

# CASE STUDY

# HAMILTON COUNTY COURTS

## Overview

- Already familiar with video conferencing for courts system
- Department was looking to upgrade their video conferencing solution
- Safety and security increase with less need to transport inmate
- New system work seamlessly with legacy archiving system



**Hamilton  
County  
Courts**



The Hamilton Clerk of Courts department is an early technology adopter. Not afraid of introducing new techniques and technologies, Hamilton County introduced their first video conferencing system to the department back in 1997 as an assessment for the Administrator of Courts, who was doing a doctoral thesis on video communications in court systems. The video conferencing market was so new at that time that many people didn't think it was even possible. Not realizing they were pioneers of the time, their first video conferencing solution was deployed, and the court system quickly realized the benefits of arrangements via video conferencing and has had a system in place ever since.

Over time, the technology has improved, and the needs of the court system have changed. In order to keep up with the expanding needs of the court system, Hamilton County approached IDS for a new and updated solution.

The Hamilton County Clerk of Courts department used their video conferencing solution daily to conduct courtroom arraignments. Defendants in one location – often in prison – could call into the courtroom for their arraignments. There is a dedicated video conferencing room in the prison designed specifically for this purpose; prisoners are brought to this room to attend their arraignments which would otherwise be across town.

Because the Clerk of Court system was already very familiar with the video conferencing technology, finding a solution that would fit their needs wasn't difficult.

"We were looking for a state-of-the-art system, one that would replace our old system with updated functions and be easy to use," said Cathy Hightower, Executive Secretary for Hamilton County.

## Action

IDS proposed a high-definition video conferencing solution by Lifesize, which was already the state standard in Indiana. After Cathy did some research on Lifesize, she concluded that it would be a great fit for the needs of the court system. "We found that it was really a top-of-the-line solution and that is exactly what we were looking for."

IDS implemented the new Lifesize solution and provided training for courtroom personnel. Making calls on their own without having to get IT involved was important because the system is used daily.

Any court proceeding must have the audio recording archived, so the new Lifesize system was also connected to the existing audio archival system in the courtroom for a seamless integration that wouldn't change the workflow. During a video arraignment session, the audio in the court and the audio from the jail is recorded to the same file using the existing audio system. This allows for the same workflow whether the proceeding is in person or over video.

*“EVERYONE IS PLEASED WITH THE SOLUTION; THE HIGH DEFINITION IS GREAT, AND IT IS EASY TO USE.*

*CATHY HIGHTOWER  
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY*

## Results

As an early adopter, Hamilton County realized the benefits of using video conferencing for their daily arraignments long ago. Prisoners no longer have to be transported from prison to the courtroom. Safety and security for the community and courtroom personnel increased and the county realizes a financial benefit from not having to transport prisoners back and forth for their courtroom appearances. The feedback from Judges and other courtroom personnel has been very positive. "Everyone is pleased with the solution; the high definition is great, and it is easy to use," said Cathy. The system can also be used across counties or even the country for defendants who are having hearings in other areas.



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