

## Introduction

In recent years, Niagara County Correctional Facility faced the complicated challenge of engaging incarcerated individuals productively, reducing infractions, and creating a safe, secure environment for both corrections officers and incarcerated individuals. To address these challenges, Niagara County Correctional Facility partnered with Securus, an Aventiv company, driving efforts to better serve the incarcerated through rehabilitative justice, to deploy secure tablet technology. The implementation of tablet technology in the Niagara County Correctional Facility resulted in enhanced connections between incarcerated individuals and friends and family; as well as a 22 percent reduction in infractions and increased facility security.

## Background

Niagara County Correctional Facility is a medium-security correctional facility located in western New York.

### Niagara County Correctional Facility: By the Numbers

*12 in 1,000 people in Niagara County had a conviction as of 2019 (Data Collaborative for Justice). The number of people incarcerated can put a strain on local facilities. Niagara County Correctional Facility can house up to 447 incarcerated individuals and the average stay is 31.5 days.*

Like many correctional facilities, Niagara County Correctional Facility faced issues related to behavior, limited access to educational and reentry resources, and reported difficulties in maintaining connections with loved ones outside the facility. In 2021, recognizing the potential benefits of tablet technology, the jail administration partnered with Securus, a trusted provider of correctional technology solutions, to introduce tablets into the facility. It transformed the daily experience for everyone in the facility – creating efficiencies for administrators and correctional officers as well as value for the incarcerated individuals who rely on their tablets for connection with family and reentry resources every day.

## Objectives

The primary objectives of introducing tablet technology at Niagara County Correctional Facility were:

- 1 Increase Incarcerated Individual Engagement:** Provide access to educational content, vocational training, and communication tools to improve incarcerated individuals' prospects upon release
- 2 Reduce Infractions:** Minimize rule violations and misconduct by reducing conflict over access to phones and connecting incarcerated individuals with tools for rehabilitation
- 3 Enhance Safety:** Create a safer environment for both corrections officers and incarcerated individuals
- 4 Improve Efficiency:** A safer, more organized environment in the facility allows correctional officers and jail administrators, to be more efficient in their jobs

## Tablet Implementation

Jail administrators worked closely with Securus to implement tablet technology tailored to Niagara County Correctional Facility's unique needs. The tablets are equipped with a range of features, including secure communication tools, access to educational content, legal resources, and information on employment opportunities and reentry support.

### Content & Apps

- Secure Communication:** Through e-messaging and phone calls on tablets and video visitation kiosks, incarcerated individuals can communicate with family and friends through secure channels, strengthening their support networks and helping them prepare for reentry
- Free Content:** Securus tablets provide access to vital reentry resources, including free employment search tools, educational programming, a legal library, faith-based programming, podcasts, thousands of eBooks, and more. Additionally, individuals have the option to purchase premium media, such as movies, TV shows, games, and music. Premium media prices vary by category, but mirror the same purchasing model as consumers buying from iTunes or any other online entertainment provider
- Educational Content:** The tablets offer educational resources such as podcasts and Khan Academy Lite educational videos, allowing users to develop new skills.
- 1:1 Model:** With Securus, every incarcerated individual has access to their own tablet, reducing the odds of conflict over access to communication and technology resources
- Personalized Training:** Securus works closely with customers at all stages of the process – from procurement through implementation.

### Security Features

The tablets are equipped with a range of security features to ensure the safety and integrity of the correctional environment.

- Investigative Solutions:** Securus offers one secure platform to monitor communications – excluding privileged calls – so law enforcement and investigators can detect attempts to harass or threaten individuals, both inside or outside a facility, and identify efforts to coordinate other unlawful activity
- Remote Management:** The tablets can be remotely managed by one centralized platform, allowing correctional officers and administrators to monitor and control device usage in real-time
- User Authentication:** Incarcerated individuals can only access the tablets through secure, personalized logins, ensuring that each user receives appropriate content and resources
- Content Filtering:** All apps are configured to operate within a closed, secure environment without access to the internet. Inappropriate or prohibited content is blocked, guaranteeing that incarcerated individuals have access to educational materials and safe communication channels. This proactive approach helps maintain a secure digital environment and minimizes the risk of abuse.

## 1 Reduced Infractions

The introduction of tablet technology has resulted in a significant reduction in infractions. Prior to the tablets, the facility faced disciplinary and behavioral issues, particularly related to phone and TV use. One major source of conflict was competition over the use of wall phones. Another conflict was from large groups gathering around the TV and shouting over one another, a significant source of noise and a strain on correctional officers.

The availability of educational content and communication tools has kept incarcerated individuals engaged and focused on personal development, leading to a noticeable decrease in rule violations.

*Between November 1, 2020 - October 31, 2021, 1,001 incidents of discipline were recorded. During that same duration after adopting the tablets, 785 incidents of discipline were recorded. This is a 22 percent reduction in infractions.*

## 2 Safer Environment

Tablets contributed to a safer environment both for correctional officers and incarcerated individuals. The reduction in infractions helped create a more orderly and peaceful facility, lowering the potential for confrontations. Corrections officers have reported feeling more secure in their work environment.

Secure tablets also help prevent the introduction of contraband or the planning and coordination of criminal activity both inside the correctional facility and in the community.

## 3 Improved Engagement

Incarcerated individuals now have the opportunity to acquire valuable skills that can help them reintegrate into society successfully.

Preliminary findings showed a 67 percent increase in phone calls once the tablets went live, compared to wall phone usage. Incarcerated individuals emphasize how being able to make calls and send messages from their cell allows them to have privacy, avoid conflict, and remain in near-constant contact with loved ones.

Enhanced communication with loved ones has also had a positive impact on incarcerated individual and corrections officer well-being.

The inclusion of free and premium content, including educational materials, faith-based offerings, self-help guides, and other resources help incarcerated individuals prepare for a successful reentry starting on day one with the goal of reducing recidivism and enabling rehabilitative justice.

*"In a pod, you have 56 incarcerated individuals housed together. We have two TVs and four phones per pod. Prior to the tablets, there would be fights over what channel the TV was on and who was next on the phone. The tablets give everyone the option to call their loved ones when they want instead of waiting on everybody else to have their turn on the phone. So it's definitely made it easier for them to coexist."*

**- Chief Jail Administrator Anthony Suess**

*"My main job and responsibility in this facility is keeping myself, my coworkers, and all of the incarcerated individuals safe. The tablets help us do that by relieving a lot of tension and pressure. If you have a block with 16 guys on it, they're not fighting over the phones, fighting over the TVs. They're able to talk to their families. It makes our job safer and easier."*

**- Corrections Officer Sydney**

*"We monitor communications for potential nefarious activity. It helps with gaining information on crimes on the outside and also with gaining information on contraband possibly coming into the jail."*

**- Chief Jail Administrator Anthony Suess**

*"E-Messaging is the most used app in Niagara County. The more access you have to your family and friends while you're incarcerated encourages individuals to want to do better, to return to loved ones, and set up support for when they are released."*

**- Chief Jail Administrator Anthony Suess**

*"The most valuable thing that I've seen being used with the tablets is definitely the self-help podcasts. They have different podcasts for addiction, for anger management, and other topics. They're all free too, so incarcerated individuals can go right onto their tablets, download podcasts that pertain to them, and listen with their headphones. I've heard many guys say that they learned different coping mechanisms, different ways to talk to people if they are struggling with addiction problems, and I've watched people actually get help through their struggles."*

**- Corrections Officer Sydney**

*"Recidivism is the thing we're trying to solve. I believe that the tablet is going to help all incarcerated individuals here. Not only can they brush up on their educational development, but they can help with any issues that they're dealing with, any substance abuse issues, any anger management issues. That's helped to ensure they get the help they need to reintegrate back into society."*

**- Field Intelligence Officer Paul**

## Chief Jail Administrator Anthony Suess

“You’ll likely have officers giving you some pushback in the beginning, but once they have the tablets in their units and they see how the incarcerated individuals are using them, you’ll see higher morale from staff and inmates and it’s going to reduce problems in your jail.”

“The Securus tablets are a godsend. It keeps people occupied and it’s a win-win for us. If they can have more contact through e-messaging with videos and pictures, it’s safer for us because the risk for contraband coming in and out is reduced. If I can give somebody a tablet and it keeps their mind distracted from doing something wrong or hurting themselves or hurting somebody else, it’s a huge perk.”

## Corrections Officer Sydney

“A lot of people ask me, why are we giving out tablets? They’re in jail. What I would say to them is, these are people that are your neighbors. They’re people that are going to be coming back into your community at some point. Our goal when they’re here is to help them get the help that they need so that when they get out, they have different coping mechanisms and different points of contact for resources like addiction counselors, crisis services, and hotline numbers. These tablets help them get all of those resources. They have a legal library on their tablet that’s helping them learn about their case, learn about criminal justice, and learn the importance of coming out and serving your community in a positive way.”

## Field Intelligence Officer Paul

“Having the tablets here has been a positive thing for this facility. Incarcerated individuals before had time to think about the negative in their lives, and now that we have tablets, their minds are engaged. That’s half the battle of creating a safe and positive environment.”

## Juan Rumble, Incarcerated Individual

“The tablets are your best friend. You take it with you everywhere you go and they’re rechargeable. From day one, it teaches you how to handle yourself.”

“Tablets have created a lot of peace for us because you could be talking on the tablet through your phone in your cell without anybody having to be around others and face noise or competition for wall phones.”

“When I heard about the tablets, I didn’t even know how to work them. I learned the apps and the programs from other incarcerated individuals. I didn’t even know you could send messages, VideoGrams, or even that you could listen to music. It was great. I think it’s a relief for a lot of incarcerated individuals. It’s like a way of getting your mind out of hard things and onto more productive things.”

“I get a lot of messages from my family about my dogs, my nieces, my sisters. Everybody in here has loved ones that send them pictures and keep them updated.”

“I come from a working family, so I’ve always wanted to do better than what I had, but I didn’t know the right path and right decisions to make. There’s a lot of good podcasts that I listen to on my tablet that teach me new skills: how to open bank accounts, how to start a new business, and how to become a better person when I get out.”

## Michael, Incarcerated Individual

“My son is three years old and he has started talking so much. I’m happy I can get the videos of him actually talking and just doing little silly stuff that kids do. It’s a blessing.”

## Conclusion

The successful deployment of tablet technology at Niagara County Correctional Facility demonstrates the potential of correctional technology to transform facilities, reduce infractions, and create safer environments. Enabling incarcerated individuals to strengthen relationships with friends and family, using secure communications on the tablets, prepares them for reentry and creates a more peaceful facility. For correctional institutions seeking to enhance safety, reduce infractions, and promote inmate engagement, partnering with Securus for tablet deployment presents a proven solution that aligns with the goals of rehabilitation and safer corrections environments.

To learn more about tablet solutions and how they can benefit your correctional facility, please contact us at [\[Contact Information\]](#).

**Note:** The information in this case study is accurate as of September 2023 and reflects the status of Niagara County Correctional Facility’s tablet program at that time.