

INTRODUCTION

Significant attention has been devoted over time to ensure that crime victims and survivors¹ have opportunities to be safely and actively engaged participants in their cases and in the overall justice process. A victim's right to notification and information about his or her case has long been termed the "threshold right" from which all other victims' rights flow. When victims are informed about the status of a criminal case and the custody status of an alleged or convicted offender,² it empowers them to more safely participate in justice processes and make decisions related to other critical needs, including protection, support services, restitution, and victim compensation. Informed victims are encouraged to voice their recommendations in plea agreements, sentencing, and parole decisions through victim impact statements.

In 2005, Congress appropriated \$8 million to help states create or expand statewide automated victim information and notification (SAVIN) systems, and has appropriated additional funds annually. These SAVIN systems are intended to provide a single point of shared services for victims anywhere in a state to learn about the incarceration or custody status of an offender the status of their case against an offender, from the point of arrest and incarceration through disposition, release, and community supervision. Other federally and state-funded SAVIN services are providing status information and notification on domestic violence protective orders and court events.

The goal of a SAVIN program is to increase public safety and deliver many of the basic victim notification rights provided by 33 state constitutional amendments and hundreds of state statutes across the nation, as well as the federal Justice for All Act signed by President George W. Bush in 2004. These legislative reform initiatives increase public safety and improve basic justice decisions by ensuring that victims are given timely and accurate information that both enhances their ability to protect themselves and ensures they are able to fully participate in the justice process if they so choose.

SAVIN programs should be guided by a cross-disciplinary Project Steering and Advisory Committee that includes crime victims, victim advocates, justice and allied professionals, and information technology (IT) experts.

SAVIN is designed to be – first and foremost – victim-sensitive and victim-centered. All efforts related to its planning and implementations have an important bottom line: How can SAVIN improve the treatment of victims, help them exercise their rights to information and notification, and provide them with important information that can enhance their personal safety?

This document is designed to provide guidance in the overall governance, planning, implementation, management, and evaluation of SAVIN programs.

¹ Throughout these Guidelines and Standards, the term "victims" will be used to describe "crime victims and survivors," which includes all victims of crime and the surviving family members of homicide victims.

² Throughout these Guidelines and Standards, the term "offenders" will be used to describe all persons who are alleged to be criminal defendants and those who have been convicted of crimes.

At the time of this publication, the SAVIN Online Community web site—a component of the National SAVIN Training and Technical Assistance Project sponsored by the National Criminal Justice Association with support from the Bureau of Justice Assistance, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. To register for access to this web site, please visit www.savinonline.org.

Its primary purpose is to serve the technical assistance needs of Administrators who develop and direct automated telephonic victim information and notification systems, often referred to as SAVIN (Statewide Automated Victim Information and Notification) systems. The web site is designed to serve as a conduit for the distribution of SAVIN-related information and materials gathered or developed by the SAVIN Training and Technical Assistance Project. It is also intended to provide a communications forum to afford Administrators, their IT staff and other staff the opportunity to provide peer-to-peer support and cross-education and to foster a national network to enhance effective and efficient delivery of notification services to crime victims.

The SAVIN Online Community web site is a one-stop web presence for state and local SAVIN practitioners, administrators, and project managers. The power of this site lies in its ability to connect and update the SAVIN community on a continual basis. The site uses web 2.0 tools to increase the ability of practitioners to interact and communicate. Practitioners can use forum functions to ask questions and share “best-practice” experiences with one another.

The SAVIN Online Community also includes a Virtual Library, including sample memoranda of understanding, interagency agreements, legislation, training materials, victim/survivor outreach resources, public education and awareness resources and public service announcements (PSAs), and statistical reports.

Practitioners can request training and technical assistance through the SAVIN Online Community, as well as access myriad of SAVIN resources.