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## Phone service for domestic violence victims in jeopardy

By Stephenie Steitzer - [ssteitzer@courier-journal.com](mailto:ssteitzer@courier-journal.com) - May 20, 2010

FRANKFORT, Ky. -- An automated telephone service that notifies domestic violence victims when perpetrators are served with protective orders is out of money and in jeopardy of being discontinued, advocates said Thursday.

The VINE Protective Order service, which started in 2005, had previously relied on federal grants, said Marcia Roth, executive director of the Mary Byron Project, an anti-domestic violence group involved in originating the concept.

No new federal money has been allocated for VINE -- which stands for Victim Information and Notification Everyday -- nor has Gov. Steve Beshear or the legislature recommended any state money be directed to the service, Roth said.

"On July 1, without \$240,000 ... the VINE Protective Order safety net will disappear," she said at a Capitol press conference.

Beshear said in a statement that his administration is searching for new federal money for the service.

"Tough economic times have made funding difficult for even the most deserving programs, and we are working hard to find innovative ways to keep these programs functional," he said.

More than 47,000 domestic violence victims in Kentucky are registered for the service. In 2009, it delivered nearly 600,000 phone notifications and 53,000 e-mail notifications, Roth said.

Kentucky was the first state to institute the VINE Protective Order service, as well as the original VINE, which notifies crime victims when perpetrators are released from jail and prison.

The original VINE was launched 15 years ago as the result of the murder of Mary Byron, a Jefferson County woman who was killed by a former boyfriend after he had been released from jail.

Byron had asked police to notify her if and when he was released, but he made bail without anyone being notified.

Beshear said the original VINE is fully funded in his proposed budget, which the legislature is expected to vote on next week during a special session.

Roth said a handful of states use the VINE Protective Order system. Kentucky has a contract with Appriss Inc. of Louisville to administer the service.

She said it would take roughly \$240,000 a year to keep the system going.

Senate President David Williams, R-Burkesville, said Thursday he was previously unaware of the funding situation.

"We'll just have to take a look at what they are talking about and why the money dried up," he said.

House Speaker Greg Stumbo, D-Prestonsburg, did not respond to a request through a spokesman for comment.

Stumbo was at the forefront of domestic violence protection issues earlier this year. He sponsored House Bill 1, known as "Amanda's Bill," in honor of Amanda Ross of Lexington, who was murdered last year after obtaining a protective order against her ex-fiance, former state Rep. Steve Nunn.

Nunn has been charged with capital murder in her death.

HB1, which Beshear signed into law, gives judges the authority to require certain domestic violence suspects to wear electronic tracking devices.

Byron's mother, Pat, who founded the Mary Byron Project after her daughter's death to find innovative ways to end domestic violence, called on the governor and legislature to fund the VINE Protective Order service during Thursday's press conference.

Byron said that without the notification service, victims might be too afraid to seek protective orders against a perpetrator.

"Protective orders make a difference for thousands of men, women and children in Kentucky," she said.

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