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Kansas implementing automated victim notification system

TOPEKA – (August 23, 2016) – An automated system designed to notify crime victims when an offender has a change in custody status is being implemented in counties across the state, Kansas Attorney General Derek Schmidt announced today with the Kansas Department of Labor and Kansas Sheriffs Association.

County-by-county implementation of the Kansas Victim Information and Notification Everyday (VINE) system began in March. Although operation of the state prison system is centralized through the Department of Corrections, the county jails are separately operated by individual counties. Before VINE, there was no central source of information available to crime victims about offenders held in county jails.

VINE is a free and anonymous service provided through the collaboration of the Kansas Attorney General's Office, the Kansas Department of Labor and the Kansas Sheriffs Association. The VINE system allows victims of crime to use the telephone or internet to search for information regarding the custody status of their offender in a county jail and to register to receive notification when the offender's custody status changes, such as when the offender is released from jail. Types of offender information available are name, offender number, current offender custody status, location of the offender and scheduled release date if available. The Kansas VINE system is currently for offenders housed in county jails and also allows access to offender information in other participating states. Kansas VINE is available in multiple languages and available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Currently, 18 counties have been activated. Over the next two years, remaining counties across Kansas will complete the data management integration and become activated. Appriss is the national vendor for VINE implementation and is partnering with Kansas for statewide implementation.

"Kansas VINE serves as a vital community safety resource for victims, victim advocates, victim assistance staff, criminal justice professionals, and community members," Schmidt said. "It is an additional source of information victims of crime can incorporate into their safety strategies."

"The Kansas Department of Labor is excited to join with the Kansas Attorney General, the Sheriffs of Kansas and the Kansas Sheriffs Association to collaborate on this opportunity to assist victims of crime while helping combat unemployment fraud in Kansas," Kansas Department of Labor Secretary Lana Gordon said.

"The Sheriffs of Kansas and Kansas Sheriffs Association are excited about VINE coming to Kansas and consider it one of the most important public safety initiatives we have been involved in. As Kansas VINE becomes live in our counties, we can't help but feel this will greatly enhance the victims' knowledge and allow them to better prepare their safety plan for future use," Sheriff Sandy Horton, Retired, Executive Director of the Kansas Sheriffs Association said.

A series of trainings sponsored by the collaborating agencies and Appriss were held this month in Kansas City, Topeka, Pittsburg and Wichita and were attended by more than 250 criminal justice professionals, law enforcement officers, prosecutors, corrections officers, victim witness coordinators and community based advocacy program staff. Participants learned the history of VINE, how Kansas VINE works and how to register for automated notifications. Additional trainings are being planned across the state.

Implementation of Kansas VINE is in the beginning phase. For additional information about the system and how to register, please visit the attorney general's website at www.ag.ks.gov/vine.

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