

Nebraska Juvenile Supervision Program Incorporates GPS Tracking



“We are focused on holding the juveniles accountable, their parents believe safety is enhanced, and in the end we are helping these kids to lead more productive lives.”

Becky Steiner, Director,
Cedars Juvenile Justice Services

HIGHLIGHTS:

- Nonprofit supervises juveniles referred by local probation and a state agency
- CEDARS delivers a wide range of juvenile services, including “Tracker program” that uses GPS tracking technology for certain juveniles who present more risk
- About 20 to 30 juveniles are supervised with BI GPS tracking technology today

THE PROGRAM

Established 60 years ago, CEDARS has a strong tradition of working with abused, neglected and vulnerable children and their families in Nebraska. As one of the largest nonprofit child-caring organizations in the state, CEDARS provided an all-time high (850) in overnight care to children in emergency shelter, foster care and youth homes in 2008. The organization provides a wide range of services, such as foster care, shelter services, mental health, counseling and more; the organization also provides specific supervisory and counseling services for juveniles involved in the state and local criminal justice system.

CEDARS Juvenile Justice Services division includes *Wraparound*, a strategy planning process with families and their children; *Juvenile Diversion Services*, for youth involved in the criminal justice system; *Life Skills Center*, for at risk youth 13 to 18; *Tracker Services*, which involves one-on-one supervision of youth 13 to 18; and *Street Outreach Services* for runaway or homeless youth.

For juveniles involved in the criminal justice system, CEDARS often used electronic monitoring technology to ensure the juveniles were compliant to court- or agency-ordered curfews and schedules. More recently, the organization shifted to GPS tracking technology to provide a higher level of detail – very accurate GPS data points that can show the individual’s movement in the community throughout the day – for the juveniles it supervises in the Tracker program.

CEDARS used electronic monitoring for five years, including the use of BI HomeGuard® 200 for three years. HomeGuard 200 is the industry’s most widely used radio-frequency electronic monitoring system. In July 2008, the organization shifted clients to BI ExacuTrack® AT, active GPS tracking technology that provides near real-time GPS tracking data. In addition, CEDARS uses the BI GuardCenter, BI’s national monitoring center for support services. Supervising CEDARS staff may also access and adjust client data, schedules and zones directly via a secure, password-protected web site.

CEDARS works closely with the district attorney, probation agency, the state and others to determine whether the juvenile is an appropriate candidate for the Tracker program. Currently, there are about 200 juveniles in the Tracker program; of these, 10% to 15% are monitored with ExacuTrack AT after a careful screening process. Currently, the GPS tracking technology assists CEDARS to monitor juveniles throughout southeast Nebraska. In addition, the organization employs 1.5 full-time employees to install and remove GPS tracking technology, define boundaries (also called zones) where juveniles can and cannot travel during the day, maintain inventory and, most importantly, respond to violation alerts. Juveniles typically remain on the BI GPS tracking technology for 30 to 60 days.

THE RESULTS

CEDARS provides a range of services to support and monitor at-risk youth in Nebraska. These services promote stability in these juveniles’ lives and, therefore, public safety. Among many other services, the organization has successfully incorporated GPS tracking technology within its arm that works with offenders in the local and state criminal justice system. GPS tracking is providing a high level of detail about juveniles who require more supervision as they live, attend school or work in the community. CEDARS officials believe the GPS tracking technology promotes accountability, as the juveniles in the program understand they must follow conditions of release, including traveling within very precise inclusion zones or avoiding prohibited exclusion zones. If not, additional sanctions will follow, including referral to detention. Additionally, in certain instances, GPS tracking is used as a cost-effective sanction for probation violations versus sending the juvenile directly to detention.

THE TECHNOLOGY

- BI ExacuTrack® AT
- BI GuardCenter®



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