



# TACIR INSIGHT

TENNESSEE ADVISORY COMMISSION ON INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

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## IMPROVING VICTIM SAFETY WITH GPS MONITORING AS A CONDITION OF RELEASE FOR DEFENDANTS ACCUSED OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

### Background

Pretrial GPS monitoring is one condition of release that magistrates in Tennessee may impose for domestic violence defendants. Although it is a tool that can help improve victim safety, some experts and researchers in the field of domestic violence question GPS monitoring's effectiveness in keeping victims safe and reducing recidivism during the pretrial period, and funding it is a challenge.

In light of its potential as a tool to improve victim safety in domestic violence cases, the General Assembly passed Public Chapter 827, Acts of 2018, directing TACIR to conduct a study of the effects and implementation of GPS monitoring as a condition of release for defendants accused of stalking, sexual assault, domestic abuse, and violations of orders of protection. The Commission's report explains that because of the unique and complex nature of domestic violence, pretrial GPS monitoring is most effective when implemented within a well-coordinated system.

### Findings and Recommendations

- Local jurisdictions should consider adopting GPS monitoring as but one component of a larger coordinated community response—including strong interagency partnerships, education and training, and victim support services such as family safety centers, domestic violence high-risk teams, and lethality assessments. Local governments and partner agencies need to clarify roles and expectations and develop and commit to procedures and policies.
- Regardless of whether local governments choose to implement GPS monitoring programs, law enforcement and victim advocate agencies should be encouraged to adopt validated lethality assessments because of their effectiveness as a tool to identify victims most at risk of serious harm or death and to help prioritize their access to safety planning and other services.
- If the General Assembly appropriates additional funds to the Electronic Monitoring Indigency Fund (EMIF) specifically for real-time GPS monitoring of domestic violence defendants, it should require that local governments drawing money from the fund, at a minimum, adopt a validated lethality assessment tool to both help identify domestic violence victims in the greatest danger and immediately connect those victims with services to improve their safety.
- Local governments adopting pretrial GPS monitoring programs may also choose to prioritize high-risk cases and certain types of offenses, including intimate partner violence, strangulation, stalking, threats involving firearms, or violations of protection orders.