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New GPS Monitoring Rolled Out for Juvenile Offenders in New Orleans

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— Categories: Crime



New Orleans is introducing a real-time GPS monitoring system for juvenile offenders accused of violent crimes, replacing outdated ankle monitors that were not actively tracked. This new technology aims to improve supervision and accountability for youth released into the community.

For years, Orleans Parish struggled with a system where teenagers on ankle monitors were not monitored in real time. Adults were tracked continuously, but alerts for juveniles were delayed, allowing some to remove devices without immediate detection. City Council

President Helena Moreno addressed this issue, saying, “We had some tragic situations where offenders cut off their monitors, and no one knew until reports came in weeks later. So we said, ‘What’s the point of a monitor if no one’s watching it in real time?’ That’s when the council stepped in.”

The city and state collaborated to form a Juvenile Monitoring Unit within the Office of Juvenile Justice (OJJ). This \$4 million project is funded through American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars and focuses on increasing accountability. Moreno explained, “Now, we have a system that sends alerts immediately and probation officers trained to respond in real time.”

Monitoring Upgrade

The new devices resemble smartwatches worn on the wrist, replacing traditional ankle bracelets. Leah Newton, regional director of OJJ, said the wrist monitors “just look like a normal watch,” allowing youth to live without the stigma of ankle monitors. These devices provide more frequent location updates, reducing the time between reports from every 15 minutes to every few minutes. This faster reporting allows probation officers to react promptly if violations happen.

The watches include tamper detection features such as heart rate monitors. Newton noted, “If, for example, the youth were to cut the band, it would then not be tracking the heart rate, and that would alert as well.” The device also includes a camera for photo check-ins, ensuring the youth is wearing the monitor properly.

This technology, made by Talitrix, is already used in other Louisiana areas, including Calcasieu Parish, which has the largest GPS wristband contract in the U.S. Last year, over 3,000 units were distributed. The system is also used in Georgia’s Pierce County and some mental health courts.

Officials are closely monitoring the program’s progress. Moreno said, “There’s a lot of accountability measures that were built into the contracts, tons of reporting requirements they have to provide back to the council. If it’s not successful, we can quickly change course.”

Despite the advances, some experts caution that technology alone cannot fix the challenges of juvenile supervision. Rafael Goyeneche of the Metropolitan Crime Commission said, “Someone has to have the ability to respond. That type of technology will

probably be violated more by juvenile offenders than by adult offenders. They're just a harder population to manage."

The Juvenile Monitoring Unit pairs the technology with in-person follow-ups, including home and school visits. Currently, 10 teens are enrolled and supervised beyond electronic tracking. Newton said, "I think the biggest issue prior was they were realizing, 'I'm not being as monitored as I thought I was.' Exactly. Yes. That's our goal: to have the tracking capability and the supervision component visiting them, going to their school, and making sure they are doing what they need to do."

It is still uncertain if this will reduce repeat offenses, but Newton remains hopeful. "My goal is to have a 24/7 monitoring capability; we're not there yet, but that's the goal," she said. "If a youth cuts the band, we start the process of locating them and getting them back into custody."

This new GPS monitoring marks an important step for juvenile justice in New Orleans. By combining advanced technology with active supervision, officials hope to better protect communities and support youth rehabilitation.