

**NEWS > LOCAL NEWS****Law allows tracking of offenders**[Print Page](#)**By Hillary Gavan**  
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Published: Thursday, August 7, 2008 12:52 PM CDT

Advocates for domestic violence victims are praising a new Illinois law that allows judges to order domestic violence offenders to wear GPS tracking devices.

Gov. Rod Blagojevich signed the law Monday after a suburban woman was gunned down by an ex-boyfriend outside her office.

Under the law, which goes into effect Jan. 1, 2009, an abuser can be ordered to wear a tracking device if he or she violates a restraining order. Illinois' Department of Corrections and Department of Juvenile Justice previously have used GPS to track sex offenders.

Illinois' Division of Probation Services will set standards to implement its program.

The law also calls for an additional fine of at least \$200 for every penalty when there's a conviction for violating a restraining order. The money would go to the newly established Domestic Violence Surveillance Fund.

GPS is already used successfully on some state parolees who are listed as sex offenders, according to Derek Schnapp, a spokesman for the Illinois Department of Corrections.

Schnapp said the state monitors those on GPS and has a contract with a company called Behavior Intervention Inc. The company subcontracts with a center responsible for monitoring parolees with a GPS device 24 hours a day. If an offender moves too close to a victim, the center will contact parole agents.

Details are being worked out about how the system will actually work in Winnebago County.

Winnebago County Sheriff's Department Chief Deputy Kurt Ditzler said the probation department will develop the standards, services and equipment to implement the program.

Corita Forster, the program director at Beloit Domestic Violent Center, said GPS monitoring devices would be helpful for victims of domestic abuse in Wisconsin.

"It would be useful to have some way of knowing where the perpetrator is and if the offender is intent on doing harm," Forster said.

State Rep. Ron Wait, R-Belvidere, co-sponsor of the bill, explained that the GPS will be set with certain parameters. Any time the perpetrators crosses the boundary, local police will be notified as well as the potential victim. A squad car will then be sent out to check on the perpetrator.

Forster does have concerns, however, about if the devices will deter the perpetrators. Some

offenders, for example, get restraining orders and still break them.

"Some don't care if the paper is there. They make contact anyway and stalk," Forster said.

Forster said the system would be helpful if the victims could read the device and know where the perpetrator is.

Because the law is not in effect in Wisconsin, Forster said those at the Beloit Domestic Violence Shelter work on safety plans with clients. Those plans include changing the locks on their homes, changing phone numbers and moving out of town if necessary.

Forster advises that victims inform co-workers and supervisors at their workplace of what is going on so they can make sure the perpetrator doesn't come in their place of employment.

The new law is named for Cindy Bischof, who was slain in a parking lot in March by an ex-boyfriend who then turned the gun on himself. Bischof's family said she'd inquired about using GPS technology before she was killed after taking numerous steps to try to protect herself.

The Associated Press contributed to this story.

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