



LYNNE ABRAHAM  
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

**DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE  
THREE SOUTH PENN SQUARE  
CORNER OF JUNIPER AND SOUTH  
PENN SQUARE  
PHILADELPHIA, PA 19107**

# **NEWS RELEASE**

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**Contact** Robert Eskind  
Public Information Officer  
Philadelphia Prison System  
215-685-7888

**Contact:** Cathie Abookire / 215-686-8711  
Director of Communications  
District Attorney's Office

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## **Philadelphia Launches Crime Victim Notification Network**

### ***Crime Victims Can Track Defendant Status Online and Register for Notification of Release, Transfer or Escape***

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**Philadelphia, PA--**Philadelphia District Attorney Lynne Abraham and Philadelphia Prison Commissioner Louis Giorla joined together today to unveil a new automated victim notification system to help victims of crime track the status of an offender housed in the Philadelphia Prison System. Known as PA SAVIN, the notification enhancement to local victim services is part of a new statewide, automated victim notification system that is expected to be available in all 63 counties with jails by October 2008.

“As a District Attorney, I have been dedicated to providing victims of crime with better recognition, information, and support,” said Abraham “My office is proud to be part of this collaborative effort with the prison, PDAI, the state, local victim advocates, and law enforcement to provide victims, their families and our communities an important empowerment tool in the fight against crime.”

The implementation of the Pennsylvania Statewide Automated Victim Information and Notification (PA SAVIN) system is a joint project of the Pennsylvania District Attorneys Institute (PDAI) and the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD). Pennsylvania is one of 13 states to receive funding from the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) within the U.S. Department of Justice to launch a statewide program.

“This is an example of government working smarter, better, faster” said Commissioner Giorla. “For the past 14 years prison staff have kept a manual log for victim notification, and made the phone calls themselves. We’re proud to help build an automated network that makes victim notifications easier, automatic, and more victim-centered than ever before.”

Philadelphia is the largest local government in the commonwealth to implement PA SAVIN. The Philadelphia Prison System houses 23% of all county incarcerated inmates in Pennsylvania. Under Philadelphia’s current manual notification system, an average of over 200 victims of crime choose to receive notifications that their offender has been released, transferred, or in the rare case escaped each month.

“PA SAVIN is a tool to empower victims of crime and enhance the one-on-one counseling and outreach that victim advocates already do,” said PCCD Chairman Walter M. Phillips. “PCCD commends Philadelphia for its foresight and dedication to victims of crime in implementing this automated notification system.”

The automated network will allow Pennsylvania residents to receive real-time information about the custody status of offenders. They can register to be notified of an offender’s release, transfer, or escape from a county or state facility either by telephone or e-mail, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Users can call a toll free number 1-866-972-7284 for live, operator assistance or log onto [www.pacrimevictims.state.pa.us](http://www.pacrimevictims.state.pa.us).

Live telephone operators assist victims who need help obtaining offender information or registering for notification. Technical support professionals monitor and maintain the network to ensure high reliability and availability of this service, which is free to the public.

"One of the biggest losses victims often suffer is their sense of safety, said Mary Catherine Lowery, Co-Chairperson for the Philadelphia Coalition for Victim Advocacy (PCVA). “We believe that SAVIN will be an important empowerment tool that victims can use, with up to the minute information they can utilize, anytime day or night. The system places this information literally at the fingertips of both victims and others in their support system. It will allow victims additional independence in their safety planning."

The county-based PA SAVIN system complements an existing manual system operated by the state Office of Victim Advocate that provides notification to crime victims regarding offenders within the state Department of Corrections and the state Board of Probation and Parole.

Other counties using PA SAVIN are: Berks; Blair; Carbon; Cumberland; Clarion; Clinton; Columbia; Crawford; Elk; Erie; Jefferson; Juniata; Lackawanna; Lancaster; Mifflin; Montgomery; Montour; Pike; Somerset; Tioga; Union; Venango; Washington; and Wayne. Two years ago, Centre County independently implemented the SAVIN technology and has now integrated into Pennsylvania’s system. In southeastern Pennsylvania, Bucks and Chester Counties are currently working to implement the system.

PDAI and PCCD have selected Appriss®, Inc., a Kentucky-based technology company, to implement the SAVIN service. Appriss launched the first victim notification service in 1994, following the murder of Mary Byron, a 21 year old, who was shot to death by a violent ex-boyfriend; the ex-boyfriend had been released from jail on

rape charges, without Byron's knowledge. The victim notification service is currently available in more than 2,000 communities in 41 states.

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