

## VPASS Work Group Meeting

9-15-2017

Attendance: CDCR-A.Miller-FOPS, M.Tillotson-FOPS, R.Jackson-FOPS, E.Valencia-FSP, T. Baker-CSP-Solano, J.Rubalcaba-CSP-Solano, K. Samuels-FOPS/SH, L. Leonard-EIS. SIFC Members: B. Scott, J. Foss, S. Steele, and Guests: Gail Brown-IFC Chair, Solano

### I. Introductions

### II. Old Business – VPASS Enhancements Implemented on June 6, 2017

#### Features Implemented:

- Statewide message removed from all screens but the landing page of VPASS
- Temporary Password format simplified, making them easier to enter correctly
- Security improvements made to login process
- Reducing appointments returned to one instead of three, making more appointments available to visitors during the peak period

#### Discussion:

- a) Overall, the June changes did not have any issues. The change from three appointment times to one appointment time worked and did not cause website errors. Some users are reporting slowness, but this could be due to individual internet connectivity.
- b) Appointments now fill up a little faster than previously. Example: Solano used to fill up in about 3 ½ minutes; now the appointments are gone in about 3 minutes. This is due to more appointments becoming available at once.
- c) EIS monitors performance and connectivity during the appointment opening times.

### III. New Business – Additional VPASS Enhancements Implemented on Sept. 2, 2017

#### Features Implemented:

- New website look and feel, with higher contrast format for ease of viewing and mobile device navigation
- Larger “Login” and “Register” buttons
- Reduced number of steps to view/accept the VPASS disclaimer
- Link titles and lists are more intuitive
- “Facility Message” link changed to “Visiting Status”
- “Do you have a Question” link changed to “Frequently Asked Questions”
- List of visiting status for all institutions on one page. Each prison has “normal” or “modified” status next to name making it easy for visitors to see if visiting status has changed.
- Visitors can mark inmates they no longer visit as “inactive”
- Visitors can mark other visitors on their list as “inactive”

#### Discussion:

- a) The September release is not a “mobile” app, but there are more mobile-friendly features. CDCR has had a reduction in complaints over usability, however, there are still calls about password resetting. The visiting status is more clear.

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- b) Overall, the June changes did not have any issues. The change from three appointment times to one appointment time worked and did not cause website errors. Some users are reporting slowness, but this could be due to individual internet connectivity.
- c) Workgroup members reported that there has not been much negative feedback on the changes.
- d) From a system perspective, there is not much else that can be improved on VPASS. The issue is a capacity issue – more visitors than availability. CDCR is discussing other options to try to accommodate more visitors. These options are not going to be liked by everyone. One options still being discussed is the addition of Friday visiting. This is dependent upon legislative funding for staff and may not alleviate overcrowding. Also, for example, at some of the busiest prisons, an “Every Other Weekend” schedule could be considered. No decisions have been made and discussions continue.

### IV. New Items

- a) Weddings on VPASS

**Discussion:**

Solano does wedding appointments on VPASS and it's difficult to get everyone on the same appointment at the right time. CDCR does not recommend scheduling weddings using VPASS. CDCR will survey each prison and discuss standardizing a process for how weddings are scheduled and handled, then work on communication of the standard so the process is widely communicated.

- b) Memo for Out of State Visitor Appointments

**Discussion:**

Workgroup brought up the memo that was sent to the PIO's at each institution in regards to scheduling visits for out of state visitors who have not visited for 30 days and are greater than 250 miles from the prison. This process is not used frequently and most IFC's and families don't even know if the existence of the memo. The group discussed several ways of better utilizing this valuable tool for families: 1) having some sort of message added to VPASS for Out of State visitors telling them of this process. 2) Post the memo in housing units so inmates can share with their families. 3) Have out-of-state visitors contact the visiting sergeant directly, instead of the PIO. Having a process for long-distance, infrequent visitors is important. CDCR will follow up on this at the next meeting.

- c) Handling Walk-ins – Update from CDCR

**Discussion:**

The intention of VPASS was never to limit walk-ins. The original intention of VPASS was to process walk-ins in between appointments, as time allowed, however, some institutions have implemented a “break” in appointments to process walk-ins. Some

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prisons do not even allow walk-ins to enter the prison grounds until a later time. Prisons were given the authority to determine how to process walk-ins. Headquarters is still working with the institutions to try to standardize messages on VPASS. Monthly calls with Visiting Staff and Wardens have made the policy clear. Some institutions have logistical concerns which need to be overcome (bussing, etc.), however, walk-ins must be processed.

A question was asked by the workgroup about when the last visitor of the day can be processed? CDCR said the policy is that visitor processing ends 1 hour before visiting ends. The workgroup reported that at least one institution is telling visitors it is 2 hours before visiting ends. CDCR will follow up on this.

Telephone appointments were also discussed. Some prisons allow phone-in appointments for Seniors or other groups who may not have Internet access. At some prisons, families are using phone-in appointments and VPASS appointments to get better visiting times.

### d) VPASS Survey

#### **Discussion:**

Now that many of the VPASS issues have been addressed, the workgroup and CDCR agreed that the VPASS survey should be turned into a more general Visiting Survey. CDCR and the workgroup, along with additional Statewide IFC participation, will contribute to the content of the survey. A suggestion was made to have an inmate visiting survey to find out what some barriers are to visiting for those who don't get visits, but the group decided to focus on the Visitor survey first. This survey will be run through Survey Monkey or some other online third party survey application. CDCR suggested having "business cards" printed that would be available in visiting for visitors to take home. The survey will also be promoted on the Statewide website, IFC websites, VPASS, and other online groups.

### e) Future enhancements to VPASS

#### **Discussion:**

In the first VPASS workgroup meetings there were suggestions about the ability to search for and change to an earlier appointment. Not having this ability is the reason that many visitors have 2 accounts. CDCR EIS will go back and take another look at this feature to determine if it's possible or not.

### f) Further consideration to having 1 appointment per inmate instead of visitor

#### **Discussion:**

This is not under consideration due to the variability in the amount of time it takes to process 1 visitor vs. 5 visitors.

### g) Statistics on Visitor Processing across the prisons

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### **Discussion:**

The workgroup asked about the statistics CDCR was going to run to show 1) If institutions were starting processing on time and 2) an average of how many visitors are processed per timeslot by prison over a quarter (or some period of time). CDCR cautioned that the numbers might vary dramatically across prisons due to the way staff is allocated. All agreed that the numbers should be run to determine if there are any patterns that can be seen. Outliers can be eliminated if they are explainable. CDCR to run the numbers and share.

### V. Closing

- a) This workgroup has been very successful in collaborating and making good changes to VPASS and visitor processing. AD Miller stressed the importance of continuing to have dialogue about visiting with a workgroup.
- b) Next workgroup meeting to be scheduled for late October/early November.
- c) Workgroup and SIFC to work on potential Visiting Survey questions and share with M. Tillotson ahead of the next meeting.