

# Electronic Monitoring of Family Violence Offenders

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## Issue

Provide information on Connecticut's 2010 pilot program that allowed the use of global positioning system (GPS) monitoring of family violence offenders, including available program statistics on the current utilization of GPS systems and its effectiveness.

## Summary

A 2010 law established a pilot program to allow Connecticut courts to order GPS devices (ankle bracelets) to be used to track family violence offenders. Under this law, the Judicial Branch's Court Support Services Division (CSSD) implemented the Alert Notification/GPS program in the Bridgeport, Danielson, and Hartford judicial districts. CSSD's preliminary report on the program indicated that it met its objective to (1) enhance monitoring of high-risk family violence offenders and (2) increase victim safety. The December 2011 final summary report concluded that the program was successfully implemented in all three court locations with a high degree of collaboration systemwide.

### *Family Violence*

*By law, "family violence" is an incident resulting in physical harm, bodily injury, or assault, or an act of threatened violence that constitutes fear of imminent physical harm, bodily injury, or assault, including stalking or a pattern of threatening, between family or household members. It excludes verbal abuse or argument unless there is present danger and the likelihood that physical violence will occur ([CGS § 46b-38a\(1\)](#)).*

### *Family Violence Crime*

*By law, "family violence crime" means a crime other than a delinquent act, which, in addition to its other elements, contains an element of an act of family violence to a family or household member. "Family violence crime" does not include acts by parents or guardians disciplining minor children unless these acts constitute abuse ([CGS § 46b-38a\(3\)](#)).*

In 2012, the legislature allowed the Judicial Branch, within available appropriations, to resume the program and operate it in one or more additional judicial districts. The branch states that the program is firmly established in the three original courts and no changes have since been made to its overall operations.

According to the Judicial Branch, no additional reports or evaluations of the program's effectiveness have been completed since CSSD's final summary report in 2011. However, regarding the program's current operations, the branch indicated that in 2022, the daily average number of active offenders and victims participating in the program was approximately 106 and 51, respectively. This was down from 207 and 68, respectively, in 2021.

(In addition to the Alert Notification/GPS program that is specifically used in family violence cases, GPS tracking is also used by parole and probation officers to generally monitor offenders in the community.)

## **2010 Pilot Program**

[PA 10-144](#), §§ 3 & 17, allowed the Judicial Branch, within available appropriations, to establish an electronic monitoring pilot program for family violence offenders in three judicial districts (Bridgeport, Danielson, and Hartford)(codified at [CGS § 46b-38c\(f\)](#)). Under this program, the court could order anyone charged with violating a restraining or protective order and who had been determined to be a high-risk offender by the family violence intervention unit to be subject to electronic monitoring if the court found it necessary to protect the victim. Under the law, the person subject to the electronic monitoring had to pay its cost, subject to the chief court administrator's guidelines.

The monitoring was designed to warn law enforcement agencies, a statewide information collection center, and the victim when the person who subject to monitoring was within a specified distance of the victim.

The act required the chief court administrator to apply for, receive, allocate, disburse, and account for federal grants to fund the program, including funds available under the 1994 federal Violence Against Women Act. It also required the Judicial Branch to end the program by March 31, 2011, unless resources to continue the program were available.

## ***Program Implementation***

According to the Judicial Branch, CSSD, in collaboration with other entities in the adult criminal justice system, designed, planned, and implemented the Alert Notification/GPS pilot program in the Bridgeport, Danielson, and Hartford judicial districts. In implementing this program, the Judicial Branch created a formal court protocol, a CSSD-Family Services policy, and an Alert Notifications/GPS policy. These documents outlined, among other things, the (1) roles and responsibilities in identifying defendants who met the criteria for tracking, (2) communication necessary between the system components, and (3) other duties required to ensure program compliance.

Prior to the program's implementation, CSSD conducted a comprehensive training for members of the local implementation teams. In addition, training was offered to local law enforcement via the Police Officer Standards and Training Council and State Police 911 Telecommunications System. Informational sessions were also provided to several police departments when requested.

## ***Program Effectiveness***

Below are brief summaries of the findings from two CSSD reports on the pilot program's effectiveness. According to the Judicial Branch, there are no additional reports or evaluations on the program's effectiveness.

*CSSD Updated Report.* In its June 2011 report on the program, CSSD reported that with significant effort from the adult criminal justice system, the Alert Notification/GPS pilot program met the objective regarding the (1) enhanced monitoring of high-risk family violence offenders and (2) increased victim safety. The report states that the high-risk defendants who were court-ordered to the program would not have received the level or intensity of surveillance without the pilot program. The report further stated that one of the program's most significant aspects was that violations and non-compliance were immediately addressed by local law enforcement and the court. It concluded that the program is a promising practice that enhanced the overall court, law enforcement, and community response to high-risk family violence cases.

*CSSD Final Summary Report.* CSSD's December 2011 report stated that there were:

- 172 defendants court-ordered to participate in the pilot program;
- 119 defendants actively placed in the program (84 in Hartford, 20 in Danielson, and 15 in Bridgeport); and
- 18 victims participating with mobile devices and 101 victims with stationary zones only.

No new cases were accepted in the program after July 1, 2011. As of July 31, 2011, all the grant funds were expended. However, with Judicial Branch and federal funding, the defendants whose cases were still active at that time were able to complete the program. The final summary report concluded that the pilot program was successfully implemented in all three court locations with a high degree of collaboration systemwide.

## Program Restarted

In 2012, the legislature passed a law that allowed the Judicial Department, within available appropriations, to resume the program beginning July 1, 2012, and operate it in one or more additional judicial districts ([PA 12-1](#), § 131, June Special Session). The Judicial Branch confirmed that the Alert Notification/GPS program has operated since October 2012 in the original three pilot court locations (Bridgeport, Danielson, and Hartford).

## Current Program Operations

Table 1 shows the estimated average number of offenders and victims in the program from 2020 through 2022. (The Judicial Branch states that these numbers are estimates since many offenders are typically in the program for a significant period and over multiple years.)

**Table 1: Alert Notification/GPS Program Estimated Daily Average Active-Offenders and Victims, 2020-2022**

	2020	2021	2022
Daily average active offenders ordered on Alert Notification/GPS	182	207	106
Daily average active victims participating in Alert Notification/GPS	47	68	51

Source: Judicial Branch

As the data shows, the average number of offenders ordered in the Alert Notification/GPS program decreased sharply in 2022. The Judicial Branch indicated that this drop was due in part to the fact that (1) the COVID pandemic impacted the length of time cases remained active and (2) in 2022 there was a policy change requiring that victims request alerts. Under the new policy, cases with no victim participation could be ordered into Adult Probation Intensive Pre-Trial Services with GPS (an adult probation service).

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