



TALLAHASSEE POLICE DEPARTMENT

GENERAL ORDERS

 Proudly Policing Since 1826	SUBJECT Victim Advocacy		 Nationally Accredited 1986
	CHIEF OF POLICE <i>Signature on File</i>		
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AUTHORITY/RELATED REFERENCES

CIB-14, Victim Advocate Unit
 Florida Constitution, Article 1, Section 16, Rights of accused and of victims
 FS 741.29, Domestic Violence; Investigation ... Notice to Victims ...
 FS Chapter 960, Victim Assistance
 General Order 2, Chain of Command-General Management
 General Order 18, Criminal Investigations
 General Order 37, Notification of Death or Serious Injury

ACCREDITATION REFERENCES

CALEA Chapter 55
 CFA Chapter 14, 15

KEY WORD INDEX

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POLICY

In the course of Department-investigated crimes or events, members are responsible for ensuring victims and witnesses are treated with fairness, compassion, and dignity in compliance with applicable Florida Statutes.

DEFINITIONS

Victim Advocate: A member with the specific responsibility of assisting victims and witnesses.

Victim Notification Card: A Department document utilized to collect victim contact information to notify certain crime victims in the event of the suspect's

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release from a detention facility (detention facility personnel make the notification to the victim using the information from the card). Form number: [PD 141](#).

Victim Rights Pamphlet: A Department informational brochure provided to victims and witnesses of crime. Form numbers: [PD 233 \(English\)](#) and [PD 233B \(Spanish\)](#).

PROCEDURES

I. VICTIM ADVOCACY GUIDELINES FOR OFFICERS & DETECTIVES

- A. The primary investigating officer has the initial responsibility of informing victims and witnesses of their rights during an investigation, and shall:
 - 1. Provide information about services, such as:
 - a. Medical attention, and
 - b. Victim advocacy services.
 - 2. Advise victims what actions to take if the suspect, their companions, or family threatens or intimidates the victim or witness.
 - 3. Provide the incident case number and explain the next steps in the investigation and/or prosecution of the case.
 - 4. Provide the Department telephone number as a contact to report additional information or receive updates on the status of the case.
 - 5. Provide a Victim Rights Pamphlet to the victim or witness and, if needed, explain its contents.
 - 6. Complete a Domestic Violence Lethality Assessment (PD234) per FS 741.29 (1c) (i.e., the Lethality Assessment Protocol or LAP) when responding to incidents involving intimate partner violence to determine the risk of serious harm or lethality as outlined in General Order 21.
- B. Provide a Victim Rights Pamphlet to victims (or family members when appropriate) and witnesses in incidents when:
 - 1. An offense report is completed for a criminal investigation, or
 - 2. A traffic crash report involves a criminal charge (e.g., traffic homicide, DUI).

- C. The Victim Rights Pamphlet provides information on the following topics:
1. Crime compensation,
 2. Crisis intervention services,
 3. Supportive and bereavement counseling,
 4. Social service referrals,
 5. Community-based victim treatment programs, and
 6. The victim's role in the criminal justice system, stages in the criminal justice process, and their right of restitution.
- D. Members shall complete the applicable sections of the Victim Rights Pamphlet, informing the victim of pertinent incident information (e.g., case number, officer name, subsequent steps in the processing of the case).
- E. Officers and detectives who arrest a suspect shall make prudent and reasonable efforts to either promptly:
1. Notify the victim of the arrest, or
 2. Notify the primary officer/ detective of the arrest so they can notify the victim promptly.
- F. In the criminal cases identified below, arresting officers/detectives are responsible for the completion of a [Victim Notification Card \(PD 141\)](#) and ensuring the completed PD 141 accompanies the arrestee's booking paperwork to the detention facility.
1. The information on the PD 141 shall include the most up-to-date contact available to the officer/detective.
 2. The PD 141 shall be completed for the following crimes:
 - a. Homicide and attempted homicide,
 - b. Sexual battery and attempted sexual battery,
 - c. Stalking,
 - d. Domestic violence, and
 - e. Dating Violence

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3. Detention facility personnel are responsible for making the notification to the victim using the information from the PD 141.
- G. If a member becomes aware of a credible threat to a victim or witness (or their families, friends, or acquaintances) from the suspect, the member shall:
1. Promptly attempt to contact and alert the victim, witness, or other affected person,
 2. When the victim or witness (or other affected person) is in another jurisdiction, contact the appropriate law enforcement agency so reasonable precautions may be taken, and
 3. Ensure the appropriate Department offense report is completed and filed to document the threat and the notification (or attempted notification) to the victim, witness, or other affected person.
- H. Upon completion of an investigation and/or prosecution, property belonging to a victim which was held for evidentiary purposes shall be promptly returned unless there is a compelling law enforcement reason for retaining it.

II. VICTIM ADVOCATE UNIT UTILIZATION

- A. The Victim Advocate Unit (VAU) is a component of the Criminal Investigations Bureau (CIB) and follows the CIB chain of command as outlined in General Order 2 (Chain of Command-General Management).
- B. The availability of, and the call-out criteria for, victim advocates are outlined in the Call-Out Procedures section of General Order 18 (Criminal Investigations).
- C. Referrals to the VAU should be :
1. Related to a Department-investigated incident,
 2. For members and their families as needed or requested (e.g., family member illness or death), and
 3. NOT for suicidal persons.
- D. At a crime or incident scene where a victim advocate is present, officers/detectives shall ensure the advocate is not left alone on the scene, for safety reasons. The only exception to this is when the advocate and

sworn member both believe the circumstances at the scene do not warrant the sworn member remaining there.

III. VAU – VICTIM AND WITNESS SERVICES

- A. Victim advocates are responsible for a proactive approach to providing victim services, and shall:
 - 1. Review and assess Department offense reports daily.
 - 2. Review any Lethality Assessment results and ensure appropriate advocacy or shelter referrals were made. Any gaps in victim support shall be addressed promptly.
 - 3. Respond appropriately to referrals from citizens, members, social service entities, and law enforcement agencies. And,
 - 4. Respond promptly to VAU call-outs.
- B. Victim advocates are responsible for providing and coordinating services for victims and witnesses who have suffered emotional or physical traumas as a result of being involved in a Department-investigated crime or event, and as warranted, shall provide:
 - 1. Timely on-scene assistance and crisis intervention services.
 - 2. Assessment and advocacy for a victim's emergency needs, such as food, clothing, and shelter.
 - 3. Information regarding a victim's rights as outlined in Florida Statutes, including assistance in filing for crime compensation benefits.
 - 4. Follow-up services and referrals for counseling and other community social services to assist with their physical and emotional needs, to include assistance in appointment scheduling, and transportation to an appointment, if warranted.
 - 5. Follow-up contacts with persons who, due to the severity of an incident, seem to have above-average service needs. And,
 - 6. Liaison services between the victim or witness and the Department, the State Attorney's Office, and the court system, to include:
 - a. Emergency legal advocacy (e.g., filing of protective injunctions),

- b. Explaining to the victim or witness, the transition of services from the Department VAU to the State Attorney's Office Victim's Advocate.
 - c. Explaining the role of a victim or witness within the prosecutorial process.
- C. When appropriate, victim advocates shall provide advocacy services to a victim's family members and persons with a significant association to a victim.

IV. VAU – OTHER SERVICES

Victim advocates are responsible for assisting the Department and community in other victim-related services and shall, as needed:

- A. Assist officers/detectives in notifying the next-of-kin of a deceased or seriously injured/ill person,
- B. Provide referrals for crime scene clean-up at the direction of a victim or their family,
- C. Conduct in-service training in victimization-related areas (e.g., victims' rights),
- D. Present community awareness programs to familiarize persons with available Department victim advocacy services and victims' rights, and
- E. Render services to members and their families following line-of-duty deaths or serious injuries, which may include:
 - 1. Next-of-kin notifications,
 - 2. Assisting the family at the hospital,
 - 3. Providing emotional support,
 - 4. Assisting with legal and employee benefit matters, and
 - 5. Other services traditionally offered to crime victims.

History: previous title (*victim advocate*) – issued 08/01/1992, revised 12/15/2000, 10/01/2001 (*title change – victim advocacy*), 09/12/2007, 08/29/2018, and 11/10/2023.