



DESCHUTES COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Policy Title: Sheriff's Office Victim Assistance	Effective Date: June 28, 2016	Policy Number: 7.20
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Attachments:	L. Shane Nelson, Sheriff	

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to emphasize the needs of victims of criminal and non-criminal incidents, and the responsibilities of Deschutes County Sheriff's Office members to provide support, information, and guidance for these individuals.

II. POLICY

Sheriff's Office deputies 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.

Victims who feel that they were treated with understanding and concern for their hardship and suffering may be more likely to cooperate with the investigation and assist in the prosecution.

Therefore, it is the policy of the Sheriff's Office to enhance the treatment of victims and survivors of criminal 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. Deputies are responsible for securing the crime or incident scene to protect lives and ensure safety.
2. Deputies 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. To reduce fright and promote victim communication, 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, deputies shall assist them in developing a safety plan, provide them with information regarding available resources, and keep them informed of Sheriff's Office actions and requirements.
6. Whenever possible, deputies should not leave a distraught victim alone. Arrangements should be made to have a relative, friend, family, or Sheriff's Office chaplain join the victim for emotional support and comfort, or arrange for transportation of the victim to a friend, family member, or other appropriate service provider.

B. Support

To calm and assist the victim in regaining composure, deputies shall:

1. Allow the victim a reasonable period of time 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 the 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.
6. Emphasize your commitment and that of the Sheriff's Office to assist and work with the victim.

C. Information and Referral

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

1. Providing a brief overview of what actions will be taken shortly thereafter and answering any questions that the victim may have regarding investigative procedures.
2. Providing information on victim service agencies available in the community.
3. Leaving names and telephone numbers where the victim can reach the deputy or the detective at the Sheriff's Office, and encouraging the victim to use the number to report additional information about the incident or to request information or assistance.

Deschutes County Sheriff's Office will comply with all victim rights notification requirements under state law. Deputies will provide victims with a Deschutes County Crime Victim's Information Packet.

D. Follow-up

Lack of information about case status is one of the greatest sources of dissatisfaction among victims of crime and victims' survivors. Deputies assigned to detectives shall make routine victim callbacks 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 Sheriff's Office, 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 their 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 Sheriff's Office and the criminal justice system.

In conducting the follow-up investigation, the detective will minimize repetition of the initial interview with the victim. The detective will also schedule the interviews and any follow-up that includes the victim at the most convenient time for the victim, if possible, and may assist in providing transportation, if feasible.

IV. CRIME VICTIM ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

A. The Crime Victim Assistance Program

1. Crime Victim Assistants (CVAs), through the District Attorney's Office, are trained in crisis intervention. They are also available to assist the victims/witnesses (hereafter referred to simply as "victim") through all phases of the investigation and prosecution, as well as the Sheriff's Office interview process.

2. If requested by the deputy or victim, CVAs may be present during the initial interview and will explain court procedures, the nature of the medical examination, if applicable, the judicial process, and the victim's role in that process.
3. CVAs will also inform the victim of costs associated with the medical examination and the availability of financial assistance through the Crime Victim Compensation Program administered by the State of Oregon, Department of Justice, and other support or counseling services available through other local agencies.
4. CVAs stay in contact with the victim throughout the process to ensure the victim is receiving the help and information they need.
5. All Sheriff's Office members will cooperate fully with the victim advocates.

V. VICTIM/WITNESS PROTECTION

The Sheriff's Office shall provide appropriate assistance to victims and witnesses to prevent further victimization, threats, or intimidation. This involvement shall begin with the preliminary investigation, and continue so long as the case is active.

The level of response and assistance shall be evaluated by incident, and be consistent with the credibility and seriousness of the threat. This assistance may include, but is not limited to:

1. Providing the witness/victim information on ORS 162.285, "Tampering with a Witness", and how to contact the Sheriff's Office if any such incident occurs.
2. Contacting the suspect or associates and advising them of legal consequences of any attempt at further victimization of the victim/witness.
3. Directed patrol strategies to increase law enforcement presence through visible patrols or stakeouts.
4. Physical protection of the victim/witness coordinated through the District Attorney's Office.
5. Information sharing if the victim/witness, family, suspect, or associates are not within the jurisdiction of the Sheriff's Office.

VI. VINE INFORMATION

Oregon Victim Information and Notification Everyday (Oregon VINE) is a program developed and managed by the Oregon Department of Corrections. Vine is a free and anonymous telephone service that is designed to provide two important features to crime victims; information and notification. VINE is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

VINE monitors the custody status of offenders in the Department of Corrections and individuals currently on probation or parole or on post-prison supervision. The Deschutes County Adult Jail and Oregon Youth Authority facilities are also included in this program.

This service is available in English and Spanish. A live operator is available to provide assistance to anyone calling the toll-free number for any reason.

All crime victims should be provided with the VINE information and toll-free telephone number so that they can call and register for notification or custody information.