



Justice delayed is justice denied. Even with the doubling of our caseload over the past four years, we met the constitutional requirements we have as prosecutors to keep our cases moving. There is no doubt in my mind that we would not have been able to do so without PbK. My office has become significantly more efficient with the implementation of PbK.

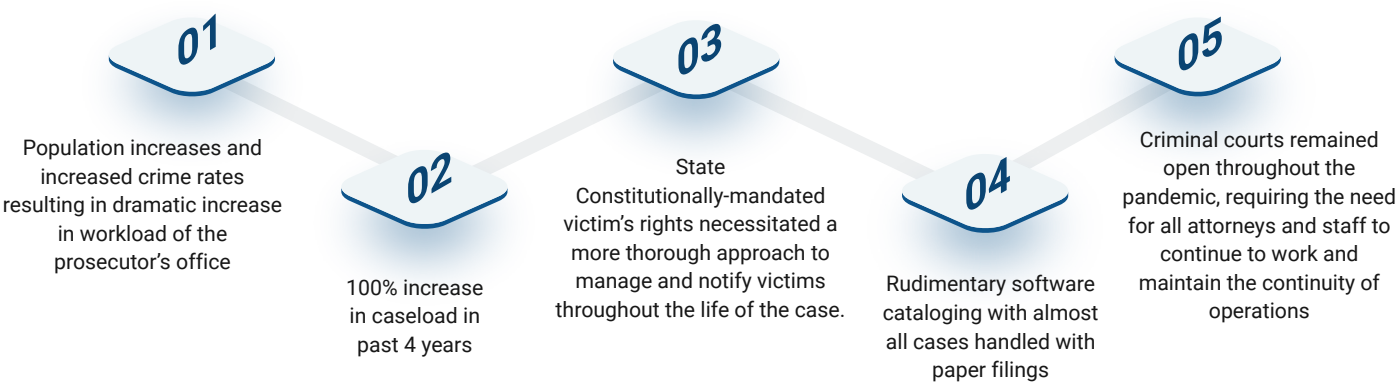
Thomas Wollman, State's Attorney, Lincoln County, South Dakota

SUMMARY:

The Lincoln County State's Attorney Office is responsible for criminal prosecutions in one of the fastest-growing counties in the nation. The office is responsible for all felony, misdemeanor, and petty offense prosecutions for the county. Over the past 20 years, South Dakota's Lincoln County has grown from 24,000 to 68,000 residents. During this time frame felony criminal filings went from 80-100 felony cases annually to over 550 felony cases annually. The misdemeanor case load grew at approximately the same rate during this period of phenomenal growth.

On the recommendation of the system administrator, Lincoln County adopted PROSECUTORbyKarpel (PbK) in 2017 as they were handling the impact of regulatory reforms related to victim's rights and a spike in crime spurred by the influx of cheap methamphetamine. The State's Attorney's Office was using rudimentary software and was mostly dependent on paper files at that time. The move to PbK allowed the office to handle the growth and effectively manage the increase in case volume through the pandemic without delays or bottlenecks in the administration of justice.

PAST CHALLENGES:



BENEFITS:

- ◆ Scaling up of the office for doubling and tripling of cases over the past few years
- ◆ Transitioning paper records to electronic records
- ◆ Increased amount of information recorded and documented for every case
- ◆ Continuity of services throughout the pandemic as the courts remained open
- ◆ Ability to keep staff and attorneys safe through work-at-home as much as possible
- ◆ Handling of all cases in a timely manner
- ◆ Documentation is so complete that judges and other agencies refer to the prosecutor's office to have the accurate historical information on defendants and past cases



CHALLENGES IN POPULATION AND CRIME GROWTH

"I've been very fortunate over my career in terms of having had the opportunity to serve with some amazing staff and some amazing prosecutors. Along with that great team, I include my IT Director. He understands the requirements of our operations as well as I do. When we were looking for case management software, he researched a few packages and was most impressed with PbK. When my IT director gave it two thumbs-up, that was when I really knew it was the right move."



Thomas Wollman, State's Attorney, Lincoln County, South Dakota

When Thomas Wollman became Lincoln County's State's Attorney 22 years ago, he was one of three prosecutors in the office handling fewer than 100 felony cases annually. Now the office includes eight attorneys and 11 additional staff members and the case load has grown from 80-100 per year to 550 felony files plus 1,300-1,400 misdemeanor files.

Continuity in the execution of justice is Wollman's main objective. "I am always mindful of the legal maxim, justice delayed is justice denied," he emphasizes. Whether it's keeping an offender in custody pretrial or holding a victim in limbo, any delays in our prosecutions interfere with our objective of seeking justice and maintaining a safe community.

Handling a dramatic increase in caseload was always the reasoning behind implementing PROSECUTORbyKarpel, but it has benefited the office in a number of other ways. It has improved the working conditions of the team and it has created a single source of knowledge with much more detailed information than they were able to maintain with the previous system of a rudimentary program and paper files. "As with all software I don't think you really realize the full capabilities of it until you spend some time with it and get your staff and your attorneys invested in it," says Wollman.

CAPTURING MORE INFORMATION DURING TRIALS

The prosecutors have leveraged PbK to document and recall more information about the cases and trials than was possible prior to using the system. Typically, one of the paralegals or legal secretaries will attend court proceedings and take notes that significantly aid with the prosecution of the case. With this documentation the file in PbK becomes an invaluable archive that effectively serves a record as the case moves through the system and beyond. "The detailed documentation and the ease with which it is accessed allows my office to provide details significantly faster to the court and counsel in our proceedings. That's a game changer when you can access that much data that quickly," says Wollman.



I used to attend court by myself and I'm admittedly not great at multitasking in the courtroom. When the court is talking about scheduling deadlines and a deputy sheriff is in my ear talking about something, or a victim wants to address something, or defense counsel is trying to talk to me, I simply can't manage taking notes simultaneously. Based upon the volume of files, we have had staff coming to court with our prosecutors taking real-time notes into PbK. It has made the management of our cases and the management of our deadlines so much more efficient.

Thomas Wollman, State's Attorney, Lincoln County, South Dakota



The prosecutors today all have another staff member come with them to the courtroom to take notes and get the details of the case in real time. "I have access to not only the previous hearing, I will have access to what the defendant said at his bond hearing on a similar case from a year before," said Wollman, recalling a time when someone came up for bond and he had a record of the defendant uttering profanities during the arraignment. "I'll have notes at my fingertips. It is an amazing tool allowing us to remind the court about those previous proceedings. The defense attorneys cringe on occasion knowing we have such great data at our fingertips. Those notes in a paper file, inaccessible, and in storage do us very little good."

Both the courts and defending attorneys have relied upon the prosecutor's office to provide historical details of the case, because Wollman's team can access the information significantly quicker than other court personnel. "Our file along with our entries and notes is a hybrid of a partial transcript of the previous proceedings and a clerk's file" says Wollman.

SINGLE SOURCE OF TRUTH

Using case management software is also a great help when a prosecutor is out and another attorney needs to handle the file. "In the past if someone was out sick, that might present an opportunity for defense counsel to proceed without a prosecutor who was fully aware of all the details of the case," said Wollman. Now that everyone uses PbK, our recommendations are on file and when a different prosecutor takes over, no information is lost.

ENSURING VICTIM RIGHTS

In 2016, South Dakota enacted a constitutional amendment for victim rights, requiring the prosecutors to keep victims updated on the status of the case in which they were a victim. The state requires notification of court dates, recommendations, sentences, and release dates of criminals so that the victims can stay updated.

PbK allows the Lincoln County State's Attorneys to automatically send out notifications to victims by e-mail, reminders to call or send regular mail to the victims, and keep track of what notifications were sent, received, and opened. The victims' rights are protected, and in case there is any dispute, proof of notification is available to show that the notifications were executed according to the legal requirements.

THE FUTURE: SERVING AS AN EXAMPLE

Compared to other counties, Lincoln County is known for having efficient case management. "My neighboring county had a team of staff members who would run around on the eve of a court date or the morning of the court date and assemble literally hundreds of paper files," said Wollman, adding that the neighboring county is now planning to install Karpel for their case management.

When considering future improvements, Wollman said they are starting to utilize PbK for the management of law enforcement video recordings. Due to the amount of data involved, they are seeking solutions that could help them manage the huge volume of files.

BENEFITS SUMMARY

1

Handling of caseloads that doubled over a few years

2

Efficiency of the department

3

Better execution of justice based on detailed records of all aspects of every case

4

Elimination of paperwork for all active cases

5

Automated delivery of notifications to victims, as required by law, with validation and documentation of the notifications

6

Scanning and uploading of past cases to digital format for better long-term storage of records

7

Staff have time to attend court hearings and take notes, improving the documentation of cases and the job satisfaction of the staff

8

Timely handling of all cases submitted to the county

9

Ability to use accurate data when considering bond and release recommendations for criminals



ABOUT THE LINCOLN COUNTY STATE'S ATTORNEY OFFICE

The [Lincoln County State's Attorney's Office](#) has the exclusive and statutory responsibility for prosecuting violations of the criminal laws of the State of South Dakota. Additionally, the office is responsible for providing legal advice and representation to the Board of Commissioners for the county and other elected and appointed department heads and staff. Lincoln County, located in southeastern South Dakota, includes an area of 576 square miles and approximately 68,000 people. Incorporated December 30, 1867, Lincoln County is the third-largest and fastest-growing county in the State.

ABOUT KARPEL SOLUTIONS

St. Louis-based Karpel Solutions is a business and government solutions and managed services provider that helps clients achieve their strategic goals through the application of cutting-edge, cost-effective technologies. PROSECUTORbyKarpel is the most widely used case management software in the United States. Founded in 1985, Karpel is a four-time Inc. 5000 company, providing business solutions that mobilize technology to meet specific business needs. Karpel Solutions employs more than 80 business professionals and technology experts with experience in various industries. PROSECUTORbyKarpel is used by over 600 clients in 31 states with over 14,000 users nationwide. For additional information visit: <https://www.prosecutorbykarpel.com>

