

Michigan's Electronic Monitoring Program One of the Nation's Oldest and Largest

More than 130,000 offenders have been monitored in the community since the Michigan electronic monitoring program was implemented in the 1980s, saving space in institutions for serious offenders.



HIGHLIGHTS:

- The Michigan electronic monitoring program was established more than 20 years ago.
- The program has monitored more than 130,000 offenders since it began.
- BI has supplied the department with compliance technologies and support since 1987.
- The program helps reduce costs and enhance community safety.

THE PROGRAM

In 1986, the Michigan Department of Corrections (DOC) successfully piloted an electronic monitoring program in Washtenaw County. Based on its success, the program was rolled out statewide in 1987. One year later, the state legislature mandated that furloughed prisoners be placed on electronic monitoring. In response, the DOC set up a formal electronic monitoring program and the program expanded rapidly. Today, the program does not focus on prisoner supervision but instead is used as an alternative to detention for a wide class of offenders—it still remains one of the largest programs of its kind nationwide.

While the Michigan DOC employs a number of community-based supervision technologies and strategies to help maintain high levels of public safety in the most cost effective manner, it selected BI for two program components—electronic monitoring and a remote alcohol monitoring system. The electronic monitoring technology monitors the absence or presence of offenders at home, thereby closely tracking curfews and schedules. As a result, offenders reside in the community where they can work, support families and contribute to the community. Today, the state's electronic monitoring program is one of the largest in the nation, supervising almost 1,900 individuals daily. Since inception in the 1980s, the department has supervised more than 130,000 offenders on electronic monitoring.

The Michigan DOC carefully screens offenders for placement in the electronic monitoring program. Participants include a wide range of offenders, including parolees (39%), probationers (51%), juveniles (6%), individuals from contracted agencies (3%), and a handful of prisoners serving the remainder of their terms in the community (1%). Electronic monitoring is imposed as an initial condition of sentencing or release, or it can be imposed as a sanction for violation behavior.

The DOC uses the BI HomeGuard® 200 electronic monitoring system. This technology includes highly reliable and cost-effective radio-frequency technology. The department also uses a version of this system for offenders who own only cell phones. These systems monitor compliance to court-ordered and agency guidelines. The DOC also uses BI Sobriotor®, a remote alcohol-testing device for defendants with alcohol problems. With Sobriotor, defendants submit alcohol tests several times daily from their homes to deter alcohol use while under DOC supervision. Some offenders are monitored with both HomeGuard 200 and Sobriotor.

Because of the high volume of offenders on electronic monitoring, the DOC uses a customer host server to manage offender data, including profiles, schedules, curfews and more. The Michigan DOC staffs its own monitoring center located in Lansing, Mich., to handle data management functions such as offender enrollment, schedule maintenance, 24-hour offender monitoring, violations alerts and reports. In total, 36 DOC staff were assigned to the Electronic Monitoring Center in 2008 to oversee and operate the program.

In Michigan, the annual cost to house a prisoner is \$35,000. By diverting individuals from costly incarceration to electronic monitoring, significant savings are achieved. To further defray program costs, the department charges offenders that can afford to pay a daily fee, ranging from \$11/day for electronic monitoring or alcohol monitoring to \$13/day for offenders on both systems.

A report to the Michigan State Legislature found electronic monitoring of offenders impacts jail utilization by preserving jail beds for offenders that pose a more serious risk to the public; offers courts an option that “falls between jail and probation”; and offers a sanction for technical violators. The report found prisons benefit by diverting technical parole violators to electronic monitoring versus a return to prison.

THE RESULTS

The Michigan DOC electronic monitoring program has proven very effective since 1987. In fact, several indicators point to the success of the program, including:

- More than 130,000 offenders have been monitored in the community since the Michigan electronic monitoring program was implemented in the 1980s, saving space in institutions for serious offenders.
- Today, almost 1,900 parolees, probationers, juveniles, and some prisoners are monitored with electronic monitoring technology each day.
- Another 350 offenders are monitored with Sobriotor for mandatory sobriety.
- The program provides judges with additional, proven sentencing options.
- When individuals are on electronic monitoring, they are not taking up a \$35,000-a-year bed. Officials estimate its electronic monitoring program helps save millions in correctional costs annually.
- The offender-pay component of the state's electronic monitoring program helps reduce program costs.
- The program's success has led the Michigan DOC to apply it to multiple offender classes, including parolees, probationers, furloughed prisoners, juveniles and others.
- BI's longstanding relationship with the department as a trusted product and service provider has resulted in multiple contract awards during 20 plus years of working together.

THE TECHNOLOGY

- BI HomeGuard® 200
- BI HomeCell®
- BI GuardServer® Custom Host
- BI Sobriotor®



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