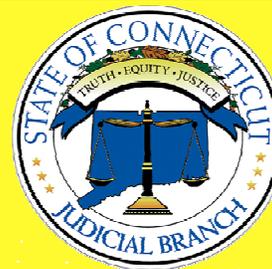


CSSD Chronicle

State of Connecticut Judicial Branch

Court Support Services Division

Tuesday, June 15, 2010



Operational Changes to Restitution Unit Provides Improved Customer Service to Victims and Clients

The goal of court-ordered restitution is to compensate the victim of a crime for a loss, damage, or injury to person or property. CSSD currently collects over six million dollars a year through its Restitution Unit from probationers who have been court-ordered to reimburse negotiated amounts to victims. Active restitution accounts have grown to over 8,500 with 4,200 new accounts opened each year. In 2009, 23,000 compensatory payments from CSSD were made to victims of crime.

The challenges that come with the rapid growth, collection, and disbursement of funds is handled by a small unit of two employees. Restitution accounts are opened and maintained on the older Adult Probation On-Line Information System (APOLIS) database which can be cumbersome to use and lacks the sophisticated tool options that newer database programs contain.

The Restitution Unit also works hard to provide culturally appropriate customer service to an ever increasing population of limited-English speaking clients and victims. At a recent CSSD cultural competency training, team members from CSSD Fiscal Administration, which includes the Restitution Unit, presented some of the communication challenges they face daily, both on the phone and in person.

Addressing Challenges:

- Several processing functions have been streamlined or changed to better handle the volume of account activity with limited staff. For example, instead of faxing restitution forms, field staff can now e-mail forms to a dedicated restitution inbox. Plans are included in the Court Management Information System rewrite (CMIS-R) that will move restitution functions from APOLIS into CMIS. This move will increase efficiency and accuracy of accounts by providing field and office staff with state-of-the-art computer technology.
- In order to provide open assistance to all clients and victims, the Restitution Unit phone messaging center was re-designed to provide help in a more diverse way. Instead of one message in English, which was lengthy and contained information for both victims and clients, callers can now choose from a variety of options—in English and Spanish—from a “calling tree.” Callers can also leave their message in Spanish which is translated by a CSSD employee volunteer and forwarded to the Restitution Unit for action.
- For live calls involving limited-English speakers, Restitution

Unit staff can easily utilize *Language Line Services*, a state-contracted company that currently provides interpreter services for 170 languages, and is available to all employees within the Judicial Branch. Additionally, for those limited-English customers who visit Central Office, a designated area has been established with phone access to utilize the interpreter service during the visit.

- Restitution Unit forms and directions, as well as documents used in other departments, are being evaluated and prioritized by CSSD staff to be translated into Spanish. Currently, several common Restitution Unit documents are available in both English and Spanish and several more will be translated in the near future.

According to Mary Kay West, Manager of Fiscal Administration and the Restitution Unit, the changes in processing account information, and the availability of language interpreter services, has had a positive effect on staff, clients, and victims. “Now, the interaction between the Restitution Unit and our limited-English customers is less frustrating. We’re able to focus on and resolve a restitution issue quickly because we can accommodate language needs when necessary. And, with the additional technology changes, we will also increase our IT account maintenance functions.”

For more information on CSSD’s Restitution Unit contact Mary Kay West at MaryKay.West@jud.ct.gov.

The CSSD Chronicle is a regular publication of information and news about the Court Support Services Division. Questions or comments on this edition, or suggestions for future articles, can be directed to Linda.Grzeika@jud.ct.gov