

# 8x8 Supports and Unifies Rapidly Expanding Nonprofit

*Abode Services, ending homelessness by putting housing first*



Abode Services is a fast-growing nonprofit whose mission is to end homelessness. With eight offices spread across three California counties, the agency needed to unite all locations and employees on one highly reliable and scalable telephone system. But with limited budget and IT resources, Abode Services also needed an affordable cloud solution. Since 2011, 8x8's technology and support have helped Abode Services secure permanent, supportive housing for hundreds of homeless families and individuals.

In 1989, a group of faith communities came together to help serve the growing number of homeless families in Alameda County, California. Over time, the organization they founded grew from a small emergency shelter in Fremont, California, to the largest homeless services provider in the Bay Area. Today, Abode Services has a presence in three counties, and assists more than 4,400 homeless clients a year.

## Switch to Housing First Model Provides Long-Term Stability for Clients

Along with its size, Abode Services' mission has expanded over the years. Director of Properties and Assets Jon White explains that "We now know that a temporary emergency shelter alone is not the solution to homelessness. Our agency is built on the principles of Housing First, a proven approach that focuses on providing a safe, supportive and permanent home as a foundation for people to build or rebuild other parts of their lives."

Abode Services' primary programs provide supportive housing for households experiencing homelessness, including individuals and families with multiple barriers to maintaining stable housing. Through these programs formerly homeless clients receive rental assistance based on income, help with security deposits and utility bills, and supportive services to help them maintain their housing for the long term.

The agency also works with local law enforcement by engaging with persons experiencing homelessness and offering them housing and support, a longer-lasting and ultimately more cost-effective solution than crisis services provided through the criminal justice system or hospital emergency rooms.



**Customer:** Abode Services

**Industry:** Nonprofit

**Locations:**

Fremont (headquarters), Milpitas, Hayward, Oakland, San Jose and Watsonville, California

**8x8 Products:** Virtual Office

**Number of Extensions:** 148

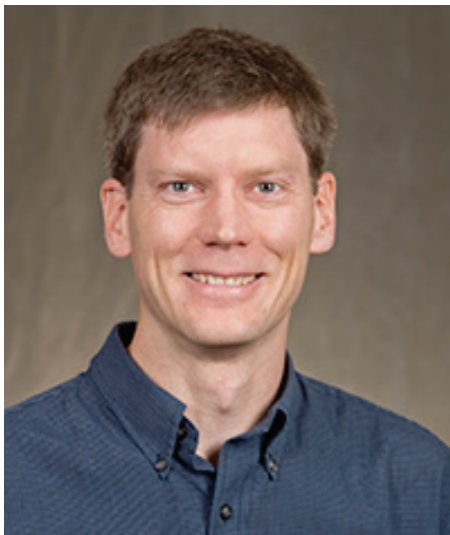
**Favorite 8x8 Features:**

- Email notification of voicemail
- Extension dialing
- Auto attendant

**Primary reason chose 8x8:**

Needed a fully cloud-based solution that requires no maintenance

**Website:** [www.abodeservices.org](http://www.abodeservices.org)



“The ability to expand is crucial for us because we are growing and changing every day. Thanks to 8x8, we now have reliable, scalable phone service across multiple offices and counties.

—Jon White  
Director of Properties  
and Assets

Abode's outreach efforts also include a mobile health clinic, which provides social and primary mental health care services to people who are homeless and living on the street. White notes that the agency's client base around the Bay Area is extremely diverse, and includes unemployed workers; low-income families with young children; persons with physical or mental health disabilities; veterans; and young adults aging out of foster care.

## Recession Leads to Rapid Expansion

Ironically, it was during the worldwide recession that Abode Services experienced a major growth spurt. As smaller nonprofits struggled to stay afloat, Abode Services stepped in to fill the gaps. For five years straight, starting in 2008, the agency grew 30% to 40% a year, eventually expanding to 160 employees and eight offices, and maintaining almost 1,700 formerly homeless people in housing on any given night.

When Abode Services began its rapid growth, it was clear the agency needed a more flexible and robust phone system. The IT department installed a new on-site VoIP system with a hardware PBX, but almost immediately, there were issues.

## Maintaining On-Site VoIP System Strains IT Resources

Call quality was often poor and there was constant downtime. But an even more serious problem was the huge amount of maintenance the new VoIP system required.

“Dealing with ongoing phone issues was too much for our limited IT resources,” says White. “We're a nonprofit whose budget is allocated for client services and programs—not administration costs.”

The agency began looking for a second replacement phone system. This time, in addition to scalability and affordability, the focus was on finding a fully-hosted cloud solution.

“We wanted to shift the burden of maintenance onto somebody else's shoulders,” explains White. “The goal was to completely relieve our IT staff of that ongoing responsibility.”

## 8x8 Provides Affordable Service for a Nonprofit in Need

Although there were a number of hosted VoIP providers that could fulfill Abode Services' technical requirements, finding one that could work within the nonprofit's budget proved more challenging. But after explaining their business needs and budgetary constraints to 8x8, the agency found a VoIP provider willing to support their mission on both fronts.

“8x8 worked with us to provide expedited service that fit our business model and budget,” says White. Before doing a full-scale deployment, Abode Services conducted a two-month trial of the 8x8 system in its office in Milpitas, California. The system performed beautifully, and the whole agency switched over to 8x8 service just days after the trial period ended.

## Extension Dialing Connects Callers to Dispersed Employees

Now that all of Abode Services' offices are united on one telephony platform, each employee has their own direct number, along with a three-digit extension. To reach coworkers at any tri-county location, employees simply dial their extensions.

Each agency office has its own auto attendant and call routing options. Outside callers who don't know an employee's DID number can easily reach them by dialing the main office number and then entering a three-digit extension when prompted by the auto attendant.

## CASE STUDY

### Easy Adds and Moves Simplify Expansion

Adding new users is also much easier with 8x8. "All we have to do is send an email ordering more phones and lines as we need them," says White. "The equipment typically arrives in a couple of days and we're ready to go. With two to three new hires coming on board every month, 8x8 makes the expansion process super-simple, saving us a lot of time."

Moving users is even easier. "When someone moves to another cube or office, they just take their phone with them and plug it in at the new location. No rewiring or tech support needed. Their extension stays the same, and phone calls get there no matter where they go!" says White.

### Email Notification Makes Message Delivery User-Friendly

Email notification of voicemail is one of the 8x8 features White cites as a stand-out at his organization.

"Our staff members spend a lot of time in the field working with clients, so they can't always take calls," he says. "Getting an email notification that you have a message with the sound file attached makes returning calls very simple for our users. That's extremely important because our people are specialists in social work, not technology, and we need the system to be as user-friendly as possible."

### Individual Conference Lines Let Users Meet Whenever They Want

Another constraint of Abode Services' previous VoIP system was limited conference lines. Before scheduling audio conferences, users had to check for availability and sometimes wait until colleagues concluded their meetings.

With 8x8, each staff member now has their own conference line, and can schedule or set up meetings on the fly whenever necessary.

"8x8 gives our employees the flexibility to meet as often as they need to, without worrying about the availability of conference lines," says White.

### Web-Based Portal Provides Direct System Control

Although 8x8's cloud solution has virtually eliminated maintenance for White's IT team, he sees 8x8's web-based administration portal as a major benefit.

"We can log in from anywhere and manage voicemail and auto attendant settings ourselves," he says. "It gives us direct control when we want it, while 8x8 does the heavy lifting in the background."

As Abode Services continues to grow its agency and its mission, White is grateful to have 8x8's technology and financial support.

"The ability to expand is crucial for us because we are growing and changing every day. Thanks to 8x8, we now have reliable, scalable phone service across multiple offices and counties. But more than that, 8x8 has shown how deeply they share our commitment to serving the homeless. They are a true community partner, not just another service provider."

Find out how 8x8 can help your business. Call **1.866.862.2811** or visit **[www.8x8.com](http://www.8x8.com)**

