

# Faith-based Louisiana Adult & Teen Challenge trusts AT&T Collaborate<sup>SM</sup> to help support people on the road to recovery

- **Business needs** - As faith-based addiction recovery program Louisiana Adult & Teen Challenge expanded, it needed better tools to support its staff and easier ways for callers to get help.
- **Networking solution** - AT&T Collaborate<sup>SM</sup> streamlined communication processes, making it easy for staff to work together from virtually any location. And they routed incoming calls more effectively to quickly help people in crisis.
- **Business value** - The not-for-profit organization enhanced efficiency and productivity, making it easier to for people to enter its life-saving programs. AT&T Collaborate<sup>SM</sup> also generated substantial savings. The organization redirected these savings to directly benefit the people it serves.
- **Industry focus** - Substance abuse treatment
- **Size** - 11 locations

## About Louisiana Adult & Teen Challenge

Louisiana Adult & Teen Challenge (LAATC) helps teenagers, adults, and families with addiction and other self-destructive behaviors. The residential faith-based program wants its graduates to (1) function responsively and productively in society, and (2) have healthy relationships in the workplace, family, church, and community.

## Solution

AT&T Collaborate<sup>SM</sup> is a flexible, cloud-based solution that blends voice services with advanced features that help organizations run more efficiently—employee availability, instant messaging, conferencing, file sharing, and team workspaces. These features help LAATC perform mission-critical work more efficiently.

## Free hope for every addict in Louisiana

LAATC is part of one of the largest and most successful recovery programs in the world. Established in New York in 1958, the program has been in Louisiana since the late 1980s. LAATC has grown to include 8 centers and 3 ancillary programs statewide, with the ability to accommodate men, women, and women with young children.

The organization is part of an international movement started by Reverend David Wilkerson. This Pennsylvania pastor moved to New York to work with teenage gang members. Today, the organization he founded, Adult & Teen Challenge, which is affiliated with the Assemblies of God, has more than 1,000 centers worldwide, including 200 in the U.S.

LAATC provides free hope to every addict in Louisiana. It has a phenomenal success rate: 86% of those who enroll complete its year-long program.



Craig Nowlan, the organization's IT coordinator, said the program is free to students (the term LAATC uses for people who enroll in its program). "There is zero cost to the student to go through our program," he

said. "We ask for a \$750 one-time induction fee, but this doesn't prevent anyone from coming in. If they don't have the money, arrangements will be made. We don't turn anyone away."



## Delivering faster help to people in need

Nowlan himself is a proud LAATC graduate. "This program saved my life," he says. "After you complete the program, there is a six-month grace period that's like an internship. During that time, people can go home and be accountable to a church for six months to prove that they can live this life in the community, or they can stay here and work for the ministry." Nowlan began working with the organization as an intern.

While he lacked much IT training, he had an aptitude for technology and was interested in learning more, so he began studying the organization's communications systems. He immediately recognized problems with the way new students were enrolled. "The intake process was not very efficient," he said. Each center handled its own inductions, but there wasn't any way to ensure that calls from people seeking help were routed to the right person so they could be handled right away.

When someone makes the decision to seek help, it's important to respond quickly, he noted. He began working to centralize LAATC's intake process to eliminate delays.

In addition, Nowlan saw a way to save money by eliminating many of the organization's telephone lines. "We had lots of POTS lines, which were expensive because we're spread all over the state," he said. "Long distance calls to our other centers and those made by students calling home were a huge cost."

## One place to call for help

After researching available options, Nowlan selected AT&T Collaborate<sup>SM</sup> to streamline the organization's communications processes and make life easier for staff and potential students. The Auto Attendant with the service solved what he considered to be a major admissions roadblock.



"Now people just have one place to call to come into the program," Nowlan said. "We also have a lot of people that will call one center looking for a particular person, but that person may be at another site. With AT&T Collaborate<sup>SM</sup> we have been able to get people



taken care of on their first call." Callers now hear LAATC's custom greeting along with options that help route their call to the right person.

Calls are easily transferred to the appropriate person. "Now the person doesn't have to hang up and call a different number and possibly be stuck on hold or get no answer," Nowlan said. "We have the ability to make sure each person is taken care of. This is vital to us."

It also makes it easy for families to reach staff members directly. "We can now give out our direct-dial numbers so it's easier for people to reach us," Nowlan said. "I like that much better than giving out my personal cell," he said.

## Streamlined communication boosts efficiency

AT&T Collaborate<sup>SM</sup> also enhances the care that staff provide for students. "When somebody moves from the induction center to the second phase of our program, there's a lot communication between the first- and second-phase counselors," Nowlan said. "AT&T Collaborate<sup>SM</sup> makes that much easier."

If staff are away from their desks, they can have their calls forwarded to any other location, or have their office and cell phones ring simultaneously, which has greatly increased efficiency. “It allows people to call me as if I were sitting at my desk, no matter where I’m working. And it allows me to easily get in touch with other staff,” Nowlan said.

The conferencing feature of AT&T Collaborate<sup>SM</sup> works well for LAATC. “It has helped a lot for our centers to be able to communicate with each other,” he said. “We can direct-dial extensions instead of having to call another center and ask somebody to walk around and search for someone. This lets us take care of things quickly.”

The organization’s supervisors use the feature to conduct management meetings twice a month. “It’s the easiest way for them to meet and talk about issues facing the organization as a whole,” he said.



## Precision and control on the go

Nowlan appreciates the control he gets with the AT&T Collaborate<sup>SM</sup> app, which helps him manage calls and conferences on the go. The app provides voice, video, and other advanced communications features.

LAATC can use the app to enter the administrative portal. Nowlan does this sometimes when phone service is out in one of the organization’s rural locations when bad weather interrupts their services. “That way staff are still able to communicate,” he said.



## Directing precious resources to do the most good

Using AT&T services also saves LAATC thousands of dollars a year. “We were paying \$800 per month for plain old telephone lines, plus long distance charges,” he said. “Now we’ve got unlimited long distance, so we don’t have to worry about the cost associated with people trying to call their families.”

This is important because money is always an issue for the nonprofit. It earns about 50% of its operating funds by running a café, thrift store, and coffee shop, and by making and selling candles. “We work to raise funds, but because we’ve grown so much we also need to ask the community and churches for help,” Nowlan said, “so saving money on our phone system is huge.”

AT&T Collaborate<sup>SM</sup> also saves money by acting as a receptionist when staff are busy providing services. “We can’t afford to have somebody that can just sit there and answer the phone,” he said. Instead, Nowlan and his co-workers use the service’s app to create a customized message for callers, take messages, or redirect calls to another person when they’re busy.

## Single provider simplifies management

LAATC also uses AT&T Virtual Private Network and AT&T Dedicated Internet service. “It just makes life and work a lot easier because it streamlines everything,” he said. “The services make things very easy and convenient for staff to share things and get things done.”

Since switching to the services, the organization has achieved better network stability and availability. Network management is simpler, too. “It’s nice to be able to manage everything remotely, which I’m able to do,” he said.

Dealing with a single provider is also a bonus. AT&T was the only network provider with the reach to supply services at all LAATC’s locations. “It’s been a big help as far as managing things. If something breaks, I’ve got one place to go and one person to talk to, and things usually get fixed quickly, which is very, very good.”

One provider also means getting a single bill for all LAATC’s communications services. “And our AT&T rep is an amazing person who has always been there and taken care of anything that we’ve needed,” Nowlan said. “We have a very good relationship—I can call her and get things done very easily.”

“Now people just have one place to call to come into the program. With AT&T Collaborate<sup>SM</sup> we have been able to get people taken care of on their first call.”

**Craig Nowlan**

IT Coordinator, Louisiana Adult & Teen Challenge

## Technology to support new treatment modalities

Nowlan expects to call on AT&T for more help soon. LAATC is adopting a digital curriculum that Teen Challenge recently introduced. “I know in the very near future that students are going to be using tablets in our classes,” he said.

In addition, LAATC is preparing to begin offering online classes. “We’re planning to film our classes and then stream them to churches and other organizations,” he said. “This idea has been tossed around for a while, but now we have the technology to implement it and potentially help a lot more people.”

He said he recommends AT&T to friends and colleagues. “It’s a good service and the support is amazing. Having a one-on-one relationship with my rep makes all the difference in the world. Things are always handled quickly, and the people who provide service or come to install something are always very professional and helpful. I would highly recommend AT&T.”