



## Office of Information Technology Services

Innovation That Matters... For All New Yorkers



### **New York State Warrant Notification System:**

*Achieving paradigm change in law enforcement practices.*

**Project Initiated: June 2016**

**Project Completed: November 2017**

**Category: Cross Boundary Collaboration and Partnerships**

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Representing Chief Information  
Officers of the states

# **NYS Warrant Notification System**

## **Category: Cross Boundary Collaboration and Partnerships**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Each year, officers are shot and killed in the line of duty attempting to serve arrest warrants. Individuals with outstanding warrants, including those under community supervision, may be more likely to engage in dangerous behaviors to avoid apprehension, often putting police, probation and parole officers and general public at risk.

To address this issue, New York State (NYS) initiated the Warrant Notification Project on June 29, 2016. The purpose of the project was to automate receipt of warrant notifications (from the NYS Wanted System – the repository for all warrant information), made to 54 state correctional facilities, eight regional parole offices, and 57 county and the City of New York probation departments, with combined supervision responsibility for over 200,000 people. Prior to project implementation, these agencies received no automated warrant notification information. The key objective was to enhance offender accountability and increase the safety of communities, victims, police, parole, probation, and correctional officers. To meet the initial requirements, NYS launched the NYS Warrant Information System in November 2017.

Two significant issues arose during project development. The team learned that police (consisting of over 600 agencies statewide) were not receiving information to indicate if persons sought on warrants were currently in state correctional custody or under parole or probation supervision. As a result, police often spent considerable time, often not successfully, trying to identify the location of these individuals. In addition, the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) promulgated new rules designed to enhance the quality and accuracy of warrant information during project development.

While not in the original project scope, the Office of Information Technology Services (ITS) Public Safety Portfolio recognized the value the of the new rules, pursuant to which the team would incorporate enhancements in system design and functionality to meet NYS warrant information needs. The project team leveraged the new rules to:

- Create a robust two-way flow of warrant information between the police and corrections, parole, and probation (in contrast to the original one-way flow);
- Bring NYS into compliance with NCIC guidelines; and
- Implement a quality control measure to prevent inadvertent removal of active warrants from NYS systems.

Of greater significance, this level of data sharing led to paradigm changes in outdated law enforcement practices. Rather than working in isolation, police could partner with parole offices and probation departments. Working together, police and parole teams now strategically design and operationalize plans that maximize the ability to safely take into custody individuals sought on warrants, resulting in greater efficiencies and productivity. The team measures the success and value of this project by various

## NYS Warrant Notification System

### Category: Cross Boundary Collaboration and Partnerships

metrics including reporting the volume of warrant notifications that the system is generating reporting improvements in warrant notification and execution by officers in the field and executive agency directors at the state and local levels and the formal recognition by the NYS Probation Commission.

#### CONCEPT

**Problem:** The original concept for the Warrant Notification Project was to create a Warrant Notification System to automate the receipt of warrant notifications to NYS correctional facilities, regional parole offices, and local probation departments in each of the state's localities. The objective of the system was to provide information to enhance offender accountability, and increase the safety of communities, victims, police, parole, probation and correctional officers. At the time of project conception, the NYS Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS), local parole offices, and probation departments in New York State, were operating in the absence of warrant notifications, which imperiled the safety of both parole and probation officers, as well as that of the public. The need for this information was critical, because:

- Parolees and probationers with outstanding warrants are more likely to engage in heightened levels of dangerous behavior to avoid apprehension;
- Parole and probation officers were often not informed when a parolee or probationer within their caseload was being sought on a warrant. This left officers unaware of their need to take precautions prior to meeting with such individuals.
- Therefore, a significant number of parolees and probationers were not held accountable for their actions, and remained at-large in the community.

Prior to the establishment of the Warrant Notification System, warrant information in NYS was only accessible to the police. This was due to their long-standing responsibility for entering and updating warrant information into the NYS Wanted System (a statewide repository of warrant information). From a strategic, financial, and resource perspective, limiting warrant information and responsibility for warrant apprehensions to the police, was inefficient and wasteful. It did not take into consideration the important benefits that could be realized through collaborative efforts with parole and probation officers. Due to their core responsibilities, parole and probation officers are keenly aware of the residential and work locations of offenders under their supervision. This knowledge ideally positions them as an invaluable asset to quickly find individuals sought on warrants.

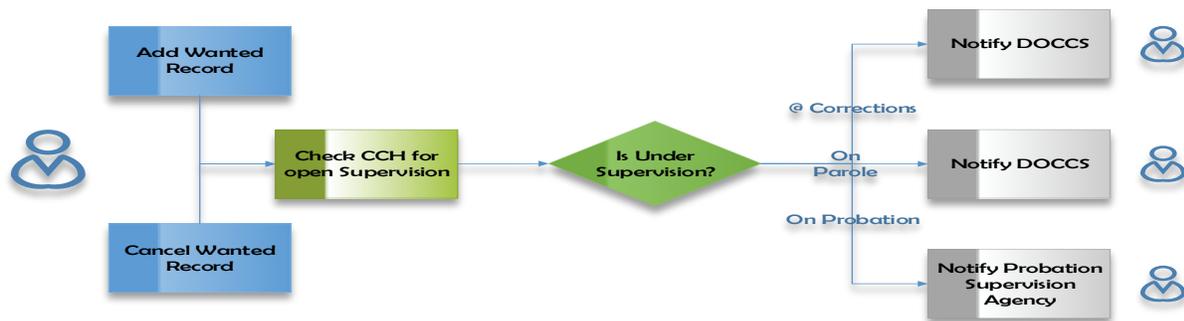
**Solution:** Recognizing the need to act quickly in response to the danger posed by individuals sought on warrants, and the safety risk posed to parole and probation officers, lacking warrant information, the Division of Criminal Justice Services (Office of Probation and Correctional Alternatives – OPCA) conceived the NYS Warrant Notification Project in 2016, and prioritized it as their most important initiative. Partnering with DOCCS, the primary goal was to create and implement a NYS Warrant

## NYS Warrant Notification System

### Category: Cross Boundary Collaboration and Partnerships

Notification System to enhance offender accountability and to increase the safety of communities, victims, police, parole, probation and correctional officers.

The project was launched in July 2016, under the direction of the NYS Office of Information Technology Services (ITS), Public Safety Portfolio, and went live on November 14, 2017. Project staff with the ITS Public Safety Portfolio designed a secure web-based solution to automate the flow of warrant information to correctional facilities, regional parole offices, and county probation departments. The source of the information are warrants entered into the NYS Wanted System by police in NYS, as well as by certain federal law enforcement agencies. An illustration of the system design follows.



The creation of the Warrant Notification System fully achieved the goal of the project: to provide NYS correctional facilities, parole offices, and probation departments with warrant information that had never been previously received, through an automated secure web service. As the diagram indicates, as originally conceived by the project sponsors, warrant information was to consist of “Warrant Entry” and “Warrant Cancel” notifications.

The system was designed to “push” information in a one-way flow, with warrants entered by the police to be automatically sent to the agency having custodial or supervision responsibility of that person. The diagram does not identify that communication (by phone) is required, with parole and probation contacting the police agency that entered a warrant, immediately upon its receipt. The purpose of the call for parole and probation officers to receive confirmation from the police that the warrant remains in “active” status – prior to taking any action, and to provide additional information to the police, as authorized.

A sample warrant notification, automated from the Wanted System for a person under probation supervision, follows. It is sent directly to the secure eJusticeNY Integrated Justice Portal inbox of the supervising probation department.

## NYS Warrant Notification System

### Category: Cross Boundary Collaboration and Partnerships

#### Sample Wanted System Entry for a Probationer

Message Header

**Type:** NYS WARRANT ENTRY

**From:** NY001185Y - DCJS - Bureau of Information Systems

**To:** NY040025G (Originating agency identification number) - Queens County Probation

**Received:** 05/10/2018 02:49 PM

**Subject:** NYS Warrant has been issued for **John Smith**, NYSID: 1234567D (Unique number assigned by DCJS to an individual with a criminal and/or civil NYS history).

#### **CAUTION**

*Do not search, detain or arrest the probationer based solely on this information. Prior to taking any action, please contact the wanting law enforcement agency to ensure the warrant remains active.*

#### **Wanting Agency**

SCHENECTADY LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY (NY000001J)

612 STATE STREET COURT HOUSE , SCHENECTADY, NY 12307, (518) 555-5555

Late into defining requirements, a new rule promulgated by the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) impacted the project. The rule was created to help ensure that states maintain up-to-date and accurate warrant information. It required states to validate (update) warrants within a specified time frame, to purge non-validated warrants from the system, and to maintain a record of all purges. In response, the NYS Wanted System was enhanced to provide this functionality, bringing NYS into compliance with the new NCIC requirement.

The NCIC rule also necessitated changes to the NYS Warrant Notification System that were conducted in parallel with the NYS Wanted System enhancement. It was immediately recognized that a third type of warrant notification – “Warrant Purge Notification – Failure to Validate” was required to distinguish it from a “Warrant Cancel Notification.” This notification, provided a quality control measure to mitigate the risk of the purge (removal) of an “active” warrant from the NYS Wanted and Warrant Notifications Systems, simply because the police did not validate (update) it in a timely manner. As with the other notifications, the receiving agency must confirm the status of the warrant with the originating police agency. If an active warrant was found to be purged, the police immediately re-enter it into the Wanted System, which then generates a new Warrant Entry to the appropriate agency

## **NYS Warrant Notification System**

### **Category: Cross Boundary Collaboration and Partnerships**

During discussions about the NCIC requirements, the NYS Division of State Police brought to light an important deficiency of the NYS Wanted System, that had not been previously identified. This information led to a key turning point in the project. It was learned that because the NYS Wanted system was a repository, the police did not receive any additional information beyond what they entered and updated. This meant that the police did not know if the person sought on a warrant was in correctional custody or under parole or probation supervision. As a result, the police would often invest considerable time trying to locate such individuals, and were not always successful. Those not found remained in the community unaccountable for their actions, posing a safety risk to the public and to police, parole, and probation officers. The ITS Public Safety Portfolio determined that the need for police to receive this information was as critical as the need to provide previously unreceived warrant information to corrections, parole, and probation. An innovative solution to transmit this information was identified by the NYS Police. As documented on the next page, a banner was created to appear on the Wanted Entry Screen immediately upon the entry of a warrant into the Wanted System. It identifies if the subject of the entry is in prison or under parole or probation supervision, and provides contact information of the applicable agency. Upon receipt of this information, if the police have not yet heard from the custodial or supervising agency, they are requested to pro-actively contact them. The creation of the banner put into place a robust two-way communication system between the police and corrections, parole, and probation.

### **SIGNIFICANCE**

The project outcome represents what is possible when agencies at the State and local levels, that traditionally operate individually, come together to achieve a shared goal – to enhance public and officer safety. Throughout the project, the team kept their eye on achieving this prize. But, it was their commitment, passion, and innovative thinking that led to paradigm changes in law enforcement practices – something not originally envisioned. Their work embodies the often repeated words of Robert Kennedy who said, “Some men see things as they are and ask, 'why' I dream things that never were and ask, 'why not'.”

The enhancement of the NYS Wanted System and the establishment of the NYS Warrant Notification System simultaneously went live on November 14, 2017. Today, these two systems provide robust real-time two-way communication between law enforcement agencies and custodial or supervising agencies. This capability not only promotes pro-active strategic and collaborative efforts between law enforcement agencies, DOCCS, parole and probation, but it connects and creates the dots in a way that has greatly improved officer and public safety.

## **NYS Warrant Notification System**

### **Category: Cross Boundary Collaboration and Partnerships**

#### **IMPACT**

The value of the project is supported by: metrics reporting the volume of warrant notifications that been generated, reporting of improvements in warrant notification and execution by officers in the field and executive agency directors at the state and local levels and the formal recognition by the NYS Probation Commission.

#### Volume of information and availability in real-time:

The sheer volume of warrant notifications generated from mid-November 2017 through mid-February 2018 is a testament to the efficacy of the implemented solution, and its significance. This represents a total of 52,375 notifications produced during the first four months that the project went live. On average, a total of 20,000 notifications are now being generated monthly. It also demonstrates the large scale of critical information that was previously unavailable to police, corrections, parole, and probation agencies. Adding to the value of this information is the fact that it's received in real-time – by the police, corrections, parole and probation officers on the front lines.

#### Accolades

The Warrant Notification System has received universal praise from local probation directors and probation officers. One director commented that his officers “love the system,” and told of instances when the Failure to Validate notification has resulted in re-entries of active warrants into the system. Absent these notifications, active warrants would have remained deleted, simply because they had not been updated within the required time-frame – posing significant risks to public and officer safety. The system has also produced another significant benefit, not originally conceptualized. It functions in an audit capacity to correct erroneous information. This occurred in the instance when a probation director reported that the receipt of a notification was especially helpful when a violation warrant was entered in error. Without the receipt of the notification, it could have gone unnoticed by the department, in which case, the probationer would have continued to have an active warrant listed incorrectly, a dangerous attempted apprehension may have occurred unnecessarily, and legal action could have been brought against the State for a wrongful arrest. Lastly, another department reported a warrant notification received for a bench warrant issued for an individual who failed to appear in court, after having been arrested for a non-fingerprintable crime (operating a motor vehicle not equipped with a required ignition interlock device) that probation would not learned of, but for the NYS Warrant Notification System.

#### Recognition

The significance of the project to enhance public and officer safety was formally acknowledged by the NYS Probation Commission in April 2018, with core project staff in attendance, at the Commission's request. It was the first time that an ITS Public Safety Portfolio project received this recognition.