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Closer Look: Computer Enables Virtual Visitation Rights

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Jon Dunn Reporting

In the Layton home of John Grough, the computer set up

doesn't look any more complicated than any other, but there on the screen after a couple of clicks is his son Michael. "There are times in the day when the reception is almost perfect, the audio is almost always perfect."

Michael used to live in Utah. After his divorce, his kids went with his ex-wife across the country. Michael has since moved closer. I spoke with him over the computer, "This specifically asked for and ruled on and ordered by the court to be part of our decree."

It took Michael showing a judge the ease of the virtual visitation for the court to buy off on it, but the benefits are not mistake for Michael "I would say my phone calls on an average last five to ten minutes at best and my video calls at a minimum of 20 minutes and some calls lasted almost two hours."

And it goes beyond a phone call, John can see things with virtual visitation he could never see over the phone. "We just had a video conference last week with my granddaughter she insisted on showing us her missing front teeth."

Utah passed its law a couple of years ago, but not as many couples are taking advantage that maybe should. Only one other state currently has a similiar law. "It took our recognizing the need for it."

Joyce Maughn is a Salt Lake attorney who helped with the law. "It's only to supplement, never to replace in person parent time. You can imagine a face if you just hear a voice on the phone or have a video call to see on the computer screen my child's face and the child to see the parent. It's like telephone time but better."

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