

# PRISON INFORMATION CLEARINGHOUSE LLC

DOCUMENT RETRIEVAL DIVISION

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**DOCUMENT NAME:** U.S. BOP Witness/Victim Notification Program Overview

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## Federal Bureau of Prisons

### Victim/Witness Notification Program

The Bureau's Victim/Witness Notification Program ensures that crime victims and witnesses enrolled in the program are notified within specific time frames of an inmate's admission to or release from an institution, and about other events concerning an inmate, such as changes in status or parole hearings.

#### Background

The Bureau's Victim/Witness Notification Program was established as a result of the 1982 Victims and Witness Protection Act, the 1994 Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act, and the Attorney General's Guidelines for Victims and Witness Assistance. A major goal of these directives is to ensure all law enforcement agencies advise victims and witnesses of critical stages in the criminal justice process. The Bureau implemented procedures in accordance with these guidelines to respond to the needs of crime victims and witnesses.

#### Procedures

In 2002, in cooperation with the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Executive Office for the U.S. Attorneys' office, the Bureau implemented the automated Victim Notification System (VNS); and in 2004, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service became a partner in the system. The VNS is a Department of Justice (DOJ) system that is designed to provide information and notification to victims of Federal crime. The VNS links participating agencies through the DOJ Intranet and allows each agency to share victim information, thus ensuring continuous service to crime victims throughout the criminal justice process. The system contains the names of all identified victims of Federal crimes. Information about victims is entered into the system at the time they are identified following the commission of a crime and the information is used to make notification(s) during the arrest, arraignment, prosecutorial, and confinement phases.

VNS is a free service to crime victims by which notifications are sent providing information about significant events during an offenders' incarceration. Notifications are made available in English or Spanish. In addition to the notification letters provided, VNS provides a toll-free Call Center and a VNS Internet Site to crime victims. Individual victims will be provided a Victim Identification Number (VIN) and a Personal Identification Numbers (PIN). These numbers are necessary to access information available via the VNS Call Center or the VNS Internet Site. Each of these services allow victims to access information, receive notifications, change contact information, and/or elect to stop receiving notifications.



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The VNS Call Center can be reached at 1-866-365-4968 and [Notify USDOJ](#) can be used to access the Victim Internet Site. Most questions regarding the VNS are addressed in the brochure provide to victims in their initial notification letter. Additional questions regarding the VNS or the Bureau's notification procedures can be addressed to our Victim-Witness Coordinators at 202-307-0884 or 202-307-2878.

### [FAQs.](#)

#### **Type of notification**

**Release.** Before an inmate completes his/her sentence, the victim/witness will be notified of the release date, the city and state of destination, and if applicable, the supervising U.S. Probation office.

**Escape.** If an inmate escapes, the victim/witness will be notified by phone of the date and time of the escape as soon as possible.

**Furlough.** If an inmate is approved for an unescorted trip to the community, the victim/witness will be notified of the starting and ending dates of the furlough, as well as the specific location. Only inmates who meet specific security standards are considered for furloughs, and these typically occur during the inmate's final year of confinement. Transfer to a community corrections center (halfway house). Once it is confirmed that an inmate has been approved for transfer to a halfway house, the victim/witness will be notified of the name and location of the facility, the transfer date, and the inmate's tentative release date from the halfway house. Transfers to halfway houses usually happen 3 to 6 months before an inmate's final release date to the community. The halfway house is generally located near the inmate's projected area of release.

**Parole Hearings.** If an inmate is eligible for parole and is receiving a parole hearing, the victim/witness is notified. The victim/witness may appear in person or submit a written statement to the U.S. Parole Commission.

**Death.** If an inmate dies while confined, the victim/witness will be notified of the date of death.

From time to time, inmates are transferred between Bureau facilities for various reasons. Victims and witnesses are not routinely notified of these internal transfers; however, the location of inmates in our custody can be determined by using the [Inmate Locator tool](#) on this website.

[Complaint](#)

[Procedures](#)



### Inmate Financial Responsibility Program (IFRP)

The IFRP was implemented to ensure that sentenced inmates develop a financial plan for meeting court-ordered and other legitimate financial obligations, including, in many cases, payments to victims.

#### Background

The Victim and Witness Protection Act of 1982, the Victims of Crime Act of 1984, the Comprehensive Crime Control Act of 1987, and the Federal Debt Collection Procedures Act of 1990 required a diligent effort on the part of all law enforcement agencies to collect court-ordered financial obligations. In 1985, the Bureau introduced the IFRP; and in 1987, it was implemented nationwide. The Bureau strongly supports this program not only because it benefits victims of crime, but also because it promotes financial responsibility on the part of inmates.

#### Procedures

Payments are made electronically through an inmate's trust fund account and include earnings from prison work assignments. Each inmate with a financial obligation, regardless of the extent of his or her resources, is encouraged to develop a financial payment plan. Through an automated information system, staff can review an offender's financial obligations and monitor compliance. Ordinarily, failure to satisfy the payment plan affects an inmate's consideration for parole, housing assignments, work assignments, performance pay, release gratuities, and community programs. Institution-level enforcement, regional office monitoring, and program reviews ensure policy compliance and the IFRP's success. The IFRP exists in all Bureau facilities.

With the exception of direct restitution payments to victims, most funds collected by the IFRP are deposited in the Crime Victims Fund, and are subsequently distributed to the states for victim assistance and compensation programs. The IFRP is thus another mechanism for holding inmates accountable to society.

Since implementation, millions of dollars have been collected to promote and assist victim assistance programs. Also, over the years, participation rate and collections have increased. Collections for recent fiscal years (FY) are as follows:

FY 1996	\$3,755,134.71
FY 1997	\$4,899,247.32
FY 1998	\$5,843,000.00
FY 1999	\$7,303,866.00

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FY 2000	\$7,312,864.00
FY 2002	\$8,055,369.81
FY 2003	\$8,659,659.00
FY 2004	\$9,549,389.00
FY 2005	\$9,808,417.60
FY 2006	\$10,020,375.17
FY 2007	\$10,091,974.08

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STATEMENT FROM OUR WEB SITE**

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