



# The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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## Press Release

### DA Morrissey funds "Project Lifesaver" For Ten Area Police Departments

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*Dedham officers Megan Jenkins, Neil Cronin, and Ken Ellis joined officers from nine other communities at District Attorney Michael W. Morrissey's Canton Office for Project Lifesaver training on Sept. 15 and 16.*

When Alzheimer's patients and children whose neuro-divergence makes them prone to wander are missing, it presents a crisis for them, their loved ones, their caregivers, and the public safety officials who need to find them.

But Norfolk District Attorney Michael W. Morrissey has supplied funding so that ten Norfolk County police departments will receive equipment and/or training to offer "Project Lifesaver," a technology developed by Virginia Police using radio signals and simple bracelets to track those prone to wander.

Training was provided by representatives of Project Lifesaver and the Quincy Police Department, which has had great success with the system since implementing it years ago. "Those who came to the Norfolk DA's Office to train local officers in the technology said that the first time they used the system, they found an adult with Alzheimer's disease in under two minutes," District Attorney Morrissey said. "They quickly realized how valuable it could be in tracking kids with autism or other issues that make them prone to run."

The Norfolk DA' Office has investigated deaths caused by elders with memory loss or confusion wandering away, then dying of exposure, Morrissey said. "I hope we never lose another person to that kind of preventable death."

Morrissey offered to fund the training and equipment for any town in his jurisdiction that wanted to implement the system. "We recognize that some towns may already have had a system in place, but for those who do not this is an excellent option." The money is coming not from tax dollars, but from the proceeds of drug trafficking that a judge has ordered forfeited in court cases – money that state law says can be used for a small number of purposes including crime prevention, police training, and law enforcement equipment.

"We had ten towns opt in, so the total cost will be roughly \$50,000," Morrissey said. "For that price, communities with a total population of almost 350,000 may prevent ever seeing this type of tragedy again." Communities receiving updated training and/or equipment were Quincy, Dover, Braintree, Dedham, Holbrook, Millis, Randolph, Stoughton, Wellesley, Weymouth and Wrentham.

Whenever a vulnerable person wanders away from caretakers, the ensuing search can also be expensive – running into thousands of dollars for helicopters, specialized personnel, overtime and other costs. "It will not take many deployments for us to see a return on this investment," Morrissey said. "And the savings in potential human misery and worry is priceless. If anyone has a loved one whom they believe should have a bracelet, their contact should be with their police department."