

**2008 EDWARD BYRNE MEMORIAL JUSTICE ASSISTANCE GRANT  
EI DORADO COUNTY**

**PROGRAM NARRATIVE**

The El Dorado County District Attorney's Office would like to obtain equipment and training vital to the investigation of privacy and identity theft crimes. Specifically, the office seeks forensic computer and cell phone analysis equipment and also seeks funds to send a District Attorney Investigator to training related to forensic analysis.

Need for the Program

Financial and criminal identity theft is a growing problem in El Dorado County and throughout the nation. El Dorado County District Attorney's Office has an overwhelming need for an identity theft program and resources to support such a program. As a small rural county, resources are stretched thin and, all too often, the past investigation and prosecution of financial crimes, including privacy and identity theft crimes, was lacking. Vern Pierson, the recently elected District Attorney of El Dorado County, is striving to correct this problem.

Each year, identity theft - one of the fastest growing types of fraud - harms many El Dorado County citizens. The Better Business Bureau estimates that identity theft causes \$52.6 billion in economic damage each year with an average of 9.3 million victims and it is estimated that victims spent approximately 300 million hours to resolve identity theft victimization.

Ultimately, the identity thief hopes to obtain personal information about their victim - including their social security number, birth name, credit card numbers, or birth date. The El Dorado County District Attorney's Office is committed to fighting identity theft by organizing training for local law enforcement personnel, participating in regional efforts to identify and prosecute identity theft rings, and (as requested in this application) to obtain and implement the best resources, personnel, and equipment to help investigate and prosecute those responsible for this growing crime.

Identity theft is often broken down into three broad categories. "True name" fraud occurs when someone uses a victim's personal information to open a new account. With this information, imposters assume the victim's identity and establish bank accounts or credit in the victim's name, leaving the victim to deal with the fallout. In an "account takeover", the person gains access to an existing, legitimate account. Someone who uses a victim's personal information to avoid prosecution commits "criminal" identity theft - leaving them with a false criminal history. It is as ruinous to people's lives as many other crimes and can be detrimental to victims' credit reports, shattering to their spirits, and devastating to their financial dreams.

Our local law enforcement agencies receive many reports of identity theft, including several recent internet scams. With the aging citizenry in our county this is a growing concern of the El Dorado County District Attorney's Office.

Additionally, with our rural communities, mail theft is commonplace. Mail theft is especially frustrating because the criminal uses that wealth of information contained in each stolen credit application to obtain credit in the unknowing citizen's name. Furthermore, our local commercial zones are expanding and growing at an alarming rate - including a new Indian Casino expected to open in October 2008.

All too often our District Attorney investigators have to wait for an out of county facility to process our requests of forensic computer and cell phone analysis. With the proper training and equipment, our office would be able to prosecute offenders of privacy and identity theft related crimes in a more timely manner.

Anticipated Public Benefit.

The anticipated public benefit of an El Dorado County District Attorney identity theft program would be to increase the availability of resources and training to provide investigators and prosecutors with the tools necessary for their investigation and prosecution of criminal and/or civil violations of various privacy and identity theft laws.

We anticipate that the proposed project would benefit the public by providing our office with essential forensic tools and associated training to properly investigate and prosecute privacy and identity theft crimes. Ensuring that our District Attorney Investigators are properly trained and equipped in the potential digital/electronic/computer forensics investigation will allow our prosecutors to obtain invaluable evidence for use at trial.

Criminals who commit identity theft often utilize many different methods to obtain the information needed in order to steal someone's identity. One of the fastest growing and more prevalent of these methods is cellular phones, smart phones and PDAs. With today's smart phones, cellular phones and PDAs criminal have access to the internet, email and practically any other information source.

It is widely accepted by Police, Investigators and Prosecutors that computers contain a vast amount of criminal evidence; it is easy to imagine the wealth of evidence contained in every criminal's cellular telephone. The El Dorado County District Attorney's office encounters many types of high technology crimes and our office is able to cope and investigate many of these crimes without assistance. Unfortunately, we currently do not have the ability to forensically examine computers, cellular phone, smart phone or PDA evidence.

In this new computer age, and with the ever-increasing use of cell phones, lap tops, scanners, and computers - more and more evidence is found by conducting necessary and thorough evaluation of these devices. With better evidence, we expect more cases to be filed, more victims to be identified, and ultimately, more convictions (criminally and civilly) of those responsible for violations of victims' privacy rights and identity theft.