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TECHNOLOGIES

THE GOLD STANDARD IN SCHOOL SAFETY

CASE STUDY

Columbia County (FL) School District Cuts Volunteer Approval Time from Weeks to Days with the Raptor® System

CHALLENGE

Florida's Columbia County School District needed to speed things up. "We had been using long and complicated paper volunteer applications since . . . well, since forever," says Dianna Swisher, Columbia County's Volunteer and Education Marketing Coordinator. "Those paper forms meant that we had to enter all screening data by hand, one at a time. And as this district grew and continues to grow, that became a really time-consuming process."

"We found what we thought was a solution in 2017, but it turned out not to be the answer. After that bad experience, we began searching for another volunteer management tool," Swisher explains. Columbia County Schools sought an electronic solution that would allow prospective volunteers to apply digitally in order to eliminate the need for laborious data entry and manual screening. With more than 6,000 annual volunteer applications coming in, keying data and screening each applicant by hand was, as Swisher emphasizes, "just really, really slow."

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The district discovered an integrated system that would not only solve their volunteer management needs but also provide an extra level of security at each school's front desk. "We found Raptor Technologies®," Swisher says. "Raptor® provides exactly what we need for our volunteer program, plus its visitor management module screens all school visitors and contractors to help keep out unwanted persons. It turned out to be the ideal solution for us."

SOLUTION

The Raptor Volunteer Management system enables volunteer applicants to submit their information via a user-friendly online portal. The system screens applicants for sex offender status and compiles any criminal background history for easy review, approval, and tracking by district officials. The system also gives Columbia County School District personnel access to a set of easily generated reporting functions, including statistics such as volunteer hours and top volunteers by school or across the district.

The Raptor Visitor Management system scans each visitor's state-issued ID, capturing basic information including name, birthdate, photograph, and the last four digits of the ID's unique number. The system then screens this information against sex offender databases in all 50 states. It also screens the identifying information against any locally customized alert databases listing custody restrictions, dismissed former employees, banned visitors, etc.

RESULTS

"Raptor stepped in and really saved the day for us," Swisher says. "It's just been wonderful. As far as volunteer management goes, our processing time is so much faster. Turnaround time for an application is faster. We get background information faster. It's just been huge for us." Swisher gives an example: "Before, it used to take us a month – minimum – to process and either approve or deny a volunteer application. Now, even at the busiest times, like at the beginning of the school year, we've got it down to less than a week, and usually it happens the same day." Swisher also emphasizes the advantage of the system's ability to let prospective and approved volunteers see their own approval status and volunteer statistics online. "It saves a lot of phone calls and emails answering questions about a volunteer's status."

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"Raptor has made the jobs of our front office staffs in each school easier – both checking volunteers in and out and screening visitors and contractors. Our administrators really appreciate the reporting capability of the system. And our school resource officers like it, too. They log onto the system to monitor sex offender flags, contractor screening, volunteer traffic at each school – things like that," Swisher continues. "They feel like they have a clearer picture of what's going on in each building. And our parents appreciate that Raptor is now a key part of our district's safe school policy."

"I can't say enough good things about Raptor," Swisher enthuses. "It's just hugely improved our volunteer processing time and made things so much easier. Raptor's tech support has been phenomenal. They've always gotten back to us quickly, and it seems like every issue has been solved within half an hour." Would Swisher and Columbia County Schools recommend the Raptor system to another district looking for a volunteer management solution? "In a heartbeat!" Swisher says.

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EVERY SCHOOL, EVERY DAY.**

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