



OFFICE OF THE SHERIFF CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO

1 DR. CARLTON B. GOODLETT PLACE
ROOM 456, CITY HALL
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA 94102



Ross Mirkarimi
SHERIFF

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CONTACT: Kathy Gorwood or Enrique Luquin
Office: 415-554-7225

EMAIL: Kathy.Gorwood@sfgov.org
Enrique.Luquin@sfgov.org

Unprecedented for the San Francisco Jail System – Rare in County Jails Nationwide: Introducing Secured Technology Tablets for Educational Advancement

The San Francisco Sheriff's Department (SFSD) and its Five Keys Charter High School (the first charter high school in a county jail in the United States) is collaborating with American Prison Data Systems (APDS) on an unprecedented pilot program that will relax the historical prohibition of computers in inmate quarters through the use of secure tablets for the purposes of delivering educational content electronically in a safe, secure and efficient way.

APDS is a public benefits corporation that was founded in 2011 by CEO Chris Grewe with the goals of making the custody environment safer and reducing recidivism in a cost-effective and technologically secure way. The pilot program's objectives are to identify client needs and to implement programs based on needs and criminal history, to establish individual treatment and reentry plans, to emphasize restorative justice and to cultivate responsible behaviors.

APDS will train SFSD staff on the safety and security features of the 125 tablets to be delivered to the Five Keys Charter Schools and the Reentry Pod. APDS Android-based tablets are connected by a secure private network, designed by the same Verizon engineers who developed network security solutions for the Department of Homeland Security and the NYC Anti-Terror Taskforce. The tablets will include the following: an online law library, APDS Secure Communications for inmate/teacher digital communications, APDS National Corrections Library (the first online recreational library curated specifically for custody environments), APDS virtual classroom for the remote delivery of teacher-led classes and the APDS Learning Management System, which supports digitization and delivery of Five Keys Charter School Courses.

According to a 2014 RAND Study, adult correctional education improves post release outcomes. Inmates who participate in correctional education programs have a 43 percent lower chance of recidivating than those who do not participate in educational programs.

PHONE: 415-554-7225 FAX: 415-554-7050

WEBSITE: WWW.SFSHERIFF.COM

EMAIL: SHERIFF@SFGOV.ORG

“APDS is thrilled that Sheriff Mirkarimi and Five Keys (Charter School) have chosen to partner with APDS and leverage our technology to expand the reach and power of their proven education and rehabilitation programs. We look forward to working closely with the Sheriff, Five Keys (Charter School) and their dedicated teams to help fulfill our shared mission of improving community safety and inmate-outcomes through education and rehabilitation”, said CEO Chris Grewe.

"If we insist on effective crime prevention then we must tackle this country's colossal failure to reduce recidivism by departure from past jail management practices that were designed to kill souls and release uneducated or unskilled inmates back into society," stated Sheriff Ross Mirkarimi. "Our pilot program for allowing inmates limited access to computer tablets is a natural extension of this Department's pioneering work in establishing the nation's first charter high school inside a county jail".

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