

Victim and Witness Assistance

318.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that crime victims and witnesses receive appropriate assistance, that they are provided with information from government and private resources, and that the agency meets all related legal mandates.

318.2 POLICY

The Oakdale Police Department is committed to providing guidance and assistance to the victims and witnesses of crime. The employees of the Oakdale Police Department will show compassion and understanding for victims and witnesses and will make reasonable efforts to provide the support and information identified in this policy.

318.3 CRIME VICTIM LIAISON

The Chief of Police should appoint a member of the Department to serve as the crime victim liaison. The Detective Sergeant is the Department's crime victim liaison and will be the point of contact for individuals requiring further assistance or information from the Oakdale Police Department regarding benefits from crime victim resources. The liaison is also responsible for maintaining compliance with all legal mandates related to crime victims and/or witnesses.

318.3.1 SPECIFIC VICTIM LIAISON DUTIES

The crime victim liaison shall assist the Minnesota Crime Victims Reimbursement Board in performing its duties and ensure that the Records Office forwards copies of requested reports to the board or other authorized organizations within 10 days of receipt, in compliance with the Records Maintenance and Release Policy. These reports include those maintained as confidential or not open to inspection under Minn. Stat. § 260B.171 or Minn. Stat. § 260C.171 (Minn. Stat. § 611A.66).

The crime victim liaison will also (Minn. Stat. § 611A.27):

- (a) Serve for a sexual assault victim or a sexual assault victim's written designee as the liaison between the Oakdale Police Department and a forensic laboratory.
- (b) Facilitate requests for information made by a sexual assault victim or written designee.
- (c) Provide an appropriate response to a victim's request for investigative data within 30 days.
- (d) Develop a procedure allowing a sexual assault victim to request that the sexual assault examination kit be submitted to a forensic laboratory if the victim had not previously authorized such submission.

The crime victim liaison or the authorized designee, in consultation with the Investigations Division Captain, should establish procedures for receiving requests for assistance in applying for U visa or T visa status, and make those procedures available to victims. The procedures should provide

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for responses to these requests to be made in compliance with applicable law and as set forth in the Immigration Violations Policy and applicable law (Minn. Stat. § 611A.95).

318.4 CRIME VICTIMS

Officers should provide all victims with the applicable victim information handouts.

Officers should never guarantee a victim's safety from future harm but may make practical safety suggestions to victims who express fear of future harm or retaliation. Officers should never guarantee that a person qualifies as a victim for the purpose of compensation or restitution but may direct him/her to the proper written department material or available victim resources.

318.5 VICTIM INFORMATION

The Support Services Manager Supervisor shall ensure that victim information handouts are available and current. These should include as appropriate:

- (a) Shelters and other community resources for victims, including domestic abuse and sexual assault victims.
- (b) Assurance that sexual assault victims will not incur out-of-pocket expenses for forensic medical exams, and information about evidence collection, storage, and preservation in sexual assault cases (34 USC § 10449; 34 USC § 20109).
- (c) An advisement that a person who was arrested may be released on bond or some other form of release and that the victim should not rely upon an arrest as a guarantee of safety.
- (d) A clear explanation of relevant court orders and how they can be obtained.
- (e) Information regarding available compensation for qualifying victims of crime.
- (f) VINE® information (Victim Information and Notification Everyday), including the telephone number and whether this free service is available to allow victims to check on an offender's custody status and to register for automatic notification when a person is released from jail.
- (g) Notice regarding U visa and T visa application processes.
- (h) Resources available for victims of identity theft.
- (i) A place for the officer's name, badge number, and any applicable case or incident number.
- (j) Notices and information regarding the rights of crime victims, domestic abuse victims, and offender release as detailed in the following:
 1. Safe at Home address confidentiality program (Minn. Stat. § 5B.03)
 2. Offender release notification (Minn. Stat. § 244.052; Minn. Stat. § 244.053; Minn. Stat. § 611A.06; Minn. Stat. § 629.73)
 3. Tenancy issues (Minn. Stat. § 504B.205; Minn. Stat. § 504B.206)
 4. Victim and specific domestic abuse victim information/Minnesota CHOICE (Minn. Stat. § 611A.02 et seq.; Minn. Stat. § 629.341; Minn. Stat. § 629.72)

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- (k) A notice that a decision to arrest is the officer's and the decision to prosecute lies with the prosecutor, even when a victim requests no arrest or prosecution.
- (l) Contact information for the Office of Justice Programs and the Emergency Fund and Crime Victims Reimbursement (Minn. Stat. § 611A.66).

318.6 WITNESSES

Officers should never guarantee a witness' safety from future harm or that his/her identity will always remain confidential. Officers may make practical safety suggestions to witnesses who express fear of future harm or retaliation.

Officers should investigate allegations of witness intimidation and take enforcement action when lawful and reasonable.