

June 15th, 2016



Dear Ms. Pollom:

I am writing to you in response to your recent comments filed with the FCC. We acknowledge your frustration and appreciate the difficult circumstances that place you and your family in the position of using our services. While Tech Friends is a business and must earn a profit, that is not our sole focus. The technology that we develop and deliver to jails is designed to enhance security, and provide quality services to inmates and families.

Your letter focuses on a number of concerns about the Video Visitation and messaging products provided at the Clark County Jail. I've addressed each concern below:

- **Elimination of face-to-face visits –**

Clark County confirmed that in-person visits can be arranged by coordinating with the facility. We suggest that you contact the jail directly to obtain approval for this option.

The reduction of in-person visits is largely a security decision by each facility. A small portion of in-person visits present a security risk when visitors bring with them contraband items ranging from drugs to weapons. With Video Visitation, the security issue is drastically reduced, and friends and family can visit from home without being subjected to a search. With Video, visitation hours are often expanded, creating more time available for families to stay in touch.

Video Visitation also benefits friends and family that are unable to travel due to work schedules or expense. In your case in particular, when you are travelling for work, visits are made possible by this technology.

- **Messaging Cost–** *the messaging rate of \$.50 is about the same as sending a traditional letter with the added convenience of rapid delivery and response.*

Mail sent to a jail is often used for criminal purposes, and as a result, each item must be searched and tested prior to delivery to the recipient. The electronic messaging option is designed to be a paper mail alternative for those who prefer the quick delivery with the added benefit of reducing the volume of physical mail to be processed by the facility each day.

We investigated our current policy limiting the number of characters in a secure message based on your feedback. Although the vast majority of electronic messages are short and family members always have the option of sending traditional mail, we have modified our software and policies to give you a better

experience when sending large messages. Effective immediately, our secure messages allow up to 50,000 characters for the same low rate.

- **Contact Number/Rate & Fee Information** –*Tech Friends’ phone number is listed in the Terms of Service section of the customer-facing JailATM.com website and in the Tech Friends website as you found. Rates and fees vary by facility due to differences in state laws and facility requirements.*

Tech Friends also provides an easy to use electronic messaging and ticketing system through the contact link on the JailATM.com website. The information provided in the email support form provides us with the best opportunity to research the issue and respond quickly and efficiently. Our customer service staff is also available to respond to phone calls.

On-site Video Visits at Clark County are free of charge, remote visits are priced at \$6 per 15 minute visit. There is no charge to fund the visitation account. We are aware of the pricing charged by other vendors and ours is among the lowest.

- **Time limit for kiosk use** – *We acknowledge that the time limits imposed for kiosk use can cause some issues for those with dyslexia and other conditions that impact reading comprehension speed. Unfortunately, time limits are established by facility to ensure that all inmates have access to the kiosk. We are always thinking of ways to improve our service and will take this into consideration for future development.*

- **Visit Quality** – *We reviewed the one video visit on your account and it was comparable to on-line video chat/visit technology available in the marketplace. The quality of the visit is dependent on the internet connection provided at the facility and the internet connection used by the visitor. We continually work with our client facilities to ensure that adequate bandwidth is available to support quality Video Visitation sessions.*

The “black out” periods of your visit are the result of a patented system security feature called Eclipse™. This optional feature was created to prevent the use of visits to display gang symbols, nudity, child pornography, and other prohibited exchanges. When the visitor’s face moves out of view, the image goes black until the face returns to the visual area. We recognize that it works differently than commercial systems but this security feature helps prevent remote video visitation from being exploited to harm others.

- **Time Zone Issues** - *We appreciate the detailed information provided regarding the time zone confusion and are looking into updating the wording on the scheduling portion of the JailATM website to ensure that this is clear to the user. Your situation is unique due to the amount of work travel across multiple time zones. In this case, the time zone settings on your computer were incorrectly set and overrode the desired time zone display by our systems. Based on your input, we are considering options to ensure that the scheduling is flexible enough to accommodate someone in your situation.*

- **Inmate Request Message** – *The concerning email that you received was sent at the request of your brother and intended to make you aware that he would like to ask you to purchase a pass that would provide him with extended tablet access. The email was not sent as part of any mass marketing campaign by Tech Friends. We empathize with the sensitivity inherent with the situation and will review the wording of communications sent on behalf of the inmate. I sincerely apologize for any unintended concern that it may have caused.*

Tech Friends makes every effort to balance the practical financial realities of our business with the desire to provide quality products to all those we serve. We challenge ourselves to create technology that enhances security to protect the public while expanding the communication options available to inmates and their families - - at a reasonable price for families like yours. Know that your input is invaluable as we move forward with improvements for the next generation of our products.

Sincerely,

Bob Shipman
President
Tech Friends, Inc.

cc: Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
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Washington, D.C. 20554