

TO: The Honorable Member of House Corrections and Institutions
FROM: The Victim Notification Task Force Group (VNTFG)
RE: Memo Updating the Group's Further Progress
Date: March 11, 2026

The Victim Notification Task Force Group respectfully submit the requested memoranda to update the Committee as to the status of its work upon the sunset of its establishment on February 15, 2026, pursuant to Act 64.

CONSENSUS RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LEGISLATIVE CHANGE

- Amend 13 VSA §5314(b) to add (7) Information about the Department of Corrections' Offender Locator System and the ability to register for automated notification of the defendant's custody status through the VINES automated victim notification system. (Currently in Miscellaneous Judiciary Bill)
 - Amend the statutes relating to parole notification to victims by changing the language in 13 VSA §5305 to reflect the language within 28 VSA §507, ensuring that notification is an opt out rather than an opt in. (Potential proposal as an amendment to the Miscellaneous Judiciary Bill)
 - Title 13 VSA §5304(b) explicitly provides a victim/survivor with the ability to opt out of any service the state's attorney advocate is otherwise obligated to provide; the VNTFG recommends that a similar provision be instituted within Title 28. This is essential for the DOC to be able to restore a "menu" option for victims to choose what notifications they wish to receive.

PROGRESS UPDATES

Language Access

The Department of Corrections uses several different translation services that AHS has contracts with. These services are AALV, Inc, Propio, U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants through the Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program, Vancro, WorldWide Interpreters, and Language Link. Propio Language Services is one the DOC uses the most as they have can be used at any time with no appointment. They have a broad language variety of over 300 languages to choose from including American Sign Language (ASL). Propio can also be used for document translation, clients can submit written materials such as medical records, legal documents, manuals, or marketing content through a secure system, and the work is assigned to trained human translators who specialize in the

relevant subject area. These translators ensure that the meaning, tone, and context of the original message are accurately conveyed in the target language. Because Propio relies on professional linguists rather than solely on automated translation tools, the results are typically more accurate and culturally appropriate, especially in complex or sensitive fields like medicine and law. Quality review processes and confidentiality standards further support reliability and compliance in regulated industries.

Live interpreters play a critical role by listening carefully, accurately conveying meaning, maintaining neutrality, and clarifying misunderstandings as they arise. Propio's live interpretation services are generally fast, dependable, and effective, making them a strong option for organizations that need immediate language access and high levels of accuracy. The Victim Services Unit now has access to these services and can utilize them to ensure that they meet the needs of all victims/survivors in Vermont.

The DOC made significant strides to address concerns about language accessibility. It should be noted however that all state agencies that serve victims must have a language/communications access plan.

VINE technology status

DOC agreed that to bring back the menu of notification options, Vermont needs to amend Title 28 to include language found currently in 13 VSA §5304(b). As noted, this amendment to statute is a consensus recommendation by the Task Force and essential in order to support DOC in providing notification that reflects the individual choices of each victim they serve.

The DOC is in the process of developing and testing a parallel data workflow from the DOC to VINE, which will replace the current VINE configuration. This initiative is intended to establish a system that is less reliant on administrative coding and more closely aligned with current business processes. The project will also incorporate necessary system enhancements and updates, including improvements to language accessibility.

Adoption of victim-centered/trauma informed language

All notifications provided via email and text were reviewed by all Task Force members as well as representatives from Disability Rights Vermont. The collective recommendations were adopted by the DOC and implemented into the VINE system.

MOU Development

The development of a Memorandum of Understanding, driven by the work and authorship of the Department of State's Attorneys and Sheriffs, is currently awaiting final sign-off from

the Attorney General's Office, and, in draft form, is otherwise agreed to by all other signatories. (see attached)

Even in its current form, this document has already proven its value. It has fostered a clearer understanding of the complex "constellation" of Victims' Rights and has effectively bridged the gap between the DOC, SAS, Law Enforcement and victim services agencies regarding overlapping duties in both legal theory and daily practice.

Gap in notification when suspect is detained

In the early meetings of the VNFTG, a long-standing gap in notification was discussed. This gap is related to persons booked into DOC custody during after-hours and on weekends/holidays. In many of these cases, a bail amount is set. If the detained person posts bail and is released, there is currently no structure to notify victims that an offender has been released. This is a statutory obligation of the DOC. Often, DOC does not have contact information for victims in these cases, and this information has historically been withheld by law enforcement in order to protect sensitive victim information. When an offender is released in these circumstances (after hours and on weekends), there is no mechanism in place that seeks victim information for notification.

As a result of these meetings, the Vermont State Police created a confidential victim information sheet that can be shared with DOC along with booking paperwork. At the request of a victim, information can be shared with DOC so that a victim can be notified if an offender is released. There is also contact information for the arresting officer so that an email can be provided to him/her, also notifying of the release (as in many cases, law enforcement is also unaware when someone is able to post bail). Both newly proposed notifications are to ensure the ability to seek support, safety plan, and assess risk.

As of this time, the proposed form (attached), has been submitted to the DOC for review and approval. Once further discussion can be had, a plan to implement the use of this form will be brought to the VSP and to municipal departments. Additionally, when this form is introduced, law enforcement officers will be reminded of how the DOC notification system can be introduced to victims for an additional option for notification.

Expansion of VINE

An informal working group emerged from the Victim Notification Task Force to examine the victim notification process for civil protection orders, review other states' experiences using VINE for civil protection order notifications, and explore whether VINE could support protection order notification in Vermont.

The group met in January and February and plans to continue meeting monthly through the spring. Participants include several members of the Victim Notification Task Force, along with other relevant stakeholders, like technology and operations staff from the Vermont Judiciary.

The group is currently mapping the existing protection order notification process to identify opportunities for improved collaboration and clarity. This includes assessing how victim contact information is collected and how notifications flow through the current system, as well as identifying any existing data systems from which VINE could pull information to facilitate notification, should stakeholders choose to pursue that option in the future.

Next Steps

The Group agreed that this process was very valuable for systems improvement and for strengthening relationships. The Group intends to meet monthly to keep the broader conversation going to better support victims and survivors and each other.