

York County Public Defenders

York, Pennsylvania United States

Overview
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After an extensive industry search and securing grant money, York County Public Defenders selected JustWare | Defender to meet their goals of a user-friendly, secure case management solution. York County now enjoys the efficiency of JustWare's public defender specific features.

Challenge

In 2006, the York County Public Defender's Office began looking for a new case management system to upgrade a paper filing system supplemented by Microsoft Excel spreadsheets. Continuity of Government Operations plans demonstrated that this paper storage solution was very vulnerable in the event of a disaster, so York County began looking for something with more security. Earlier attempts at automated case management were unsuccessful because the program was complicated and lacked user-friendly features. York County needed a case management solution that was secure but also easy to use. Public Defender Bruce Blocher asked the IT department to assist him in his search to make sure both of these goals were met.

Solution

"All demos of automated systems were held jointly by Public Defender Department management and the Information Services Department," explained Mary Jane McCluskey, Senior Project Administrator. "This helped narrow the search to solutions that were not only functional for attorneys and staff, but met the security and technology features that Information Services demanded."

JustWare | Defender was selected by York County after online demonstrations and consultation with an existing public defender agency using JustWare. JustWare's easy-to-use, web-based design made it an ideal fit for York County's preliminary goals of user-friendliness and security. In addition, JustWare represented a cost-effective solution for York County with built-in features designed specifically for public defenders such as conflict management, management/administrative reporting, imaging and document automation capabilities, and web-based design.

Result

"The system is very easy to navigate," said Jamie Swope, York County Office Manager. "The more information that you can put in the notes and the case, the better it works for the office. Conflict checks are easier. Documents are more convenient with [JustWare]."

"I love JustWare," said Erin S. Thompson, Esq., Senior Assistant Public Defender. "I like having one place to look and see what has been done on a case and who has done it. It is no longer necessary to track down a paper file to see what notes may have been scribbled on the file."

"The document generation feature is wonderful," Thompson continues. "It makes life so much easier in generating motions and client letters. I am one of the people trained as a Document Author, and I love the fact that I am doing things with the system and computers in general that I never thought I could do—write the documents so they are auto-generated by JustWare."

"The fact that all case notes are in the system helps an attorney who has to pick up a case and try it for a colleague," explained McCluskey. "The clerical staff greatly appreciates the fact that documents can be generated for the system with all relevant case data, and management loves the fact that all documents are now standardized."

Ongoing Goals

To increase in-court efficiency, York County purchased laptops with air cards for attorneys. This combination allows public defenders to enter case notes into JustWare right in the courtroom via secured Internet connection. York County will also implement a bar coding system into JustWare before the end of 2009 that will great assist in tracking files and cases. Said McCluskey of the barcodes: "we can't wait!"

JustWare was my first choice early on. Quite frankly, no other program was competitive to the options available. Essentially, JustWare offers a case virtual reality where the possible use relative to case management is endless.

Bruce Blocher
 Chief Public Defender

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