

INGENIOUS IDEAS

DEPARTMENT

Technology Helps Families Heal

(NAPSA)—Technology developed for business communications has helped some troubled families learn to talk to each other—and helped some troubled teens turn their lives around.

The decision to send a son or daughter away for treatment can be heart wrenching, even for parents with teenagers labeled “out of control.” It can be especially difficult when the treatment center is far from home. For instance, at one treatment center for 12- to 17-year-olds, more than half of the 40 or so residents are from states far across the country—and the average parent can only visit every two to three months during the nearly yearlong program.

Family Therapy

The treatment center’s philosophy is that healing a teenager is as much a family process as it is an individual one. In fact, the organization requires parents to participate with their child in at least one group session each week. Until a few years ago, out-of-state parents participated by conference call, but the technology used proved to be ineffective. Parents using the system could see their child but the child couldn’t see his parents and there was usually a five-second delay in audio. The center needed to find a better way to bridge the distance between parents and teen—physically and emotionally. The group eventually found a desktop solution called VIA3 Assured Collaboration from VIACK Corporation.

Faster Recovery Time

The center reports that since implementing the new technology, parents with children in treatment have shared more with their teens therapeutically than they’ve ever done before. The technology delivers



High-tech solutions have helped families connect with troubled teens.

live video and telephone-quality audio over the Internet, along with joint editing of documents, instant messaging and whiteboarding.

The video and audio is of high-enough quality that parents can actually read their children’s body language and hear the nuances in their voices. As a result, the center reports, parents are more thoroughly involved in treatment—and that can significantly speed up recovery time. The technology’s maker also provided customer service and training for parents—many of whom were computer illiterate before using the system.

High-Tech Healing

The center’s use of online communications has been so successful that the organization is considering using it in other programs as well. “We believe change is always possible, especially with help from a family,” says Scott Jones, manager at the center, called Turnabout Teens. “This technology lets families get involved.”