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Case Study

The Texas Department of Child and Protective Services is using Effective Edge to take control over e-mail and meetings so they can focus on developing the staff and programs that serve the children they protect.

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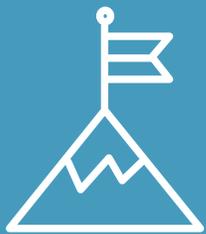


"I CAN BETTER SCHEDULE MY TIME AND TAKE CONTROL"

"I don't know how my old system would have even allowed me time to really even get the program up and running," says Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) Program Specialist, Melissa Hobbs.

Among her many responsibilities, Melissa manages a group of psychiatric hospital liaisons across the state of Texas who work with the psychiatric hospitals to ensure that children in state custody who need psychiatric treatment get the care they need. It's a program that just started a few months ago, and getting it going meant that Melissa had to spend several weeks traveling across the state of Texas to interview, hire, and then train the new liaisons. It was a massive undertaking. "I had the time on my calendar that I don't think I would've had before [taking Effective Edge]," Melissa says. "I think that all of that potentially could have looked a lot different with the way things used to be."

What Matters Most



43% increase in ability to manage information



16% increase in ability to maintain focus throughout the day



23% increase in ability to work strategically



13% increase in ability to deliver results on time



14% increase in ability to work strategically



16% decrease in work-related stress

Melissa took EDGE for Professionals for the first time earlier this year, and she says, "My life before was sitting in front of a computer or in front of meetings. I now know that I can better schedule my time and take control of my calendar myself to block off time that needs to be spent elsewhere... [Effective Edge] helps me better work with my staff and develop them. It helped make this new program more successful.

Melissa and her manager, Kim Gibbons, Director of Field, decided to bring Effective Edge to the DFPS Administration during last year's training conference. "In all the surveys we do with our staff to get a feel for what they think they need for training, the most common response is always 'time management.'" Melissa says that Kim went through Effective Edge for Professionals years ago and remembered it being really good, so they decided to bring a shortened version of Effective Edge to the training conference. "Everybody loved it and was hungry for more," says Melissa, who at that point had had the opportunity to take a full virtual session herself. "I loved it," she says, "It was truly a game changer for me. So I became the biggest cheerleader." After the conference, Melissa and Kim decided to offer the full Effective Edge for Professionals virtual session to DFPS upper management.



"Before Effective Edge I'd spend all day in meetings, then I'd go home, and I'd be on my computer all night trying to catch up on e-mail," Melissa says, adding that she believes that is a common experience at DFPS. She says that despite being an organized person, she often had over a hundred e-mails in her inbox at a time and would spend a lot of time, mostly during evenings, going through her inbox deciding whether she needed to do something with an e-mail or delete it. Her e-mail was her task list, and she had to review all of it daily until it was completed. She says she felt like she approached it with the question, "What can I accomplish today?" Since taking Effective Edge for Professionals, Melissa feels like she has an intentional to-do list.



She loves that she doesn't have to spend a lot of time combing through e-mails looking for things, and she stays much more on top of her important tasks and communications. "It's just relieved a lot of stress knowing I have more control over my day and life. I don't spend as much time working in the evening. I focus more on my family when I'm not at work now and I can prioritize more important things when I'm at home."

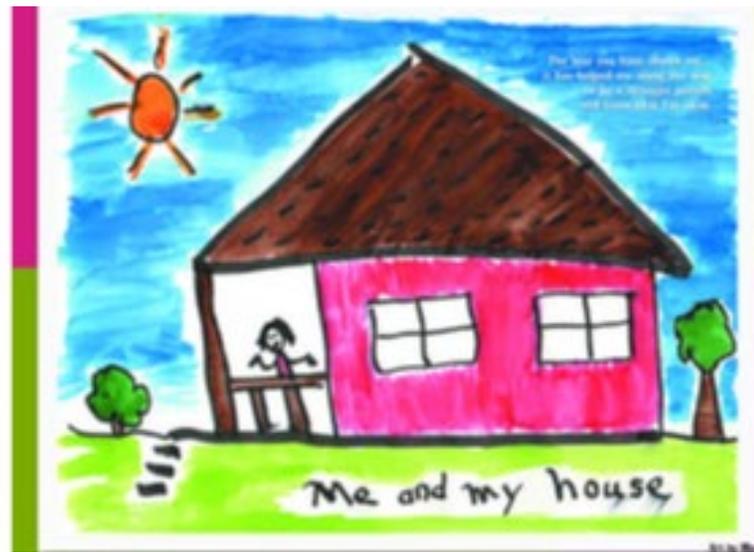
Melissa was always a high achiever. Despite days full of meetings and nights playing catch up, "I was always pretty organized," she says. "I wasn't the type to miss deadlines or not accomplish things. It just seems easier now to get things done on time because everything is so much better organized. I'm not cramming to get things done by a due date anymore. I am planned out and ready to meet those deadlines."

Melissa is enjoying the reduced stress, the balance between work and life, and feels good about how she's been better able to focus on developing her people and the programs she's responsible for. "I've noticed a reduction in my meetings and my e-mails as a result of this program," Melissa says. "Even from the bottom up; I'm more conscious now of the work I put on my own manager... before we had this idea that everything needed to be handled by e-mail, so I thought I was doing the right thing by sending her an e-mail every time something popped into my head."

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Since Effective Edge for Professionals, Melissa saves all of her non-urgent questions and thoughts to discuss with her manager during their weekly scheduled 1:1 appointment. "I'm freeing up her time, too," Melissa says, "because she's not having to spend as much time reading and responding to my e-mails. We discuss those items much more quickly during our meetings."

Overall, Melissa is taking back control of her time and her calendar, and she's seeing a reduction in time spent in e-mails and meetings, and more time available to focus on her priorities, staff, and programs.



Melissa hopes that her colleagues can achieve similar results. "I think everyone thinks that their system is working for them," Melissa says, "But just knowing there's a better way to do this can make life so much easier." Melissa and her manager hope that their colleagues can reduce the time spent in e-mail and in meetings and find extra time in their days, too.

"Our jobs really are so important, ensuring the lives of these children, and we really don't need to be so caught up in spending our day in our inboxes and too many meetings when there are more important things that we really need to be focused on," Melissa says. Melissa's goal for the Effective Edge work is to enable them to have the time to "become better managers themselves, have the time to develop their staff, and overall be able to do their jobs better."

Effective Edge seems to be having the intended results. Many participants reflected a common theme that "This is one of the best trainings I've ever taken," and they shared the sentiment that, "Everyone in the agency needs this training." Exciting increases have been reported in the ability to maintain focus, the ability to deliver results on time, and the ability to execute quickly, as well. One participant shared, "I am so excited to feel in control of my professional life. Thank you!"