

PRACTICE GUIDE:

VTC Communication with Detained Clients at Stewart Detention Center, Lumpkin, Georgia

September 6, 2016

Introduction

Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the Corrections Corporation of America (CCA) have confirmed their installation of video teleconferencing (VTC) machines at Stewart Detention Center in Lumpkin, Georgia. **This installation will allow attorneys to schedule free and confidential VTC sessions with detained clients at Stewart Detention Center.** Information summarized in this practice guide is based on telephone conversations with ICE's Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO) Legal Access Coordinator. A copy of ICE's outreach flyer regarding VTC machines at Stewart is also attached.

The installation of these VTC machines comes as the result of advocacy by a coalition of *pro bono* law firms, law school clinical programs, non-profit legal organizations, and private immigration law practitioners with clients located in the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Atlanta Area of Responsibility. Contract provisions between ICE and Stewart County required the installation of a VTC platform by CCA and ICE to allow detainees to consult with their attorneys by December 2014, but VTC machines were never installed.¹ ICE considers the installation of VTC machines to be a "pilot project;" we encourage advocates to further investigate installation of VTC machines at other detention centers.

Scheduling VTC Calls with Clients at Stewart Detention Center

VTC Programs and Equipment. CCA has installed two computers equipped with a webcam, microphone, speakers, and Skype programming in two private rooms at Stewart Detention Center. (These rooms do not replace the in-person attorney-visitation booths at Stewart). CCA and DHS have selected Skype as a platform because it is free to download, and is one of the most widely used consumer VTC platforms available. Attorneys will need a computer capable of supporting the Skype platform, a video camera, microphone, and speakers, as well as a Skype user account.

Scheduling. VTC sessions will be scheduled in 1 hour blocks, from 8 AM-4 PM, Monday to Friday. When the system is at full capacity, sixteen VTC sessions can be scheduled per day.

To schedule a VTC session with a detainee at Stewart, attorneys must send an email to **stewartvtc@cca.com** at least 24 hours in advance of the requested session. The email should include the client's name, A number, a few proposed times/dates for the requested VTC session, and the attorney's

¹ Letter from Southern Poverty Law Center, et al., to Sarah Saldana, Director, ICE, Attorney Access to Detained Clients at Stewart (Mar. 21, 2016), available at https://www.splcenter.org/sites/default/files/final_version-letter_re_access_to_counsel-stewart_detention_center.pdf.

Skype ID address. The email should also include a scan of the attorney's ID and bar card; if a legal assistant will join the call, the email should also attach a letter of authorization on the firm's/organization's letterhead and a scan of the assistant's ID. The CCA staff person will email attorneys back with a confirmed date and time.²

The same guidelines for in-person attorney/client visits will apply to VTC sessions. Only attorneys, legal assistants, and interpreters will be allowed in the VTC sessions; no family or friends of the clients are allowed. Attorneys, legal assistants, and interpreters will have to show, via VTC, government issued identification and bar cards to the CCA guard at the start of the VTC session. The VTC sessions will be confidential;³ a guard will be stationed outside of the VTC rooms to ensure security. Any documents that will be discussed with the client must be sent by mail in advance.

Troubleshooting. The stewartvtc@cca.com address will also be the point of contact to raise any issues regarding technical issues.

Further Advocacy and Feedback

We have requested that DHS hold a stakeholder session to provide any feedback about the program's implementation in six months. This program is the first of its kind in any detention center, and ICE has communicated that it is viewed as a pilot project for possible implementation at other detention centers. Please send any feedback and suggestions regarding the program to Detention.LegalAccess@ice.dhs.gov. We hope that this program can lead to further representation of detained individuals at Stewart Detention Center, and encourage implementation of this program nationwide.

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For further information, please contact Eunice Cho, Staff Attorney, Southern Poverty Law Center, at eunice.cho@splcenter.org.

² SPLC has requested that CCA provide a direct telephone number to contact detention center staff in the case of technical difficulties, and await response.

³ SPLC has requested that ICE and CCA provide reassurance that the Skype VTC communications will not be recorded or stored in any way. We have received informal assurance that these communications will not be recorded or stored.



VIDEO TELECONFERENCING TECHNOLOGY

for ATTORNEY/CLIENT MEETINGS at Stewart Detention Center

VTC

VIDEO TELECONFERENCING PILOT

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention standards require that detainees in ICE facilities be allowed confidential contact with **ATTORNEYS** and their authorized representatives in person, on the telephone, and through correspondence. ICE is committed to ensuring that individuals detained in ICE facilities are allowed confidential contact with their attorneys and authorized representatives.

Stewart Detention Center is piloting video conferencing (VTC) via the free Skype internet application to facilitate virtual attorney/client meetings.

Stewart will begin accepting requests for virtual legal visits by email @ StewartVTC@cca.com

VTC IMPLEMENTATION:

- Private areas have been set aside to accommodate VTC meetings.
- Computers loaded with the free Skype internet application will be available in the VTC meeting rooms.
- A camera and video monitor will allow the client to see and speak with his or her legal representative.
- Attorney/client VTC meetings will be confidential.

For additional questions about this process, please contact Stewart Detention Center at (229) 838-5000.

PROCESS FOR REQUESTING A VIRTUAL LEGAL VISIT AT STEWART:

- Attorneys and accredited representatives may request virtual meetings with their clients 24 hours prior to the requested meeting time by email at StewartVTC@cca.com.
- Virtual meetings may take place Monday through Friday, excluding holidays, from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm Eastern Time.
- Visits will be scheduled for 60 minutes and will automatically terminate.
- Legal representatives will be required to show appropriate identification, such as a bar card from any state, or other available documentation demonstrating bar membership, as is required for in-person visits. Additionally, attorneys will be required to provide government issued identification.