
TO: Honorable Members of the Joint Justice Legislative Oversight Committee
FROM: Jennifer Poehlmann, JD, Executive Director
Vermont Center for Crime Victim Service
RE: Act 159, Earned Time and Victim Notification
DATE: November 21, 2024

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today concerning the expansion of earned time, with a particular focus on provision of Act 159, specifically as directed within Section 3(b):

“The review of the Department’s earned time program shall also include an examination of the current operation and effectiveness of the Department’s victim notification system and whether it has the capabilities to handle an expansion of the earned time program. The Committee shall solicit testimony from the Department; the Center for Crime Victim Services; victims and survivors of crimes, including those who serve on the advisory council for the Center for Crime Victim Services; and the Department of State’s Attorneys and Sheriffs.”

As per your request, and in keeping with the above, the Center offered the following areas that partners have already identified as areas for improvement:

- Restoring a “menu” of options for victims to choose the level and types of notification they wish to receive.
- Ensure all messaging and notification is trauma informed and accessible, including services that are reflective of the needs of Vermont’s non-English speaking population and individuals who have disabilities, are hard of hearing, etc.
- Identify existing gaps and training needs.
- Consider expanding capacity to provide notification in keeping with trauma and victim-centered practice across the criminal justice spectrum.
- Examine whether there are more efficient ways to deliver notifications and, ensure it is provided in a timely manner.

The Center noted that an ad hoc group has already begun to coalesce to work toward addressing some of these issues. We respectfully request that this group, as already identified within Act 159, be given time to work on these issues and be expected to report back to the committees of jurisdiction this coming session with action steps and implementation recommendations.

