



CASE STUDY



Enhancing Officer Safety in Kendall
County With SolusGuard

PREPARED BY SOLUSGUARD 2024



BACKGROUND & SCENARIO

- Kendall County Court Services is crucial to the local justice system in Kendall County. The team conducts extensive fieldwork in homes, workplaces, schools, and jails to monitor compliance and support probationers, emphasizing the need for strong safety and communication measures.



Kendall County Court Services, led by Director Alice Elliott, is an essential component of the local justice system in Kendall County, tasked with overseeing a range of judicial functions including pre-trial and probationary services. The department is vital for maintaining community safety and ensuring compliance with court mandates. Under Elliott's leadership, the team comprises about 25 staff members, although not all are probation officers.

The core activities of the department are diverse and community oriented. Probation officers are engaged in fieldwork that includes visiting individuals in various environments such as their homes, workplaces, schools, and even jails. These visits are critical for monitoring compliance with probation terms and providing support where needed. The officers also conduct virtual check-ins and in-office meetings, offering a holistic approach to probation management. This extensive field activity places officers in different settings outside the traditional office environment, which underscores the need for reliable safety measures and communication systems while they are on duty.

CHALLENGES

With field visit process and safety



Officer Vulnerability

Before implementing SolusGuard, Kendall County Court Services encountered significant safety and operational challenges that impacted their probation officers during field duties. Under the previous system, officers would conduct visits alone, using county cars but without any means of emergency communication or personal defense—no radios, defensive sprays, or other safety tools were provided. This lack of basic safety equipment left officers feeling vulnerable in potentially hazardous situations.



Escalating Concerns

Alice Elliott, who took over as director in 2018, noted that there had been a longstanding request for improved safety measures from the officers themselves, who had even formed a safety committee to address these concerns. Although bulletproof vests and OC spray were eventually issued, the major issue of reliable and discreet communication in the field remained unresolved.



Low Satisfaction

The introduction of a radio communication system was a step toward addressing safety concerns, but it brought its own set of challenges. Officers found the radios bulky and conspicuous, making them uncomfortable during operations as they appeared too similar to police, which could skew the dynamics of their interactions with community members. The presence of the radio often deterred open communication with clients, as it contributed to a law enforcement-like persona that was not conducive to the supportive role of probation officers.



Financial Strain

Furthermore, the use of radios was financially burdensome. The need to upgrade to new, expensive equipment due to a shift from analog to digital systems, along with high ongoing operational costs, added financial strain to the department. Officers were also reluctant to use the radio system due to its complexity and the discomfort it caused, which led to a decrease in the frequency and effectiveness of field visits. This combination of safety concerns, financial pressure, and operational inefficiency underscored the urgent need for a more suitable solution.

RESULTS

SolusGuard provided a multifaceted solution to the significant challenges faced by Kendall County Court Services. Alice Elliott highlighted several key aspects of how this technology enhanced their operations without jeopardizing officer safety:



Discreet & Efficient Communications

SolusGuard's wearable devices allowed officers to send alerts and communicate their locations discreetly. Unlike the bulky radios that made officers uncomfortable and conspicuous, these devices are subtle, enhancing officers' ability to blend in and perform their duties without appearing as law enforcement personnel. This was crucial in maintaining the civilian-friendly persona of the probation officers, encouraging more open and constructive interactions with clients.

Increased Field Visits

With the adoption of SolusGuard, there was a noticeable increase in the willingness of officers to conduct field visits. The system's ease of use and the removal of the cumbersome radio system meant that officers were more inclined to engage in necessary community visits. Alice noted that the number of officers going out into the field surged as they preferred the new system over the previous radio-based method.

Cost Effectiveness

Financially, SolusGuard offered a significant cost advantage. The transition away from the expensive radio system, which required costly upgrades and had high operational costs, to SolusGuard's more economical service model resulted in substantial savings for the department. This shift came at a pivotal time as the county was facing the need to invest heavily in new radio equipment due to technological upgrades in their communication infrastructure.

Real Time Alerts & Monitoring

SolusGuard enhanced the department's capacity to monitor officer field visits in a reliable and efficient manner. Officers could now rely on the SolusGuard mobile application to simultaneously notify all members of management instantly if they were unresponsive following the completion of a scheduled field visit or if they were in an emergency. This ensured management had the information needed so help could be dispatched promptly based on the situation.

Implementation & Adoption

The implementation of SolusGuard was described as seamless. The probation officers received the devices by mail, and the setup process was straightforward, involving minimal disruption to their daily activities. The transition was well-received by the staff, with no resistance or opposition noted, indicating strong buy-in from the team.



Through these various improvements, SolusGuard addressed the core safety and operational inefficiencies previously experienced by Kendall County Court Services. The technology supported their mission of community supervision and support in a more effective and financially sustainable manner without putting officer safety at risk.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the implementation of SolusGuard at Kendall County Court Services has proven to be a transformative solution to longstanding safety communication practices and operational challenges faced by probation officers. By providing discreet and efficient safety communication tools, SolusGuard enabled officers to enhance their fieldwork without compromising their civilian-friendly persona. The technology not only facilitated real-time monitoring and alerting but also increased the frequency of field visits, demonstrating its tangible impact on operations. Moreover, the seamless implementation process and positive feedback from staff underscored the success of SolusGuard in addressing the core needs of Kendall County Court Services while ensuring the safety and well-being of its probation officers.

TESTIMONIALS

“The implementation of SolusGuard has notably increased the frequency of field visits by our officers. They appreciate the ease of use and the discreet nature of the device, which doesn't compromise their non-police persona.”

ALICE ELLIOT, DIRECTOR

“I have enjoyed the convenience of adding my appointments to the app ahead of time, and the ability to just tap to check-in and know that someone knows where I am in case of an emergency. It makes the day of traveling easier and gives me comfort in knowing I can be located at any time.”

ALICIA MEHNERT, ADULT PROBATION OFFICER

“The thing I like most about using SolusGuard is that it is quiet. When we were previously using radios, there was constant activity, and we had to verbally check in with someone. Talking over the radio caused conversations with clients to be interrupted. SolusGuard allows a quiet check-in that keeps conversations with clients flowing.”

KAYLEE UNDERWOOD, ADULT PROBATION OFFICER