

Washington State D.O.C.

A Schlage Recognition Systems Identity Verification Case Study

Washington State Monitors Offenders Remotely with HandKey® System

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- Norm Harrison, GENIE Project Manager,
Washington State Dept. of Corrections

Summary

The State of Washington saves 50,000 hours annually by processing offenders in the community via touch screen and checking identities with biometric HandKey® systems.

Business Need

The State of Washington ranks second nationally in the number of offenders on community supervision. About three quarters of lawbreakers never go to prison. Those that are imprisoned need to be followed after their release. With the offender population growing and Department of Corrections (DOC) manpower limited, the state had to automate caseload processing to keep paperwork moving.

Challenges

Offenders who live all over the state must check in regularly with probation officers. Many also must report changes of address and employment. With no face-to-face contact, probation officers needed a foolproof way to verify that the information was coming directly from the offender. A decade ago, the DOC hit on the solution – biometrics, a system that uses unique biologic markers such as hand, face or eye for identity because they cannot be lost, stolen, forgotten, or forged.



STATISTICS

Industry: State Government
Application: Identity Verification
Biometric: HandKey®
Hand Readers: 70+
Users: 45,000
Geography: United States

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Solution

Following extensive testing and a lengthy pilot project, the DOC deployed kiosks in field offices and community outstations statewide. Each kiosk contains a keypad and a touch screen monitor. Offenders report in via touch screen either on a regular schedule, or when they change addresses or employment.

After early experiments with voice recognition and finger scanners, the Department of Corrections settled on Schlage Rand Recognition Systems HandKey hand geometry terminal as the best way to verify the identify of the person reporting.

“When we deployed kiosks statewide, we went to the HandKey based primarily on its ease of use,” said Norm Harrison, project manager for GENIE (Geographically Enhanced Network Information Exchange). “We experience fewer false negatives with this system than with other biometrics we tested.” (A false negative occurs when an authorized individual cannot access the system.)

When offenders report to a kiosk, they enter their DOC number on the HandKey keypad and then place their right hand onto the terminal’s hand reader. It takes less than a second to confirm identity.

With identity verified, offenders can update address, phone or employment data via touch screen, or answer standard questions about payment of financial obligations and other matters. In addition, probation officers can key in questions about supervision conditions.

Results

According to the DOC, GENIE is the largest fully-implemented system of its kind. About 45,000 offenders in the Washington state system either report on a regular schedule or when they change address or employment. The offenders use 70 kiosks deployed around the state. All five DOC regions have at least one location that receives more than 1,000 reports a month. In total, the system receives more than 26,000 monthly reports.

“It is estimated that each kiosk report saves an officer 10 to 15 minutes in processing paperwork and computer entries,” Harrison reported. “This allows a single officer to monitor a large caseload of low-risk offenders.”

Statewide, the HandKey kiosks reduce officer processing time by an estimated 50,000 hours a month.

The DOC uses frequency of reporting as a sanction and a control. High-risk offenders may be required to check in daily; transients to report frequently about living arrangements; and the unemployed about job searches. Harrison said that the regular remote contact with offenders frees officers to spend more time providing direct services and closely monitoring high-risk offenders.

In the four years that the HandKey system has been fully operational, Harrison said that the system has been remarkably free of problems.

“We have not had any significant damage caused by offenders,” Harrison said, “since they view this reporting status as a privilege and appreciate the quickness and ease of their check-in reports. Also, after hundreds of thousands of reports, we have yet to have a HandKey fail or need replacement.”

The DOC plans to expand the HandKey kiosk system into prisons. By law, inmates must have access, in privacy, to vast amounts of information. Either staff has to hand-deliver the information, which takes time away from other responsibilities, or the information must be shielded so that other inmates can’t intercept it.

“Using kiosks with HandKey biometrics will allow the institutions to provide this routine information without direct staff involvement,” Harrison said. “It will let staff concentrate on more meaningful interventions.”

About Washington State D.O.C.

The Washington State Legislature created the Department of Corrections in 1981. As a partner with victims, communities and the criminal justice system, the DOC enhances public safety, administers criminal sanctions of the courts and correctional programs, and provides leadership for the future of corrections in Washington state. The department employs over 7,000 men and women to administer and supervise over 15,000 offenders housed in 13 institutions and 18 work training and pre-release facilities. In addition, there are over 93,000 offender field cases, of which over 61,000 are supervised offenders in the community.



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