



Texas Council on Family Violence Calls on Catapult Systems

New Web-based hotline call center application improves uptime, reporting and service offerings

The Violence Against Women Act passed by Congress in 1994 provided over \$3.8 billion to combat domestic violence. One major focus was the creation of the National Domestic Violence Hotline to provide 24 hour toll-free crisis intervention, information and referral for victims. The Texas Council on Family Violence (TCFV) was selected to manage the Hotline and the database of more than 4,000 shelters and service providers across the U.S., Puerto Rico, Alaska, Hawaii and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

The existing scouting application presented challenges with the recording, submission and analysis of scouting data. Initially, TCFV used a home-grown Microsoft Access application to manage the 1,000 monthly hotline calls. With increased public awareness about the hotline, the number of calls steadily grew to over 18,500 per month. The application was unable to scale with the increased number of transactions and users, causing frequent downtime. Several of the important features, such as search functionality, did not work properly, causing the advocates to use paper resources. A short-term solution was to place copies of the application onto several computers, causing maintenance challenges.

In March of 2004, Senator Joseph Biden created a private/public partnership called the Connections Campaign to improve the Hotline's computer and telephone technology. He enlisted the participation of America's major technology companies, including IBM and Microsoft, to donate equipment and expertise to transform the Hotline into a 21st-century call center. Microsoft Gold Partner Catapult Systems was selected to create and implement the new solution.

In 2006, Liz Claiborne Inc. initiated and funded loveisrespect.org and a new National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline with a multi-year, million-dollar grant. The helpline provides 24-hour counselors for teens to discuss dating abuse and violence issues, safety planning information and referrals to critical resources. Based on TCFV's success in managing the hotline, it was selected to also operate the new teen helpline. The helpline needed to begin operations in

just a few months and required access to the hotline's database of shelters and service providers. However, it also required customized questions, fields and reports its callers' unique issues. Catapult's familiarity with TCFV made it the perfect fit to quickly customize the hotline application for the helpline.

How Catapult Systems Helped

Catapult Systems brought technical and project management expertise to help design and build the new National Domestic Violence Hotline call center application. Its expert consultants conducted business analysis and design workshops with all TCFV advocates to understand user requirements. Catapult used these requirements to help TCFV select which functionality would fit within its budget constraints, providing the greatest functionality for the investment. Catapult also planned and configured the hardware and system infrastructure.

The new, highly scalable .NET-based application adds several robust features such as national and international geospatial mapping capabilities from ESRI, enhanced service provider search capabilities and customizable focused studies. The application also provides a flexible security model enabling the Hotline to assign specific and appropriate privileges to each worker and volunteer. Additionally, Catapult created a mechanism for TCFV to update its service provider database electronically. Previously, paper surveys were sent to providers, which had low response rates and were error prone. The new system allows providers to update their own information on a portal, which automatically updates the database.

Catapult provided TCFV with extensive training on the new system, including a formal training phase with classes and side-by-side training with advocates. It also implemented online help functionality and created a help desk ticket system.

Catapult Systems used the hotline call center application as a codebase for the new helpline. Using the successful application as launching point, Catapult was able to quickly enhance it to

“A company like Catapult Systems is really rare. They didn’t get caught up in the technology. Instead, they were really interested in learning about our business; that makes them indispensable to us over the long-term.”

Rose Pulliam | President, National Domestic Violence Hotline

meet the specific needs of the helpline. In addition, Catapult enhanced the hotline’s data model enabling service providers to be designated for either the hotline, the helpline or both. This enables TCFV to maintain a single database for two unique applications. Catapult also implemented a live chat solution for the helpline from XIGLA Software. The helpline hopes to eventually open new avenues of communication in ways that appeal to teens, such as texting and blogs.

Both the hotline and the helpline are based on ASP.NET and a SQL Server database. They are hosted on load-balanced Windows servers, providing optimal performance, scalability and availability. Catapult also enhanced TCFV’s existing reporting capabilities to improve reporting for both the hotline and helpline’s call metrics and caller demographics, using SQL Server Reporting Services.

Results

- Callers receive accurate information more quickly due to improved data access and new features such as geospatial mapping and search functionality.
- The new call center application and live chat solutions are hosted on a scalable architecture and will support the future growth of both the hotline and helpline.
- The new system architecture has improved system

uptime, ensuring availability of call center staff and allowing them to quickly provide callers with information.

- TCFV has realized reduced administration overhead due to centralized databases and elimination of paper service provider records.
- Improved reporting helps TCFV develop programs and services to better support clients. Improved reports also allow TCFV to provide the detailed data necessary to report accurate statistics and to gain additional funding from new sources.
- Streamlining the call processes has allowed TCFV to put advocates to work in different ways, providing additional services to their constituencies. Advocates also now have the ability to focus on a caller’s emotional needs, rather than focusing on locating information.
- The hotline and helpline leverage the same database, but use separate applications, which allows the features of the two applications to diverge with future enhancements to best support each hotline’s unique needs.



How can we help you?

Contact us at 1-800-528-6248 or info@CatapultSystems.com