

2015 West Virginia NASCIO Award Submission



Title: WV Help

Category: Information Communications Technology (ICT) Innovations

Contact: Andrea Darr, Director, WV Center for Children's Justice, West Virginia State Police, Crimes Against Children Unit

State Agency: West Virginia State Police

Project Initiation: 2/1/2014

Project Completion: 8/1/2014

Executive Summary

WV HELP is a mobile application available for iPhone and Android that provides instant access to up-to-date contact information for resources related to child maltreatment. The application was specifically created for Points of Contact (POC) that manage situations where victims, specifically children, experience crime, neglect, or abuse. Members of Law Enforcement, Child Protective Services, Teachers, Hospitals, Prosecutors and Judges now have reliable contact information at their fingertips.

Through a simple and elegant interface, the application provides phone numbers, physical addresses and fax numbers for county Law Enforcement, CPS, Prosecutors, Sheriff's Department, medical facilities, domestic violence programs, sexual assault programs, child advocacy centers and behavioral health facilities in each of West Virginia's 55 counties. The application also provides contact information for key resources at both the state and federal levels.

Individuals can download the application for free to their phone or android device and customize their contact list by saving key resources as favorites. The application's data is maintained in a Microsoft SharePoint list by the West Virginia State Police, Crimes Against Children Unit and updates are synced directly with the mobile application when changes are made. This method of delivering the information is more reliable than storing contacts directly in a user's phone, since information often changes and become quickly outdated.

Since the application release, it has been downloaded 3,351 times in both the Android and Apple mobile markets. The application has been well received by users as being their first stop for finding the correct contact information.

Description of the Business Problem and ~~s~~Solution

In West Virginia, more than one in four children are living below the federal poverty line, meaning the state has the 13th highest poverty rate in the nation. Also burdened with the highest drug overdose mortality rate in the US, substance abuse is a growing problem in West Virginia. A recent report showed that one in ten babies ~~in the state~~ are born addicted to drugs ~~in the state~~. Given these underlying problems, recent statistics suggest that 90% of child abuse cases involve substance abuse and take up as much as 40% of an average circuit court judge's docket.

With situations involving victims of child maltreatment on the rise, finding the necessary resources and contacts are even more critical to getting help fast. West Virginia has 55 counties with geographically diverse and rural terrain that can make finding the correct contact more difficult. Prior to the mobile application, the contact information for these resources was provided on clipboards, which were expensive to produce, bulky to carry, and impossible to update. The boards were replaced every few years through grant funding. These boards were then distributed to support personnel in areas of need. Approximately, 600 clipboards were produced at the cost of \$7,200. Sadly, some contact information changed within months of the clipboards being distributed.

The WV HELP application was designed to address these challenges while providing a cost effective solution. The WV Help application provides a portable, always up-to-date solution that allows responsible personnel to find the correct resource based on location and need. This contact information remains up to date even as agencies change their contact information, move or undergo other administrative changes.

WV Help was developed in cooperation with WV.gov portal partner, West Virginia Interactive. The application was developed over a six month period at no cost to the state or end user. WV Help is a native application that is now available in both Android and Apple mobile markets. The application has been demoed to multiple states as a transferrable solution with at least one state working on creating their own version of WV Help.

[The mobile application was developed using Objective/C for iOS7 framework. The application communicates to a backend system that was built utilizing a three tier architecture consisting of two load-balanced front end servers working securely over HTTPS. The backend system communicates to SharePoint web services to pull data from multiple lists. The same instance of SharePoint used by the Prosecuting Attorneys Institute to update their website is also used by the agency to maintain up-to-date contact information.](#)

Formatted: Font: 12 pt

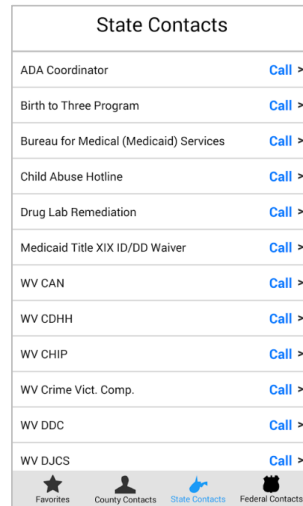
Marketing of this application has been limited but successful. Primarily marketed through an annual conference for WV Crimes against Children, the application saw quick rises in adoption. Additional press releases and website placement has furthered adoption of WV Help at limited to no cost to the agency. Currently, WV Help has managed to reach almost six times the audience of the previous solution.

Significance to the Improvements of the Operation of Government

The WV Help Mobile Application assists professionals in finding vital West Virginia resources that can help in situations where child maltreatment has occurred.

The application is separated into four screens: Favorites, County Contacts, State Contacts, and Federal Contacts. Users can tap on the desired screen using the menu bar located at the bottom of the application, then tap on the specific resource needed. Users can then click the Call button next to the desired resource or they can click on the resource to view more information. From the resource detail screen, users are presented with the phone, fax, mailing and physical address for the given resource. Additionally from this screen, the user can mark the resource as one of their favorites by clicking the star in top right hand corner, or route the resource's location on their device's native maps application.

State Contacts	
ADA Coordinator	Call >
Birth to Three Program	Call >
Bureau for Medical (Medicaid) Services	Call >
Child Abuse Hotline	Call >
Drug Lab Remediation	Call >
Medicaid Title XIX ID/DD Waiver	Call >
WV CAN	Call >
WV CDHH	Call >
WV CHIP	Call >
WV Crime Vict. Comp.	Call >
WV DDC	Call >
WV DJCS	Call >



With information as vital as this *in-nature*, it is important that *its* be kept up-to-date and correct. Contact information printed on clip boards was often quickly outdated and useless in the field. Management of resource information in the WV Help Application has been centralized and can be updated by a quick SharePoint list edit on the agency's website. Once updated, information is pushed to users' devices every half-hour. Using the traditional method, the cost of producing and disseminating clipboards would have to be incurred with each change made.

Great efficiencies have been created for the Center for Children's Justice and for professionals in the field accessing resource information. For the Center, the cost of producing a clipboard for every app download would have been over \$404,000. Instead, the agency was able to eliminate all costs associated with the resource directory, while also greatly improving access to the information.

The model for this application is being considered for re-use in other arenas. There are many instances where the code and methodology can be reused to enable centralized management of information and timely dissemination to numerous users

Benefits of the Project

WV HELP's goal is to assist individuals who are working child abuse cases to quickly access contact information at the county, state and federal levels.

WV HELP changes the way first responders and other responsible personnel access government information vital to performing their duties and protecting children. This application is the first of its kind created as an electronic directory to help find resources for dealing with child maltreatment. Making this tool available on a mobile device drastically increases the ability of individuals in the field finding help when needed.

By making an application to access the information, the audience available to use this resource greatly increased. Under the old, expensive paper based process, only 600 clipboards were distributed throughout the state in 2012. At up to \$12 dollars per clipboard, a \$7,200 expenditure was required with each publishing. Application downloads have far exceeded the number of clipboards with over 3,351 individuals from all disciplines installing the application on their phone. Through the digital approach, the cost to the agency has dropped to \$0 with an infinite audience.

The application took six months to develop through the public/private partnership with eGovernment portal provider West Virginia Interactive. The application was developed fully under the self-funded model at zero cost to the agency or the end user. The agency coordinated with resources throughout the state to collect and verify the information presented within the application over a one month period.

This application provides time savings to both the agency and individual users. Today, the agency spends just minutes each month updating the data as needed as opposed to a month or more every few years combining the data for some type of manual distribution. However, the significant time savings are on the individual user's side. In the past, contacting a resource typically resulted in calls to multiple agencies before the correct resource was found. Through the up-to-date contact information and location focused directory, individuals are able to reach the correct resource on the first call.