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Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: October 23, 2012

For immediate release: Tuesday, Oct. 23, 2012

Columbia County Sheriff David Harrison, Jr. joins New York State Sheriffs' Institute, state officials, local law enforcement and victims' advocates to announce technology to keep victims of domestic violence, other crimes safe

Text, e-mail alerts will enhance victims' safety

The New York State Sheriffs' Association Institute today announced a new program it has implemented in partnership with New York State that will allow individuals who have been granted Family Court orders of protection to register to receive alerts when those orders are served.

The Statewide Automated Victim Information and Notification Network-New York (SAVIN-NY) system allows victims of domestic violence and other crimes to register through NY-ALERT (www.nyalert.gov) to receive notifications of service 24 hours a day, seven days a week, via text message, e-mail, fax, automated phone call, web query or iAlertz, a free application for the iPhone or iPad.

The availability of the SAVIN-NY system was announced by Yates County Sheriff Ronald Spike, who is chairman of the Sheriffs' Association Institute Board of Directors, at a press conference this morning at the YWCA of Northeastern New York in Schenectady, which was one of 23 counties in which the system was piloted. The YWCA is the county's domestic violence services provider, and the event was attended by state officials, crime victim advocates, and court and law enforcement officials from throughout the Capital Region and New York State.

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Victims of domestic violence and other crimes can sign up now for the free system, which will notify them whenever orders of protection issued by Family Courts outside of New York City are served. The program will eventually be expanded to include orders of protection issued in connection with criminal cases. Individuals can register to receive SAVIN-NY alerts by visiting www.nyalert.gov, and clicking on the “Orders of Protection” box on the left menu. Additional information and frequently asked questions can be found at www.savin-ny.org.

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo said: “I would like to commend the Sheriffs’ Association Institute for obtaining resources to bring SAVIN to New York State, and working closely with state agencies to implement the system so it meets its important goal: providing victims of domestic violence and other crimes with timely information that can help keep them safe. This is a great example of how the state can work with a non-for-profit organization to effectively and efficiently deliver services that will make a difference in people’s lives.”

Added New York’s Deputy Secretary for Public Safety Elizabeth Glazer: “Representatives from agencies across the state’s Public Safety portfolio – in particular, the New York State Police and Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services – worked tirelessly with the Sheriffs’ Association Institute and victims’ advocates, the courts and local law enforcement to implement SAVIN in New York State. I encourage anyone who has been – or will be – granted a Family Court order of protection to sign up for this important service without delay.”

Sheriff Spike said: “It is well-known that the accused have rights in the criminal justice system, but it is equally important to ensure that crime victims and survivors have the right to personal safety for themselves and their loved ones. That is why the Sheriffs’ Institute is committed to this project. If a victim registers with SAVIN-NY, they will receive timely notification when a Family Court order of protection is served. That notification gives them the power to act. By using technology to provide critical, empowering information, this program expands and protects the rights of the victim. ”

New York Deputy Chief Administrative Judge Michael Coccoma, who oversees state court operations outside New York City, said: “The new SAVIN-NY system will play a vital role in enhancing the safety of family members impacted by domestic violence, providing individuals who have been granted Family Court orders of protection the option to receive alerts immediately after an order has been served on the respondent—a critical point in these cases. I am so pleased this important resource is now available to petitioners in Family Courts outside New York City, and wish to thank the Sheriffs’ Association Institute for its outstanding efforts.”

The Sheriffs’ Association Institute received a \$495,000 grant from the federal Bureau of Justice Assistance to bring the SAVIN program to New York State and worked in partnership with

the New York State Association of Chiefs of Police, the State Police, the Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services (DHSES), the Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence (OPDV), the Office of Victim Services (OVS), the state's Unified Court System, the Westchester County Office for Women, and the New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence to implement it. The information technology expertise of the State Police and DHSES allowed the alerts to be issued via NY-ALERT.

The period of time immediately following the service of orders of protection can be particularly dangerous for victims, as offenders can be more violent during a time of separation.

Acting OPDV Executive Director Gwen Wright said: "When a Family Court order of protection is served on an abuser, it can be a dangerous time for the victim. Ensuring that the victim is notified in a timely manner could be critical for their safety and for effective enforcement of the order."

Added OVS Director Tina Stanford: "Victims of domestic violence can benefit greatly from safety planning. If they know that they'll be confidentially notified when a Family Court order of protection has been served, they can make arrangements to keep themselves and their children safe."

Carole Merrill-Mazurek, director of Women's Services at the YWCA said: "I'm excited that we have a new tool in the tool bag to help keep victims of domestic violence safe and to hold their abusers accountable. I urge all advocates to learn about SAVIN-NY and to avail their clients of this important new program. All victims who go to Family Court for an order of protection should take the extra safety measure to be notified when that order is served."

Added Lisa A. Frisch, executive director of The Legal Project: "This system is quite literally a potential life saver for victims of domestic violence. We know from providing pro bono legal help to over 1,300 abuse victims annually that when victims take action to sever the relationship, their risk of harm increases. Knowing when their abusers are served with the order of protection will help victims plan for their safety."

When registering with SAVIN-NY, victims also can identify additional individuals to be notified when orders of protection are served, such as advocates, attorneys, friends or family members.

Putnam County Sheriff Donald B. Smith, president of the New York State Sheriffs' Association, said: "SAVIN-NY is a great success story in the area of victims' rights. The Sheriffs Institute started with a two-year grant to test the Order of Protection Notification Project in a

limited area. By partnering with key agencies, like the NY-ALERT system of Homeland Security for the notifications, the New York State Police for IT support, the state Unified Court System, which initiates the orders, and many others, the Institute built a program that will endure into the future, while saving the state tax dollars and helping to ensure that victims are treated with fairness, dignity and respect.”

Added New Windsor Police Chief Michael Biasotti: “Domestic violence cases are among the most frequent calls for police. When victims receive notification that their order of protection has been served they can be more vigilant. The SAVIN-NY system leverages NY-ALERT technology so that victims can register for 24/7 notification when an order has been served.”

In addition to Schenectady, the SAVIN-NY program is active in the following 22 counties: Albany, Broome, Cattaraugus, Cayuga, Livingston, Monroe, Nassau, Orange, Onondaga, Ontario, Otsego, Niagara, Rockland, Seneca, St. Lawrence, Steuben, Suffolk, Tioga, Washington, Wayne, Westchester and Yates.

The New York State Sheriffs’ Association Institute was formed in 1979 to operate some of the charitable and educational programs that had been administered by the Sheriffs’ Association. The institute provides education and training for sheriffs and their staff; operates the Institute’s Summer Camp for children; and the Sheriffs’ Victim Notification Services.