



Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency  
for the District of Columbia  
633 Indiana Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20004

# CSOSA FACT SHEET

November 2011

## Did You Know?

- CSOSA began using GPS monitoring in 2003.
- Approximately 600 offenders are on GPS monitoring at any given time.
- CSOSA uses GPS as one of a series of graduated sanctions for non-compliance and to monitor certain high-risk offenders.
- The GPS unit is worn around the ankle and is about the size of a cell phone.
- GPS units must be charged twice daily for at least 45 minutes to maintain a strong signal.
- GPS units record violations such as entering a restricted area, attempting to tamper with the unit or mask the transmission, and failing to charge the unit.
- Community Supervision Officers can access an offender's GPS track movements electronically to receive real-time information on an offender's location.

The Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency (CSOSA) supervises approximately 16,000 men and women on probation, parole, or supervised release in the District of Columbia. CSOSA's Community Supervision Officers (CSOs) use a number of strategies to ensure that individuals on supervision comply with their conditions of release. Global Positioning System (GPS) technology, which continuously monitors an individual's location and movements, provides a powerful tool to help CSOs enforce compliance for high-risk offenders. GPS is one of the most stringent sanctions CSOSA can impose on offenders who have demonstrated non-compliance; it is also an effective means of enforcing court-imposed geographic restrictions.

CSOSA began using GPS technology in 2003 to monitor high-risk sex offenders. Since then, use of GPS has increased to include:

- Domestic violence offenders with stay-away orders, curfew requirements, or home detention,
- Other categories of offenders with court orders restricting access to certain individuals or locations,

- Recalcitrant, unemployed offenders,
- Offenders who have tested positive for PCP use, and
- Other offenders whose assessed risk level and behavior indicate a need for this level of monitoring.

Approximately 600 offenders are enrolled in GPS monitoring at any given time. The program is managed by the GPS Unit

The unit transmits information via both satellite and cellular signals, providing an automatic "back-up" for circumstances in which the satellite signal becomes unavailable. The offender's movements are registered every minute. CSOSA maintains a GPS Unit Help Desk, which manages and installs the equipment; monitoring services are contracted.



Most offenders on GPS have defined "inclusion" and "exclusion" zones; that is, specific locations where they are supposed to be (e.g., at home during curfew hours) or are not supposed to be (e.g., near a restricted person's residence or workplace). By defining these boundaries, the

CSO enables GPS to

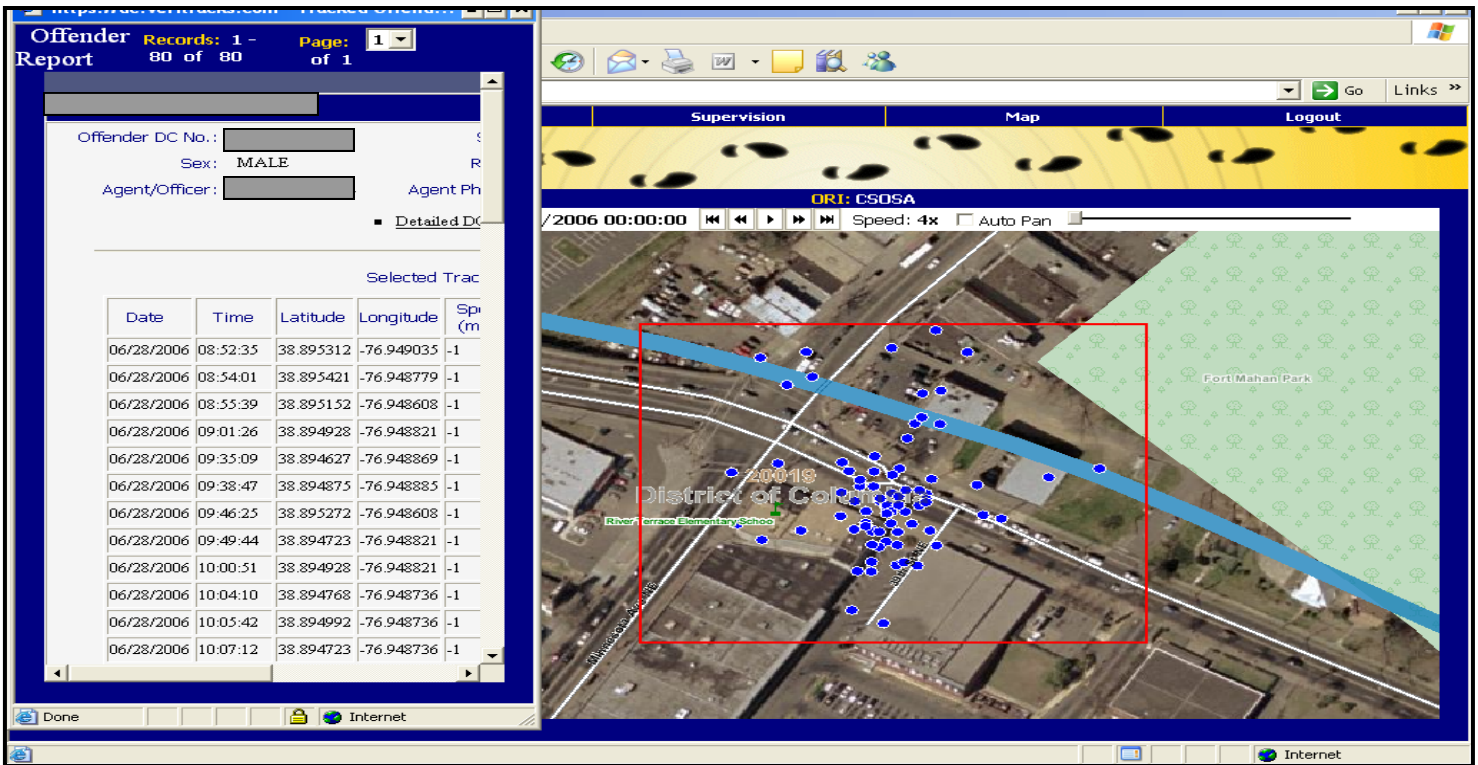
record violations automatically. The CSO can also transmit an electronic signal to a GPS unit to receive nearly instant information on the offender's location.

All sex offenders and selected other cases placed on GPS are monitored through "active" tracking, which re-

within CSOSA's Community Supervision Services division.

## PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Offenders placed on GPS are required to sign a contract indicating that they understand the restrictions and conditions of the program. The offender is then fitted with a GPS unit, a one-piece device (about the size of a cell phone) that is worn on the ankle.



GPS identifies both the exact times and the locations of an offender's movements, which can be laid over a satellite photograph of the area. Here, the blue dots represent the offender loitering near an elementary school. The chart at left displays the times of position readings.

curfew requirements. Each CSO receives a daily status report on all of his or her GPS cases, and the CSO can conduct detailed reviews of each offender's movements.

The CSOSA system has the ability to lay maps of the city or Google Earth satellite photos over the record of an offender's movements to ascertain his or her reasons for being in a given location. For example, maps may not provide the presence of a playground, but a satellite photo may identify a playground and provide the reason a sex offender is frequenting the area.

When a violation is detected, it is first investigated by the GPS Unit to verify its accuracy; in some cases, the offender may have had a valid reason for appearing to violate his or her restrictions. If the violation is verified, the CSO responds with appropriate action, which may include notifying law enforcement or the releasing authority.

Offenders sometimes attempt to tamper with the GPS device by either attempting to remove it or attempting to block transmission signals. The device can sense and record some of these attempts, and police officers have also noted instances where offenders were arrested with damaged GPS devices. In December 2008, the District of Columbia Council passed the "Anti-GPS Tampering Emergency Act," which permits the arrest of an individual suspected of tampering and defines penal-

ties including a fine and/or imprisonment of up to six months.

**LAW ENFORCEMENT PARTNERSHIP**

In addition to its value as a supervision strategy, CSOSA's GPS monitoring program assists Washington's Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) and other law enforcement partners in crime investigations. GPS tracking is able to place offenders at crime scenes through the Automated Crime Scene Correlation (ACSC) Partnership Program. ACSC automatically compares offender-monitoring data with police department information on reported crimes. When data from the two sources intersect, a "crime hit" report is automatically generated and disseminated to law enforcement officials and supervising officers.

Using GPS, offenders can be identified or eliminated as suspects, assisting law enforcement with investigations. For example, through the ACSC program, a sex offender was placed at the scene of two attacks on young women in the Northwest part of the city. Supervision staff, using information provided by MPD and the ACSC program, notified MPD that a "crime hit" had placed the offender there at the time of the attacks. MPD officers quickly apprehended the offender, thereby preventing additional victims. Mapping technology also allows CSOSA

and law enforcement partners to create extremely detailed maps of locations and offender movements to aid in suspect apprehension and/or to provide verifiable confirmation of an offender's location. This information can be imperative for quickly including and excluding offenders from current investigations.

CSOSA's GPS team provides monthly training to MPD and other law enforcement partners, including the United States Attorneys Office, the US Capitol Police Department, US Park Police, police officers in adjacent jurisdictions, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Partner agencies also have the ability to search GPS data to check for violations or connections to new crimes. The system receives hundreds of inquiries daily.

GPS is a powerful tool for law enforcement. In addition to augmenting the CSO's ability to monitor individual cases, GPS contributes vital information to crime investigations. As part of CSOSA's supervision strategy, GPS is increasing public safety in the District of Columbia and adjacent jurisdictions.

*CSOSA's web site (www.csosa.gov) contains agency-produced video on GPS and many other community supervision topics. Click on "television and radio shows" on the homepage.*