



D.C. Agency Goes High Tech to Monitor Juvenile Offenders

New GPS application to help track wayward teens

By Derrick Ward

It's not new technology, but it's being applied in a new way by D.C.'s Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services.

The agency has begun a pilot program to track youth offenders with global positioning satellite technology.

Adult offenders have been tracked this way for years — like ankle bracelets that send out an alert if the wearer leaves his or her home while under house arrest. Now DYRS is using the latest people-tracking tech, which allows for real-time checks on the wearers and can be programmed to alert authorities when an offender enters a certain neighborhood or even a certain building.

DYRS Interim Director Robert Hildum said they've used GPS tracking on a limited basis in the past.

"There was some electronic monitoring, but it was sporadic," he said.

"The second thing we utilized was intensive third-party monitoring," he said.

That method required an employee to physically check on the offender two or three times a day — a costly and marginally successful. While the units cost about \$1,000 each, round-the-clock monitoring only costs about \$8 to \$12 per day per offender, compared to as much as \$40 per day per offender for the third-party monitoring.

The new devices also send out alerts if the wearer tries to remove or disable the ankle.

The agency has 25 units now, and they've got a grant for another 175 units down the line.

