



PRESS RELEASE

Washington County Jail Offers Video Visitation

May 2, 2013 — The Washington County Jail has expanded services available from the inmate phone services provider, Telmate, to include video visitation. The jail's new and innovative equipment, including 21 durable touch screen video kiosks, came at no cost to Washington County taxpayers. Telmate will also provide free software upgrades, Internet service and lifetime on-site service and maintenance.

The new system will allow family and friends to visit an inmate via a video call (similar to Skype). Some of the greatest benefits will be to visitors who will no longer have to come to the Sheriff's Office for every visit. Visitors with Internet access, a desk or laptop computer, and a webcam can visit from the comfort of their own home. It will also save time and expense for visitors who live far away, disabled visitors, and those who may be too ill to travel for a visit.

The cost of a video visit will be \$9.90 per 30 minute call, regardless of whether it is scheduled by the inmate or the visitor. The person who schedules the visits pays the fee. The fees are the same for local, long distance and international calls.

How Does it Work?

By going online to www.telmate.com, a potential visitor will be able to create an account and request authorization to visit a specific inmate. Once authorized (per jail policies), the visitor will deposit funds online, by phone, or in person in the jail lobby. This will enable the visitor to schedule a video visit online. Inmates will also be allowed to schedule visits with authorized persons as long as they have funds in their inmate account.

With traditional in-person visits, inmates are allowed two one-hour visits per week in a visiting booth during set hours. With video visits, inmates will be allowed an unlimited number of visits per week to the extent appointments are available. Video visits are allowed during normal visiting hours, plus Fridays and Mondays.

All video visits will be monitored for compliance with jail rules. It is a privilege to be able to use this service, and all participants will be required to adhere to the rules. Those who violate the rules will be barred from using the system.

About the Washington County Jail

There is only one jail in Washington County, and on any given day, 620 of the 572 beds are full. You read that right. There are only 572 beds, but with new arrestees in the booking process and others in the course of release, our jail is at capacity most days. In addition to booking, lodging, feeding and transporting inmates, the jail must also provide visiting, phone calls, commissary privileges, and mail services. All of these services are being scrutinized to gain efficiencies as county budgets are constrained.

Contracting with Telmate appears to offer many benefits to the jail in the future. Within a couple months, video visiting may be able to accommodate tablet computers and smartphones. We are also looking to implement paperless systems where inmates use the kiosks to order commissary, request medical services, and even send electronic messages (imagine monitored email).