

Rehabilitative Technology in Corrections: Problem, Solution and Roadmap

Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA)







Residential Substance Abuse Treatment (RSAT)
Program for State Prisoners

Training and Technical Assistance Resource

This project was supported by grant No.15PBJA-22-GK-01132-RSAT awarded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance. The Bureau of Justice Assistance is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the SMART Office, and the Office for Victims of Crime. Point of view or opinions in this document are those of the author and do not represent the official position or policies of the United States Department of Justice.



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1. Introducing Today's Speakers



John Needelman

Is the **Chief Information Officer** at the **Iowa Department of Corrections**.

John oversees the integration and strategy of IT systems across nine of Iowa's prison institutions. With a **career spanning over 18 years at the Department**, John has a deep expertise in IT strategy, technology architecture, and system administration.

Throughout his career, he has been committed to enhancing technology infrastructure to improve department operations and efficiency.

April Feng

Is the **CEO of Ameelio**, a non-profit technology provider that connects incarcerated individuals and their families through low-cost and cutting-edge technology.

Prior to Ameelio, April worked with **Steven Levitt**, author of **Freakonomics**, at the **University of Chicago** and also worked in the **United Kingdom's Parliament** during Brexit.

She received a Master's in Philosophy and Public Policy from the **London School of Economics**, and a Bachelor's in Economics and Political Science from the **University of Notre Dame**.



ameelio

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this presentation, participants will be able to:

- Address challenges posed by evolving technology such as staff burden, security risks, and cost
- Navigate evidence-based technology for improved outcomes in education and recidivism
- Identify and improve on other technology limitations such as wifi networks, hardware demands, and digital literacy

Rehabilitative Technology in Corrections: Problem, Solution and Roadmap

Wednesday, May 22, 2024
2:00–3:00 PM EST



82% of incarcerated people are rearrested within 10 years post-release



Successful reentry
programming begins
from **the first day** of
incarceration



But correctional facilities across the country are **struggling** to provide effective reentry programs



Due to critical staffing shortage –
correctional
workforces have
**declined by up to
29%** in states within
just 3 years

Rehabilitative Technology in Corrections

- 01 Introducing Today's Speakers
- 02 Problems in Correctional Technology
- 03 Implementation Principles
- 04 Case Study

Ameelio's Mission

We're on a mission to provide correctional agencies and staff the most **innovative**, **efficient**, and **lowest-cost** communication and education products available.

And to **empower** the incarcerated with vital tools to rebuild their lives.

Who we are

We are the **only nonprofit** IPCS provider in the industry.

We offer video calls, e-messaging, voice calls and visitation scheduling, and leverage this infrastructure to expand **educational** and **reentry programming**.

2. Problems in Correctional Technology

SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

GOVERNMENT ENVIRONMENT ECONOMY HEALTH JUSTICE EDUCATION ELECTION 2024

JUSTICE

Investigation shuts down texting, email, tablet-based phone calls for inmates and families

BY: JOHN HULT - MARCH 21, 2024 6:00 PM



Security vulnerability, elevated risks, and alarming public reports

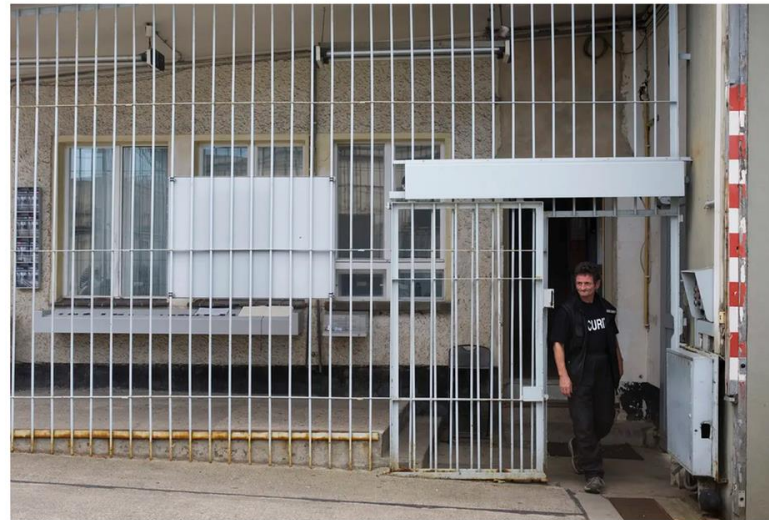
Top Technology Concerns

Consequences

Technology rollouts slow, tech debt increases, and new services cease

POLICY / US & WORLD

Prison phone service breach exposes attorney-client call recording



Max Moreau / Flickr

A woman with dark hair, wearing an orange short-sleeved shirt, is seated and talking on a white telephone. She has a blue identification band on her left wrist. A large, out-of-focus hand is raised in the foreground, palm facing the camera, partially obscuring the right side of the frame. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

**Programs are cancelled, the public loses trust, residents
and staff lose access to vital resources**
This jeopardizes rehabilitation progress

3. Implementation Principles

Key focus areas

- 01 High Security
- 02 Ease Staff Burden
- 03 Customize For Daily Workflows

High Security

The number one priority in corrections is **security**

For every right way, there are a million wrong ways that result in high-risk security breaches with untold consequences – and new vulnerabilities emerge regularly

Correctional technology must be designed with security as a focal-point and stay **customizable to adaptation**

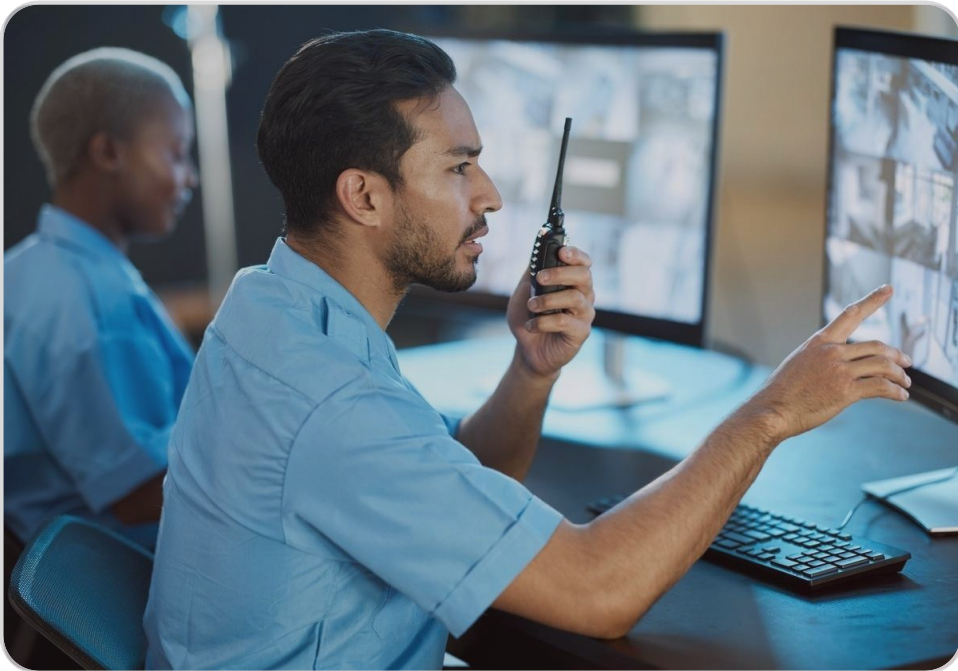
Ease Staff Burden

Correctional agencies everywhere are facing a critical **staffing shortage**

Processes and technologies should focus on reducing staff burden and aiding daily operations

Customize For Staff Workflows

All of these benefits were only possible because we **customized technology** for each staff member's workflows and optimized for **ease of use** within high-stress environments. Our digital tasks are designed to minimize opportunities for human error.



But staff are not the only group that engage with correctional technology.

Incarcerated people, their families and friends, attorneys and healthcare providers all utilize technology.

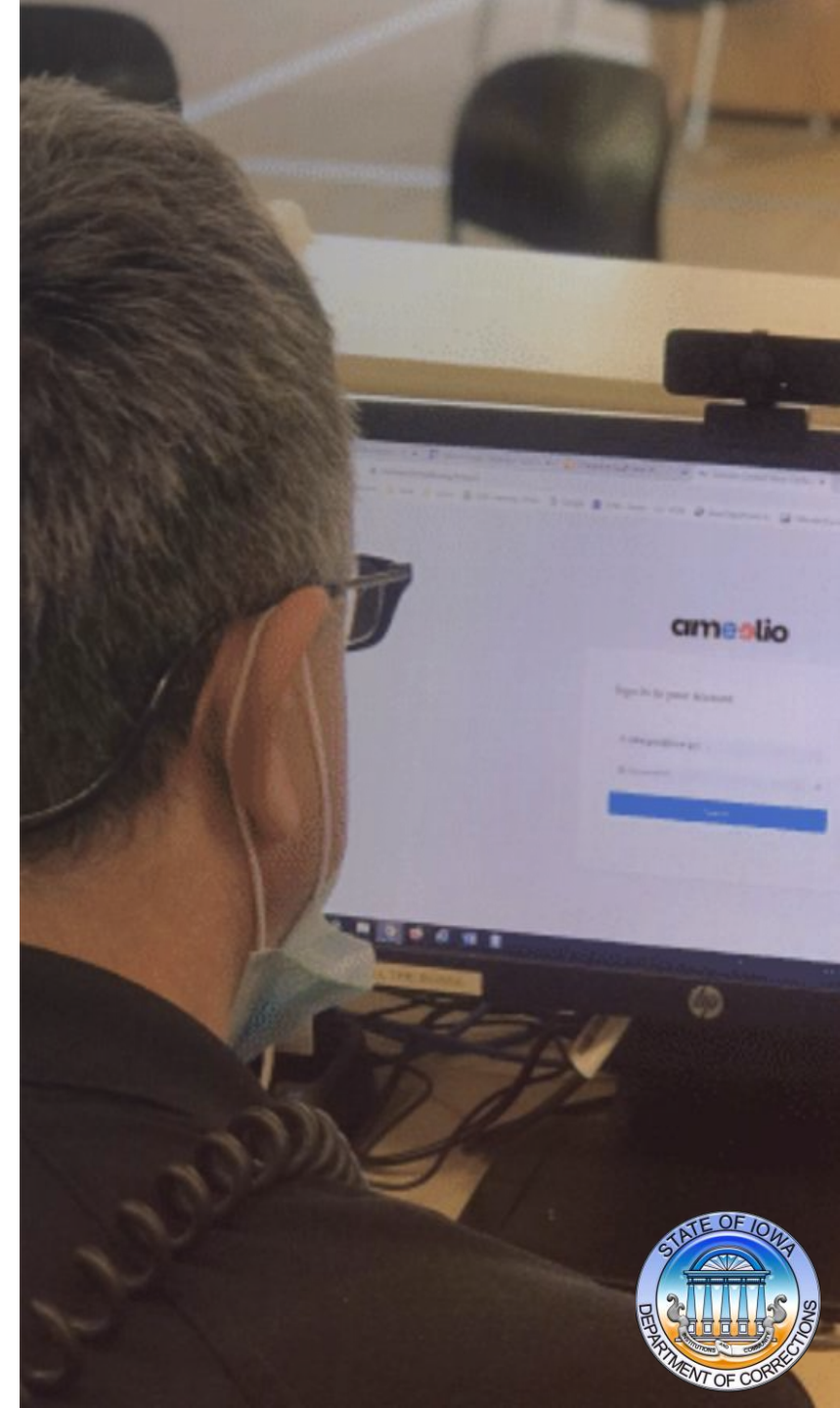
We focused on **wraparound stakeholders** throughout our technology ecosystem and its implementation.

Prioritized Security: Collaborated closely with facility staff to understand security challenges they face in their unique, day-to-day workflow. And we designed our system facility by facility.

Increased efficiency: Implemented user-friendly systems for DOC staff and adopted transparent system designs.

Transparency in impact: Recommend measuring the impact of new technology on occurrences of infractions – keeping staff and resident safety a priority.

Mitigated staff burden: Launched features that combine multiple staff processes into **one step**, streamlined designs saved staff time and eased staff burden, preventing burnout and low-retention.





”

Ameelio's video calling platform is so easy to use — it's going to **save us COs an abundance of time**, make our work more efficient, and get our prison population reconnected with their families at no cost.

Mike Gass, Correctional Officer
IA Department of Corrections

4. Case Study

Case: Iowa Department of Corrections

Iowa was the **first state** to implement Ameelio's video visitation solution to incarcerated individuals.

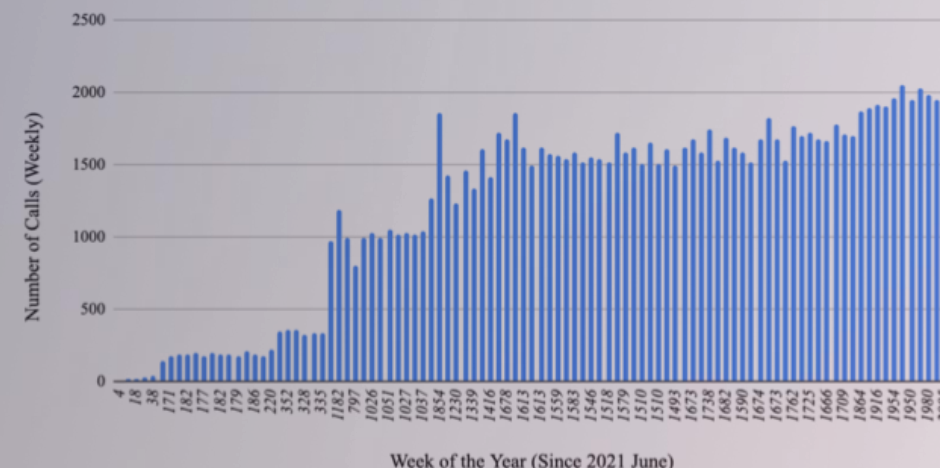
An independent research group at the University of Chicago, UC Berkeley, and Vanderbilt University found that Ameelio's free video calls directly led to a **reduction in infractions** and increase in-person visitation.

Since the launch in June 2021, **video call volumes increased by 103%**.

Ameelio presented **an accessible alternative to in-person visits**. Video calls make it more accessible alternative for out-of-state individuals to stay in touch with their loved ones inside.

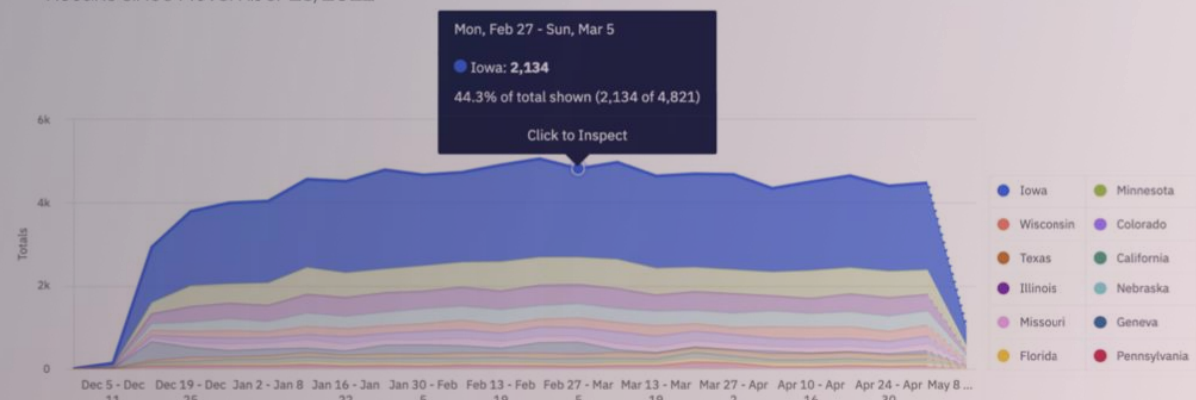
Number of Calls Scheduled (Weekly)

Since the beginning of Ameelio in Iowa



Out-of-state vs In-state Video Call Scheduling in Iowa

Results since November 28, 2022



”

The technology is not just for in-state visitors but for out of state visitors. And that impacts the safe operations of our prisons.

We really wanted to find a platform that would create that **extra layer of security**. We've had video visits from 44 states and 12 different countries. Incarcerated people have something to look forward to with these video visits. I can even see it helping with disciplinary issues internally and potentially shifting our culture.

Beth Skinner, Director of Iowa Department of Corrections



How did these factors
influence our approach
to implementing new
technologies?

Correctional staff

Incarcerated people

Families & Friends

Legal & Health

providers

Education providers

Stakeholders

Considerations

High Security

Easing Staff Burden

Customized

Panelist Conversation

QUESTIONS

- ▶ Type your questions in the Q&A box on your screen.



John Needelman | john.needelman@iowa.gov

April Feng | april@ameelio.org

References and Resources

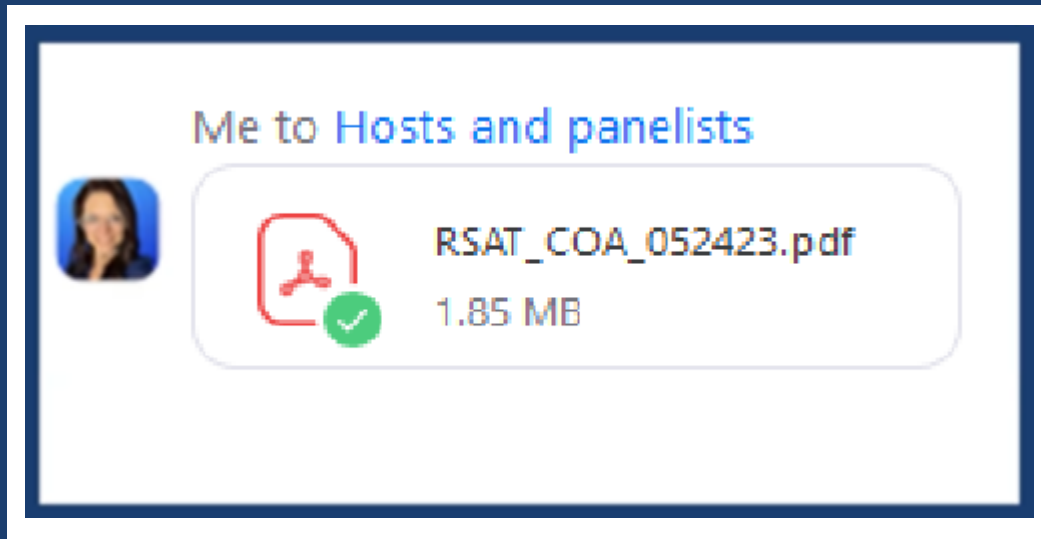
Presentation References:

- <https://bja.ojp.gov/news/justice-matters/desk-bja-november-2023>
- <https://www.themarshallproject.org/2024/01/10/prison-correctional-officer-shortage-overtime-data>
- <https://www.theverge.com/2015/11/11/9715002/securus-attorney-client-privilege-breach-prison>
- <https://southdakotasearchlight.com/2024/03/21/investigation-tied-to-prison-tablets-leads-to-shutdown-of-text-email-for-inmates-and-families/>

BJA/NIC Resources & Programs:

- [Safeguarding Correctional Facilities and Public Safety by Addressing Contraband Cellphones Program](#)
- Child Friendly Family Visiting Spaces in Jails and Prisons Program
 - [Model Practices for Parents in Prisons and Jails guide](#)
 - [Children of Incarcerated Parents Program Assistance](#)

You can download the certificate of attendance from the chat.





CERTIFICATE OF CONTINUING EDUCATION



1 Continuing Education Hour (CEH) approved by NAADAC, the Association of Addiction Professionals



Pass 10-question quiz with 7 correct answers



Download certificate upon completion of the quiz

May 22, 2024 RSAT webinar CEH quiz link:

<https://survey.alchemer.com/s3/7858214/May-22-2024-RSAT-Webinar-CEH>

CONTACT



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