CASE STUDY

Safer Communication and Positive Incentives Drive Culture Change in Alameda County



Alameda County
Juvenile Justice Center
Oakland, California

- Capacity: 300 beds
- 42–60 youth
- Orijin partner since 2018

Challenge

Outdated technology that did not support a rehabilitative vision

At Alameda County Juvenile Justice Center, youth once shared just two landline phones per unit—creating conflict, inequitable access, and safety risks. For Superintendents John Ebrahimi and Albert Bañuelos, it became clear that legacy systems were incompatible with a trauma-informed, rehabilitative approach.

But communication wasn't the only barrier. As Reentry Services Coordinator Rakeya noted, the facility also lacked a way to streamline case management and support individualized reentry planning. At the same time, staff were seeking a more engaging way to motivate youth, reduce idle time, and improve safety outcomes—ideally through an incentive-based model that could align with their broader goals of rehabilitation, education, and workforce readiness.

The challenge: find a secure, scalable platform that could do it all—engage youth, support casework, promote behavior change, and meet the high safety and compliance standards of a correctional environment.

By the Numbers

- **648,700+ minutes of voice calls used**
- **85% daily tablet utilization**
- **<60 population despite 300+ capacity**
- **Significant reduction in phone-related safety incidents and unit tension**

> **"When youth feel safe, motivated, and supported, they behave differently. The tablet becomes a powerful incentive for positive change."**

John Ebrahimi
Superintendent of Detention

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Solution

An all-in-one solution that enabled a rehabilitative transformation

The leadership team at Alameda County Juvenile Justice Center chose Orijin because it is a learning platform that could deliver more than education—it became a foundation for behavior management, skill-building, and personal growth. The Orijin tablets provide secure, private access to GED prep, soft skills development, OSHA certifications, behavioral interventions, and voice calls.

Incentivizing good behavior using the Incentive Engine

Alameda encourages youth engagement and reduces behavioral incidents using Orijin's Incentive Engine, a structured, tiered reward system. Youth earn privileges—like extended phone time or media—by participating in education, accessing cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), and meeting daily expectations. Through the platform, rewards are customizable, reinforcing individual goals while promoting facility-wide behavior standards.

When zero-tolerance rules are broken, youth experience temporary access loss, reinforcing accountability in a non-punitive way. The result: calmer units, greater motivation, and more consistent engagement across the board.

> **"We're seeing calmer units, fewer physical conflicts in the facility, and more consistent engagement in our programming."**
>
> **Albert Bañuelos**
> Superintendent

Integrated into individualized case plans

Orijin's tools are embedded into each youth's case plan—making it easy to complete CBT, workforce preparation, and skill-building activities on their tablet. This digital integration streamlines the process for staff while empowering youth to take ownership of their progress. Case managers and reentry staff can track participation and milestones in real time, ensuring targeted support and better reentry outcomes.

> **"We're not just offering programming—we're integrating it into their individual case plans for maximum impact."**
>
> **Rakeya Cherry-Hill**
> Reentry Services Coordinator

Secure communication via tablet-based phone calls

To address longstanding safety and equity concerns related to communications, Alameda transitioned from outdated copper-wire landline phones to secure, two-way calling using Orijin's tablet-based communications tools. This shift not only eliminated the tension and incidents caused by shared phone access—it also enabled youth to communicate more regularly and privately with loved ones, a key factor in maintaining hope and preparing for reentry.

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Dedicated support and alignment inside the facility

Alameda's technology implementation is supported by a designated tablet coordinator onsite and an engaged leadership team that ensures programming aligns with youth needs and facility operational goals. The day-to-day oversight—combined with dedicated support from Orijin's strategic account team—helps ensure the platform remains responsive, relevant, and impactful across all three facilities.

> **"Youth are actively engaged in their own rehabilitation process. The tablets are not just tools—they're part of the plan."**
>
> **Rakeya Cherry-Hill**
> Reentry Services Coordinator

A platform built on data and adaptability

The Orijin platform gives Alameda leadership insight into youth engagement trends, voice call usage, course completions, and more. These data points inform operational decisions, reinforce safety goals, and support alignment with standards like Title 15 and evidence-based reentry practices.



Results

Safety improves, culture shifts, and youth thrive

Since partnering with Orijin, Alameda County has seen a powerful shift in facility culture and youth outcomes. The introduction of secure, individualized learning has contributed to fewer safety incidents, calmer units, and more consistent engagement.

Youth now access education, CBT, and reentry tools privately and at their own pace—aligned directly with their case plans. Daily tablet utilization has reached 85%, and youth have logged more than 648,700 minutes of voice calls, offering safer, more equitable communication with family. Staff report a significant drop in phone-related conflicts and unit tension, thanks to more structured access and the facility's tiered incentive system.

Despite a 300-bed capacity, the population remains below 60, a reflection of intentional reform supported by engaging, rehabilitative programming. Staff also note improved morale, stronger alignment across teams, and a more focused, trauma-informed environment where youth are building the skills they need to succeed beyond the facility.

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Correctional Leader Since 2014

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