

# silanis Stanislaus County

## Stanislaus County, CA, Cuts Paper Processing to Increase Family Services



The District Attorney's office in Stanislaus, California, is the largest law firm in the county and handles a wide range of state-level services, from prosecuting criminal cases to locating absent parents. The latter, carried out by the Family Support Division of the DA's office, assists over 40,000 families annually in establishing paternity, enforcing support orders, and collecting and distributing child support payments. In 2000 alone, it distributed an impressive \$48 million in payments from obligor parents.

To keep up with the growing number of yearly cases and to spend more time servicing families, the division recognized that it needed to reduce its paper trail.

The back-end processing and signature authorizations needed to deliver its services within the Stanislaus County area is very paper-intensive. The paper

trail becomes even more complicated as interstate and international agencies are added to the mix in cases where non-custodial parents live in different states or countries.

Moreover, paper prevented new families from receiving timely assistance from the Family Support Division. Because all new cases require a signed application form, custodial parents either needed to take time off work to open a file in-person at the division's office, or had the form mailed to them, which caused more delays in the overall processing of their application and in receiving services.

To address these problems, and other general and HR inefficiencies, the DA's Family Support Division introduced an electronic signature and approval management solution from Silanis in February 2001. Benefits include an 80% reduction in the time needed to administer their most resource-draining process: time studies. These detailed time sheets-critical to obtaining Federal funding-can now be completed in two days each quarter or eight days per year, versus the previous two months per year, enabling their staff to focus more on actual services.



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The division also plans to introduce a new Web service, powered by Silanis' electronic signatures, which will enable families to complete and sign application forms online, so that they can begin receiving family support services without delay.

### SUMMARY OF PROBLEM

The Family Support Division needed to address the glaring inefficiencies in its internal administrative, HR and IT processes before automating externally. Like many other agencies, the Division's daily operations are paper-intensive and require multiple authorities to give their signature approvals before a process can move forward. Everything from the opening of a case file to a request for personnel is carefully documented, signed and authorized. Managing the paperwork requires photocopying, faxing, mailing, and filing, and costs the division time and money.

One of the Division's core administrative processes involves submitting quarterly time studies to the federal government. These reports are absolutely critical in that the federal government uses them to determine how much funding will be allocated to the Division. They are similar

to invoices submitted by consultants or contractors, in that they detail-minute-by-minute-how the Division spends its time.

Prior to implementing Silanis' ApproveIt Desktop electronic signature software, the time study process occurred on paper, meaning all of the time and dollar amounts had to be tallied manually—an extremely time-consuming process commonly prone to miscalculations. Each employee would complete their calculations and hand-sign their report. The quarterly reports would then be compiled and merged into a single report before being submitted to the State, through which federal funding is dispersed. In the past, preparing and compiling all of the reports could take up to 10 business days each quarter, for a total of two months of work per year.

Similarly, contracts for hiring vendors and consultants averaged a four-week process. Contracts would be created in Microsoft Word, but then they would be printed and routed to the purchasing department, the County's legal counsel, the vendor and Family Support Division management for signature. Approving these and other documents such as

supply forms, time sheets, requests for vacation time and requests for sick leave were also unnecessarily time consuming; some were lost, others misplaced; several involved manual calculations; and they all had to be filed.

Finally, the Division's current Web site is a static source of information. In the future it will become dynamic, with service recipients benefiting from real-time electronic signing. Single parents often cannot take time off work to sign the required paperwork. As a result, the process is lengthened because documents have to be mailed and hand-signed - often resulting in lost or misplaced paperwork.

### SUMMARY OF SOLUTION

The Family Support Division of Stanislaus County's DA's Office deployed Silanis' electronic signature and approval management software to 200 personnel in February 2001. The beauty of choosing ApproveIt Desktop was that it was fully compatible with the Microsoft Office 2000 software their employees were already familiar with, reducing the learning curve and ensuring employee-acceptance.



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By using ApproveIt Desktop, the Division has now fully automated a number of extremely time-consuming internal processes and as a result, keeps those processes electronic—even when signatures are required. For example, time studies that used to take two weeks are now compiled and submitted within two days. Microsoft Excel automatically calculates time and dollar amounts billed to the federal government. Case-workers then simply click the electronic signing icon in the ApproveIt Desktop menu that appears in Excel's menu bar; they enter their private password; and their electronic signature is permanently embedded in the report. The report can then be instantly routed by email for additional signatures. Now, rather than spending two weeks per quarter on their time studies, Division personnel can reinvest their time in their critical customer service-oriented responsibilities.

Similarly, purchasing and consulting contracts that previously required four weeks to complete are now finalized in days, since the purchasing department, the County's legal counsel and Family Support Division management all sign electronically.

The Division is currently undergoing an organizational transition and in 2003, will be known as the Department of Child Support Services. One of the goals of this new organization will be to use the Web to offer custodial parents new levels of customer service—making the new Department more accessible to parents whose strained finances keep them from taking time off to come in and sign documents.

### SUMMARY OF BENEFITS

The return on investment was immediate. Approval processes have been compressed by as much as 80%. Employees can now dedicate their time and effort to providing family services, and spend less time managing paper. The main benefits:

#### **Streamlined internal approval processes**

- Division employees spend less time managing paper and more time on the growing number of case files.

- Quarterly time studies now take two days to complete versus the previous 10 days, an 80% time savings.

- Purchasing and consulting contracts now finalized in days, not weeks.

- No more lost or misplaced paperwork.
- No more manual calculations.

#### **Readied the Division for Web-based G2C transactions**

- Convenience of online signing will likely increase the number of parents serviced, making internal efficiency that much more critical.

#### **Leveraged employees' familiarity with Microsoft Office**

- ApproveIt Desktop supports Microsoft Word and Excel, as well as Adobe Acrobat, JetForm FormFlow and more, right out-of-the-box.

#### **No need to hire consultants for deployment**

- Two of the Division's IT employees oversaw setup and provided training, with the support of Silanis' technical team. ↻

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