



In 2000 the Vermont Department of Corrections, through the efforts of the Victim Services Program, began to explore the possibility of automating its victim notification functions. Several years later and after much discussion and planning with community stakeholders, including the Department of the States Attorneys and Sheriff's, the Attorney General's Office, the Courts, the Center for Crime Victim Services and the Network Against Sexual and Domestic Violence, the VAN Service (Vermont Automated Notification) is about to become a reality.

In 2006, the Department of Corrections applied for and received a \$400,000 grant from the Bureau of Justice Assistance through the Statewide Automated Victim Information and Notification (SAVIN) initiative. This federal initiative is designed to help states improve their victim and community information and notification capacities.

Work to begin automating Vermont's notification and information service began in earnest in the fall of 2007 with a statewide Victim Notification Summit, where over fifty Department of Corrections staff along with victim survivors and partners from community victim service programs met to discuss the transition to automation, identify special issues and challenges and begin to design a Vermont based service. A Department of Corrections Work Group continued the design work in collaboration with the Victim Notification Advisory Group, which is comprised of representatives from the original stakeholder groups and victim survivors.

In October 2008 a contract was signed with Appriss, the automated notification technology vendor. The Victim Services staff began to work with the Appriss implementation team to build the data interfaces, develop public awareness materials and write "scripts" that will be used when the automated notifications are delivered. Testing of the system will begin in late February with a tentative date set for April 27<sup>th</sup> for the launch press conference.

Integral to the success of the VAN Service is public awareness about the service. In addition to printed materials (posters, law enforcement tear off cards and brochures) there will be a public awareness campaign through articles in the paper, radio stories and a public service announcements.

A mass mailing will be sent to victims and community members who are currently registered to receive notification from the Department of Corrections to inform them about the VAN Service and to give them information about how to register.

The VAN Service is totally free, confidential and available to anyone in the State wishing to get or receive information about the status of an offender in the custody of, or being supervised by the Department of Corrections.