



August 27, 2025

Cook County Sheriff's Office Pricing Review Board

Meeting Overview:

- Date: August 27, 2025
- Time: 9:30 – 10:15am
- Location: Virtual Meeting, Microsoft Teams

Attendees:

- Cook County Sheriff's Office (CCSO)
 - a. Olivia Soja, Jason Hernandez, Amar Patel, Alta Johnson, Douglas Maclean, Michael Halpin
- ViaPath Communications
 - a. Lesley Hernandez, Johnathon Walker, Tony Lowden
- Board Members
 - a. Risa Lanier, Robert Pincham, Amanda Ward, Matthew Hiltibran

Absentees:

- None

Agenda:

- Introductions and Announcement of New Members
- Brief background/history on ViaPath contract and in custody tablets
- Connectivity updates
- ViaPath Contract and Rates for Services
- New Features on Tablets
- Q&A

Minutes of the Meeting:

1. Introductions and Announcement of New Members
 - a. Cook County Sheriff's Office (CCSO) - Olivia Soja, Jason Hernandez, Amar Patel, Alta Johnson, Douglas Maclean, Michael Halpin
 - b. ViaPath – Lesley Hernandez, Johnathon Walker, Tony Lowden
 - c. Board Members – Risa Lanier, Robert Pincham, Amanda Ward, Matthew Hiltibran
 - d. Risa Lanier and Robert Pincham are new to the board as of this meeting.
2. Brief background/history on ViaPath Communications contract and in-custody tablets
 - a. Jason Hernandez spoke about the inception and benefits of in-custody tablets including expanded phone time/access, the messaging function, learning courses, and entertainment features. He spoke briefly about working hand-in-hand with ViaPath to deliver the lowest rates possible for family/friend calls and messaging. He also detailed past Pricing Review Board (PRB) gatherings in 2024 and addressing connectivity issues with ViaPath at the site visit in August 2024.
3. Connectivity Updates
 - a. Amar Patel and Alta Johnson from CCSO IT spoke about identifying connectivity issues for in custody tablet use in Division 11 on the PRB site visit in August 2024. Alta Johnson explained that the receivers were moved away from window shutters as a solution leading to improved connection in Division 11. Alta Johnson explained that connectivity issue reports in other Divisions are addressed on a case-by-case basis and connectivity across other divisions is intact.
4. ViaPath Contract and Rates for Services
 - a. Alta Johnson showed the exact rates for phone calls and messages to IIC's and family/friends. Amar Patel spoke about the comparison of our rates to other correctional facilities, which are comparatively low. Alta Johnson stated there are 3,655 tablets currently in use.



5. New Features on Tablets

- a. Alta Johnson spoke about new feature rollouts for tablets, including digitizing paper forms in the jail, including request slips and grievance forms. Alta explained the current paper process for these forms is that blank copies are available on living units and are collected daily by CCSO IIC Services social workers. Digitizing the forms will free up time for social workers and allow requests to be collected and organized more quickly.
- b. Alta Johnson and Amar Patel spoke about expanding family and friend video visiting access to the in-custody tablets so that IICs can conduct video visits from tablets during dayroom hours, greatly expanding the capacity for video visiting. CCSO has been piloting the software and connectivity on tablets and working through bugs. The video visit software automatically identifies faces and blurs out all remaining video that is NOT a face.

6. Q&A

- a. Board members were invited to ask questions about the information shared by CCSO IT and ViaPath.
 - i. Question: "How are tablets are distributed and how are they used for disciplinary?"

Answer: Alta Johnson responded and explained that tablets travel to different living units on large pushcarts and are available to IICs on a schedule in accordance with "dayroom time", or daily time out of the sleeping area of the living unit. Alta explained that tablet use is restricted in RU, or "rehabilitation housing" units. If an IIC commits a disciplinary infraction, it can lead to time in RU housing and therefore restricted tablet use. Intentionally or neglectfully damaging a tablet can also lead to restricted use.
 - ii. Question: "How are tablets repaired and how earphones are distributed?"

Answer: Alta Johnson and Lesley Hernandez explained that ViaPath collects and repairs damaged tablets and restores them to usable condition. They also explained that each IIC is

provided one pair of earphones upon entry to the jail, and subsequent pairs must be purchased on commissary.

- iii. Question: “Are there any concerns about safety and prohibited behavior on video visits with the expansion of video visiting access to tablets?”

Answer: Alta Johnson and Amar Patel explained that the video visit software automatically identifies faces and blurs out all video that is NOT a face. This greatly reduces incidents of prohibited behavior on video visits. They also explained that all tablet use takes place in the presence of an officer and all visits will be recorded and available for review by CCSO Investigators as needed.

- iv. Question: “How is the connectivity in all divisions and is there an expected stress on connectivity once video visiting access is expanded to tablets?”

Answer: Alta Johnson and Amar Patel explained that connectivity complaints are addressed on a rolling basis in all divisions by CCSO IT and ViaPath. The connectivity issue in Division 11 was severe and consistent, leading to the change in antennas and update provided to the PRB. CCSO IT is piloting video visiting access on tablets in the Women’s Division and there are few added connectivity issues with the addition of video visiting. Connectivity will be monitored and addressed throughout the expansion of video visits.