

## BARRIERS OR CHALLENGES TO SAVIN PROGRAMS

SAVIN programs are not without barriers and challenges. Some of the most significant challenges include startup and ongoing costs, the need for ongoing collaboration among numerous stakeholders, change management, reliability and validity of data and secure information-sharing technologies, and concerns about potential liability. The following is a list of barriers and challenges faced by some states while implementing SAVIN programs. These Guidelines and Standards address how to overcome these issues to successfully implement a SAVIN program.

### Costs

A significant barrier to a SAVIN program is the cost. However, there are significant cost savings to be accrued over time and there are ways to overcome the initial cost barrier. Some states that have implemented a SAVIN program have realized cost savings, improvements to victim/witness services, and secondary benefits by streamlining data systems and interagency protocols.

- Converting from a paper-based to an automated system, such as a SAVIN program, may require a concentrated startup effort to develop the tools and resources required for a safe and effective SAVIN system. Attention must be paid to the accuracy and security of the information that is transferred or entered, but the investment can have significant financial and programmatic benefits later.
- For some jurisdictions, funding has not been appropriated for their intended SAVIN programs or enhancements; however, collaborative efforts of key stakeholders can make a jurisdiction eligible for federal funding to implement or enhance a SAVIN service.
- The wide variety of hardware, software, platforms, and data applications necessary to network and secure agency databases can add to the cost of the system rollout, but the standardization and linkages will yield long-term benefits.

### Lack of Collaboration

Historical barriers to effective collaboration among victims, advocates, justice practitioners, and technology professionals must be overcome.

- The successful collaborative process of establishing a SAVIN program will affirm that agencies and officials have the best interest of victims and public safety in mind and serve to improve information sharing on a broader basis.
- Collaboration for system planning and implementation does not always include the most significant end users of SAVIN services (crime victims, witnesses, and other at-risk persons, including advocates and justice professionals). Representatives from these key stakeholder populations must be included and actively involved in all phases of a SAVIN program, especially in its planning phases and in assessing its capabilities and limitations, and be informed how SAVIN benefits them.
- Stakeholder agencies must commit time, personnel, and resources to increasing victim and public awareness about the new and evolving SAVIN system and provide planned outreach for traditionally underserved populations (e.g., non-English speaking victims, victims with Limited English Proficiency, victims with disabilities, persons with special needs, and elderly victims).
- Timeframes for implementation depend greatly on the ability of key individuals and agencies to adhere to tight schedules, budgets, and protocols that are supportive of one another. If

personnel and resources are not available for the actual SAVIN rollout, the entire implementation plan can be significantly delayed or derailed.

- Interagency policies or memoranda of understanding (MOUs) that clarify the roles and responsibilities for implementing a SAVIN program are essential to the successful delivery of services, and serve to streamline interagency protocols, cover gaps, reduce overlaps, and increase the effectiveness of public safety services.

### **Change Management**

The introduction of a SAVIN program will involve change, and it is not unusual to encounter resistance to change. Change management requires a deliberative approach in how to introduce the changes, communicate why they are important, and how they will add value. Examples of value might include cost savings (financial and labor), the facilitation of compliance with legal and regulatory duties, and freeing up time for other responsibilities.

- Many agencies and professionals are comfortable with the status quo of victim notification, and fail to recognize the benefits of automation.
- Some agencies may insist that all communication with victims, witnesses, and case-related professionals be done on a personal basis by trained agency personnel. However, the automated confidential notifications with 24/7 access to trained SAVIN service representatives and referrals to local victim services readily provide the “human touch” that is a key tenet of victim assistance.
- Key personnel may be afraid of using technology to manage sensitive data. These fears must be recognized and overcome through education about security technology for data protection.
- New laws or amendments to existing statutes may be required to accommodate automated victim information and notification.
- Each state or territory must identify the various stakeholders who need to be educated on how to effectively use SAVIN. Successful implementation of a SAVIN program must include training and ongoing education.
- New agency policies, protocols and job descriptions may be required as a part of the implementation of a SAVIN program.

### **Quality Assurance**

It is extremely important that the SAVIN program performs with a high degree of accuracy (valid and reliable data) and regard for the safety and confidentiality of the victim. To ensure that the SAVIN program operates at this level, certain safeguards need to be implemented. It is important that states, tribes, and territories adopt appropriate best practices to safeguard the standards for technology, policies, and procedures. The reliability and validity of offender and case information incorporated into SAVIN systems rely on the accuracy and timely entry of the data. This is an important responsibility for the personnel transferring or entering the data in the SAVIN system.

The lack of existing standardized performance measurements impedes the ability to universally gauge the use and usefulness of SAVIN programs. Performance benchmarks specific to SAVIN are essential to the initial rollout and the long-term accountability to funding sources, end users (victims and others), and researchers focused on how to continually improve victim services and public safety. At the time of this writing, the National Institute of Justice has awarded a grant to

ICF International to conduct a 36-month evaluation of the implementation of SAVIN programs nationwide.

Major goals of the evaluation include “assessment of victim satisfaction with SAVIN programs and enhancements and examination of the non-use of SAVIN programs by victims.”

**Potential Liability**

The legal basis for agency or service provider liability for failure to provide victims with statutorily mandated rights to information and notification is not clearly or fully established as yet by case law. In states with specified methods for compliance with victims’ rights and cause-of-action recourse, it is conceivable that liability may be an issue for parties named in the relevant statutes and regulations, except where provisions for acting in good faith or legislated immunity from civil or criminal liability are clearly stated.

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