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Kentucky one of few states to use electronic warrant management system

FRANKFORT, Ky. – An electronic, interlinked system that went online this year has revolutionized the way Kentucky law enforcement and criminal justice professionals access and serve warrants, summonses and other related documents, Gov. Steve Beshear announced today.

Nearly a year after it was first implemented, more than 62 percent of the new warrants entered into the E-Warrants system have been served, compared with less than 10 percent served under the old system.

The system, which first went live in Jefferson County in January 2008, has since been launched in Campbell, Scott, Bourbon and Woodford counties. The program is expected to launch in Fayette County in early 2009, and be active statewide within the next 24 months.

Kentucky is one of only a handful of states that utilize an electronic system to manage certain types of warrants.

Prior to use of this system, as many as 300,000 warrants were outstanding on any given date in Kentucky, primarily because the warrants were paper-based and reside in each county with no statewide mechanism for access.

“The E-Warrant system is modernizing policing in the commonwealth,” Gov. Beshear said. “Kentucky continues to be a leader in utilizing technology to greatly enhance efficiency and improve public safety. Not only will officers have immediate access to outstanding warrants, but pertinent data is collected and stored in a searchable format, providing an invaluable tool for law enforcement.”

In Jefferson County, for example where more than 72 percent of new warrants have been served – a warrant was served on a suspect just 17 hours after a criminal complaint was issued for murder, 1st degree robbery and evidence tampering. Law enforcement officers ran a search on the E-Warrants system and found the defendant listed as a witness in a separate criminal complaint, which provided sufficient information to locate and apprehend the defendant.

Eventually, all old warrants will be entered in the system, dramatically helping to erase the backlog of unserved warrants. Additionally, by mid-2009, all new emergency protective orders and domestic violence orders will be entered into the E-Warrants system. The system also helps avoid situations where a warrant is served on an individual multiple times, saving valuable time and resources.

“The E-Warrants system provides all Kentucky law enforcement officers with instant access to critical local warrant information, beyond what they can obtain through the National Crime Information Center,” Kentucky State Police Commissioner Rodney Brewer said. “This greatly enhances officer safety and will result in more warrants served and more criminals off our streets.”

“We’re well on our way in resolving Kentucky’s long-term need for improving access to warrant information as well as sharing such data across agency boundaries,” Thomas L. Preston, executive director, Kentucky Office of

Homeland Security (KOHS), said. "This program will be a national model for improving response to crime as well as the threat from terrorism."

The E-Warrants system also enables judges to receive, review and take action on warrants via handheld electronic devices such as a personal digital assistant or cell phone.

"The success of the Kentucky E-Warrants system is an example of technology at its best, playing an important role in protecting the public and delivering swift and efficient justice," Chief Justice of Kentucky John D. Minton Jr. said. "As the E-Warrants system is implemented across the commonwealth, all judges will have the ability to electronically sign warrants and issue criminal complaints anywhere there is Internet access. This technology will allow the Court of Justice to better serve the citizens of Kentucky and save valuable time and resources."

The system was originally funded with a \$4.5 million General Fund appropriation, and implemented through KOHS. Extending the program statewide is expected to cost about \$900,000, mostly for training, travel and system enhancements. Once fully operational, the system will be owned by KSP and maintained as part of the agency's ongoing technology maintenance contract.

The E-warrant system is the second technology-based enhancement aimed at improving public safety to take effect under Gov. Beshear. In September 2008, Gov. Beshear announcement Public Safety First, an initiative that elevates and unifies several key public safety technology programs under a single umbrella of protection to be overseen by the Justice and Public Safety Cabinet.

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