Washington County

Victim/Witness

Assistance

Washington County
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Victim/Witness Program Services

As a victim of crime, you have certain rights. It is the duty of the Victim/Witness Program to make sure these rights are protected and that you are informed of and understand these rights. These rights include:

PROTECTION

- ***Protective Orders:*** In some cases, a protective order can be issued to prohibit the accused person from having contact with or engaging in certain behaviors with the victim.
- ***Separate Waiting Areas:*** Separate waiting areas are available while waiting for court proceedings. Escorts can also be provided into and out of the building.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

- ***Compensation:*** If you are traveling from out of town, you may be entitled to payment for mileage, meals and lodging.
- ***Property Return:*** Certain evidence **may** be returned before the case is heard in court.
- ***Restitution:*** The defendant may be ordered to pay for any losses due to property damage, medical expenses, etc.
- ***Criminal Injuries Compensation:*** If you are a victim of crime, you may be eligible for compensation for unreimbursed medical expenses, funeral expenses or lost wages. Contact the Victim/Witness Program to see if you qualify.

NOTIFICATIONS

- ***Intercession:*** The Program can provide documentation for your employer/school verifying your appearance in court or for appointments with the Commonwealth's Attorney.
- ***Court Dates:*** You may request to be notified of any changes in court dates.
- ***Release of Defendants:*** You have the right to be notified if the defendant is transferred from one facility to another, escapes, changes his/her name, is released, discharged or is placed on parole. Contact the Program for more information.
- ***Appeals:*** You have the right to be notified if your case is appealed or the defendant files a habeas corpus petition. Contact the Program for more details.

VICTIM INPUT

- ***Remaining in the Courtroom:*** As a victim, you have the right to remain in the courtroom unless the judge determines that your presence would impede the trial.
- ***Victim Impact Statements:*** If the defendant is found guilty, you have the right to express to the judge or jury what impact the crime has had on you.
- ***Victim Input:*** You have the right to give input at the plea bargain stage.

COURTROOM ASSISTANCE

- You may apply to have your address and telephone number kept confidential.
- You have the right to an interpreter.
- In certain sex offenses, you may ask for a closed preliminary hearing.
- In certain cases involving children who have to testify, closed-circuit television may be requested.

In addition to the services listed above, the Program can assist with:

- Crisis Intervention
- Emergency Assistance
- Courtroom Tours
- Court Preparation
- Filing for Compensation / Restitution
- Case Information

*IF YOU WISH TO REMAIN ACTIVE IN YOUR CASE AND RECEIVE INFORMATION, YOU **MUST** INFORM US OF ANY CHANGES IN ADDRESS AND/OR TTELEPHONE NUMBER.*

****Other Things to Know****

Dropping Charges- Once you have filed charges, the only person who can drop them is the judge. You must appear in court.

Continuances- Sometimes trials cannot take place as scheduled. We will make every effort to notify you in advance, but you may call the day before court is scheduled to determine if the date is still accurate.

Subpoena- An order from the court directing you to appear at a particular time and place to testify. Failure to appear may constitute a separate offense.

Preliminary Hearing- This is the first proceeding held when a person is arrested for a felony. A judge listens to the evidence of the crime and determines whether there is probable cause that an offense has been committed. The victim generally testifies.

Grand Jury- A random selection of seven citizens whose duty it is to hear the Commonwealth's evidence on felony charges and decide if the defendant should be indicted. The Grand Jury meets the fourth Tuesday of January, April, July, and October to hear testimony on what evidence is available. This hearing is not open to the public.

Defendant- The person charged with committing a crime.

Felony- A crime punishable by possible imprisonment in the state penitentiary.

Misdemeanor- A crime punishable by no more than twelve months in jail.

Docket- A schedule of court cases to be heard on a particular day in a certain court.

Sentencing- At the conclusion of a trial, if the defendant is found guilty, the judge or the jury will decide how much time he/she should serve either incarcerated or on probation, or a combination of the two. Sentencing may be scheduled for a later date so that a pre-sentence report can be prepared by the probation and parole office. You may attend the sentencing if you wish, and the Commonwealth's Attorney may request your presence.

Tips on Testifying

1. ***Tell the Truth.*** Answer each question truthfully. If you do not know an answer, say you do not know.

2. ***Bring Evidence.*** Bring photographs, repair bills and other proof that the crime was committed. If you need witnesses subpoenaed, contact us immediately.

3. ***Dress Appropriately.*** It is important to be respectful of the Court so the Judge will know you are serious. Dress as you might to go to a job interview, a meeting at school or a church service. Shorts are not allowed in Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court.

4. ***Recall the Incident.*** Be prepared to tell the court what happened in your own words. Picture the scene so you can testify accurately.

5. ***Never Lose Your Temper.*** The defense attorney may make you feel uncomfortable, but he has an obligation to ask questions and determine the truth. Hold your temper and your testimony will have a better chance of being heard. Remember - you are NOT on trial, the defendant is.

6. ***Be Prepared to Wait.*** The court docket can be very lengthy. Bring a book to help you pass the time.

7. ***Answer only the Question Asked of You.*** Do not volunteer information. If you do not understand a question, ask that it be explained.

8. ***Do Not:*** Chew gum while testifying.

Important Telephone Numbers

◊ Victim/Witness Assistance.....676-6038

- ◊ Commonwealth's Attorney.....676-6291
- ◊ Washington County Sheriff's Office 676-6000
- ◊ Legal Aid .....Toll Free 866-534-5243
- ◊ Magistrates Office.....676-6228
- ◊ Abingdon Police Department....628-3111
- ◊ Glade Springs Police Department.....429-5134
- ◊ Damascus Police Department.....475-3341
- ◊ Washington County Department of Social Services.....645-5000
- ◊ Highlands Community Counseling Center.....628-9504
- ◊ Childrens' Advocacy Center……. 276-645-5867
- ◊ Abuse Alternatives……..628-6940 (24 hour crisis line).. 1-800-987-6499

Crisis Center (Rape Crisis Program 24 hour).....628-7731

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