



Insuring That The Victim's Voice Has A Place
At The Table

Vermont Department of
Corrections
Victim Services Program

October 2009



Vermont
Automated
Notification
Service

THE "TRAINING" TABLE

FROM THE DIRECTOR - Amy Holloway

The last issue of THE TABLE was titled "SPECIAL VANS ISSUE" but I am taking this issue one step further because it is devoted exclusively to VANS training issues and calling it THE TRAINING TABLE... get it? OK, so maybe I thought it was a more clever title than it actually is! Indulge me.

While this TRAINING TABLE won't contain a full selection of delicious and nutritious high energy foods designed specifically to build muscle, bulk and strength, it will provide a fine selection of information, updates and training tips about VANS that will help you do your job. Please pay particular attention to the sections about the new Victim Notification Directive and how to access VINEWatch.

So in the immortal words of Julia Childs.... Bon Appétit!

VANS Launch Highlights

- July 1, 2009 - VANS makes a “soft launch”. Data began to be sent from the Department of Corrections to Appriss, the VAN Service’s vendor, Staff began to register victims and themselves onto VANS, victims who talked with staff were informed of its existence and were registered, and notification calls and emails started to go out.
- August 18, 2009- Official launch and Governor’s Press Conference and Appreciation Reception
- August 20, 2009 - Letters sent to all previously registered victims to inform them that they have to register with VANS in order to keep receiving notifications. Registrations of the general public began.
- September 10, 2009- New Victim Notification Directive was signed by the Commissioner. The Directive goes into affect on November 16, 2009.
- October 1, 2009 - 1074 offenders have registrants registered for notification about them and 759 notifications have been made since July 1, 2009.
- November 16, 2009- VANS transition is finished and all notifications are done by the automated system, except for the Non-automated notification events required in the new Directive



VAN Directive Highlights

The updated Victim Notification Directive 502.01 explains the roles and responsibilities of Department staff in light of automated notification. Highlights of the Notification Directive include:

- Victims are entitled by statute to receive notification when an offender’s custody status changes, and when speaking to a victim, DOC staff are required to tell them about the VAN Service and help victims register on it.
- VANS is an open system which allows anyone to register for notification.
- The management and maintenance of VANS will be done by Victim Services.
- VANS will take over the notification function completely after November 16, 2009, except for the required non automated notification events. (See page 5 in Case Worker Highlights for a complete list)
- Staff are required to use consistent and accurate codes on booking slips and to keep PMD dates and code information accurate and current. (Required Booking Codes and PMD codes are available in attachments 4 and 5 in the Directive.)
- Victim contact information will not be available to staff through Tiny Term after November 16, 2009. All victim contact information will be accessed through VINEWatch. The red VICNOT designation will still be visible for those who have victims registered on VANS.
- Access to Vinewatch is given only to staff who have completed VANS training. VINEWatch training will be made available by Victim Services and on-line through webinars the first Tuesday of every month at 2 pm. (Call Victim Services for Details)
- Casework staff are still required to have contact with victims for the purposes of doing release and safety planning, and to respond to questions and concerns.

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Revisions made to the Interim Notification Directive:

- **The name of the Directive was changed to Victim Notification- Automated (VANS) and Non-Automated** and the whole directive was re-formatted making it easier to follow.
- **Additions to the definition section** were made including :Automated Bail Receipt, Good Time Reduction, Hardcopy Bail Receipt, Vinelink and VineWatch.
- **A section on procedures for overriding an offender's status when the database is offline and a paper booking slip is necessary was added.**

The Shift Supervisor or booking officer will initiate an override of the VAN Service to "manually" change an offender's custody status and initiate a notification call/email in the event the Department's database is not responding and it becomes necessary to use a paper booking slip to:

- **book** an offender into the facility,
- **release** an offender from the facility for any reason
- **transfer** and offender to another facility or to supervision in the community.

If the facility has access to the internet, the shift supervisor will initiate an override directly through VineWatch.® (see Attachment 3 for instructions). If there is no access to the Internet in the facility , the Shift Supervisor or booking officer will call the Appriss Operation Center at 1-866-APPRISS and initiate an override of the offender's status through the operator.

- **Parole Board responsibilities and duties have been added.**
The Parole Board staff is responsible for entering the "last seen dates" and parole hearing/review outcomes for every offender who is seen by the parole board within 48 hours of a Parole Board hearing or review. If an offender waives their right to a hearing in advance of a parole hearing or on the day of the hearing, the outcome "waived" must be entered into the database so that an accurate notification can be made.
- **A description of the impact of voided booking slips** is included and the procedures to cancel a notification call are explained

Voided Booking Slips: Most of the time voiding and re-writing a booking slip will not actually change an offenders custody status and will therefore not trigger a new notification call/email (i.e. when a voided slip changes an offender's status from a D to S or corrects an incorrect facility code). If the voided and re-written booking slip does not change the offenders physical custody, then no cancellation of the call is necessary.

If however a voided and re-written booking slip is necessary to correct an inaccurate change in custody status that may have triggered a notification (i.e. a slip was written for a release, transfer, or incarceration when these didn't occur) Victim Services must be contacted during regular business hours to initiate a call cancellation process or the toll free 24 hour VANS line operator after hours and on weekends.

If there are questions about whether a voided booking slip has initiated an inaccurate notification call/email, the DOC staff member entering the voided booking slip should consult either Victim Services or check the status of the notification through VINEwatch.

- **Several additional non-automated Notification events** have been added
 - When a positive recommendation is being made by the Department to terminate probation
 - When an offender is missing but before being placed on escape status when there is a concern for the victim's safety
 - When an offender, who has a registered victim, is placed out of state through the Interstate Compact. The registered victim should be informed that the offender will no longer be on the department's headcount resulting in the registration being automatically cancelled. They should be informed that if the offender is transferred back into the state, they can re-register onto VANS. The victim will be responsible for checking VANS to see if the offender is back on the Department's headcount.
- **Added a procedure for when a Request for Notification Form is received after hours.**



To Register onto VANS

Toll Free/24 hour operator assistance
1-866-976-8267 (VANS) or www.vinelink.com

Appriss Operations Center 1-866-APPRISS

General VANS Information

- VANS is an open system which means anyone can register for notification
- Registrants have a choice of being notified by either phone or email. Registrants who don't have phone or email access can register to get letter only notification.
- Registrants will be asked to register as either a Victim/Affected person or as an "Other". Victims will be asked to register their name and address in addition to a phone/email address. "Others" may register anonymously by registering just a phone and or email but no name and address.
- Registration takes less than two minutes to complete.
- Registrants may register to receive notification about more than one individual.

VINELink

- VINELink is the "public face" of the VAN Service.
- VINELink can be accessed by the public and DOC staff by logging on to www.vinelink.com. Click on VT when the map comes up and search for the offender's name.
- Information about individuals who register for notification through VINELink is totally confidential.
- Use VINELink to get information about an offender's custody status and to register victims quickly.
- VINELink is totally confidential. No one can use VINELink to see who is registered against an offender.

VINEWatch

- VINEWatch is the management tool for the VAN Service. It is not available to the public. It is only available to DOC employees and State's Attorneys Victim Advocates so only .
- VINEWatch is accessed only by those who have permission. If you have been trained and have a user ID and Password, you can access VINEWatch. Access by logging on to www.vinewatch.com.
- Use VINEWatch to:
 - Search for an offender to see if there are registered victims/affected persons
 - Run reports to see who has received notifications
 - Register an individual or oneself to receive notification about an offender
 - Update a registrant's profile or disable/delete a registration
 - Access victim contact information
 - Print notification letters for your files
 - Over-ride an offender's status, block a notification, stop a notification ca
- Contact Victim Services if you need training on VINEWatch. Without training... no access.

Caseworker Highlights



- Caseworkers will continue to do letter/phone call notifications until November 16, 2009 unless victim is already registered on VANS.
- To confirm that a victim is registered on VANS or to access victim contact information go to VINEWatch.com
- Your User ID for VINEWatch is your first name initial/last name (example Amy Holloway's user ID is aholloway) Use your user ID as your password the first time you log in. USE ALL CAPS. (example: AHOLLOWAY) You can then change your password. You have to have been trained by Victim Services before you are assigned a user name or a password.
 - Make personal non-automated notifications for the following events:
 - * death of an inmate
 - * when inmate is requesting a compassionate furlough
 - * when offender is requesting a pardon or sentence reconsideration
 - * when a staff member makes a positive recommendation for parole outside of the regular hearing/review cycle
 - * when an inmate is interviewed by the media
 - * when a victim who is receiving medical treatment or works in a medical facility, requests to be notified when the offender is going to a medical appointment at the same facility
 - * when an offender is given permission to travel to another state and the victim lives in that state
 - * when an offender is going to appear before the Parole Board for a revocation hearing
 - * when an offender goes to the work camp
 - * when an positive recommendation for a probation termination is made
 - * when an offender in a domestic violence case goes missing but has not yet been placed on "escape status"
 - * when an offender goes to another state as part of the interstate-compact.
- Keep PMD dates and codes up to dates as they are used to trigger a 30 day pre-release notification
- Continue to involve victims as part of your case management practice as you did before automated notification especially while doing release planning. Remember too much information to and about a victim is better than no information at all.
- Don't deliver bad news during your first contact with a victim. Call victims early on in the process to introduce yourselves, explain your role and let them know what might be happening in relation to releases later.

Booking Officer Highlights

- Use accurate booking codes as outlined in Attachment 4 of the Victim Notification Directive (including the F Comp Furlo when releasing to compassionate furlough)
- Complete a computer-based Bail Pending Slip when receiving bail at the facility in advance of the actual release. If the system is "down" complete a paper NCR bail receipt. Do not complete an a computer based Bail Pending slip if bail is posted at court. If the system is down, or the time between the bail being posted and the release is less than 30 minutes, call the victim. Then book offender out as usual. Check in VINEWatch for victim contact information.

If the DOC's PAS Booking system is not available and you have to complete a paper booking slip, initiate a **manual override** of the VAN Service if you book an offender into a facility, release an offender from a facility or transfer the offender to another facility or to the field. To initiate the override, do the following:

- During regular business hours call Victim Services at 241-2309 or 241-2302.
- After hours call the Appriss Operations Center at 866-APPRISS (866-277-7477) or if you have access to the internet, log onto VINEWatch, initiate an override by doing the following: search for the offender, click onto his OID number. when you get into the offender's page, click the override button at the top of the page. When the override page comes up, click the "override status" box fill in the detail, click the "generate notification" box and finally click on "update".

Administrative Staff Highlights

- Fax any Request for Notification Forms that are received at the facility to Victim Services (fax # 802 241-2377). You can file them in the offender's core file or mail them to Victim Services.
- When a victim calls asking for information about an offender tell them about the VAN Service and help them register through the toll free line, VINELink or use VINEWatch to register them yourself.
- Make sure all offenders who are booked into your facility are booked in accurately and when changing slips contact Victim Services if there is any possibility that the change will initiate a notification call/email.



“I HAVE A QUESTION”



Throughout the design, training and implementation period Victim Services has been asked a lot of really good questions about VANS. Here are some examples.

Why am I getting emails telling me that an offender has been released but is still under community supervision when this change happened a long time ago?

As you know, some offenders are on two headcounts. The VINE technology is quite simplistic so when one of these dual status offenders is released from jail but is still on supervision, it is read as a change in an offender's status that needs a notification. It is the original booking slip that placed the offender on community supervision that triggers the notification, which is why the old dates are being sent out in the notification. We are working on fixing this so that the old dates are not part of the notification.

What do I do when the database is down and an offender is being released or booked into a facility?

It is in this circumstance that you will have to initiate an OVERRIDE. You can do that by simply calling the Appriss Operations Center at 1-866-APPRISS (1-866-277-7477) or you can do it yourself manually through VINEWatch. To do it manually log into VINEWatch, search the offender whose status you need to change by clicking on “offender” under the Search category on the left hand side. Search by last name. When the offender's name comes up, click on to the OID # which will bring you to the offender's page. At the top of the page you will see the Override button. Click on that button and then put a check in the “Override Custody” box, fill in the details and then click the “Generate Notification” box and fill in the “Reason for Override” box and then click update.

Now that VANS is up and running does this mean I don't have to do anymore notifications and is Victim Notification information automatically being transferred from Tiny Term to VANS?

CONTRARY TO POPULAR BELIEF VICTIM NOTIFICATION INFORMATION IS NOT BEING AUTOMATICALLY TRANSFERRED FROM TINY TERM TO VANS so until the 16th of November staff members are responsible for making all notifications UNLESS THE VICTIM IS ALREADY REGISTERED ONTO VANS. You will know if they are registered on VANS by logging onto VINEWatch and checking to see if the victim has registered against the offender. This is why it is critical for you to know how to use VINEWatch. It is in your best interest to have victims registered. Before November 16th you can contact victims to let them know about VANS and encourage them to register. Otherwise they won't be getting notifications from the DOC. |

If you need to be trained on how to use VINEWatch, contact Amy Holloway and she will let you know when the next training will take place. Remember you will still have to make non-automated notifications in some situations. After November 16th the only way you will be able to access victim contact information is through VINEWatch. If you don't know how to do that, call Victim Services at 241-2302 or 241-2309 to get help. Like it or not, VINEWatch is something that you are going to have to learn how to use to be able to do your job.

Some Final Thoughts



All of us who have been involved in the overhaul of the Department's victim notification system have come to understand what an enormous undertaking this has been. Our work on VANS has required us to get involved in pretty much every aspect of the Department's operations from booking, to casework management, to directive development, training, and IT, not to mention the outreach and training required for our community partners.

We have come to understand that the best laid plans don't always pan out. Witness our eight week delayed "launch date"!

We have come to develop a healthy respect for our much maligned database (upon whom we have come to depend a good deal in this process) and appreciate the complexities of our correctional system which can result in odd booking events and even odder notifications especially when creative and inconsistent booking and casework practices are employed. We can't emphasize enough the fact that as one department it is critical that we do things in a consistent and uniform way. In order for VANS to work to make accurate notifications to victims the data not only has to flow, but it has to be accurate. So, we implore, beseech and beg those of you who are responsible for doing booking either in a jail facility or in a Probation/Parole office to make sure that you enter the correct codes when you book offenders in or out of your facility or when an offender's status changes for any reason, including being placed on parole, transferred to another state on an ISC status or being terminated from probation or parole. Be mindful that when you "update" or "correct" a booking slip it might trigger a new notification.

We have come to respect the fact that change is hard no matter when it happens and even more difficult in this current climate of constant change and uncertainty. Please know that we and the citizens of Vermont who we serve appreciate all of the efforts being made by DOC staff to integrate VANS into their everyday practice. It has already gotten great reviews and made a huge difference. Thank you!

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