

**REPORT OF THE
VIRGINIA STATE CRIME COMMISSION**

VICTIM NOTIFICATION SYSTEMS

**TO THE GOVERNOR AND
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF VIRGINIA**



HOUSE DOCUMENT NO. 59

**COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
RICHMOND
1999**



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

VIRGINIA STATE CRIME COMMISSION

Senator Ken Stolle
Chairman

Rich Savage
Director

December 8, 1998

To: The Honorable James S. Gilmore III, and
Members of the Virginia General Assembly:

House Joint Resolution 158, agreed to by the 1998 General Assembly, directed the Virginia State Crime Commission to conduct a study on automated victim notification and information systems and to submit its findings and recommendations to the Governor and 1999 session of the General Assembly.

In fulfilling this directive, a study was conducted by the Virginia State Crime Commission in 1998. I have the honor of submitting herewith the study report.

Respectively submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "K. Stolle".

Kenneth W. Stolle
Chairman

KWS:hvk

VIRGINIA STATE CRIME COMMISSION
MEMBERS

Chairman

Senator Kenneth W. Stolle

Vice-Chairman

Delegate Raymond R. Guest, Jr.

From the Senate

Senator Janet D. Howell
Senator Thomas K. Norment, Jr.

From the House

Delegate James F. Almand
Delegate R. Creigh Deeds
Delegate A. Donald McEachin
Delegate Brian J. Moran
Delegate Clifton A. Woodrum

Appointments by the Governor

Sheriff Terry W. Hawkins
The Honorable Robert J. Humphreys
The Honorable William G. Petty

Attorney General's Office

The Honorable Mark L. Earley

Executive Summary



Virginia State Crime Commission

Victim Notification Systems

January 1999

In 1998, the Virginia General Assembly passed House Joint Resolution 158 directing the Virginia State Crime Commission, as lead agency, to study the feasibility of statewide implementation of an automated victim information and notification system. Specifically, HJR 158 requested that the Crime Commission evaluate:

- The cost of implementing a victim information and notification system in the Commonwealth;
- The feasibility of implementing a victim information and notification system in the Commonwealth; and

- The effects a victim information and notification system would have on the Commonwealth and its citizens.

Findings

Generally, the workgroup found:

- Citizen concern about the rights of victims of violent crimes has increased over the last several years.
- Victim information and notification systems are one way to address the fears and concerns of victims of violent crimes.
- Various private vendors provide automated victim information and notification systems of similar design and effect.
- Automated victim information and notification systems must be interfaced with the computer systems of each criminal holding facility located within the Commonwealth.
- Various criminal holding facilities within the Commonwealth currently use a variety of computer hardware and software to track inmate populations.



Executive Summary

- Individual vendors need to know the specific number of criminal holding facilities and each facility's respective operating system before they can estimate the cost of implementing a victim information and notification system.

Recommendation

- The Virginia State Crime Commission recommends a request for proposals be issued to vendors of victim notification and information systems to determine the cost of and feasibility of integrating the Commonwealth's correctional centers and regional jails into such a system.



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Authority for Study

During the 1998 session of the Virginia General Assembly, Delegate Raymond R. Guest, Jr. sponsored House Joint Resolution 158 directing the Virginia State Crime Commission to study the effects, feasibility and cost of implementing a victim information and notification system - *See Appendix A.*

Section 9-125 of the **Code of Virginia** establishes and directs the Virginia State Crime Commission "to study, report, and make recommendations on all areas of public safety and protection." Section 9-127 of the **Code of Virginia** provides that "the Commission shall have the duty and power to make such studies and gather information in order to accomplish its purpose, as set forth in Section 9-125, and to formulate its recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly." Section 9-134 of the **Code of Virginia** authorizes the Commission to "conduct private and public hearings, and to designate a member of the Commission to preside over such hearings." The Virginia State Crime Commission, in fulfilling its legislative mandate, undertook the study of victim notification systems.

Members Appointed to Serve

At the May 19, 1998 meeting of the Crime Commission, Chairman Senator Kenneth W. Stolle of Virginia Beach selected Delegate Raymond R. Guest, Jr. to chair the Governmental Affairs Subcommittee studying victim information and notification systems. The following Crime Commission members were selected to serve on the Subcommittee:

Delegate R. Creigh Deeds

The Honorable Mark L. Earley

Delegate A. Donald McEachin

The Honorable William G. Petty

Senator Kenneth W. Stolle, ex-officio



Introduction

Report Organization

The remaining sections of this report present the results of the Virginia State Crime Commission's analysis of victim information and notification systems. Section II provides an overview of the report's study design. The report's findings and recommendations are presented in Section III.



Study Design

This study was conducted by the staff of the Virginia State Crime Commission under the oversight of the Commission's Governmental Affairs Subcommittee. During the course of its research, the staff made monthly reports to the subcommittee and took direction on the course of the study.

Staff surveyed Sheriffs from each of Virginia's jurisdictions to determine inmate population, release data, and the degree of difference in regional computer hardware and software operating systems. Seventy-five of one-hundred twenty-one jurisdictions responded to this survey. Whereas statistical sampling and surveying depends on selecting random and representative samples which permit generalization of quantitative findings to larger populations, here staff looked to gain feedback from the entire population of Virginia Sheriffs. As such, no tests of significance were conducted.

Staff also conducted a review of relevant literature and utilized interviews and vendor presentations both to augment the information brought forth by the survey and to obtain information that was otherwise unavailable in a cost effective manner. Thereafter, workgroup meetings were held, and findings and recommendations were developed. These findings and recommendations were presented to the Virginia State Crime Commission for consideration in the 1999 General Assembly.



Background

Victim notification systems are designed to provide information to victims of crime. While personal contact notification systems have been in place for many years, automated victim notifications systems are a relatively recent development.

Personal contact victim notification systems can be found operating throughout the United States in various forms. These notification systems can be classified into two categories; those that have been specifically designed to serve the needs of victims of crime, and those that have haphazardly appeared as an additional function of an already existing office or agency. This latter group usually develops in jurisdictions without an established notification system because victim demand for information forces criminal justice agencies to respond. For example: a sheriff's deputy who is tasked with the responsibility of responding to all calls from victims regarding perpetrator release information, or an assistant clerk charged to answer all calls from victims regarding the status of an alleged perpetrator's case. What both of the planned and unplanned personal notification systems have in common is the need for the jurisdiction in which the system is operating to provide an employee to respond to victims questions and concerns.

The implementation of automated victim information systems, because of their nature, is always planned. These systems, which are operated by a computer, require little to no personal contact between the victim and notifying agency. Most often, these systems are fully automatic and integrate the computer operating systems of regional jails and correctional facilities, and oftentimes courts. They can be designed to notify victims of the impending release of a perpetrator, the dates of parole hearings and, at the trial level, dates of hearings and other important events in the case of the victim's perpetrator.



Findings and Recommendations

Finding 1 Citizen concern about the rights of victims of violent crime has increased over the past several years. Increased media attention has created a growing interest in victims' rights. Particular attention has been given to several cases throughout the United States in which a perpetrator, after being released from incarceration, offended the same victims, oftentimes to a greater degree, and sometimes resulting in death. As a result of these cases and the public attention surrounding them, many states have passed legislative packages know as a "Victims' Bill of Rights."

Finding 2. Victim information and notification systems are one way to address the fears and concerns of victims of violent crimes. Evidence showed that the knowledge provided by these systems to victims can reduce apprehension by informing them about the status of their perpetrators' cases and incarceration. The information provided by these systems allows victims of violent crime to more fully participate in cases which may concern them. This participation gives them a feeling of control, and reduces their apprehension about the outcome of the perpetrators case. It was shown that the notification function of these systems allows victims to more easily testify at parole hearings of which they may have been previously unaware. This function was also shown to reduces victim concern by allowing them to prepare for the release of a perpetrator.

Finding 3. Numerous vendors provide automated victim information and notification systems. While these systems vary somewhat in design, they can all be programmed to provide similar information and notification functions.

None of these systems stand alone. As the vendor presentations showed, they must all be integrated with the computer operated systems of regional jails, and correctional facilities. While the Virginia Department of Corrections uses a centralized computer operating system, Virginia's regional jails rely on a wide variety of hardware and software configurations. Victim information and notification vendors will need to know and consider the particular operating systems of each facility to estimate the cost of developing and implementing such a system.

Recommendation. The Virginia State Crime Commission recommends that the Secretary of Public Safety issue a request for proposals to determine the cost and feasibility of integrating the Department of Correction's facilities and Virginia's regional jails into a victim information and notification system.



Appendix A

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF VIRGINIA -- 1998 SESSION

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 158

Directing the Virginia State Crime Commission to study the feasibility of statewide implementation of the Victim Information and Notification Everyday (VINE) program.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, March 12, 1998

Agreed to by the Senate, March 10, 1998

WHEREAS, the Victim Information and Notification Everyday (VINE) program is a free 24 hour automated hot line which provides crime victims with current information on offenders housed in the City of Chesapeake Jail; and

WHEREAS, the VINE system allows a victim to call and receive information on the custody status of an inmate and it automatically notifies a registered crime victim when the person by whom they were victimized has a change of custody status; and

WHEREAS, through VINE, the City of Chesapeake Jail booking system is electronically linked to the National Call Center in Louisville, Kentucky; and

WHEREAS, the VINE program is designed to bridge the gap between crime victims and the criminal justice system; and

WHEREAS, because of the information available through the VINE program victims have felt more secure; and

WHEREAS, because of the success of the VINE program it has been suggested that it be implemented statewide; and

WHEREAS, the VINE program is privately funded by an anonymous benefactor and the cost and feasibility of implementing the program on a statewide basis must be evaluated; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Virginia State Crime Commission be directed to study the effects, feasibility and cost of implementing the VINE system statewide. All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Commission, upon request. The Commission shall complete its work in time to submit its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the 1999 Session of the General Assembly as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents.



Appendix B

TO: All Virginia Regional Jail Superintendents/Administrators and City Farm Directors
FROM: Susan B. Williams, Staff Attorney
DATE: August 31, 1998
RE: Commission's Study of Victim Notification Programs

Pursuant to HJR 158, requested by the Virginia Sheriffs Association and introduced by Delegate Guest, the Virginia State Crime Commission is studying the feasibility of statewide implementation of a victim notification program. Such a system would automatically provide information to victims of crime regarding the custody and status of an inmate. In order to accurately estimate the cost to the Commonwealth of implementing such a system, the Crime Commission needs your input.

The Commission respectfully requests that you complete the questions below and fax this memo back to the Crime Commission at (804) 786-7872. It would be most helpful if we could receive your responses no later than September 8, 1998.

1. Name of county/city:
2. Average daily inmate population:
3. Estimated number of inmates released annually:
4. Describe hardware platform (i.e., AS/400, PC on LAN).
5. Describe software platform (i.e., booking system).
6. Is software used for booking maintained by internal staff or outside vendor?
 Internal staff
 Outside vendor
7. Are all inmates booked through a single booking system?
 Yes
 No
8. Is any victim data collected and entered at the point of booking?
 Yes. Please describe information that is collected and entered.
 No
9. Contact for computer related questions.
Name:
Phone #:

Thank you for your assistance. The information you provide is crucial to our study efforts.



Appendix B

Ques1	Ques2	Ques3	Ques4	Ques5	Ques6	Ques7	Ques8
Smyth	46	1,692	Visions	Visions	Both	Yes	No
Norfolk	1,217	11,260	PC or LAN	Foxpro	Both	Yes	No
Alleghany	28	900	PC	CJIS Booking	Outside	Yes	Yes
Tazewell	86	585	LAN	CRISS	Both	Yes	No
Amherst	60	1,500	PC or LAN	DCAD	Both	Yes	No
Fairfax	900	24,000	PC	COBOL	Both	Yes	No
Northumberland	20	100	None	None	None	Yes	No
Grayson	20	336	LAN	None	None	Yes	No
Franklin	72		PC or LAN	None	None	No	No
Albemarle/Charlottesville	310	3,550	PC or LAN	OSSI & LIDS	Both	Yes	No
Warren	40	1,500	PC	DBASE IV & LIDS	Internal	Yes	No
Richmond	1,336	26,925	NCR Server	GL Database Engine	Internal	Yes	No
Roanoke	726	10,200	IBM 9672	IMS COBOL II	Internal	Yes	No
Accomack	88	948	PC or LAN		Internal	Yes	No
Bland	10	70	PC	Microsoft Office	Internal	Yes	No
Wise	65	2,084	PC	AMT & CAD	Internal	Yes	No
Apomattox	25	435	PC & LIDS	LIDS	Internal	Yes	No



Appendix B

Ques1	Ques2	Ques3	Ques4	Ques5	Ques6	Ques7	Ques8
Culpeper	47	2,100	PC or LAN	LIDS	Internal	Yes	No
Newport	470	8,046	PC or LAN	PC or LAN	Internal	Yes	No
Patrick	35	480	PC or LAN	AMT & CAD	Internal	Yes	No
Sussex	45	764	PC	LIDS	Internal	Yes	No
Fauquier	75	2,072	PC or LAN		Internal	Yes	No
Bristol	85		Mainframe	PC or LAN	Internal	Yes	No
Charlotte	25	500	PC-Novell	Memex-AMT	Internal	Yes	No
Amelia			PC or LAN	EXCEL	Internal	Yes	No
Northampton	49	381	PC or LAN	CRISS/MEGG	Outside	Yes	No
Shenandoah	47	895	LAN	MEGG	Outside	Yes	No
Carroll	42	1,092	PC or LAN	MEGG	Outside	Yes	No
Alexandria	396	11,293	LAN	CJIS Booking	Outside	Yes	No
Southampton	125	950	PC or LAN	JMS 4000	Outside	Yes	No
Scott	18	1,000	PC	CJIS Booking	Outside	Yes	No
Roanoke	175	4,625	PC or LAN	Windows 95	Outside	Yes	No
Augusta	130	1,500	PC or LAN	MEMEX	Outside	Yes	No
Rockingham	182	3,600	PC or LAN	DOS	Outside	Yes	No



Appendix B

Ques1	Ques2	Ques3	Ques4	Ques5	Ques6	Ques7	Ques8
Mecklenberg	100	1,676	LAN	On-Line Reporting	Outside	Yes	No
Botetourt/ Fincastle	50	750	PC	VISION	Outside	Yes	No
Arlington	540	5,700	VAX 4500A	Tiburon Record	Outside	Yes	No
Lancaster	21	400	PC or LAN	CJIS Booking	Both	Yes	No
Gloucester	45	1,600	PC or LAN	CRIS, DOS Based	Outside	Yes	No
Russell	52	1,100	PC	AMT	Outside	Yes	No
Rappahannock	16	236	PC	CRIS	Outside	Yes	No
Buchanan	40		PC	CJIS Booking	Outside	Yes	No
Virginia Beach	1,090	17,000	PC	DBASE IV	Internal	No	No
Bath	4	50	PC	LIDS	None		No
Danville	165		AS 400	CAD/RMS	Outside	Yes	
Clifton Forge	5	450			None		No
Pulaski	85	2,066	File Server	CJIS/AMI	Internal	Yes	Yes
Henry	116	2,169	PC	Digital Solutions	Both	Yes	Yes
Highland	0	67	PC			Yes	Yes
Emporia							



Appendix B

Ques1	Ques2	Ques3	Ques4	Ques5	Ques6	Ques7	Ques8
Nottoway	No Jail						
Lunen	No Jail						
New Kent	No Jail						
Norton	No Jail						
Prince George	No Jail						
Rockbridge	No Jail						
Middle Peninsula	No Jail						
Clarke	No Jail						
Suffolk	450	6,059	PC	NET BEUI & IPX/SPX Protocol	Outside	Yes	No
Portsmouth	850	2,300	PC	VISION	Outside	Yes	No
Va. Peninsula Reg. Jail	289	5,262	PC or LAN	CRISNET	Outside	Yes	No
Clarke-Frederick-Winchester Reg. Adult Detention Center	251	3,250	PC	Jail House Management (DSI, Altoona, PA.)	Outside	Yes	No
Emporia/ Greensville	65	700	PC	PC	Internal	Yes	No
Richmond County	270		PC or LAN	Digital Solutions	Internal	Yes	No
New River Valley Reg. Jail	348				Internal	Yes	No
Prince Edward/Farmville	250	396	PC	Detention Center System	Internal	Yes	No



Appendix B

Ques1	Ques2	Ques3	Ques4	Ques5	Ques6	Ques7	Ques8
Fredericksburg	293	2,680	AS 400	Perceptics	Internal	Yes	Yes
Danville Adult Det. Center	115	1,589	PC	Jailstar	Internal	Yes	No
Pamunkey Regional Jail	187	3,600	AS 400	New World Jail Management System	Both	Yes	No
Rockbridge Reg. Jail	74	1,200	PC or LAN	Digital Solutions	Both	Yes	No
Central Va. Reg. Jail	240	2,400	PC	Jailhouse Management System	Both	Yes	No
Riverside Reg. Jail	732	6,300	LAN	Digital Solutions	Outside	Yes	Yes
Bedford/Campbell/Halifax/Lynchburg	483		PC or LAN	PC	Outside	No	No
Newport News City Prison Farm	248	1,818			Internal	Yes	
Caroline			PC	PC	Both		No



VIRGINIA STATE CRIME COMMISSION
STAFF

Rich Savage
Director

Sylvia A. Reid
Executive Assistant

Judy R. Philpott
Policy Analyst

Lawrence L. Schack
Legislative Analyst/Methodologist

Herschel V. Keller
Staff Attorney

Katharina E. Cron
Research Analyst

Susan B. Williams
Staff Attorney
