



# State plans to implement victim notification system

By Duane Barbati, Staff Writer

Posted: 03/05/2010 12:00:00 AM MST

RUIDOSO - New Mexico district attorneys were introduced Tuesday to the Victim Information and Notification Everyday system, which is expected to be up and running statewide by June 2011. A demonstration of the V.I.N.E. system was presented to district attorneys at the New Mexico District Attorneys' Association's annual spring conference in Ruidoso.

The Doña Ana County Detention Center was the state's pilot facility for the V.I.N.E. program in 2005, while the Otero County Detention Center's V.I.N.E. program is expected to be running by the end of this year.

Administrative Office of the District Attorneys Executive Director Kelly Kuenstler said she wanted to thank the Doña Ana County District Attorney's office and victim advocates for leading the way on the program.

"The New Mexico VINE program will include detention centers, court notifications and prison notifications," Kuenstler said. "It will give victims and their families a way to take control. Victims and their families can be registered to be notified via e-mail or telephone in the very near future. After that, we hope to have a very successful text messaging notification program."

The V.I.N.E. program was created in 1994 after Louisville, Ky., resident Mary Byron was raped, assaulted and stalked by her former boyfriend in late 1993, according to the Byron Project Web site.

The former boyfriend was arrested and jailed for the crimes, but someone posted his bail and he was released. On the evening of Dec. 6, 1993, Byron was shot and killed by her former boyfriend while sitting in her car after leaving work. There was no way for Byron to know of her former boyfriend's release.

V.I.N.E. notifies victims, their families and citizens of an offender's incarceration status through an automated real-time booking system via e-mails and telephone alerts. Victims and their families can register for notification of an offender's change in incarceration status to include releases and transfers, court hearings and a reduction in human error, which allegedly happened in the Byron case. It notifies within 15 minutes of a status change. A victim can receive up-to-date information from the system 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Twelfth Judicial District Attorney Diana Martwick said Otero County notifies victims of an offender's status.

"This is an automated system," Martwick said. "Hopefully, the room for human error is also minimized. We do work very closely with Otero County Detention Center officials. They help us do victim notification."

She said her office will continue to notify victims as in the past.

"Once we roll out the automated system throughout the state, it's really going to help those facilities," Martwick said. "It will help us out more. We think it's going to be a big help to victims and increase the level of their safety."

The system will notify victims and their families of murder, sexual assault cases, domestic violence, robbery and other violent crimes.

V.I.N.E. program administrator Kevin Ann Cary said she believes sex offender registry status notification will be added to the system at a later date.

"We're hoping it will be included at some point," Cary said. "It is available in English, Spanish and Navajo. The funding for the V.I.N.E. program was through a Bureau of Justice grant. It's going to be such a benefit for the victims. It's going to give a sense of control in their lives again. Even if a victim is in a shelter, they can still anonymously find out an offender's status."

For more information about the V.I.N.E. program, visit <http://appriss.com/VINE.html> or <http://vinelink.com>.

*Contact Duane Barbaty at [dbarbaty@alamogordonews.com](mailto:dbarbaty@alamogordonews.com).*

Copyright © 2010, MediaNews Group