



State of Vermont
Department of Corrections
280 State Drive
Waterbury, VT 05671-1000

TO: Joint Justice Legislative Oversight Committee
DATE: December 15, 2025
SUBJECT: Victim Notification Task Force Report Clarifications

Introduction:

The Victim Notification Task Force Report developed under Act 64 outlines the Task Force's progress and recommendations. During the review process, DOC noted that several recommendations reflected work already in place or underway. Because those clarifications did not appear in the final report, DOC is providing this memo to more accurately reflect our current practices and statutory obligations.

Response to Recommendations for Legislative Consideration:

Recommendation #4: Reinstate VINE 'menu' options allowing victims/survivors to choose which notifications they receive, consistent with opt-out provisions in Title 13.

Response: Due to the phrasing of 13 V.S.A. § 5305, victims are unable to opt out of any of the notifications DOC is statutorily obligated to provide. Without amending this statute, restoring the 'menu' options would result in DOC failing to meet its statutory obligations.

Response to Recommendations for Further Work to Carry Out Legislative Objectives:

Recommendation #1: Continue staff training on VINE and maintain the two-day Survivor-Centered Trauma-Informed Communication Training.

Response: DOC's Survivor Center Trauma Informed Communication Training is already offered to all staff per DOC's Victim Survivor Services and Support policy.

Recommendation #2: Develop a clearer plan to meet the notification obligations for earned time under 28 VSA §818(b)(4)(B), and increase victim awareness of the opt-in option.

Response: DOC implemented various initiatives to meet its obligations established under 28 VSA §818(b)(4)(B), to include: adding language around earned time notifications to DOC and VINE websites, directing DOC staff to inform victims of the right to opt into earned time notifications and providing staff with language to use during these conversations, providing language to Center for Crime Victim Services and Vermont Network to distribute on their websites and through their email listservs. DOC is meeting its obligation under 24 VSA §818(b)(4)(B) and has yet to receive an opt in to this notification.



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Recommendation #3: Apply the language-accessibility review used for email notifications to text and telephonic notifications; include links to VINE where possible.

Response: VINE currently does have an embedded link in all text messages, which leads to the VINE website. From there, a user could log in and look at the notification language. DOC will include as much language as possible from the revised email notifications in the telephonic notifications.

Recommendation #4: Develop a process requiring all direct-service staff to proactively contact victims during DOC intake to gather contact information, identify preferences, and share VINE and resource information.

Response: DOC continues to meet statutory obligations as well as engage victim/survivors in the progression of the case. Planning is done on a case-by-case basis weighing the specific needs of the victim/survivor and the risk posed by the supervised/incarcerated individual. DOC may rely on State's Attorneys Victim's Advocates, who serve as the main point of contact for a victim(s) pre-adjudication, to provide victim contact information so that DOC can make initial and ongoing outreach to victims. If DOC does not receive contact information upon adjudication, staff will contact the SAVA for information.

Recommendation #5: While VINE is a useful tool that can fulfill many notification responsibilities, the VNTFG acknowledges that VINE is not a replacement for direct service, especially in more complicated, high risk, or highly sensitive situations. Some of the critical areas that should require direct service from the DOC include:

- A. Parole hearings.
- B. Notification about supervised individuals who abscond.
- C. Sex Offender Release.
- D. Pre-sentence Investigation (PSI) reports.

Response: DOC's Victim Services Unit provides direct support to victims during each of these highly sensitive situations. DOC does not notify victims of community supervision absconding *until* a Commissioner's Warrant is issued, as an individual is not formally considered to have absconded before that point. DOC conducts release planning with victims as applicable and incorporates victim input into PSI processes through coordination with State's Attorneys' Victim



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Advocates. DOC also provides direct support for victims who wish to be part of the parole hearing process.

Recommendation #6: The VNTFG recommends that DOC work toward remedying identified VINE technical issues and develop a protocol to monitor and remedy notifications when outages and errors occur.

Response: DOC created a fulltime dedicated position to support the operations and maintenance of VINE, including strengthening booking process accuracy, and provide sustained technical and operational oversight to victim services notifications. By realigning the position, DOC will address persistent booking errors, enhance training and certification processes for staff, and ensure victim notifications are accurate and timely.

Recommendation #8: Continue developing introductory materials and outreach for victims, including clear information on confidentiality, and involve DRVT and survivors in this effort.

Response: DOC continues to expand written materials providing VINE information, community resources, probation and parole contacts, and restitution information. DOC has also developed a comprehensive introductory letter outlining available programs, including the Victim Offender Dialogue Program, the Apology Letter Bank, and VINE. These materials also state that all victim information is confidential.