Government Agency Secures Sensitive Information and Lowers Costs with GeoTrust SSL Certificates

The Washington State Department of Early Learning (DEL) spearheads a variety of education and child care programs and services in the state of Washington. Established in 2006, DEL focuses on the earliest years of children's lives, offering information about preschools, kindergarten readiness, and other educational opportunities such as early reading programs. The agency also oversees the licensing of child care centers, provides professional development training to child care providers, and funds grants to low-income families to help them acquire child care.

Challenge: Safeguard Sensitive Information Easily and Cost-Effectively

With almost half a million children in the state of Washington under the age of six, the Department of Early Learning has a tremendous responsibility to make sure that each child receives the education and services that he or she needs to thrive. A key part of that effort is collecting and managing a vast amount of data from childhood development professionals and programs. "The agency gathers a lot of information from across the state. For example, we collect licensing data from more than 7,400 child care providers, and that's just one part of what we do," says Gene Thomas, Network Administrator at DEL.

To make collecting that data as convenient and efficient as possible, Thomas and the IT team at DEL have implemented several web applications that employees and providers can use to transmit data online. Because much of the data is highly sensitive, security is a top concern. "People use our applications to send names, addresses, medical information, and other confidential data," Thomas says. "We simply can't put information like that at risk, so a critical part of our job is making sure that data stays safe."

For DEL, SSL certificates were a must-have to protect the privacy of children and child care providers. To effectively secure the agency's web applications, Thomas and the IT team needed to find an affordable, easy-to-manage solution that offered strong security backed by a well-known, credible provider.

Solution: Cost-Effective SSL Security that Is Easy to Implement and Manage

When Thomas joined DEL two years ago, he discovered the agency already had several SSL certificates from different providers, including GeoTrust. The certificates were disorganized, so Thomas did a security audit to streamline the agency's SSL security. After reviewing his options, Thomas opted to stick with GeoTrust. "When we looked at everything GeoTrust had to offer, the decision to renew was easy," says Thomas. "GeoTrust offers the best value and name recognition for the price, so we rebuilt the security for our web-based applications using GeoTrust SSL certificates."

The fact that GeoTrust offers fast issuance and an easy deployment process also played a major role in Thomas's decision to renew. "With a previous vendor, it took us about two weeks to get a certificate, but with GeoTrust the process only took a few days," he says. "After that, installation was a snap. GeoTrust customer support walked me through the authentication process, and the web site had all of the documentation I needed to get the certificates up and running."

Solution Summary:

For the Washington State Department of Early Learning, securing confidential information submitted by child care providers is critical to help ensure young children across the state receive the assistance they need. By using GeoTrust SSL certificates, the agency is able to protect sensitive information while lowering costs, saving time, and giving users valuable peace of mind.

Industry:

- Public sector education and child care

Key Challenges:

- Secure web-based applications used to submit licensing information and other sensitive data
- Reduce costs while offering strong security from a well-known, reputable provider
- Implement an easy-to-manage solution to save time and allow IT staff to focus on other tasks

Solution:

- GeoTrust® True BusinessID

Washington State Department of
Early Learning

GeoTrust®

Thanks to GeoCenter—GeoTrust's online management portal—Thomas discovered that GeoTrust SSL certificates are just as easy to administer. "The other vendor we were using provided management tools, but they weren't very intuitive," says Thomas. "With GeoCenter, I can log in and easily see all my certificates in one place. I can reissue or renew a certificate if I need to, and then move on. I'm done in a matter of minutes."

Results: Strong Security that Lowers Costs and Gives Users Peace of Mind

With GeoTrust SSL certificates, DEL has been able to provide strong, credible security for its web-based applications while significantly reducing the overall cost of SSL security. "As a state agency, we always keep an eye on our budget and strive to find the best solution at the best price," Thomas says. "Not only does GeoTrust give us solid, cost-effective protection for our applications, it also gives our users peace of mind. When they log in and see the GeoTrust seal and the padlock icon, they know they can submit private information without worrying."

In addition to reducing costs and reassuring users, SSL security from GeoTrust has also lowered the burden of managing online security. "Before we completed the switch to GeoTrust SSL certificates, every time I needed to change some part of our SSL configuration, it would take me about two days. Now, it takes just a few minutes," says Thomas. "Managing SSL is just one part of what I do, so GeoTrust makes it much easier for me to focus on the other important parts of my job."

Future: Continuing to Rely on GeoTrust for Easy-To-Manage Security

Moving forward, DEL plans to keep its current GeoTrust certificates and implement new ones as it expands its web sites and applications. "In the coming year, we're going to have to deploy more SSL certificates, and we're going to stick with GeoTrust," Thomas says. "There's no compelling reason to switch to another vendor. GeoTrust certificates work well, they are easy to setup and manage, and they're a great value. GeoTrust certificates will be part of our web sites for the foreseeable future."

About GeoTrust

The internet's one million most-visited domains rely on GeoTrust SSL more than any other certificate authority.* GeoTrust is the largest low-cost SSL brand solely focused on security. With GeoTrust, you get inexpensive SSL without sacrificing convenience, choice or reliability. We're a trusted security partner with a proven track record for reliability, quality and convenience.

Results:
- **Significantly lowers cost of SSL security**
- **Reduces burden of managing SSL certificates, allowing IT staff to focus on other tasks**
- **Reassures users that sensitive information is protected**

"As a state agency, we always keep an eye on our budget and strive to find the best solution at the best price. Not only does GeoTrust give us solid, cost-effective protection for our applications, it also gives our users peace of mind. When they log in and see the GeoTrust seal and the padlock icon, they know they can submit private information without worrying."

–Gene Thomas, Network Administrator, Washington State Department of Early Learning

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* August 4, 2010: Netcraft Survey Shows GeoTrust SSL Secures More Alexa Top 1 Million Domains than Any Other SSL Provider