
Victim and Witness Assistance

317.1 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.

317.2 POLICY

The Plymouth Township Police Department is committed to providing guidance and assistance to the victims and witnesses of crime. The members of the Plymouth Township 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.

317.3 CRIME VICTIM LIAISON

The primary assigned investigating officer or detective shall serve as the crime victim liaison for their assigned case. The crime victim liaison will be the point of contact for individuals requiring further assistance or information from the Plymouth Township Police Department regarding benefits from crime victim resources. This person shall also be responsible for maintaining compliance with all legal mandates related to crime victims and/or witnesses.

317.3.1 CRIME VICTIM LIAISON DUTIES

The crime victim liaison shall ensure that (18 P.S. § 11.212):

- (a) The Department maintains a supply of the crime victim forms developed by Pennsylvania's Commission on Crime and Delinquency's Office of Victims' Services.
- (b) Records of victim notification are maintained by the Department.
- (c) Victims receive information regarding the availability of crime victims' compensation, including an application form for compensation, within 48 hours of filing a report with the Department.
- (d) Victims receive the Crime Victims Act information within 24 hours of initial contact with the Department.
- (e) Crime victim forms are attached to the reports received by the Department and that there is a place included for a victim to acknowledge receipt of required information.
- (f) Victims of a personal injury crime are notified of the arrest or detention of a suspect and of the filing of a complaint related to the crime within 24 hours.
- (g) Victims of a personal injury crime are notified of the escape of an individual from the custody of the Department as soon as practicable.
- (h) Property belonging to victims that was seized as evidence is returned in a timely manner after determination is by the prosecutor that the property is no longer needed.

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317.4 CRIME VICTIMS

Officers should provide all victims with the applicable victim information handouts and document it in the report.

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.

317.5 VICTIM INFORMATION

The Administration Lieutenant 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 violence and sexual assault victims (18 Pa.C.S. § 2711; 23 Pa.C.S. § 6105).
- (b) An advisement that a sexual assault victim has a right to a medical forensic examination (35 P.S. § 10172.5).
- (c) Assurance that sexual assault victims will not incur out-of-pocket expenses for forensic medical exams or evidence preservation during the criminal statute of limitations, and information about evidence collection, storage, and preservation in sexual assault cases (34 USC § 10449; 34 USC § 20109; 35 P.S. § 10172.5).
- (d) Information regarding victims' right to consult with a sexual assault counselor, if applicable (35 P.S. § 10172.5).
- (e) 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.
- (f) Information concerning the availability of protective orders and policies related to the enforcement of protective orders for victims of sexual assault (35 P.S. § 10172.5).
- (g) A clear explanation of relevant court orders and how they can be obtained.
- (h) Information regarding available compensation for qualifying victims of crime (18 P.S. § 11.701 et seq.; 35 P.S. § 10172.5).
- (i) Pennsylvania Statewide Automated Victim Information and Notification (PA SAVIN) information, 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.
- (j) Notice regarding U visa and T visa application processes.
- (k) Resources available for victims of identity theft.
- (l) A place for the officer's name, badge number, and any applicable case or incident number.
- (m) The rights provided to victims of crime as provided in 18 P.S. § 11.201 and 35 P.S. § 10172.5.

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- (n) Information regarding the address confidentiality program administered by the Pennsylvania Office of Victim Advocate (23 Pa.C.S. § 6704).

317.6 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.

317.7 TRAINING

The Training Officer shall ensure that all members of this department receive appropriate training related to this policy, including familiarity with the availability of crime victims' compensation (18 P.S. § 11.212).