUESTIONS? COMMENTS? CONCERNS? CONTACT US!**

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