

Putnam City Schools



Industry

Education

Location

Warr Acres, Oklahoma, United States

Products

Genetec Clearance

How a school district's police department securely shares digital evidence in minutes

Putnam City Schools is the fifth largest school district in the State of Oklahoma, United States. The district serves over 20,000 students and employs 2,500 staff in three cities—Bethany, Warr Acres and northwest Oklahoma City. Over 30 schools provide education ranging from pre-kindergarten to grade 12, as well as alternative and special education programs. While students focus on learning, Putnam City Schools Police Department (PD) works hard to keep everyone safe. Officers monitor schools 24/7 and also spend a lot of time conducting investigations and compiling digital evidence for cases. Often, this involves working closely with local agencies to help keep their communities safe.

Challenges – Managing video evidence the old way

Putnam City Schools PD handles criminal cases, internal investigations, and local police requests. This means they're always searching for video evidence. In the past, finding and sharing that evidence was time-consuming and inconvenient. The chief or assistant chief of police would locate the archived video from a database folder, reformat it, and save it on a USB stick. For safe-keeping, they put the stick in an envelope and stapled it to the case report. Then, they would hand-deliver the package to recipients. The risks were always a concern—the copy could get lost or end up in the wrong hands.

Solution - Upgrading to a digital evidence management system

Today, Putnam City Schools is changing how its community shares information. That's because the police department upgraded to Genetec Clearance™, a digital evidence management system. The fact that the cloud-based solution is compliant with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) was a big selling point. This means that the system meets government cybersecurity standards, so video and other digital evidence is always protected. For officers, sharing evidence with the district attorney's office, principals or police is easier and faster. Without leaving their desk, they email recipients a secure link to the case file and video. The whole process is now simple and worry-free.

Putnam City Schools Police Department quickly and easily shares evidence with district staff and city stakeholders using Genetec Clearance

Since implementing Genetec Clearance, Putnam City Schools Police Department (PD) is handling more cases in less time. According to Mark Stout, Chief of Police at Putnam City Schools, “We used to spend a lot of time burning copies of evidence and delivering them to the district attorney’s office or to whoever needed it. We didn’t realize how out-of-date that process was until we started using Genetec Clearance. Now, we’re able to process those cases faster and move on to other tasks.”

Once an investigation begins, the Chief of Police or the Assistant Chief of Police opens a new case and imports digital evidence into Genetec Clearance from the Security Center platform. They use a map to tag the school’s name and address and add keywords to describe the type of case such as assault, theft, disciplinary, etc. It’s an easy way for them to find evidence later. They can also attach PDF reports and add notes about the case.

Sharing video is even simpler. Whether it’s the district attorney, a school principal or the human resources director, district officers can add recipients to a case and provide each person with specific viewing or editing privileges. Each recipient then receives an email with access to the case and the associated digital evidence files.

There’s no need for Putnam City Schools PD to convert video formats either—the system does that automatically. And every time the video is viewed or a case is accessed, the activity is logged. With this level of auditing, chain of custody is never questioned.

Keeping student privacy top of mind

Protecting student privacy is critical to the district. It’s why the district PD is thrilled to see the highest cybersecurity measures built into Genetec Clearance. If necessary, they can also use video redaction to blur minors’ faces and omit them from the evidence.

“Whenever something happens, the first thing people want to know—‘is there video?’ And when we’re dealing with children, we must be extremely diligent about protecting their privacy. That’s why when we found out that Genetec Clearance was FERPA-compliant, we were sold. Now, we can quickly send video evidence to anyone who needs to view it, in a secure manner,” said Chief Stout.

Helping local police close cases faster

It’s not just the Putnam City Schools PD that are impressed with the efficiency of the system. Local police agencies have also praised the speedy and secure delivery of video files. In one case, Chief Stout sent video to a Lieutenant from the City of Oklahoma PD. The Lieutenant was investigating a complaint concerning a local police officer after an altercation outside a school.

“The Lieutenant called me back immediately and said, ‘Just what kind of system do you guys have?!’ He thought I would have to burn the video on a DVD and he was ready to send someone over to pick it up. That could have taken the whole day, but instead, he had the evidence he needed in 30 minutes,” said Chief Stout.

During a big case, the Bethany Police Department contacted Chief Stout while investigating a series of robberies at a chain of fast food restaurants. The investigator was looking for video of the most recent robbery that occurred at a restaurant adjacent to a school.

Sure enough, Chief Stout quickly found video of the suspect driving by the school, parking, and then getting out of his car before putting on a mask. The local officer insisted on coming to pick up the video, but Chief Stout assured him that he would receive an email within minutes with the evidence.

“He was so impressed with how quickly we were able to send him that video. Working with the Oklahoma City police department, they were able to identify the suspect from the vehicle in the video and make an arrest that night,” explained Chief Stout.

Leading the way to digital evidence sharing

In the school district, any video evidence whether for criminal charges or disciplinary cases needs to be kept 5 years after the student’s high school graduation. So, if the student is in grade 6, video evidence must remain on their file for 11 years. As the PD processes more cases, storage costs add up. Instead of investing in more servers, there’s a possibility for the school to save all video archives in the cloud. This would help the district cut down on long-term archiving costs while still keeping evidence accessible and secure.

With this initial success, the plan is to keep processing more cases using the digital evidence management system. “Genetec Clearance is a huge asset. It saves us time and alleviates the headaches of preparing and delivering files. Plus, everything is going digital now. I think it’s just a matter of time before all case reports and evidence will be shared digitally between city agencies. As a forward-thinking district, we’re happy to be leading the movement to faster, more secure information sharing in our community,” concluded Stout.

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