

Reimagining Public Defense With Modern Case Management

The Utah County Public Defender Association capitalizes on Filevine customization and reporting to meet public sector needs.



Practice Area: Government (Public Defense)

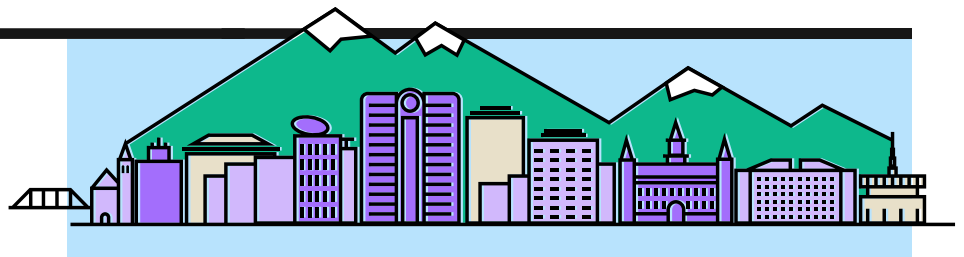
Location: Provo, UT

Solutions: Filevine, Docs+

utahcounty.gov

Founded in 1993, the Utah County Public Defender Association provides legal defense services to indigent individuals facing charges. The non-profit organization fulfills the Constitutional right to an attorney for citizens of Utah County.

Josh Esplin, Chief Counsel and Trial Attorney at the association, shares why Filevine's customization fits the niche of public defense.



The Challenge

In many jurisdictions, the responsibility to operate public defense falls on the state. In Utah, each county is responsible to provide the services.

Utah County, the state's second-largest county, contracts with the Utah County Public Defender Association to represent individuals appointed by the court who cannot afford to pay for their own attorney.

The association handles misdemeanor to felony cases along with specialty court cases including drug, mental health, veterans, and juvenile court. When Josh joined the association in 2008, he shared that their system, Amicus, was "basically a case counter." Josh became an innovator for change by personally switching his work and files to a tablet due to frustration with current processes.

Not long after, the association turned to Filevine as their new system of record. With Filevine, the office can customize different case types, which means one tool can handle their diverse docket. Additionally, Filevine's robust reporting better positions the association to provide concrete data when negotiating annual budgets.

100% digital document filing capability

9+ case types handled

60 users shifted to remote work during COVID-19



We had always been looking for the magic program to address our situation, and we found that in Filevine.”

- Josh Esplin, Chief Counsel and Trial Attorney

How One Quasi-Government Agency Streamlines Public Defense

1 Single Source of Truth

The Utah County Public Defender Association leverages Filevine to build the custom solution they need. The association uses a single Filevine instance with different projects (or case types) for everything they handle, which includes:

- Utah County cases
- Appeals
- Juvenile delinquency cases
- Juvenile welfare cases
- Grant-funded cases (also known as “outer-county” or cases sent from smaller counties)

Through Filevine, team members can add notes to cases, assign tasks to colleagues, and link email communication right to the case file. Email integration is a game-changer for the team because attorneys and legal operators don’t have to dig through email chains to find critical information. This became a lifeline for Josh and his colleagues when the world pivoted to remote work during the COVID-19 pandemic and attorneys could no longer meet with clients in person or at court.



I’ve relied heavily on being able to communicate with clients through email.”

- Josh Esplin, Chief Counsel and Trial Attorney

Rich text editing, like bold and italics, in the case file has also been a win for Josh. Whenever he prepares an argument for court, he pulls up the project in Filevine and makes a note of the statute to reference. The text formatting is a simple yet effective way for Josh to visualize information hierarchy and quickly scan notes while in court.

2 Robust Reporting = Relevant Resources

The Utah County Public Defender Association heavily focuses on the budget they receive from the county commission. They present to the commission on a quarterly basis for reporting purposes and also negotiate annually for a contract.

Filevine reporting helps the association prepare for these quarterly updates and budget negotiations. The platform can report on multiple data points, and Josh believes, “Filevine has the most robust reporting, in terms of tools offered and customization features.”



When we’ve been heavy on caseloads, Filevine shows us that. Filevine enables us to use that information to communicate with our funding sources about what our needs are, in an effort to obtain resources to address them.”

- Josh Esplin, Chief Counsel and Trial Attorney

3 Saving Time With a Searchable System

Filevine's [Docs+](#) feature has revolutionized the Utah County Public Defender Association's document management system. Previously, Josh had to download individual PDFs, open them in Adobe, and then highlight to make notes. With [Docs+ OCR](#) (Optical Character Recognition), Josh can easily search every uploaded or scanned document within Filevine.



The Docs+ feature and the OCR function are huge for me. The ability to highlight and annotate within the system itself and not go outside to another third-party application is a time-saving feature.”

- Josh Esplin, Chief Counsel and Trial Attorney

4 Leveraging the Cloud's Accessibility

When Josh started practicing law, the industry survived on paper files. He went to court with a carry-on suitcase full of files for that particular court date. The digital transition, in conjunction with Filevine, placed the Utah County Public Defenders Association in a very prepared position when the COVID-19 pandemic hit in 2020.

Filevine can be accessed online anywhere, which made the association's sudden transition to remote work not much of a transition at all. “We were already situated and were able to go remote with Filevine,” Josh says.

The Outcome

Josh believes the quality of representation increases when attorneys' efficiency, resources, and productive tools increase or expand. Filevine's customization, reporting, Docs+ feature, and cloud storage are the key to unlocking that powerful combination for the Utah County Public Defender Association to better serve its clients and community.



The customization in Filevine outweighs any of the negatives by far. It's the best system out there that I've seen.”

- Josh Esplin, Chief Counsel and Trial Attorney

See how Filevine can help your firm grow with a free demonstration.
Call us at 801-657-5228.

filevine.com/utah-county-public-defenders