



SOUTHERN LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE

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Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles



DMV Connect Operations Manager Jonathan Butner, Virginia State Senator Charles W. Carrico, Sr., and DMV Field Operations Assistant Commissioner Robert Irving at the 68th SLC Annual Meeting.

VIRGINIA'S DMV CONNECT PROGRAM

In May 2012, the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) and Department of Corrections (DOC) launched the **DMV Connect** program, an innovative, low-cost approach to reducing criminal recidivism rates in the commonwealth. The program was designed to smooth prisoners' transition back into society by ensuring they have valid state identification upon release — a necessity for finding employment, opening a bank account, obtaining housing, and applying for benefits and services. The program has since expanded and the DMV now offers similar services to other populations of limited mobility, including the elderly and disabled.

The **DMV Connect** program utilizes a portable equipment case specially manufactured for the Virginia DMV. The case contains a laptop, camera, back-

drop, and signature pad, and has the capability to connect securely to the DMV's computer system through a virtual private network, allowing the Connect team to make real-time transactions. As inmates approach their release dates, correctional facility staff collect and scan the necessary proof of identification documents, transmit them to the DMV, and charge the inmates' accounts for the cost of the ID. The **DMV Connect** team then visits the facility to take each inmate's picture and required signature and enter them into the system. The correctional facility holds the IDs on file and issues them to inmates upon release. The **DMV Connect** team also provides individualized driver compliance summaries to each inmate, informing them on how they may obtain a driver's license after they are discharged.

Since the program began, **DMV Connect** has issued more than 4,500 state

IDs to inmates at more than 40 state correctional facilities, two federal correctional facilities, eight sheriff's offices, and regional jails. In March 2014, the DMV expanded these services to other vulnerable populations, issuing more than 200 IDs at U.S. Veterans Affairs hospitals, homeless shelters, and assisted-living centers for the elderly and disabled. The Department aims to open additional training centers and broaden service reach to the homeless, elderly and disabled, and to begin providing child ID card services.

The **DMV Connect** program has an annual operating cost of \$187,000, with the frequency of visits determined by demand. In high-volume facilities, the **DMV Connect** team makes monthly visits, though in lower-volume facilities, the team may be dispatched bi-monthly or quarterly. The program's annual operating cost covers the price of the equipment cases, staff salaries, travel expenses, and DMV vehicles and cell phones, with the operating budget coming from the taxes and fees collected in the Virginia Motor Vehicle Special Fund.

This low-cost service provides immediate benefit to populations in need and long-term benefit to society. Recidivism rates in Virginia have dropped to their lowest levels on record. Although ongoing evaluation by the DMV and DOC will determine the exact effect the **DMV Connect** has on recidivism, the program has proven successful.