

CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY:  
COUNTY OF SANTA CLARA

# County of Santa Clara improves the quality of social services with simplified IT management.



## Customer Profile

Industry: Local government  
Organization: Social Services  
Agency, County of Santa Clara,  
California  
County budget: \$4 billion (2008)  
Employees: 12,000-plus in county,  
2,800 in agency

## Business Impact Summary

### Business:

The County of Santa Clara is at the heart of America's Silicon Valley and provides a range of public services to a population of nearly 1.7 million. The County's Social Services Agency helps ensure the welfare of Santa Clara's children, seniors and dependent and disadvantaged adults, and handles more than 105,000 cases at any one time.

### Challenge:

With diminishing resources and increased demand for transparency, the County and its agencies must be able to report on their services and outcomes and justify how public money has been allocated. As a result, a series of quarterly performance reports are produced on all the agency's operations — including IT — that can influence future State and Federal funding.

### Solution:

To ensure its IT services can withstand public scrutiny, the agency uses CA Incident & Problem Management and Service Availability Management solutions to efficiently respond to 3,500 incidents and requests per month. As well as capturing key operational data for the performance reports, the solution has also helped to improve fix times and reduce the number of outstanding issues.

### Result:

By enhancing efficiency within the IT department, the agency has been able to increase productivity and improve cost controls. This means frontline staff can spend more time focusing on the needs of the people of Santa Clara County. The agency is also able to demonstrate operational improvements, which could help secure additional budget for more social services.

---

## Business

### Enabling a healthy and vibrant community

The County of Santa Clara is at the heart of America's Silicon Valley and covers more than 1,300 square miles and 15 cities, including San José. The County's agencies and departments provide a range of public services, such as education, law enforcement, recreation and housing, for a population of nearly 1.7 million.

The Social Services Agency is the second largest agency in the County, and helps ensure the welfare of Santa Clara's children, seniors and dependent and disadvantaged adults — many of whom come from a wide range of backgrounds and cultures; more than 100 languages and dialects are spoken across the County.

Among the agency's responsibilities are foster parent recruitment, child abuse investigations, back-to-work programs, a seniors' nutrition program and providing financial assistance. The agency is committed to delivering these services to a professional and high-quality standard so it can help as many people as possible with the resources available.

*"We have to report on much more than just the services we have delivered — we need to justify our decisions and how we use our budget."*

---

#### Adesh Siddhu

Director of IT Infrastructure for the Social Services Agency of The County of Santa Clara

---

## Challenge

### Delivering accountable social services

As Silicon Valley continues to evolve and grow, the County needs to find new and innovative ways to provide adequate housing, generate energy, conserve water and provide social support services for all of its residents — young and old, native and foreign. It is predicted Santa Clara's population will increase by nearly 200,000 by 2010.

Despite this growth, the County is facing shrinking resources and financial uncertainty, which means it must find more efficient ways of working. It also needs to be increasingly transparent about how public money is allocated as well as the services it delivers.

For the Social Services Agency, this means demonstrating measurable outcomes across its three key service streams: children, seniors and welfare. As Adesh Siddhu, Director of IT Infrastructure for the Social Services Agency of The County of Santa Clara, explains, "Under Federal law, we now have to report on much more than just the services we have delivered — we need to justify our decisions and how we use our budget. For example, we would need to demonstrate the long-term outcome of placing a child into foster care and whether we achieved the right result."

Although this approach helps public services in the USA become more accountable and effective, it represents a considerable workload for the local agencies and organizations involved. Santa Clara's Social Services Agency handles more than 20,000 calls to its child abuse helpline every year and has around 100,000 welfare cases logged at any one time — all of which need to be measured on a long-term basis.

To help manage this workload and its resources more efficiently, the agency is making increased use of IT. As Adesh confirms, "Although the majority of our client interaction is face-to-face, we use IT to record information and activities — for example if a welfare check has been sent out to an individual."

*“CA Service Desk provides us with an invaluable repository of operational data, which is essential for contributing to the agency’s quarterly performance reports.”*

**Adesh Siddhu**

Director of IT Infrastructure for the Social Services Agency of The County of Santa Clara

This information can then be used to evaluate agency service levels and improve the customer experience — often through the use of new technology. For example, by introducing a document management system and centralized call center, the agency has given its clients increased access to social services. Prior to this approach, clients were tied to a single case-worker at a single office. The agency also uses CalWORKs Information Network (CALWIN), a State-based system, to help determine the eligibility of applications for welfare assistance.

**Ensuring IT transparency**

As a result of this increased reliance, IT has also come under the transparency spotlight and must be able to account for its services and performance to both State and Federal authorities as well as independent welfare watchdogs and individuals who make a request under the Freedom of Information Act.

As part of its public reporting obligations, the agency produces a series of quarterly performance reports — including a dedicated section on IT — that can influence future funding from the State and Federal authorities. “We need to be able to report on the number and types of IT issues, resolution times, the volume of outstanding problems and availability of core systems, such as CALWIN,” comments Siddhu.

With such a public spotlight on its IT performance, the agency needs to ensure that its operations are as efficient as possible. For the IT department this means taking advantage of standardized and automated processes to make its operations less resource intensive.

---

## Solution

**Automation enables faster resolution of IT problems**

To help deliver these efficiencies, the County’s Social Services Agency deployed an Incident & Problem Management solution from CA. The IT department uses the solution for all service provisioning — from handling end user support requests to planning a major server migration.

Every month, around 3,500 IT incidents and requests are managed via CA Unicenter® Service Desk, which was implemented with the help of CA’s Technology Services team. Since the initial deployment in 2002, the CA Incident & Problem Management solution has helped the agency streamline and automate a number of core internal processes. This has led to:

- More user queries being resolved on the first call
- Fewer outstanding issues
- Faster resolution times

“Prior to deploying CA Service Desk, 40 percent of tickets were unresolved after 15 days. Now no more than 10 percent of tickets go beyond 10 days — and this is normally when we are waiting for parts to be procured,” comments Siddhu.

A key factor in achieving these results is the agency’s seamless escalation process for IT incidents, which is automated by CA Service Desk workflows. This process ensures that IT team members are immediately notified when an escalation and reassignment occurs. CA Service Desk also provides easy access to an accurate history on the incident, which helps to further simplify the resolution process. “The CA Incident & Problem Management solution

enables helpdesk operators to access records on previous incidents and resolutions and provide a more efficient response,” comments Siddhu.

*“Our frontline staff can spend more time focusing on the needs of the people of Santa Clara and providing a higher quality service.”*

**Adesh Siddhu**

Director of IT Infrastructure for the Social Services Agency of The County of Santa Clara

**Using knowledge to deliver better value**

The agency hopes to increase these knowledge sharing capabilities in the coming 12 months by implementing CA Service Desk Knowledge Tools in the IT department and beyond, which will help facilitate data capture for reporting purposes and systems trouble-shooting.

The IT department already uses a CA Service Availability Management solution to enable intelligent incident correlation across its infrastructure. Using CA Unicenter® Network and Systems Management (Unicenter NSM), the agency is able to identify if an application outage has been caused by a problem with a specific device. The solution also automatically raises and updates incident tickets within CA Service Desk. The ability to quickly identify the root cause of an IT problem is essential for ensuring the availability of core applications, such as CALWIN.

---

**Result**

**Providing better social support to the people of Santa Clara**

By increasing application availability, the CA solutions have made a dramatic impact on the agency’s operational efficiency. The IT department hopes to build on these results by using CA Service Desk to establish meaningful service level agreements with the agency’s departments, so they can focus on delivering support to Santa Clara’s communities.

In particular, the agency has been able to reduce duplication of effort, which has helped to:

- Improve cost control
- Increase productivity
- Optimize internal resources

By using the CA Incident & Problem Management solution to demonstrate these results from an IT perspective, the agency has also enhanced its operational transparency. “CA Service Desk provides us with an invaluable repository of operational data, which is essential for contributing to the agency’s quarterly performance reports,” adds Siddhu.

The ability to demonstrate performance improvements and outcomes could also help the agency secure additional funding from State and Federal authorities, which ultimately means better social services for the community. “By improving systems availability and performance with CA Unicenter Network and Systems Management, our frontline staff can spend more time focusing on the needs of the people of Santa Clara and providing a higher quality service,” comments Siddhu.

---

To learn more and see how CA software solutions enable other organizations to unify and simplify IT management for better business results, visit [ca.com/customers](http://ca.com/customers).