

Spotlight on: The Polk County Information Technology Department (IT)



Mission Statement

The mission of the Polk County I.T. Department is to provide the highest quality technology-based services, in the most cost-effective manner, to facilitate the county's mission as it applies to the management of, and the service to, citizens' well-being.

IT department is extremely committed in using technology to protect information and prevent information breaches

The IT department has a long history of implementing stringent control policies and procedures, as well as monitoring mechanisms to protect county business information and citizen

data. The goal is, and has always been, to protect the confidentiality, integrity and availability of this important information and respond quickly and aggressively to security threats. The following information outlines activities performed and technologies used by the IT department to combat the every-growing threats against our institution.

Intrusion Detection and Prevention Systems: The IT department implemented technology to alert us of possible criminal activities from outside AND inside our networks. When dealing with data loss and identity theft, we don't rule out any person as a possible threat. The IDS/IPS appliances also alert us when software was added, security policies were enforced, or user activities violate preconfigured thresholds.

Firewalls and Access Control Lists: The IT department manages several firewalls at the perimeter and within the various local networks as well as our virtual private networks. Our firewalls are designed to create and manage security zones, port monitoring, and traffic monitoring and peer-to-peer activity and intrusion prevention services.

Penetration Testing and Baseline Security: The IT department has deployed testing technologies to allow us to test our networks and information systems for all known vulnerabilities and weaknesses. Such testing allows us to be the first to detect and mitigate a weakness in our system(s).

Virus & Malware Protection: The IT department has a full suite of software installed to assist us in preventing viruses and malware software against attacks from the Internet, from our Email, cell phones, computer, servers and virtual private networks (VPNs). Our protection software also manages the security connections between our smart phones and internal email. Finally, we have website monitoring and censoring per access control lists.

Encryption: The IT department has set up encryption technology on portable devices (including thumb / flash drives), VPNs, and email services as a way to protect confidentiality of data at rest and in transit.

Inventory Management: The IT department maintains and manages the inventory of all information systems and stored information. This makes it easy and complete to apply patches, updates and fixes to hardware and software without missing any systems or their components. It also allows us to review and quickly reveal any trends in activity that might lead to potential threats. Further, the IT department is charged with all technology equipment procurements, thus leading to standard levels of quality, performance and compatibility throughout the county.

Data Backup & Restoration: The IT department manages the data backup for all information stored on Polk County's networks. This makes it extremely easy to monitor back-up activity and note if any data failed the back-up process. Equally, any data restores are completed by the IT department and make recovery a breeze.

Two-layer Authentication: The IT department has implemented 2-layer authentication on remote devices that need access to law enforcement software. This is a requirement from the criminal justice information system of Wisconsin.

Redundant Networks: The IT department has designed and deployed a duplicated network infrastructure for high availability and certain fault tolerances. With fail-over functionality, a server could fail within our virtual farm and its payload would automatically be transferred to the paired server farm. This fail-over protection is seamless to the user in the event that a server has crashed.

Central Technical Support: The IT department supports nearly all software and hardware technologies in place today. This model of a central support system allows IT to track all work orders and identify trends in user activity as well as weaknesses in its product lines. This also allows us to strategize on future technologies and product standardization. The technologies deployed by IT allow staff to perform support functions from our central office, which reduces travel and response time and bring about faster resolutions.

Project Management: The IT department is involved in nearly every major technology implementation throughout Polk County's campuses. We sit in on project plans to assure compatibility with legacy systems, act in a consultative fashion to advise departments of variable options and work with departments from project initiation through deployment.

Programming: The IT department has played a major role in developing applets and automation tools for nearly all departments over the years. These tools have integrated disparate systems as well as exporting / importing data between asynchronous database systems. The greatest return on investments was in time savings employees experienced in comparison to the outdated manual processing.

Network Administration: The IT department has designed and maintained the countywide network systems. The network includes internal networking (both wired and wireless), external networking (allowing staff to access timecards, email, intranet and their desktops remotely) and virtual private networks. Having one department managing such a complex network system is no easy task, but greatly enhances connectivity, performance, functionality and security, while reducing the time it takes to track down issues and make repairs.

Education: The IT department is continually apprising county staff of upcoming security events, projects and learning initiatives. Further, we designed a computer lab / training center for all county staff to participate in in-house training. October is Cyber Security Awareness Month and IT staff and posted dozens of security awareness poster throughout county buildings and departments. The IT staff also subscribe to the following trade magazines; Government Technology, City and County, Future Structure, Governing and HealthIT.

Participation in Technology Organizations: Various staff members of the IT department sit on technology panels, boards and, or committees. This enhances our awareness of technology changes, trends and threats. Organizations that IT staff are enrolled, subscribed to or sat on include; Project Managers Institute, Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College Advisory Council, HIPAA Collaboration of Wisconsin (HIPAACOW) Security Network Group, Governmental Information Processing Association of Wisconsin (GIPAW). The IT Director has been certified as a computer forensics examiner.

One of IT's greatest tools: Perhaps one of the most effective and crucial tools in the IT arsenal is "communication." It is absolutely vital that IT staff and management keep open, honest and professional communication with all county

employees and citizens alike. Without good communication, we cannot build trust. And without trust and trustworthiness, the IT department could not have been as successful and secure as it is today.