

POLICE VICTIM ASSISTANCE

<i>Effective Date:</i> April 15, 2013	<i>Directive Number:</i> 10-9-1	
<i>Special Instructions:</i> NONE		
<i>Distribution:</i> All Sworn & Civilian Personnel	<i>Last Re-Evaluation Date:</i>	<i>Total Pages:</i> 2

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to emphasize the needs of victims of crime and non-criminal incidents and the responsibilities of officers to provide support, information and guidance for these individuals.

II. POLICY

Law enforcement officers are often in a unique position to provide assistance to victims of crime and other traumatic incidents that may have both immediate and long-term impact on their emotional recovery. Also, victims who feel that they were treated with understanding and concern for their hardship and suffering more frequently become enthusiastic about cooperating with the investigation and assisting in the prosecution. Therefore, it is the policy of this department to enhance the treatment of victims and survivors of crime and non-criminal crisis situations by providing the assistance and services necessary to speed their physical and emotional recovery, and to support and aid them as they continue to interact with the criminal justice system.

III. PROCEDURES

A. Safety and Security

1. Officers are responsible for securing the crime or incident scene to protect lives and ensure safety.
2. Officers shall render emergency aid to individuals who have suffered physical injuries, and shall as soon as possible, summon any necessary medical assistance.
3. Where physical injuries are not apparent, victims shall be asked if they are injured and whether medical attention is required.
4. In order to reduce fright and promote victim cooperation, victims should be informed as soon as appropriate that they are no longer in immediate danger.
5. Recognizing that victims often suffer physical and/or emotional shock, officers shall assist them in making decisions and keep them informed of police actions and requirements.
6. Whenever possible, police officers should not leave a distraught victim alone. Arrangements should be made to have a relative, friend or family member or departmental clergy join the victim for emotional support and comfort, or arrange for transportation of the victim to a friend's, family member's or other appropriate service provider.

B. Providing Emotional Support

In order to calm and assist the victim in regaining composure, officers shall:

1. Allow the victim a reasonable time period in which to express feelings and emotions while describing what happened during the incident;
2. Express empathy for the victim and recognition and understanding for emotional reactions;
3. Provide reassurance that the victim's feelings are normal and understandable;
4. Not be overtly judgmental of the victim's feelings and emotions or apparent lack thereof, or of victim judgments or actions related to The incident.
5. Help redirect any self-blame and responsibility for the criminal act from the victim to the perpetrator; and
6. Emphasize your commitment and that of the department to assist and work with the victim.

C. Information and Referral

Before leaving the scene, it is important that officers take any steps necessary to meet the victim's needs for support and information. These include:

1. Providing a brief overview of what actions will be taken shortly thereafter, and answering such questions as, "will a criminal investigator contact the victim?", "will evidence technicians be used at the scene?", "will line-ups or show-ups be held?" and "what other law enforcement actions will be taken?";
2. Providing information on victim service agencies available in the community; and
3. Leaving names and telephone numbers where the victim can reach the officer or the criminal investigator at the department, and encouraging the victim to use the number to report additional information about the incident or to request information or assistance.

D. Follow-up

Lack of information about case status is one of the greatest sources of dissatisfaction among victims of crime and victims' survivors. Therefore, officers assigned to criminal investigations shall make routine victim callbacks in order to determine whether the victim has new information concerning the case, to ascertain whether the victim is in need of assistance from outside sources or the department, and to relay information relating to such matters as:

1. The status of stolen, recovered or removed property;
2. The arrest and detention of suspects, and the pretrial release status;
3. The victim's possible eligibility for victim compensation;
4. Court restraining orders;
5. Court proceedings and schedules; and
6. The operations of the department and the criminal justice system.

ORDERED and EXECUTED this 15th day of April, 2013

Christopher Workman
Chief of Police