

Montgomery County, Ohio – AgencyLink

Highlights

www.agencylink.org

- Industry**
 Local government
- Application**
 Collaborative social services hub with private client information integrating thousands of human support agencies with law enforcement and judicial authorities
- Business Problem**
 Safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of highly sensitive online social service information
- Security Solution**
 AppShield 4.0™
- Business Benefits**
 Montgomery County Office of Family and Children First can assure the agencies it coordinates—and the citizens who rely on their services—that their online data will not be compromised. It can enable courts, law enforcement agencies and social service providers to collaborate confidently in the knowledge that the private information they share is secure.
- ROI**
 Ability to deliver a “vertical case management” approach that will reduce costly duplication of services; high level of buy-in, cooperation and synergy among agencies, enabling a comprehensive mix of services to a broad client base; compliance with regulatory standards for data protection; ability to fully block application intrusion.



Montgomery County Office of Family and Children First enables courts, law enforcement agencies and social service providers to collaborate securely.

Montgomery County, Ohio - AgencyLink Uses AppShield to Enable Powerful Collaboration Among Service Agencies Without Compromising Private Sensitive Information

On a cold Friday afternoon, Brooke, a homeless woman in her thirties, asks for some canned goods from the food pantry at a Dayton, Ohio, parish church. However, Wayne, a young church volunteer, knows the community can help her with more than just food. He logs on to a Web portal and schedules an appointment for Brooke with a county case worker. Then, he hands her a bus token and a simple map with instructions to the Montgomery County Department of Job and Family Services. Two hours later, Brooke is well on the way to changing her

“By protecting the Web applications through which service providers share information with law enforcement and the judiciary, AppShield will help [attain] a high level of buy-in, cooperation and synergy among agencies.”

—Ed McNachtan, Program Manager, Montgomery County Office of Families and Children First

AppShield: Automated Web Application Firewall

- Maximum application protection in minimum time
- Easy application deployment in a secure environment
- Smart, behavioral software eliminates manual configuration with automatic policy generation
- Scales effortlessly with no additional management burden
- No reactive patching, rule updates or administrative headaches

“Public data repositories typically have controls in place to ensure that sensitive information is not abused. AppShield helps ensure that hackers cannot use AgencyLink to circumvent these controls.”

—Ed McNachtan

life. Using the same Web portal as Wayne, the case worker has enrolled her in a substance abuse treatment plan, connected her with a job training resource and helped her apply for medical and food stamp assistance.

The technological initiative that will soon be bringing such fresh-start scenarios to fruition is AgencyLink, an innovative Web portal now being implemented by the Montgomery County Office of Family and Children First (OFCF). Aimed at streamlining the processes by which assistance agencies help needy individuals and families to become self-sufficient, AgencyLink will function as a collaborative “services hub,” enabling a broad range of providers and agencies to quickly and efficiently exchange information and expedite case handling.

One of AgencyLink’s websites consists of a module that is a multi-jurisdictional data warehouse that integrates the county’s family violence data such as defendant information, court case information, probation and parole information, mug shots of defendants, and TPO/CPOs as well as court and law enforcement documents and reports from treatment centers. Practitioners such as law enforcement officers, judges, prosecutors, pre-trial services, probation officers, child welfare and adult protective services workers and citizens will no longer have to navigate a frustrating maze of siloed information to make critical trade off decisions about a case.

According to Ed McNachtan, Program Manager at OFCF, maintaining such sensitive data in a centralized highly accessible store presents formidable security concerns. “Exposing information to unauthorized access through our Web applications could compromise our citizens’ privacy and even undermine law enforcement efforts,” he observes. “For example, a client might hack into the system in an attempt to obscure his violent history from the social worker who helps determine his visitation arrangements. In designing the AgencyLink portal, we needed to ensure that our data warehouse and online applications would be protected from hackers and other cyber threats.”

To help achieve that objective, OFCF chose AppShield software from Sanctum as the Web application firewall that will protect all AgencyLink websites and modules. “Sanctum’s reputation for providing the most reliable intrusion prevention solution available today makes AppShield the logical choice for us,” McNachtan notes. “By protecting AgencyLink’s Web applications from intrusion, AppShield helps us assure agencies that are using the system that confidential data is reasonably secure and will not be stolen or altered. That assurance is key to attaining a high level of buy-in, cooperation and synergy among agencies—which in turn will enable us to provide the most comprehensive mix of targeted services to a broad client base.”

AppShield helps ensure compliance with regulatory standards

AgencyLink's Family Violence module imports information from 13 courthouses in Montgomery County—including misdemeanor, felony, domestic relations and family courts. In addition, it holds summary information — such as statistical analyses of trends by geographical region and can produce OLAP and geo-coding reports—that can help Montgomery County target geographic and demographic sectors where help is most crucially needed. Also housed within AgencyLink's other modules is personal confidential information such as social security numbers, date of birth, social services records, ecomaps and genograms that document relationships and medical and psychosocial patterns within families, as well as photographs downloaded from the mug shot server of the Montgomery County Sheriff's Department.

“Because our website contains a mix of private and public information, we need to treat all of it as confidential,” McNachtan explains. “Apart from our ethical commitment to our citizens' privacy, the county is also bound by regulatory standards such as HIPAA [the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act], which requires us to protect the privacy of health-related information.”

Even information that comes from public records needs to be protected from unauthorized access, McNachtan adds. “While certain data—such as the names and addresses of registered sex offenders—may be publicly available elsewhere, public data repositories typically have controls in place to ensure that sensitive information is not abused, making them ‘practically obscure’ due to the cost, headaches, and energy needed to be expended to obtain the information”.

“The concept of warehousing information from other databases is essentially a double-edged sword. The data needs to be easily accessible to those who need it to do their jobs, however we don't want to make it any easier for unauthorized individuals to view the information if there is no need or reason for them to do so. By safeguarding the data in our modules at the application level, AppShield ensures that hackers cannot use AgencyLink to circumvent 'practically obscure' information, and as a result, protects people's privacy to unauthorized viewing.”

Unparalleled protection against application manipulation

Like most enterprise Internet infrastructures, OFCF has a wide variety of technology that all needs to interoperate smoothly together. But

according to McNachtan, prior to Sanctum none of the technology solutions addressed threats most critical to their infrastructure, those at the application level. AppShield provides the OFCF with a security gateway that interoperates with their existing technology and optimizes their current infrastructure. “In our view, one of the most critical concerns is that hackers could manipulate Web applications and compromise confidential information,” he observes. “For example, a favorite technique among hackers is cookie poisoning, in which unauthorized users introduce dangerous code into local ‘cookie’ files that interact with Web applications. Another is cross-site scripting, in which a malicious user ‘injects’ code into another user's website session in order to steal secure information. Sanctum's AppShield

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—Ed McNachtan

is the only solution we have found that provides consistent, reliable protection against these threats and more.”

“AppShield will run continuously on redundant servers in AgencyLink’s infrastructure, dynamically detecting, blocking and reporting any attempt at application manipulation. “From our discussions with

Sanctum customers and through the research and testing we have conducted, we are confident that AppShield is the best choice we can make to secure our site and fully block application intrusions,” McNachtan says.

McNachtan concludes: “For many years, OFCF has promoted the vision of integrating social services

agencies into a highly efficient and accessible virtual agency, in order to build a healthier, more stable and more successful community. By applying the reliable protection that AppShield delivers to our collaborative Web applications, we are now able to transform that vision into a reality.”

Montgomery County, Ohio – AgencyLink Success Story



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