

Maricopa County's Pretrial Services Agency provides a range of services that promote community safety while alleviating taxpayer expense associated with defendants waiting for trials.

BI Technology Backs Large Arizona Pretrial Services Agency



HIGHLIGHTS:

- Pretrial Services program has supported the Superior Court for more than 25 years
- Approximately 2,200 defendants are involved in the program monthly
- The agency employs a mix of supervision monitoring technologies and services to offer the court options for defendant release

THE PROGRAM

Since the mid-1970s, the Pretrial Services Agency has provided the Superior Court of Arizona in Maricopa County with a range of services directed toward defendants awaiting trial. The agency has grown and adjusted its service, offering to meet the needs of one of the fastest growing and largest counties in the nation. Today, more than 2,200 defendants a month are on supervision with the Pretrial Services Agency in Maricopa County.

The agency's goals include: minimizing community risk, getting defendants to their court dates, and monitoring defendants during release while also saving taxpayer's money. The agency plays a vital function in community safety from the time a person is released to community supervision and throughout the adjudication process. The agency's staff collects, verifies and provides information and bond reports on felony defendants to Superior Court judicial officers. Criminal histories and other defendant information is collected and summarized pending the initial court ap-

pearance, in turn helping judicial officers make informed release decisions regarding bonds, pretrial detention or community supervision requirements.

To help with the supervision requirements for some of the defendants released to the community, the Agency turned to BI Incorporated for a flexible mix of monitoring solutions in 1999. Approximately 10% of the agency's clients are monitored with some type of electronic monitoring system. Maricopa County uses two BI electronic monitoring systems, BI HomeGuard® 200 and BI Cellular®, to monitor the absence or presence of the defendants at home. As a result, the agency can determine if the person is complying with curfews and schedules defined by the court or agency.

The HomeGuard 200 and BI Cellular systems consist of a transmitter attached to the offender, a field monitoring device (together these are called a unit) installed in the offender's home, and BI's host computer system, manned by monitoring specialists

in the BI GuardCenter®, a national 24/7 monitoring center. HomeGuard is for clients with traditional landline phone service, while Cellular includes wireless technology for clients who lack traditional phone service. For certain high-risk defendants, the Agency is using a GPS tracking system.

The agency also uses BI VoiceID® to verify defendants comply with a certain schedule, whether it be at home, work, school or elsewhere, through a series of random and scheduled calls (Maricopa County uses random call feature only) placed to or received from defendants. This system requires no equipment, is very cost-effective, and is meant for low-risk individuals.

The Pretrial Services Agency determines the level of supervision each defendant requires based on a thorough risk assessment and a judge's release orders. Based on a client's ability to pay, the agency assesses defendants a sliding scale fee for services and technology they receive to defray the cost of the service.

THE RESULTS

Maricopa County Pretrial Service Agency officials believe the program is a success on many fronts:

1. Of defendants referred to the program, more than 90% make their court appearances as scheduled, saving the county money and time.
2. Jail beds are reserved for serious defendants, an important feature considering overcrowding issues in Maricopa County facilities.
3. Officials are able to verify defendant behavior while they are in the community, ensuring boundaries set by judges are maintained.
4. Taxpayers save substantially through individuals being supervised closely in the community versus jail as they await trial. In fact, officials suggest that through electronic home detention alone, the county saves approximately \$309,000 monthly. This savings is derived from a \$5 daily fee (which may be offset by a defendant payment) versus a daily jail rate of \$62.29.
5. Officials believe the partnership of professional agency personnel in combination with private industry technology delivers a much wider range of release options for Superior Court judges.
6. Officials say the monitoring technology acts as a "staff multiplier," allowing officers to handle more important supervising tasks while leaving routine compliance checks to the equipment.
7. Officials say the voice verification system is very effective for maintaining curfew checks, saving officers from nightly, tedious home checks in person.

TECHNOLOGY:

- BI HomeGuard® 200
- BI Cellular®
- BI VoiceID®
- BI GuardCenter®



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