



## Florida Statewide Guardian Ad Litem Office

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**JOHNNY C. WHITE**

CIO, Florida Statewide Guardian Ad Litem Office

In Florida, over 48,000 abused and neglected children participate in non-criminal court cases involving custody rulings, foster care, and adoption. The Florida Guardian Ad Litem Office (GAL), a state agency with approximately 500 staff operating throughout Florida, coordinates a support network of more than 4,600 volunteers to ensure that abused and neglected children have active, knowledgeable advocates in court. With an average load of 1.6 cases per volunteer, and 125 cases per staff attorney, the program was hard-pressed to deliver representation in every case. To expand the reach of the program to serve all child cases, the State of Florida stepped in with funding and a formal mandate to organize the office as a state-level agency in January 2004.

**THE CHALLENGE: CONNECTING 4,670 ADVOCATES IN 54 OFFICES THROUGHOUT THE STATE**

Prior to 2004, GAL offices operated as 21 individual entities across the state, under the jurisdiction of the 20 judicial circuits. When the agency was created, it became apparent that a common IT backbone would be needed to ensure the accurate tracking of every case and child in the system. “The executive director noticed an immediate need to put everyone on a statewide network in order to communicate as a consolidated state agency,” said Johnny C. White, CIO, Florida Statewide Guardian Ad Litem Office.

Furthermore, the IT support staff needed to roll out the required infrastructure on an extremely tight budget. “We started looking at various ways to build the network but quickly realized that just the cost of the physical connections to the 54 offices was money we couldn’t afford,” continued White. With each office on a 10 Mb dedicated line costing \$675 per month, networking costs alone could top \$405,000 per year.

Staff resources were likewise limited, with only two full-time support staff to deploy and maintain IT for the entire organization. “Patch management for a distributed architecture would require about two hours per week per location; for 54 locations, that would mean 100 hours per week just maintaining existing systems,” noted White. “In addition, a distributed architecture would require us to

### Key Benefits

- Improved service delivery to children in need
- 50 percent reduction in network connectivity costs
- 99 percent decrease in IT staffing requirements; 98 percent reduction in patch management time
- New users set up in 30 minutes versus five hours
- Simplified compliance with regulatory requirements and reporting

**Applications Deployed**

10 applications, including:

- Proprietary Case management and tracking application
- Microsoft® Office and Exchange
- Network and System Management Tools



have 20 full-time employees for each of the state's 20 judicial circuits, to maintain local servers and data. That approach didn't make sense for us; it would take key resources away from our core mandate — providing representation for children."

#### IMPLEMENTING A CITRIX SOLUTION FOR REMOTE OFFICE CONNECTIVITY

To provide case coordinators and other advocates across the state with fast and secure access to IT services, GAL turned to a Citrix access infrastructure to consolidate its IT architecture. The Citrix® MetaFrame® Access Suite enables 500 authorized GAL staff to access key applications, including email and Microsoft® Office, from any office or remote location throughout Florida using any device or connection. GAL also plans to roll out its mission-critical case management solution via the system in the near-term. These applications are deployed centrally without compromising performance, accessibility, or security. In addition, GAL IT will provide support for wireless connections as well. **Bayshore Technologies**, Florida's only Platinum-level Citrix Solutions Advisor, worked closely with GAL to implement the Citrix solution.

#### FROM START-UP TO SUCCESS IN RECORD TIME

The new state-level agency achieved immediate success with a single, functioning IT infrastructure across the entire state within the allocated IT budget. "If every state agency worked this way, they'd have more resources to serve constituents. Using a Citrix solution to deliver secure, on-demand access to information from anywhere saves an incredible amount of time and money," noted White.

The alternative approach — a traditional design with 20 to 30 distributed servers in the statewide network — would have been too costly, resource-intensive, and time-consuming. Configuring more than 500 client devices would have required technicians to physically touch every machine, demanding hundreds of man-hours. Adding new users would have necessitated on-site visits by a technician to physically and administratively set up their PCs. These actions might require between four and five hours per client device. In contrast, setting-up new users via the Citrix solution takes only 30 minutes, a time- and cost-savings of 90 percent.

#### HELPING CHILDREN IN NEED THROUGH ON-DEMAND ACCESS

Beyond cost-savings, improved connectivity and on-demand access to critical information will dramatically improve the delivery of service to children in need. For example, staff can easily transfer a case from one jurisdiction to another instantly, sometimes saving weeks of work, and ensuring that the newly assigned case coordinator always has all of the information needed to represent the child. GAL will have roughly 300 people inputting data in order to generate reports to the Florida Legislature. GAL's access infrastructure will provide a focal point for data collection.

With statewide case consolidation, GAL also will maintain direct control over cases and visibility into the assigned caseload, ensuring critical information is available to provide more effective advocacy.

The MetaFrame Access Suite ensures the security of sensitive information by containing sensitive child case information within the

#### Networking Environment

- Citrix® MetaFrame® Access Suite 3.0 running on 4 IBM HS20 Blade Servers
- Microsoft® Windows Server™ 2003
- Internet, WAN and dial-up connections
- 500 client devices, including 400 Dell PCs and 100 donated laptops

confines of the data center. In addition, the Citrix solution dramatically simplifies user access without compromising security. Previously, users needed to maintain as many as four different logins, drawing on limited resources for common problems such as password resets. The MetaFrame Access Suite will reduce the number of passwords to one, eliminating a significant time and cost drain on the lean IT staff.

In addition, although users will access the system through a single point of entry, the Citrix solution will enable the IT staff to efficiently maintain control over access to case information, provisioning file availability. Only users with a specific need — validated by a central authority — will be able to view case files.

"Once we get the entire MetaFrame Access Suite up and running, we'll be able to better administer how we publish applications and critical information to users," concluded White. "Citrix makes the entire process faster and easier for us — it will save us a great deal of time, money, and energy, as well as enable us to reach our goal of 100 percent representation for all abused and neglected children across the state."

**About Citrix MetaFrame Access Suite:** Extending the world's most widely deployed presentation server, the Citrix MetaFrame Access Suite is access infrastructure for the on-demand enterprise. The suite centralizes access to applications and information and enables IT staffs to deliver, manage, monitor and measure enterprise resources on demand.