

# GENERAL ORDER



Title	<b>Victim/Witness Services</b>
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DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Replaces  
**General Order 204.06 (Victim Services Program)**  
**Special Order 01-12 (Crime Victims Compensation Program)**

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## I. BACKGROUND

One characteristic of effective law enforcement is reflected in the way victims/witnesses of crime are treated by police officers.

For most victims/witnesses, a police officer is the first criminal justice official they encounter after the crime has occurred. Because of this, police officers are in a unique position to provide support, information, and guidance to victims/witnesses of crime. Using basic crisis intervention, and providing referrals for additional services can affect the ability of the victim/witness to begin the process of healing from the pain of victimization.

A police officer's professional, compassionate response may result in:

- Increased public confidence and trust in the police;
- A positive relationship with the victim/witness that encourages cooperation during the investigation, and helps to ensure continued cooperation should the case go to court;
- Minimized stress for the officer through police intervention that has a beneficial impact; and
- Better leads and more accurate information that contribute to increased case closure rates.

## II. POLICY

The policy of the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) is to treat all victims/witnesses in a respectful, responsive, and compassionate manner that reflects the Department's recognition of the trauma of victimization. A member's interaction with the victim/witness of a crime shall not contribute additional harm.

## III. DEFINITIONS

When used in this directive, the following terms shall have the meaning designated:

1. Victim/Witness - a person who suffers direct physical, emotional, or financial harm as a result of the commission of a crime.
2. Law Enforcement Verification Form - for the purpose of eligibility under the Crime Victim Compensation Program (CVCP) administered by the DC Superior Court, the Law Enforcement Verification Form confirms that the crime has been reported and that the claimant did not knowingly or willingly participate in the commission of the crime. The CVCP office may request that the Responding Officer, or the Detective/Investigator who responded to the incident, fill out this form to establish the victim's eligibility for financial assistance.
3. Secondary Victim - a person who suffers as an indirect result of a crime (i.e., surviving family members of a homicide victim; a child who witnesses domestic violence, etc.). For the purpose of eligibility under the CVCP, secondary victims are family members, a member of the victim's household at the time of the crime, a person with close ties to the victim, or a person who has witnessed the crime. A secondary victim may also be a person who assumes the obligation to pay for medical, funeral, or burial expenses.
4. CVCP Victim Assistance Package - the CVCP Victim Assistance Package permits MPD to meet its legal obligation to provide notification of the financial assistance available to victims/witnesses of violent crime. The package includes a CVCP brochure and application, and is delivered to the crime victim.

## IV. REGULATIONS

- A. MPD members shall assist victims/witnesses of a crime by providing information about victim rights and available services that can help them cope with physical injury, economic loss, and emotional trauma. (CALEA 55.1.1)
  1. Pursuant to DC Official Code § 4-517 (a), the "Victims of Violent Crimes Compensation Act of 1996" the Metropolitan Police Department is required to inform victims or secondary victims, of violent crime about the Crime Victim Compensation Program and provide application forms. (CALEA 55.1.3 d)

2. Pursuant to DC Official Code §23-1902, the “Crime Victims Rights Act of 2000” legislation, the Metropolitan Police Department is required to notify crime victims of their rights at the earliest opportunity after the crime.

B. MPD members shall protect the confidentiality of victims/witnesses consistent with applicable law, current MPD Standard Operating Procedures, and other applicable directives. (CALEA 55.1.3 b)

**V. CRIME VICTIM COMPENSATION PROGRAM (CALEA 55.1.3 a)**

A. The Crime Victim Compensation Program, administered by the DC Superior Court, is designed to provide financial assistance to victims/witnesses and secondary victims of violent crimes that occur in the District of Columbia. The CVCP will not provide compensation for property loss or pain and suffering. Eligibility criteria include: (CALEA 55.1.1)

1. The person filing the claim must not have committed the crime or aided in the commission of the crime for which the claim is filed.

2. A PD Form 251 (Incident-Based Event Report) must have been filed within seven (7) days of the crime.

a. In sexual assault cases, the reporting requirement may be satisfied if the victim/witness seeks medical treatment.

b. In domestic violence cases, the reporting requirement may be satisfied if the victim/witness requests a Civil Protection Order (CPO), or a Temporary Protection Order (TPO).

c. In cruelty to children (child abuse) cases, the reporting requirement may be satisfied if a neglect petition is filed in the D.C. Superior Court.

3. A claim must be filed within one (1) year of the crime, or within one (1) year of learning about the program.

B. Violent crimes include, but are not limited to the following:

1. Arson;
2. Aggravated Assault;
3. Assault on a Police Officer;
4. Assault with a Dangerous Weapon;
5. Assault with Intent to Commit any Offense;
6. Assault with Intent to Kill;
7. Burglary;
8. Carjacking;
9. Cruelty to Children (child abuse);
10. Domestic Violence;
11. Driving Under the Influence;

12. Forcible Sodomy;
  13. Hit and Run;
  14. Kidnapping;
  15. Maliciously Disfiguring Another;
  16. Manslaughter;
  17. Murder;
  18. Mayhem;
  19. Negligent Homicide;
  20. Rape;
  21. Reckless Driving;
  22. Riot;
  23. Robbery;
  24. Sexual Abuse;
  25. Stalking;
  26. Sodomy of a Child less than Sixteen (16) Years of Age;
  27. Threats; and
  28. Unlawful Use of an Explosive.
- C. The CVCP may provide financial assistance for temporary shelter, or for moving expenses, but requires that the victim/witness secure a referral that describes the need to relocate for health and safety reasons. (CALEA 55.2.5)
1. Members who have knowledge of the case may choose to complete the CVCP Referral Form if requested by the victim/witness. The member shall ensure he/she records his/her contact information in the space provided on the form. (CALEA 55.2.3 d)
  2. The CVCP office may follow up with the member who made the referral to seek further information and/or clarity.
- D. The Investigative Review Officer (IRO) is the district point of contact for the Crime Victim Compensation Program. The IRO shall: (CALEA 55.1.3 a & b)
1. Prepare the Victim Assistance Package within three (3) days of the crime being reported to police (Monday, if the crime occurs on a weekend). The Victim Assistance Package shall consist of:
    - a. A copy of the PD Form 251;
    - b. CVCP brochure and CVCP application;
    - c. Crime prevention material related to the crime that was perpetrated against the victim/witness, to include a brochure on the Victim Information and Notification Everyday (VINE) system;

- d. A copy of the PD Form 251B (Victim Rights/Referral Card); after completing the contact information at the bottom of the form; and checking the box for the CVCP and any other appropriate referrals; (CALEA 55.2.1 b)
    - e. The name and phone number of the Detective/Investigator assigned to the case; or
    - f. The name and phone number of the officer assigned to the follow-up investigation when a Detective/Investigator has not been assigned.
  2. In instances when a Detective/Investigator has been assigned to the case, the Victim Assistance Packages shall be provided to that Detective/Investigator for delivery to the victim/witness.
  3. In instances when a Detective/Investigator has not been assigned to the case, or the case is closed, the Victim Assistance Packages shall be provided to the lieutenant of the PSA in which the victim/witness lives for delivery to the victim/witness.
  4. Mail the Victim Assistance Packages that have been returned by the PSA lieutenant after the PSA officer has made two unsuccessful delivery attempts to the victim/witness.
  5. Mail Victim Assistance Packages to victims/witnesses who live outside of the police district in which the crime occurred, or outside the District of Columbia.
  6. In cases of Domestic Violence, the IRO shall provide the Victim Assistance Package to the Domestic Violence Detective/Investigator at the appropriate District.
    - a. Under no circumstances shall the IRO mail the Victim Assistance Package directly to the victim/witness.
    - b. If the Domestic Violence Detective/Investigator is unable to deliver the Victim Assistance Package directly to the victim/witness, he/she shall mail it to the secondary contact, if one is listed on the PD Form 252.
    - c. If the Detective/Investigator is unable to deliver the Victim Assistance Package directly to the victim/witness, or to the secondary contact, he/she shall document this information on the PD Form 252 (Supplement Report).
  7. Fax a monthly report to the Office of the Superintendent of Detectives that summarizes:

- a. The number of Victim Assistance Packages hand-delivered to victims/witnesses by PSA Officers/Detectives/Investigators;
  - b. The number of Victim Assistance Packages mailed to victims/witnesses;
  - c. The number of Victim Assistance Packages returned to the IRO from the mail.
8. Receive requests from the CVCP office for completion of the Law Enforcement Verification Form. Ensure that:
- a. The Law Enforcement Verification Form is completed by the officer or Detective/Investigator who responded to the crime;
  - b. Upon return, review for accuracy and completeness. The PSA officer or Detective/Investigator shall complete the form in accordance with Section V, F, items 1 and 2. This includes completing the form within one (1) business day upon receipt from the IRO;
  - c. Fax all Law Enforcement Verification Forms to the CVCP Office in accordance with the following deadlines:
    - (1) For homicide cases, return forms within **twenty-four (24) hours** of receipt from PSA lieutenant; and
    - (2) For non-homicide cases, return forms within **three (3) business days** of receipt from PSA lieutenant.
9. Stock CVCP supplies at the District Detective Office:
- a. Maintain a supply of CVCP brochures and CVCP applications;
  - b. Contact the CVCP office to obtain brochures and applications as needed; and
  - c. Maintain a supply of the PD Form 251B for use by Detectives/Investigators.
- E. The Youth and Preventive Services Division IRO shall:
1. Coordinate with the Child Protection Unit liaison at Children's Hospital to ensure:
    - a. Detectives/Investigators work closely with the Child Protection Unit liaison to complete the necessary paperwork, in order to process CVCP applications for juvenile and child victims/witnesses; and

- b. The CVCP application and PD Form 251 are promptly forwarded to the CVCP office by the Child Protection Unit liaison.
  2. Provide the Complainant Case Number (CCN) to the Detective/Investigator and/or the Child Protection Unit liaison as requested to ensure prompt processing of the CVCP application.
  3. Receive requests from the CVCP office for completion of the Law Enforcement Verification Form. Ensure that:
    - a. The Law Enforcement Verification Form is completed by the Detective/Investigator who responded to the crime;
    - b. Upon return, review for accuracy and completeness. The Detective/Investigator shall complete the form in accordance with Section V, F, items 1 and 2. This includes completing the form within one (1) business day upon receipt from the Youth Services IRO;
    - c. Fax all Law Enforcement Verification Forms to the CVCP Office, in accordance with the following deadlines:
      - (1) For homicide cases, return forms within **twenty-four hours** of receipt from the Detective/Investigator; and
      - (2) For all other cases, return forms within **three (3) business days** of receipt from the Detective/Investigator.
- F. The PSA Officer shall:
  1. Deliver the Victim Assistance Package to the victim/witness within **two (2) working days** of receipt from the PSA lieutenant:
    - a. Upon delivery, ask the victim/witness for any additional information that would assist in the investigation of the crime and inquire if his/her needs of assistance have been met; (CALEA 55.2.4 a)
    - b. Record additional information provided by the victim/witness on the PD Form 252 (Supplement Report);
    - c. Make two attempts to deliver the Victim Assistance Package;
    - d. Document the date and time of each attempt to deliver the Victim Assistance Package in the narrative portion of the PD Form 252; and
    - e. Return undelivered packages to the PSA lieutenant.

2. If requested, complete and return the Law Enforcement Verification Form to the PSA lieutenant within **one (1) business day** of receipt. If there is not enough information available to complete all the questions on the form, enter "Unknown," or "Pending Further Investigation," as appropriate.

G. The Detective/Investigator shall:

1. Deliver the Victim Assistance Package to the victim/witness upon receipt from the IRO;
2. Make two attempts to deliver the Victim Assistance Package;
3. Document the date and time of each attempt to deliver the Victim Assistance Package in the narrative portion of the PD Form 252; and
4. Return undelivered packages to the IRO;
5. In cases of homicide, negligent homicide, or assault with intent to kill (AWIK) that results in a homicide, ensure the victim's family, and/or friends, and/or other secondary victims shall receive a Crime Victims Compensation Program brochure and application form and a PD Form 251B, either at the scene of the crime, or within 24 hours from the commission of the crime. (CALEA 55.2.4 a)
  - a. If the CVCP office requires the PD Form 251, and/or the Law Enforcement Verification Form to establish eligibility, ensure that these documents are completed and returned to the CVCP office within 24 hours of the request.
  - b. If there is not enough information available to complete all the questions on the Law Enforcement Verification Form, enter "Unknown," or "Pending Further Investigation" as appropriate.

H. The PSA Lieutenant shall:

1. Receive the Victim Assistance Packages from the IRO to submit to the PSA officers for delivery to victims/witnesses:
  - a. Ensure that the PSA officers are delivering Victim Assistance Packages within **two (2) working days** of receipt.
  - b. Return to the IRO all Victim Assistance Packages that could not be hand-delivered by the PSA officers within **two (2) working days**; and
  - c. Ensure that the PSA officer has made two (2) attempts to deliver by reviewing the narrative section on the PD Form 252.

2. Ensure the Law Enforcement Verification Forms received from the IRO are completed by the officer who responded to the crime, reviewed for accuracy and completeness, and returned to the IRO within **two (2) working days** of receipt.
- I. Commander, Office of the Superintendent of Detectives shall:
    1. Ensure that copies of the monthly CVCP reports from the District Detective's Offices are provided to the Special Program Development Unit, Office of Organizational Development by the 8<sup>th</sup> of each month, or the next business day if the 8<sup>th</sup> falls on a weekend or holiday.
    2. Ensure that Detectives/Investigators assigned to do follow-up investigations of violent crimes provide victims/witnesses, secondary victims, or family members of homicide victims with the CVCP brochure and application and a Victim Rights/Referral card. (CALEA 55.2.4 a)
  - J. District Commanders shall: (CALEA 55.1.3 c)
    1. Ensure that a CVCP poster is noticeably displayed in the station for the public's viewing;
    2. Ensure that CVCP brochures and applications are kept in stock; and
    3. Maintain the CVCP brochures accessible to the public within the station.
  - K. Director, Special Program Development, Office of the Organizational Development shall prepare a 6-month summary report on the number of Victim Assistance Packages delivered and mailed in each District.
  - L. The responding officer or Detective/Investigator may be required to testify at a CVCP hearing.
    1. If a claimant is denied compensation, he/she may appeal to the CVCP Appeals Board within thirty (30) days of the decision.
    2. Hearings are scheduled at the discretion of the Appeals Board to obtain additional information, and are conducted at the D.C. Superior Court.
    3. The testimony will only be required from the responding officer or Detective/Investigator where compensation benefits are denied for reasons related to the role of the victim/witness in the crime. (CALEA 55.1.3 d)

## VI. PROCEDURAL GUIDELINES

- A The Initial Responding Officer or Detective/Investigator shall:

1. Use basic crisis intervention techniques to provide immediate emotional support. The three basic crisis intervention techniques are listed below:
    - a. Safety and Security - Address the safety and security needs of the victim/witness by making sure the victim/witness's physical concerns are taken care of, and ensuring his/her safety.
    - b. Ventilation and Validation - Allow the victim/witness to talk about his/her feelings about what happened. Validate the victims/witnesses experience and feelings by listening attentively with a non-judgmental demeanor.
    - c. Prediction and Preparation - Tell the victim/witness what will happen in the near future by explaining the subsequent steps in the processing of the case. (CALEA 55.2.4 b)
  2. Provide the victim/witness with the PD Form 251B after completing the contact information at the bottom of the form, and checking the box for the CVCP and any other appropriate referrals. (CALEA 55.2.3 a) (CALEA 55.2.5)
  3. Advise the victim/witness about what to do if the suspect(s) threatens or otherwise intimidates him/her. (CALEA 55.2.3 b)
  4. Inform the victim/witness about the case number and subsequent steps in the processing of the case; and (CALEA 55.2.3 c)
  5. Provide a telephone number that the victim/witness may call to report additional information about the case, to receive information about the status of the case and to call 911 in case of an emergency. (CALEA 55.2.1 a) (CALEA 55.2.3 d)
- B. The Commander, Office of the Superintendent of Detectives, shall ensure that during the subsequent investigation: (CALEA 55.2.4)
1. Detectives/Investigators explain to the victim/witness:
    - a. The procedures involved in the investigation of their case; and
    - b. The role of the victim/witness in the investigation. (CALEA 55.2.4 b)
  2. Detectives/Investigators inform the victim/witness of a violent crime of the status of the investigation, as outlined in the Standard Operating Procedures, Metropolitan Police Department Homicide Investigation, (Appendix 7, "Victim Notification").

3. Each incident is investigated when a victim/witness is
    - a. Threatened; or
    - b. Intimidated.
    - c. If substantiated, the Detective/Investigator shall obtain an arrest warrant as outlined in GO-PCA-702.01 (Arrest and Bench Warrants). (CALEA 55.2.2)
  4. When possible, Detectives/Investigators schedule line-ups, interviews, and other required appearances at the convenience of the victim/witness. To ensure the victim/witness will be able to appear, transportation will be provided, if available. (CALEA 55.2.4 c)
  5. As appropriate, Detectives/Investigators encourage victims/witnesses to register with the Victim Information and Notification Everyday (VINE) system by calling 1-877-329-7894. The victim/witness then receives automatic notification when the Department of Corrections custody status of the offender changes. (CALEA 55.1.3 d)
- C. The Supervisor, Evidence Control Department, shall ensure the prompt return of the victim/witness property as outlined in GO-SPT- 601.01(Recording, Handling, and Disposition of Property Coming into the Custody of the Department) and GO-SPT-601.03 (Handling and Accounting for Seized and Forfeited Property). (CALEA 55.2.4 d)
- D. District Commanders shall ensure:
1. The responding officer delivers the PD Form 251B to the victim/witness at the initial call.
  2. CVCP brochures and applications, the PD Form 251B, and crime prevention materials are in a location accessible to the public within the station, and available in both English and Spanish when possible.
  3. The prompt return of the victim/witness's personal property in accordance with GO-SPT- 601.01 and GO-SPT-601.03 for property not forwarded to the Evidence Control Department. (CALEA 55.2.4 d)
- E. The Director, Institute of Police Science, in consultation with the Special Program Development Group, Office of Organizational Development shall ensure:
1. A victim/witness services component is included in the training provided for:
    - a. Recruit Officers;
    - b. Experienced Officers;

- c. Detectives;
    - d. Dispatchers; and
    - e. Supervisors.
  2. The training curriculum must include, but is not limited to:
    - a. Basic information on victim/witness issues, as well as the basic crisis intervention techniques described in VI, A, 1, a-c of this directive;
    - b. Information about requirements under the DC Official Code §4-501, et. Seq. Official Code §23-1901; and (CALEA 55.1.1)
    - c. Familiarity with the contents of this directive.
- F. The Senior Executive Director, Office of Organizational Development shall ensure:
  1. A survey of crime victim/witness is conducted in the District of Columbia every three years at minimum; (CALEA 55.1.2)
  2. The findings of the survey are applied to the development of initiatives that improve the Department's response to victims/witnesses of crime; and
  3. The PD Form 251B is updated at least once each year. A designated member in OOD shall: (CALEA 55.1.2)
    - a. Research the list of victim service providers;
    - b. Check associated phone numbers; and
    - c. Update the service providers and phone numbers as necessary.

## **VII. CROSS REFERENCES**

1. GO-SPT- 601.01(Recording, Handling, and Disposition of Property Coming into the Custody of the Department)
2. GO-SPT-601.03 (Handling and Accounting for Seized and Forfeited Property)
3. PD Form 251B (Victim Rights/Referral Form) (Attachment A)
4. DC Official Code § Chapter 5; Section 4-501 thru 4-518 (CVCP)

5. DC Official Code §23-1902 (Crime Victims Rights Act of 2000)
6. Metropolitan Police Department Homicide Investigation Standard Operating Procedures

// SIGNED //  
Charles H. Ramsey  
Chief of Police

Attachment

CHR:NMJ:MAR:dh:jh:uk