



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 28, 2015

The Commonwealth Victim Advocate and Pennsylvania State Police Improve Notifications to Victims of Sexually Violent Predators

Harrisburg, PA – Commonwealth Victim Advocate Jennifer R. Storm and Pennsylvania State Police Captain Scott C. Price today announced a new partnership that ensures all victims receive timely notifications when a sexually violent predator is identified by the courts.

On December 20, 2011, Pennsylvania's Adam Walsh bill was signed into law, bringing the commonwealth into compliance with the federal Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act. This law assigned responsibility to state police to notify victims when a sexually violent predator registers with the Megan's Law Unit and when the offender changes his or her address or place of employment.

"This specific victim notification regarding sexually violent predators didn't fall under the responsibility of the Office of Victim Advocate as all other post-sentencing notifications do," said Storm. "Our office helps crime victims every day by providing ongoing services after sentencing, therefore it makes sense that we assist in making these notifications."

Through a Memorandum of Understanding the Office of Victim Advocate now has access to the PA Sex Offender Registration Tool to identify victims and notify them throughout the criminal justice process in a timely and sensitive manner. In just two months since the process began, the OVA has been able to contact an additional 798 victims and offer them their services.

"OVA is uniquely situated to perform this notification for the benefit of victims," said Price. "When they offered to assist with the notification process we were more than happy to cooperate."

The PSP has no mechanism to maintain contact with a victim to keep a victim's address current after the initial registration process. In many instances, especially for state-sentenced offenders, a long period of time can elapse from the time an offender is sentenced by the court to the time that the offender is eligible for parole or released from prison. This passage of time can make it difficult for the PSP to provide victim notification if their contact information has not been updated.

In a statement from Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency Chairman Josh Shapiro, who was unable to attend the event, he stated, "We are pleased to be able to bring together the State Police and the office of Victim Advocate to address the issue of victim notification. This is a great example of government working together to better serve our commonwealth. One of our top priorities is creating partnerships to address victim's needs and this project is an important step forward in that mission."

This project is funded through a subgrant from the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency from the federal Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehension, Registering, and Tracking (SMART) Support for Adam Walsh Act Implementation Grant Program.

For more information on the Office of Victim Advocate, visit their website at www.ova.pa.gov.

For more information on the Pennsylvania State Police, visit their website at www.psp.pa.gov.

MEDIA CONTACT : Jennifer Storm, OVA 717-756-9741

Maria Finn, PSP 717-783-5556

#