

CLIENT SUCCESS STORY

CourtFunds helps crime victims receive restitution money faster, easier

York County, PA Clerk of Courts office saves time and money with switch from paper restitution checks to CourtFunds electronic disbursements

■ EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The York County, Pennsylvania Clerk of Courts office is responsible for all criminal court records for the York County Court of Common Pleas. They maintain a record of the docketing and events associated with up to 9,000 cases annually and collect approximately \$12 million in costs, fines, and restitution from criminal defendants each year.

As one element of increasing efficiency, York County, PA switched from issuing paper restitution checks to CourtFunds electronic disbursements in December 2020, resulting in time and cost savings.

■ THE CHALLENGE

When Clerk of Courts, Dan Byrnes, took office in January 2020, the Costs and Fines Department was sending out approximately 1,500 paper restitution checks each month.

According to York County's Chief Deputy of the Financial Division, Alexis Winters, "It took at least four hours — maybe even a full day to process all the checks. We had to work in batches of 100 checks: printing them, folding them, addressing and stuffing the envelopes, then getting everything in the mail. It was very time consuming and expensive."

And that was when things were running smoothly.

A large red circle containing the text "\$80K" in white, bold, sans-serif font.

\$80K

York County's annual operational savings after switching to electronic disbursements for restitution victims

A large blue circle containing the text "\$1M" in white, bold, sans-serif font.

\$1M

year-over-year increase in restitution monies collected by York County — a direct result of eliminating paper checks

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"If anything caused a delay, that would make the process even longer," Winters explained. "This could cause people to receive their restitution checks later than expected, leading to potential financial hardship for those victims and an influx of calls to the department, diverting Clerk of Court's staff even more of their valuable time."

"Those types of interruptions really hurt productivity," Winters said.

“ [With our old process] it took at least four hours — maybe even a full day — to process [paper] checks. We had to work in batches of 100 checks: printing them, folding them, addressing and stuffing the envelopes, then getting everything in the mail. It was very time consuming and expensive. **[With CourtFunds], it only takes us about two hours a month now to send out all of the restitution money.**”

— Alexis Winters, Chief Deputy, Financial Division, York County Court of Common Pleas

■ MAKING THE SWITCH FROM PAPER CHECKS TO ELECTRONIC DISBURSEMENTS

The team identified eliminating paper restitution checks as an opportunity to increase their level of service to crime victims, while simultaneously reducing costs to taxpayers. Their discussions eventually led them to CourtFunds, an electronic payment disbursement solution for courts and justice systems. York County was already using the platform to pay jurors for their service, so it was a natural fit.

Although it took a few months to get all the restitution recipients switched over to CourtFunds cards, Winters said her account representatives were with her every step of the way.

"Everyone I've worked with at CourtFunds has been great," she said. "Any time I had a question they were very quick to help me. They helped us integrate CourtFunds with our existing court management system, so we're able to create a report each month of everyone who needs to receive money. Then we upload that to the CourtFunds site, and the money goes onto their cards."

39%

the increase in restitution payments to victims after implementing CourtFunds

compared to 2015-2019 average disbursements

“ [The additional restitution money collected] is a direct infusion into our economy this year of over \$2.5 million, which was paid directly to crime victims. **At the same time, we lowered the cost to the taxpayers of processing those payments through the implementation of CourtFunds.**”

— Dan Byrnes, Clerk of Court, York County, PA

Now, the new system is saving the department hours of work, not to mention the cost of printing and mailing all those paper checks. An internal audit revealed operational savings of over \$80,000 per year.

"It only takes us about two hours a month now to send out all of the restitution money," Winters said.

CourtFunds has also cut back the amount of time the department has to spend dealing with lost or returned checks, since the restitution recipient's account isn't tethered to their physical mailing address and funds sent to a card don't expire like a stale check.

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■ MORE TIME MEANS MORE RESTITUTION MONEY FOR VICTIMS

Winters said CourtFunds has freed up the Clerk of Courts office to focus on more impactful projects, and it's helped the department shift its efforts from payments to collections.

"Over the last year we've been pushing for more and more restitution, and we've increased our collections quite a bit," Winters said. "In fact, we collected over \$1 million more last year than we did the year before."

"That's a big deal, because it means more restitution money is going to those crime victims," she concludes. In 2021, the York County Clerk of Court's office increased their restitution payments to crime victims by 39% over the 2015-2019 average distributions.

Clerk of Courts Dan Byrnes stated, "That money is a direct infusion into our economy this year of over \$2.5 million, which was paid directly to crime victims. At the same time, we lowered the cost to the taxpayers of processing those payments through the implementation of CourtFunds."

■ LEARN MORE ABOUT COURTFUNDS

From municipal and county, to state and federal courts, CourtFunds is the contactless way to disburse payments to everyone accurately and on time, no matter what part of the transaction they play a part in — jury payments, restitution, child support, bonds, witnesses, and more.

Learn more about how CourtFunds can help your state, county, or municipality solve its most complex pay disbursement challenges by scheduling a call with one of our payment technology experts.

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