



[Inmate Use of Computer Tablets in Pima County](#)

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Allowing inmates to use tablet computers in the Pima County, Ariz., correctional facility has helped improve safety for both inmates and staff while providing access to life skills training and contact with family, according to the Pima County Sheriff's Department.

The Pima County Adult Detention Center in Tucson houses between 1,800 and 2,000 inmates at any given time. The sheriff's department had a six-month pilot tablet program that began in December 2015, after which tablets were given to every inmate.

"The pilot program was to test the durability and security of the tablets and the WiFi. We told inmates to try and breach the security and they couldn't do it," says Capt. Sean Stewart of the sheriff's department. "The tablets were considered secure and durable so we distributed them to all inmates."

A tablet is taken away for a period of time if an inmate is troublesome, which gives them impetus to



behave, according to Stewart.

“The tablets have helped create a safe and secure environment. The tablets are valuable to inmates and they don’t want to lose them. It keeps them occupied and entertained. The tablets serve as an inmate management tool and it gives them something to occupy their minds,” Stewart says. “Prior to tablets, if officers confronted an inmate about negative behavior, the inmate would often be belligerent and hostile. Now that officers have the ability to take a tablet away, they are getting a different reaction from inmates. The inmates are being apologetic, contrite, instead of being belligerent.”

Suicides, inmate-on-inmate fights and inmate altercations with correctional staff have all declined by at least 50 percent since tablet use was instituted, and the overall jail environment has improved. The sheriff’s department compared statistics during a 12-month period prior to distributing tablets with the 12-month period after tablets were distributed.

“You just walk about the jail and you don’t feel that tension; it’s palpable,” Stewart says.

There is no internet access and no social media through the tablets. Through a secure intranet, access is provided to anger management programs and employment training. For a monthly fee, users can stream music. They can exchange emails (roughly 2,000 characters for 25 cents) and call family (20 cents a minute) via a secure, monitored server. Every email message and phone call is monitored. Family members cannot directly call an inmate; they can call and leave a short message asking an inmate to call them at a certain day and time. Providing each inmate with a tablet means they do not have to compete for use of limited wall phones, reducing tension.

Not all tablet usage requires a fee. For example, users have free access to an electronic law library and to hundreds of free e-books. Inmates can use the tablets to request medical care and notarization of

paperwork for court.

The vendor provided the tablets free to the department and installed servers and WiFi, and in exchange could keep all revenue generated from tablet use for the first year. After the first year was up, revenue is now shared with Pima County. Revenue that come back to Pima County go toward inmate welfare fund to benefits inmates while incarcerated.

For more information, contact Capt. Sean Stewart at sean.stewart@sheriff.pima.gov.

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