

BI CASE STUDY: Luzerne County Department of Probation Services Partners with BI Incorporated

“This program is a great partnership between BI and Luzerne County. As a result, the community benefits by limiting incarceration expenses while increasing public safety.”

– Matthew Wirtner,
BI Eastern Regional Manager

Offender-funded electronic monitoring program pays for itself, reduces officers’ caseloads



HIGHLIGHTS:

- The Program supervises between 140 and 160 offenders daily.
- Taxpayers save approximately \$4.5 million annually through this cost effective program.
- The program’s successful completion rate has been approximately 90% since inception.
- An average of 53,000 days of incarceration were avoided in 2009 alone as a direct result of the electronic monitoring program.

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THE PROGRAM

Luzerne County, Pa., includes nearly 320,000 residents living within 900 square miles. BI Incorporated's Luzerne County Electronic Monitoring Program provides electronic monitoring services for the Luzerne County Department of Probation Services, and the Luzerne County Correctional Facility. This offender-funded program—under the jurisdiction of Luzerne County's nine presiding judges—provides a cost-effective solution to monitor and ensure compliance among offenders referred to the program by the Luzerne County Court of Common Pleas.

BI has a long-standing relationship with the County that began when Luzerne County Probation initiated a BI-managed electronic home monitoring program in 1998. In 2000, due to budget constraints and rising departmental costs, probation notified BI that it would have to terminate the program. BI responded to the agency's need and offered to oversee an offender-funded EM program for the department. BI took responsibility for handling all case management duties, including intake and orientation, check-ins when required, job-search supervision, fee assessment and collection, and the laborious task of managing offender schedules.

Based in Wilkes-Barre, Penn., BI's offices are in close proximity to the Luzerne County Department of Probation Services to best coordinate these services. This win-win solution eliminates the department's overhead and administrative costs and assists the local criminal justice system with an alternative sentencing option that reduces jail overcrowding.

Luzerne's EM program targets populations from two county-wide programs, including the Intermediate

Punishment Program (IPP) and the Home Incarceration Program (HIP). Offenders in the IPP are sentenced to house arrest/home confinement and can leave their home only for the purpose of employment, medical appointments, substance abuse treatment, religious services or under court orders. Offenders in the HIP are screened and deemed eligible for early release from prison after serving half their minimum sentence. This helps alleviate expensive overcrowding at the local jail and allows prisoners to successfully reintegrate into a supervised community setting under electronic supervision.

As a service of the courts, Luzerne's EM program allows judges the discretion to sentence any offender they deem appropriate to the program, regardless of income. BI charges participants a flat rate of \$15/day. BI applies a sliding scale payment rate for indigent individuals.

BI's patented technology lies at the core of this program. Between 140 and 160 participants are monitored each day using several BI systems, including BI HomeGuard® 200, a home detention system that monitors offenders agency-ordered schedules and curfews; BI ExacuTrack®, GPS tracking system for higher risk offenders; and most recently, BI TAD™, a device that offers dual capabilities of continuously monitoring for alcohol consumption and home curfew monitoring capabilities. Also used is BI GuardWare® on the Web, a monitoring system that allows probation officers to independently access, update and receive reports via BI's secure Web site. Finally, probation staff members also utilize the GuardCenter, BI's 24/7 monitoring center to alert supervising officers to violations.

THE RESULTS

More than 53,000 offender days incarcerated were avoided via this program in 2009 alone – and 235,000 days avoided since 2002. This significant diversion has helped to reduce pressure off an overcrowded jail facility. In addition, a jail bed at the Luzerne County Confinement Facility costs \$85/day. By diverting individuals to the electronic monitoring program, the county is saved \$4.5 million in 2009 in bed costs alone. In addition, a majority of the technology costs are being offset by the offender payment fees.

Offenders are enrolled in the program an average of 90 days. Successful participants are released back to probation and/or parole, or are released on a time served basis into the community. In 2009, the program retained a successful program completion rate of approximately 90%.

In addition to the financial benefits, the program delivers strict accountability for court-ordered schedules. BI's unique approach to offender supervision has allowed the department to eliminate the administrative duties of their caseload. As a result, probation officers can devote more time, resources and energy to successfully ensuring offender compliance, and focus solely on conducting field supervision, making home and employment visits, and tending to court-related matters. These cooperative efforts have enhanced public safety through proactive, community-based supervision that has kept the offender monitoring program as close to 100% cost-free to the department as possible.

TECHNOLOGY:

- BI ExacuTrack®
- BI HomeGuard® 200
- BI TAD™
- BI GuardWare® on the Web
- BI GuardCenter®



BI Incorporated

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