

2008 Innovations Awards Program APPLICATION

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ID # (assigned by CSG): 08-E-15MA

Please provide the following information, adding space as necessary:

State: Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Assign Program Category (applicant): Children and Families

1. Program Name – **Video Conferencing**
2. Administering Agency – **Massachusetts Department of Youth Services**
3. Contact Person (Name and Title) – **Robert Brennan – CIO**
4. Address – **27 Wormwood Street Suite 400, Boston Ma 00210**
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7. E-mail Address - robert.d.brennan@state.ma.us
8. Web site Address - <http://www.mass.gov/dys>
9. Please provide a two-sentence description of the program. **We have begun a multi-year program to implement a video conferencing network that will encompass all 100+ residential and community-based sites that serve detained and committed youth in the Department of Youth Services (DYS). It will enhance the Department's educational efforts, facilitate more parental and case-worker visitation with clients, and address some of the administrative needs of the agency.**
10. How long has this program been operational (month and year)? Note: the program must be between 9 months and 5 years old on March 1, 2008 to be considered. **The program was first launched in October, 2006.**
11. Why was the program created? What problem[s] or issue[s] was it designed to address? **The program was initiated to provide a broader range of learning opportunities for approximately 800 of the detained and committed youth in DYS secure residential facilities. Video conferencing also offered an additional means of communication for clients to have contact with family members who were unable to travel to and from the program location. The ability of clinicians to have immediate "after-hours" access to clients in crisis was also a benefit. Overall, the addition of video conferencing ability has allowed the agency to grow**

in several ways: 1) virtual classroom and distance learning experiences for clients in secure programs; 2) case-worker and parental visits without incurring the hardship of long-distance travel; 3) remote clinical evaluations; 4) inter-classroom competitions where confined youth are not permitted to travel; and 5) multi-site administrative conferences, which save time and reduce the need for expensive travel.

12. Describe the specific activities and operations of the program in chronological order. **Initial implementation in late 2006 put five video conferencing units into our Central Office and four largest sites. An extensive evaluation cycle during 2007 helped us make further purchases that we believe will help launch the entire state-wide implementation over the next two to three years.**
13. Why is the program a new and creative approach or method? **It applies technology in a way that makes it easier and more cost-effective to serve the needs of at-risk youth and their families, case workers and monitors and it supplements the educational experience of our clients who are in confined residential environments. The unique part of this program is the plan to expand it to encompass all of our locations state-wide.**
14. What were the program's start-up costs? (Provide details about specific purchases for this program, staffing needs and other financial expenditures, as well as existing materials, technology and staff already in place.) **The program began with an initial investment of about \$50,000 worth of equipment. A recent additional purchase of \$120,000 has augmented this. We anticipate an additional \$200,000 to \$300,000 over the next two or three years to complete the project. The management is being performed by existing staff, and the conferencing is running over an existing network, which is partially funded by the federal Schools and Libraries program. Additional enhancements to the TCP/IP network are under consideration to support expanded use.**
15. What are the program's annual operational costs? **Annual costs beyond purchase of the equipment will include maintenance contracts as the original warranties run out. These will be offset by the reduction in the Department's travel expenses.**
16. How is the program funded? **The TCP/IP network is paid from the DYS operational budget and federal funds. Specifically, the Department's IT budget covered the cost of the equipment and the operating cost is covered through federal reimbursement. We are investigating grant funding for additional expansion of the capability and enhancement of the educational opportunities for DYS clients.**
17. Did this program require the passage of legislation, executive order or regulations? If YES, please indicate the citation number. **N/A**
18. What equipment, technology and software are used to operate and administer this program? **The underlying technology is pre-existing network connectivity and network management tools, combined with the Video Conference Management tools purchased from the vendor. TCP/IP network management is provided by our internet service provider and the video management is performed using Tandberg Management System software.**
19. To the best of your knowledge, did this program originate in your state? If YES, please indicate the innovator's name, present address, telephone number and e-mail address. **So far as we know,**

YES. The original impetus came from Donald Sullivan (at that time Acting CIO) Donald.Sullivan@state.ma.us

20. Are you aware of similar programs in other states? If YES, which ones and how does this program differ? **We are not aware of others, but acknowledge that others might exist. We propose that the far-reaching all-inclusive nature of the program is probably unique within the arena of juvenile corrections. We are unaware of another similar program which has integrated as many functions pertaining to the education and long-term support of at-risk youth.**
21. Has the program been fully implemented? If NO, what actions remain to be taken? **NO, we are in year two of a four to five year implementation schedule.**
22. Briefly evaluate (pro and con) the program's effectiveness in addressing the defined problem[s] or issue[s]. Provide tangible examples. **Further training at the teacher level is needed to enhance its effectiveness and acceptance as an educational tool. Some recent effective uses include: 1) a virtual tour of the Central Office for an art class that plans to prepare wall murals for a conference room; 2) a series of multi-site meetings for our medical/clinical staff to evaluate screening and clinical programs for the youths in custody; and 3) a scheduled set of meetings to train direct-care managers state-wide in a new physical restraint policy. Some of our case workers are eagerly anticipating the ability to hold meetings with the clients without having to make a three-hour round trip.**
23. How has the program grown and/or changed since its inception? **The original intent was to provide a broader educational experience to the youth confined to secure programs. We now envision it being applicable to a wide range of client needs both inside and outside these facilities.**
24. What limitations or obstacles might other states expect to encounter if they attempt to adopt this program? **Foremost is the concern by secure IT departments to host the network traffic that will be generated. We overcame this obstacle by having a separate, client-oriented network already in place that we could use as a pilot and if necessary for long-term implementation. There also requires an adjustment of users' concepts of how to conduct meetings and embrace distance learning.**