Case Study

IOWA VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES

STATE AGENCY SERVES IOWANS, WHEREVER THEY ARE, THANKS TO REMOTE ACCESS VPN

Anywhere, anytime mobile connectivity has provided organizations with the ability to offer their employees the option to work remotely, away from a central office. And it's an option many employees have taken because of the added convenience.

But for Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services (IVRS), a state agency headquartered in Des Moines, having a mobile workforce isn't merely a matter of convenience for its employees, but rather, an imperative for the Iowa citizens that IVRS serves.

IVRS partners with schools and employers to help Iowans with disabilities find work and education so they can enter the workforce.

> **"THE PERSONALIZED SUPPORT FROM NCP ENGINEERING IS NOTHING LESS THAN FANTASTIC."**
>
> **Bill Dickerson,**
> **Network Security Administrator at IVRS**

IVRS staff members, about half of whom are counselors, often have to meet clients in the field, sometimes a county or two away from the central office.

According to Bill Dickerson, Network Security Administrator at IVRS, this arrangement has the potential to create technology challenges for staff as they travel between multiple locations in the same day, all while requiring secure and reliable access to information over an Internet connection.

Fortunately, Dickerson has found the perfect remote access solution for IVRS staff – the NCP Secure Enterprise Solution.

Why NCP engineering?

For Dickerson, who has worked in IT for 25 years, NCP's VPN remote access solution has been an immediate difference-maker across the agency's 30 offices. Previously, IVRS staff had been using a Cisco solution, which was "really complicated to configure" and didn't always allow users to connect, according to Dickerson. The solution was also limited in its logging capabilities, meaning Dickerson and his staff had to constantly dig into the system to troubleshoot.

In assessing VPN alternatives, Dickerson found that NCP stood out because it offered connect-before login – users would automatically open a secure connection to the IVRS network as soon as they logged into their device. This meant even non-technical employees would be able to work securely and without interruptions.

And that's exactly what happened after Dickerson chose NCP.

On the day of the transition, the NCP Secure Enterprise Solution worked so well that users didn't even notice the difference. It was just as easy a process for Dickerson, who was able to use the solution's central remote access management feature to create new user profiles across a variety of devices, including laptops, tablets and smartphones.

"Once you get it up and running and in place, you can ignore it," he says.

The time-saving nature of NCP's VPN solution has been especially important recently, as Dickerson is faced with a help desk staff shortage. A network administrator also retired a year ago, and has yet to be replaced by the State Office of the CIO. But the VPN works well without requiring much attention from Dickerson. Whenever he needs to manage or customize settings and configurations, he's easily able to do so, before refocusing his attention on larger projects.

The Benefits

Today, as long as they are working over a reliable Internet connection, IVRS users no longer have to worry about losing remote access. The VPN will even stay active for multiple consecutive days, up to a week. The system

Benefits for IVRS:

- ▶ Easy for administrators to configure
- ▶ Provides a stable VPN connection and strong security in all environments
- ▶ Ease of use for users
- ▶ Flexible and adaptive to changing organizational needs
- ▶ Reduced IT staff time spent on VPN
- ▶ High-touch technical support
- ▶ Extensive logging capabilities and clear log information

NCP
SECURE COMMUNICATIONS
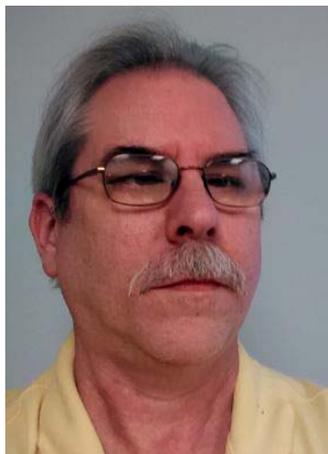
Bill Dickerson,
Network Security Administrator at IVRS

hasn't had any failures in the four years the agency has been using the VPN.

It is paramount that Dickerson feels confident his network and data are secure, because IVRS has a contract with the Social Security Administration. This means that Dickerson has to ensure all client information is encrypted before it is transmitted, and that process must take place over a secure IPsec connection – which the NCP Secure Enterprise Solution provides.

As for troubleshooting, it's "a piece of cake," according to Dickerson. He can go into the log to easily find the root cause of a connection problem, such as a user entering an incorrect password or a firewall blocking an ISP.

The NCP VPN is also a cornerstone component of IVRS's disaster recovery plan. When it looked as though one office would need to transition to a new site requiring employees to work from home, IVRS was prepared to use NCP VPN to have workforce work remotely. When a flood threatened another office, IVRS planned to have employees work remotely until the danger had passed.

Dickerson also says that the personalized support from NCP engineering has been "nothing less than fantastic" – he feels like he's treated as though he's one of only a handful of customers, despite NCP's size. He also says that it's not just technical road bumps that are easily addressed. NCP engineering staff will even take the time to walk Dickerson through his "How do I...?" questions about the system itself.

This type of support will be all the more valuable as remote access increases its footprint within IVRS. Dickerson anticipates the VPN will soon need to cover more of the IT environment, so he plans to add 20 to 30 more licenses to the 99 he already has.

By expanding remote access, IVRS will be even better equipped to fulfill its mission for Iowans.

About NCP engineering GmbH

Headquartered in Nuremberg, NCP engineering GmbH facilitates secure access to central data networks through the internet. NCP's products and solutions meet all requirements regarding usability, security and cost-effectiveness. Core competencies are in the areas of IP-routing, central

> **"ONCE YOU GET IT UP AND RUNNING AND IN PLACE, YOU CAN IGNORE IT."**
>
> **Bill Dickerson,**
> **Network Security Administrator at IVRS**

management of remote systems, as well as encryption, VPN and firewall technologies.

The company develops software for mobile computing, teleworking, branch office networking and M2M. With NCP's software, the user's end devices can easily and securely connect to the corporate headquarters' network via public networks. The technology used in NCP's products ensures integration and compatibility to products of other vendors.

To learn more about NCP engineering, visit **www.ncp-e.com**.
Reach the company on its blog **vpnhaus.ncp-e.com** or on Twitter at **@NCP_engineering**.