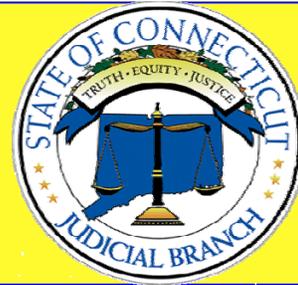


CSSD Chronicle

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Pilot Program Using GPS Technology for Victim Notification in High-Risk Domestic Violence Cases

Connecticut is recognized as a leader in its response to domestic violence offenses within the criminal justice system. This includes a comprehensive intake process; the use of a validated risk assessment instrument that predicts re-offense; thorough assessments identifying offender and victim needs; and enhanced pre-trial supervision with a continuum of evidence-based interventions that reduce recidivism. The Family Violence Education Program (FVEP) for pre-trial offenders, and the EXPLORE and EVOLVE programs for convicted and high-risk domestic violence (DV) offenders, have proven to be effective tools for reducing recidivism among this population. Through education and behavior change, offenders develop awareness and understanding of the harmful effects of violence on victims and children.

However, several high-profile DV incidents recently occurred in Connecticut that were marked by an extreme level of violence and included several fatalities. This prompted the General Assembly to propose significant legislation during the 2010 legislative session to further strengthen Connecticut's domestic violence statutes and offender programs.

Legislative Task Force Recommendation—One program recommendation from a 2009 legislative task force on domestic violence urged the use of GPS tracking of high-risk offenders, as well as notification equipment for potential victims. In response to this recommendation, CSSD Family Services acquired a federal grant, through the *U.S. Recovery Act*, for a nine-month DV pilot program within the Bridgeport, Hartford, and Danielson courts. It will utilize GPS tracking of offenders, and provide victim notification. The project, which recently gained legislative approval, is scheduled to begin in the fall of 2010, and will address a daily minimum of 21 offenders and victims.

G4S Participant/Victim Tracking Solution—The pilot program will introduce First Alert/GPS monitoring of DV offenders who are charged in adult criminal court with violating a restraining order or protective order, and who have been determined to present a high level

"This initiative will increase victim safety by providing notification that the high-risk offender is near, so a pre-determined safety plan can immediately be put into action."—

William Carbone, CSSD
Executive Director

of risk to a victim. The offender must wear an ankle bracelet at all times, and the victim carries a similar device on their person. The First Alert/GPS system, offered by G4S Services, LLC, provides automated alerts when a high risk offender violates pre-set zones established for victim protection. It will notify a victim, and the police authority, if an offender tampers with the device; when the offender gets too close to the victim's home, place of work, or other established location; or, gets too close to the victim's mobile

exclusion zone if the victim is away from home. Since the mobile exclusion zones are established around the victim's device, rather than fixed locations, the system will offer coverage for the victim not just when they are at home, but also when they are mobile and in public places.

GPS Pilot Program Locations—Several factors went into the selection of the court locations for the pilot program. Bridgeport Court was chosen because it has a long-established domestic violence docket and places an emphasis on offender accountability and victim safety. In Hartford Court, local police have recently established a domestic violence unit to combat the high level of serious DV cases in the area. The Danielson Court was chosen due to its rural location to determine how the First Alert/GPZ system will function within areas that have potentially poor cellular coverage.

CSSD Family Services Deputy Director Steve Grant extolled the program by stating, "We believe this relatively new technology will be very useful in the proactive and timely notification to victims of potential, unsafe circumstances. This initiative will encompass important collaborations with key criminal justice and victim advocate stakeholders."

In addition to victim safety, significant outcome data, including offender recidivism rates, will be available for analysis prior to expanding the program to all areas of the state. ☞

For more information on the First Alert/GPS system DV pilot program, contact: Michael Aiello, CSSD Program Manager, Michael.Aiello@jud.ct.gov, or Joe DiTunno, CSSD Program Manager, Joseph.DiTunno@jud.ct.gov

The CSSD Chronicle is a regular publication of information and news about the Court Support Services Division. Questions or comments on this edition, or suggestions for future articles, can be directed to Linda.Grzeika@jud.ct.gov