Public Defender + Social Worker + Two-Way Text Messaging = Increase in Court Appearances

PROBLEM

Public Defender clients were not showing up for court as a result of multiple barriers.

WHY IT MATTERS

Unaddressed social service needs like transportation, childcare, and employment support lead to ongoing criminal justice system entanglement. Getting people to court and avoiding failure to appear warrants is critical. It is also important to make sure defendants get the help needed to improve their chances of avoiding continued criminal justice entanglement.

INNOVATION

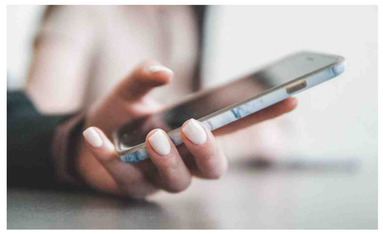
Implementation of a two-way messaging system. Placement of a social worker in the Public Defender's office and court house.

HOW

STEP 1
Training Attorneys

STEP 2
Client Engagment and Resources

STEP 3
Judiciary Buy-In



UpTrust

- Collaboration with UpTrust for court reminders
- Clients connect with attorney and social worker

70% of all notification messages were successfully delivered

29% of all notification messages were sent to the wrong number

Family & Children's Services

- Court Entity Coordination
- Transportation Support
- Case Management Referrals

71% of all client messages were positive

70% of all clients indicate transportation support needs

Public Defender

- Fewer failure to appears
- Reduced jail bookings
- County and individual savings

40% of all messages received required a PD attorney reply

~700 FTAs prevented since launch

"The Public Defender's dockets have been very large for years in Tulsa County with a high Failure to Appear rate. Since the UpTrust system has been implemented, there has been a noticeable increase in court appearances. The Public Defender's partnership with Family & Children's Services has proven to be a successful and productive collaboration. In addition to people getting to court, I am happy they are getting access to needed services and resources."
– Special Judge April Seibert, District 14

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SAFETY+JUSTICE CHALLENGE
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Family & Children's SERVICES

TULSA COUNTY PUBLIC DEFENDERS
Of the people. For the people.