



*The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation announces
the launch of a new video conferencing program...*

VEST Services

Video Equipment Scheduling Tool



California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) is taking steps to improve institution-based video conferencing capabilities to better facilitate an incarcerated person's ability to appear in court without the expense and burden of transportation while enhancing public safety. A scheduling system developed by Cisco Systems is being modified and integrated with CDCR's Strategic Offender Management System (SOMS) to provide a secure public-facing portal for approved court users to schedule a virtual appointment with an incarcerated person.

The court user will be able to look up an incarcerated person's schedule in real time and create an appointment via the Video Equipment Scheduling Tool (VEST) application in SOMS. When creating the appointment, the system will also reserve one of several confidential locations near the incarcerated person's housing unit which contains a Cisco DX-80 video teleconferencing device. Once the appointment is submitted, VEST sends the user a confirmation email with a Webex address for all participants to use. The day before the scheduled appointment, the incarcerated person will receive a ducat and know to report to the device location at the specified time. Once there, the programmed device will connect to the video conference by pressing the start button.

The VEST application will create many efficiencies associated with the scheduling process and will also provide the department valuable, accurate data for all levels of staff about a) scheduled appointments, such as how many appointments are requested, how many are rescheduled, and how many took place, as well as, b) device usage, such as when the call was initiated, how long the call took, how the call ended, the length of the call, and the quality of the connection. This data will provide the necessary feedback for CDCR staff to identify process improvements.

CDCR is also creating a new centralized scheduling unit, VEST Support Unit, to assist all users and manage this new technology. Beginning later this year, VEST Services will initiate a proof-of-concept process between two institutions - the California Men's Colony in San Luis Obispo and the California State Prison, Sacramento in Represa, as well as the criminal California Superior Courts in four counties - Kern, Kings, Sacramento, and San Luis Obispo. Once feedback from end users is received and refinements are completed, VEST Services will begin a roll out schedule to all institution statewide.

VEST FAQ

What is a Proof-of-Concept?

A proof-of-concept is a process designed to demonstrate the feasibility and validity of a business/operational process. The VEST team, in collaboration with county court users, will test operational workflows and draft procedures, and make adjustments prior to expanding VEST scheduling statewide. During this period, we will test the VEST application and DX-80 devices to discover aspects that may improve the overall usability and user functions before launching the program statewide.

Is VEST replacing the “VCS” Microsoft web-based scheduling application?

Yes. VEST will replace VCS. The VCS application is currently in limited use for scheduling video conferences with incarcerated persons housed at California Men’s Colony, Correctional Training Facility, Ironwood State Prison, and Kern Valley State Prison. Once VEST goes live at these institutions, the VCS portal will be disabled.

How do the courts get access to VEST?

Send an email to m_VESTSupport@cdcr.ca.gov with the following information: first and last name, user title, work email address, contact number, department/unit and reason for request. All requests will be vetted by the VEST team. Please note, all persons provisioned to use CDCR’s VCS portal will automatically be added to VEST.

Do courts have to use the Webex platform?

No. The courts have the option to use any platform, i.e. Zoom, Google Meet, Go To Meeting, etc. When scheduling a video conference with an incarcerated person in VEST, the user can enter a Session Initiation Protocol (SIP) address associated with a specific meeting scheduled on the desired platform.

Will court experts such as health care professionals be able to use VEST?

Yes. Experts can utilize the VEST application for confidential interviews requested by the courts.

What happens if the date and time selected in VEST is not available?

If an incarcerated person is not available at the required date and time, the newly established centralized scheduling team, VEST Support Unit, is available to assist in resolving the scheduling conflict.

Can a court user modify an appointment after it has been scheduled?

Yes. The court end user can log into VEST to edit/modify a scheduled conference, such as changing the date and/or time and adding documentation.