

## **Overview**

Santa Barbara County has three attorneys appearing in court 500 times monthly on behalf of its 13,000 Child Support cases. With court resources in short supply, we wanted to maximize attorney efficiency by making sure that all the relevant case information was easily accessible. All our case files are in a statewide electronic system; we have no paper files. Yet, for several years, support staff was creating temporary paper files for the court-bound attorneys.

## **Problem or Challenge**

Temporary files are time-consuming to produce, contain confidential information that must be guarded under strict security protocols, and are awkward to handle, making it difficult to quickly access the many types of information necessary for full representation of the case facts and achievement of an appropriate court order.

## **Solution**

The department had already provided laptops and laptop training to its attorneys and worked out security protocols so that its electronic case management system could be encrypted and available via wi-fi in the courtrooms. The next step was to identify the key case information that was spread through dozens of separate computer pages within the system and create a “data scraping” program that would transfer that information into one easily accessible face sheet, to allow the attorneys to make to the court a seamless recital of key case information. In addition to the face sheet, important documents such as proofs of service and prior court orders were given standardized file names and grouped with the face sheets so that they were also easily accessed in court. In addition, standardized language fitting most outcome situations was developed and made into “macros” that court-attending support staff could quickly deploy into Judgments and Orders After Hearing, so that a judicial signature and service on the parties could be achieved before anyone left the courtroom.

## **Budget / Costs / Savings**

Child Support developed this project with the use of existing resources, though the costs include laptops for three attorneys and three support staff ( $\$800 \times 6 = \$2,400$ ) and encryption software (Encryption Plus,  $\$800/\text{year}$  for licensing). Programming was done in-house by our IT staff with some assistance from a colleague in another county, and has been shared with Child Support departments in other counties, who are also eager to go paperless. Preparation by support staff for a day’s court calendar has been shaved from 8 hours to 15 minutes. We are also able to set more matters on calendar, lessening wait times for court dates. Finally, being able to produce and serve results on the spot has cut down on inaccuracies, and greatly lessened after-court work.

## **Results**

Besides saving staff time before and after court appearances, the use of electronic files has increased the smooth operation of the court, allowed more cases to be heard by the court in the same amount of time, and delivered results to the parties quickly, so that they can begin to meet their Child Support

obligations timely. The project has been enthusiastically embraced statewide, with other counties able to use the same computer programs developed by Santa Barbara county.

**Project Contact**

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**Overview:** We implemented Spot: an online learning management solution that improves mandated training compliance; simplifies registration, learning, reporting, and coverage; and reduces staff downtime.

**Problem or Challenge:** Today's county Department of Social Services staff must complete a mushrooming list of trainings—due to state mandates, policy changes, induction or position requirements, technology updates, and more. And administrators must monitor compliance with an ever more complicated set of training requirements and timetables—with courses to be completed (depending on position) within 30 days of hire, one year of hire, two years of hire, every two years thereafter, and so on.

Traditionally this training was provided only in the classroom, and tracked manually. That meant work time lost to travel for workers; scheduling, coverage and transcript hassles for supervisors; and difficulties for administrators in tracking and reporting on individual and unit compliance with training mandates.

**Solution:** We put together a small team of Staff Development, Systems, and Vendor representatives. Together we developed a learning management solution with three components:

1. A customized Training Partner Learning Management System (LMS) core module runs behind the scenes, accessed by Staff Development administrators. It combines a scheduling system for instructor-led training; a hosting system for web-based training; and a database that cross-references employee information, training requirements, and training completion information.
  2. Spot (Site Providing Online Training) is what workers and supervisors see. It's a customized online end-user interface to the LMS. Spot offers access to web-based training; online registration for instructor-led training; and simple instant reporting such as transcripts, roll sheets, and progress reports.
  3. Rover (Resource Online for Viewing Extended Reports) is a custom online reporting solution for managers and instructors. Rover tracks, across the entire department and across specialized worker classes, compliance with all key training mandates.
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Two Staff Development members (with backgrounds in both training and software) were assigned and equipped (with the necessary training, hardware and software) to create and acquire online courseware.

The system was given a family-dog name and a cartoon mascot, and marketed internally. On-site demos were provided with the trainer dressed head to toe in a Spot dog costume!

**Budget/Costs/Savings:** The Geometrix Training Partner software package includes components for the core and online modules. Cost depends on the number of user licenses: we paid about \$50,000 for five administrative licenses and 700 end-user licenses. Annual maintenance cost runs about \$6000. An LMS is not so much an off-the-shelf product as a toolkit with which to build, by configuration and customization, a system that meets the organization's business processes and needs: we spent about \$10,000 in each of the first two years for extra contracted and customization work, including building Rover (a Microsoft SSRS system for complex reports).

Annual savings are estimated at over 1200 staff hours of foregone travel, plus savings from reduced motor pool use, more efficient tracking and reporting, productivity enhancement from on-demand how-to information, reduced seat time per topic learned (e-learning has an estimated 50% advantage in this area), and costs avoided by being able to quickly deploy and verify completion of corrective training.

**Results:** Over 50 online courses are now available on Spot. Our goal was to have 25% of training taken online. In 2012, 30% of training was taken online; and in 2013, 35% was taken online—saving travel time and cost, and trainer hours. Supervisors also save time by enrolling their staff online for instructor-led classes, and generating instant transcripts for employee reviews. Reporting is vastly improved: individual, unit, and department level compliance with training mandates can be instantly assessed; and the annual state training report, which used to take several weeks of manual work to compile, is automatically generated in minutes.

**Project or Program Contact:**

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**Title:** Customized Breastfeeding Texting Program

**Overview:** Breastfeeding supports health for mothers and infants. To improve information and support with Generation Y mothers about breastfeeding, we created a two-way breastfeeding texting program.

**Challenge:** Communicating with today's young mothers has changed. Generation Y (Gen Y) is the new face of motherhood. They are responsible for 76% of all births and 85% of first births (1980-1994 & up to 34 years). They trust their peers, blogs, and web communities. Texting is a favorite communication mode and 99% of Women, Infant & Children's (WIC) new moms use electronic information resources. Ninety three percent own a cell phone, 79% have unlimited texting and 55% have a smart phone with Internet service (Western WIC region Electronic Technology (ET) Project, 2011).

**Solution:** The WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Program partnered with Educational Message Services Inc. to develop, implement, and evaluate a text messaging program in English and Spanish. "Bfed" Text messages begin at 12 weeks prenatally until 10 weeks postpartum. Participants have to agree to the texting program and send back a code word to "opt in." The Bfed Texting Program is web to text based via cell phone. The computer web program sends an automated message at predetermined intervals – one way communication. This texting program is unique in that it allows for two way interactive communication. The participants can text back to the Breastfeeding Peer Counselor. They can enter into a dialogue typing on their computer to

the participant who receives the message as a text. This helps the texting program feel more personable.

**Budget:** The cost for one year of the two-way texting program is \$3,500. The cost was funded through the WIC Peer Counselor grant. The program has demonstrated effectiveness in the following ways:

- Two Peer Counselors (each with a caseload of 130+ participants) do not have to repeat the basic breastfeeding messages over and over. The automated texts handle this task and saved time.
- The Peer Counselors can spend their time helping new mothers with breastfeeding problems, questions, and issuing manual and electric breast pumps as needed.
- Meeting the needs of Gen Y with two way texting is priceless and brings credibility to our WIC program.

**Results:** The Bfed texting program will be completing its third year and is being coined as the “Santa Barbara County Program” since we were the first. Thirteen other programs from California to Washington DC have adopted our breastfeeding Bfed texting program including the actual text messages. Local WIC breastfeeding rates have increased to more than 34% when the statewide average for breastfeeding in the WIC program in California is under 21%. The Bfed program is a model for the nation.

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