



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

NEWS RELEASE

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NEW VOICE SYSTEM KEEPS TABS ON JUVENILE PAROLEES

Gov. Christie Whitman, Attorney General Peter Verniero and Juvenile Justice Commission (JJC) Executive Director Paul Donnelly announced today that the JJC is using a state-of-the-art voice verification tracking system to monitor the daily activities of youth released from state detention facilities.

"Public safety is our top priority when integrating these young men and women back into society," said Gov. Whitman. "This technology is just one of several ways we monitor juvenile parolees to protect the public while allowing them to get the services they need, such as education, vocational training and employment, in the community."

The JJC has instituted Voice Track as part of its new parole/aftercare program for juveniles which combines strict public safety features with services to youth. The system uses a voice print of each juvenile to track his or her movements up to nine times a day. When a juvenile checks in by telephone, the system identifies where the juvenile is located and the time of day and immediately alerts a parole officer.

Every youth released from a JJC facility will be on the VoiceTrack system for the first 30 days and, thereafter, on an as needed basis.

"The parole officer is a law enforcement official in the community whose chief duty is to protect the public," said Attorney General Peter Verniero. "Through this comprehensive system of technology and daily human contact, we can better serve juveniles and the community."

In addition, juveniles are given a cloaked pager, one with a secret phone number and with no street value, and the system can page a juvenile at random. The youth is given 10 minutes to phone into the computer, which can alert the parole officer if the youth is not at a number recognized by the system.

The aftercare program features strict public safety measures, including curfews, reporting requirements, urine testing for drugs and community service assignments. Parole officers, along with an assistant case manager,

handle a maximum of 45 cases, compared to up to 100 cases assigned to each parole officer in the past.

As a complement to public safety, the parole/aftercare program provides services to reintegrate juveniles back into the community. Through specialists in each of the regional offices, youth connected with educational or employment opportunities, counseling and mentors.

"Our goal is to give youth the opportunity to become independent, productive, law-abiding citizens," said Donnelly. "By holding them accountable for their actions and helping them to succeed in school or at a job, we hope to prevent them from becoming repeat offenders."

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