



A Technical Lifeline for At-Risk Young People

CLIENT CHALLENGES

- Ensure 24/7 hotline connection during installation
- Upgrade legacy technologies wherever possible
- Integrate new technologies with legacy systems
- Enable call management separate from corporate system
- Install system during relocation of Covenant House facility
- Control communication, call accounting and management costs
- Enable future migration to IP

BACKGROUND

While most people grapple with competing claims on our time, Covenant House's team of specially trained staff and volunteers wait patiently for the phones to ring. Some calls are from homeless kids desperate for a safe place to sleep. Other callers shake the best-trained listeners with threats of suicide or self-injury. NINELINE is a lifeline for young people and their families, whether they're facing a crisis or dealing with ongoing difficulties in life," explained Gil Ortiz, Director of Covenant House's NINELINE. "Many of our callers have nowhere else to turn for help. We have to be ready to take that next call, no matter when it comes in."

THE NINELINE CHALLENGE

NINELINE is the 24/7 national hotline for Covenant House International, the largest privately funded agency in the US serving homeless, runaway and "throwaway" young people. Each year, NINELINE staff and volunteers answer up to 400,000 calls. Callers are served directly or linked to one of 30,000 public, private and law enforcement agencies offering specialized services.

In March 2007, NINELINE faced both logistical and technical challenges. NINELINE operates under Covenant House International, which had shared facilities on 17th Street in New York with Covenant House New York, the largest Covenant House facility. When the two Covenant House organizations relocated to separate facilities in New York, NINELINE moved with Covenant House International to its new headquarters at 34th Street and Eighth Avenue, while Covenant House New York moved to its larger existing facility on 41st Street and Tenth Avenue.

The relocation opened opportunities for NINELINE to upgrade its aging infrastructure. At the previous shared location, Covenant House New York managed the building and telephone systems. Any changes, modifications and repairs for the NINELINE telephone system had to go through Covenant House New York's IT staff. When the organizations moved, the IT staff went with Covenant House New York to 41st Street while the old telephone system and BCMS went with Covenant House International and NINELINE to new 34th Street location.

NINELINE needed to accomplish two technical objectives at its new location: fill in the gaps left after separating the shared resources and upgrade the legacy system. "The old phone and BCMS system was a dinosaur," admitted Ortiz. "We didn't need bells and whistles, but we definitely needed reliability, functionality and cost-efficiency."

CONSULTEDGE'S SOLUTION

Consultedge took a measured approach in developing its solution. Scott Ryan, Project Manager for Consultedge, explained, "We worked with Gil to precisely identify the functionalities he needed, any operational or financing constraints, and any critical features such as redundancy or scalability. Then, we analyzed the technologies NINELINE already had to determine which could be used or upgraded, which needed to be replaced, and which were inoperable with new technologies."

The resulting design reflects an integration of reused, upgraded and new technologies capable to achieving NINELINE's mission-critical operational needs and its long-term goals.



Covenant House
460 West 41st Street
New York, NY 10036-6801
<http://www.covenanthouse.org>

APPLICATIONS AND SERVICES

- Communication Manager 5.0: High reliability and scalability.
- S8500 Media Server with G-650 Gateway: Upgraded speed and capacity.
- Call Center Elite for Vectors and Skills (25 counselors): Improved flexibility in answering, transferring and recording calls.
- EC500: Supports mobility and future IP telephony applications.
- Intuity LX: Multi-media messaging for voicemail, email and fax integration.
- Upgraded Basic Call Monitoring System: Call monitoring, management and recordkeeping.
- UPS: Assures uptime for servers, control network switch and Intuity LX
- Software support for Communication Manager, EC500 and Call Center Elite under 3-year contract with Consultedge.
- Maintenance services provided to three additional Covenant House locations throughout the New York area.