



## Missouri Governor Announces Enhanced Notification System to Help Crime Victims

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### October is Designated as Domestic Violence Awareness Month

October 23, 2007 -- JEFFERSON CITY - Missouri Governor Matt Blunt today announced the completion of an enhanced statewide automated notification system regarding protective orders as the state recognizes October as Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

"During Domestic Violence Awareness Month, I urge all Missourians to join together in recommitting themselves to eliminating domestic violence and reaching out to its victims, letting them know that help is available," Blunt said. "I am pleased to announce this enhanced system intended to provide crime victims with the information they want to know about their attackers' custody and court status. This system will help provide security and emotional peace of mind by allowing victims to be notified in real time when the protection order they request has been served."

Since 1987, October has been observed as Domestic Violence Awareness Month. During this time, the efforts of many committed organizations are highlighted and recognized in order to increase public awareness of domestic violence and the needs of battered women and children.

Today's announcement is part of an ongoing effort to enhance and expand victims' rights and services. The state currently has a database that tracks offenders' custody and court dates and notifies crime victims when there is a change in their offender's custody status. The automated system known as MoVANS empowers crime victims with the facts of their case and eliminates paperwork and guesswork to receive pertinent information about their attacker and the resources to obtain the information.

The notification system is now enhanced to notify victims when their request for a protection order is served as well as other confidential updates and information regarding their case at any time, day or night.

Petitioners will have the option of registering for automatic updates using a confidential PIN and their own phone number. By simply calling the toll-free number at 1-866-566-8267, victims can get confirmation that a protection order has been served and receive information regarding upcoming court hearings.

During this past June, the project was tested in four Missouri counties including St. Louis City, Boone, Buchanan and Cole. October marks the beginning of a statewide roll out to implement the system across the state.

Gov. Blunt signed comprehensive legislation in 2007 enhancing laws protecting women and children who fall victim to domestic violence and sexual assault. The legislation under Senate Bill 429 and House Bill 583 increases sentencing terms for repeat domestic violence abusers from 5-15 years in prison to 10-30 years, or life in prison and also requires the state to cover the charges of forensic examinations for victims of sexual offenses who are uninsured. Also the bill protects communications among sexual assault survivors and advocates at rape crisis centers.

Last week the governor announced he plans to recommend that more than \$2.3 million be available to cover medical exam costs associated with rape or sexual assault in next year's budget. The governor is also recommending that \$1.8 million be made available in the supplemental budget to protect victims. This funding will ensure that sexual assault victims will not be further traumatized by being forced to pay for the medical exams needed to collect information about their attacker's DNA which requires specialized training. These exams can be vital in the successful prosecution of the assailant and the health of the victim.

The Missouri Office for Victims of Crime is a program within the Department of Public Safety created to provide a liaison between victims, victim service providers, and the criminal justice system.

Source: Missouri Governor