

	<p style="text-align: center;">BRIDGEPORT POLICE DEPARTMENT</p> <p style="text-align: center;">POLICY AND PROCEDURE GENERAL ORDER</p>	Distribution	General Order Number
		ALL PERSONNEL	6.14
		Original Issue Date	Reissue/Effective Date
		11/19/19	1/31/20
Order Title: VICTIM/WITNESS ASSISTANCE - ADMINISTRATION		Accreditation Standard: POSTC: 2.5.4, 3.4.5, 3.4.6	Section 6
		Section Title INVESTIGATIVE FUNCTIONS	
Rescinds: 3.5.6, 3.9.1		Armando J. Perez, Chief of Police	

This General Order is for departmental use only and does not apply in any criminal or civil proceeding. This General Order should not be construed as creation of a higher legal standard of safety or care in an evidentiary sense with respect to third party claims. Violations of this General Order will only form the basis for departmental administrative sanctions. Violations of law will form the basis for civil and criminal sanctions in a recognized judicial setting

I. PURPOSE

To establish a written directive that describes the Bridgeport Police Department's procedures related to the administration of our Victim/Witness Assistance Program.

II. POLICY

It is the policy of the Bridgeport Police Department to ensure that the Department makes every reasonable effort to assure that the personal rights and safety of the victim and witnesses are afforded and protected by the Department's actions. Department members are to be particularly sensitive to the special needs of the victims and families of crimes such as domestic violence, child abuse, sexual assault, and abuse of the elderly. The Department shall conduct a periodic assessment of the needs and assistance that are required by victims and witnesses.

III. PROCEDURE

A. Rights of Victims and Witnesses

1. Victim/Witness Assistance - General

a. The Department's goals and objectives applicable to Victim/Witness Assistance are as follows:

- 1) To inform police officers of issues involving victim/witness rights and of resources available to them and to the victim/witness;

- 2) To provide social assistance, referral, emotional support, and other help to persons who are physically, financially or emotionally harmed by crime;
 - 3) To reduce the number of cases dismissed due to victim/witness problems during the interval after arrest and before conviction;
 - 4) To provide professional handling and treatment by police to victims/witnesses consistent with their important investigative and prosecutorial role;
 - 5) To protect the rights of victims and witnesses and meet certain obligations in victim/witness assistance imposed by law.
- b. The Detective Bureau Commander or designee will have overall responsibility for administering and coordinating the Department's role in victim/witness assistance and will have authority to direct the activities of all departmental personnel in carrying out the obligations of this function. The Department may utilize the services of the Superior Court Family Relations Office, the Center for Family Justice, Crisis Intervention, or services at Bridgeport Hospital or Saint Vincent's Hosital. The Detective Bureau Commander or designee shall coordinate the efforts between the Department and these available services. Other Supervisors, and personnel so designated, shall be directly responsible for administering any victim/witness activities and assistance that apply to their respective functions. Specific responsibilities of others include:
- 1) Staff supervision and guidance of the activities of first responders who come into direct contact with victims/witnesses, such as patrol officers, school resource officers, investigators, and other police officers and civilian employees;
 - 2) Line supervision of all non-sworn employees and volunteers who are directly involved in victim/witness assistance efforts;
 - 3) Maintaining liaison with other criminal justices agencies, governmental, non-governmental agencies and organizations concerned with victim/witness needs and rights; and
 - 4) Working closely with the Coordinator(s) of the Victim/Witness Advocate(s) of the Connecticut State's Attorney Office, various family and domestic abuse shelters, sexual assault crisis centers, and other local and state agencies and advocates for victim's rights.

2. Victim/Witness Rights Introduction

- a. The rights of victims and witnesses are described in detail in the Connecticut General Statutes, as amended. Other state and Federal statutes offer protection for witnesses and victims and include prohibitions against intimidation and bribery.
- b. Some of these rights include making information available to victims and witnesses, to assist with case preparation, to assist in scheduling appearances, and to guarantee victims the right to either testify or to file a victim impact statement to detail the injury or other loss suffered. Victims and witnesses are entitled to certain compensations for injury or loss and may also be entitled to compensation and relief for medical benefits, lost wages, replacement service costs, and certain other losses.
- c. Department personnel will treat victims and witnesses with fairness, compassion, and dignity, and must remain aware that successful prosecution and/or completion of an investigation may depend on the cooperation and degree of assistance provided by victims and witnesses. This Department will remain committed to the development, implementation, and continuation of appropriate victim/witness programs and activities.

3. Description Of Victim/Witness Rights

- a. In addition to the legal rights established by Connecticut Statutes for victims and witnesses, the Department shall afford all victims/witnesses the following:
 - 1) To be notified of the status of an investigation, and when a defendant is being released from our custody. Such notifications may include telephone contact, voice message, personal contact, etc., and shall be documented in a supplemental report.
 - 2) To be protected from harm or threats of harm because of cooperation in the prosecution of a case.
 - 3) To have personal property promptly returned when it is no longer needed as evidence.
 - 4) To be informed of financial assistance and other social services available and to be informed of Victim's Assistance Funds and how to apply for it.

- b. Although our department may not be directly responsible for carrying out some of these rights to victims and witnesses, the Victim/Witness Assistance Coordinator shall put procedures into effect so that department personnel have the means to refer victims to the appropriate agencies.
- c. In addition to the above rights of victims/witnesses, the Department shall also provide the following assistance, which may also be coordinated through other local and state public and private agencies:
 - 1) Victim's Assistance Program - A statutorily established program that compensates designated classes of victims from state funds for specified crime-related losses resulting from specified crimes.
 - 2) Restitution - A court-imposed sanction requires offenders to personally compensate their victims for crime-related losses. Restitution may be mandatory or discretionary with the sentencing court. It is usually ordered as a condition of probation or suspended sentence.
 - 3) Protection From Intimidation - Statutory provisions establishing criminal penalties for persons who intimidate or attempt to intimidate victims, witnesses, or informants with intent to prevent their testimony or discourage the reporting of a crime. Laws authorizing courts to enjoin such activities are also included.
 - 4) Elderly Victims - Statutory provisions designating specific criminal penalties for crimes committed against elderly victims or establishing programs to prevent abuse, neglect or the exploitation of the elderly, including laws requiring law enforcement officials or medical personnel to report incidents of abuse, neglect or exploitation of elderly persons.
 - 5) Sexual Assault Victims - Statutory provisions that authorize compensation to sexual assault victims for special medical services, establish special programs dealing with the problem of sexual assault (including counseling and special prosecution programs), or allow child sexual assault victims a less public atmosphere in which to testify.
 - 6) Domestic Violence - Statutory provisions against committing domestic violence against a family or household member, items to be considered when setting bail, and the filing for a

Temporary Protection Order prior to trial.

- 7) Sexual Offender Notification – Statutory provisions requiring the registering of sexual offenders, and the notification to the community of certain sexual offenders.
- 8) Stalking Law - Statutory provisions against engaging in a pattern of conduct which would cause physical harm or distress to a person, the filing of an anti-stalking protection order, items to be considered when setting bail, and ordering a mental evaluation of offenders are described in the applicable sections of the Connecticut General Law.

4. Victim/Witness Training

- a. The Detective Bureau Commander or designee, in conjunction with the Department's training function, shall be responsible for administering training to all department personnel regarding victim/witness rights and needs, the role of law enforcement in meeting these needs, and information about existing agency and community victim/witness assistance programs available to the public. This training shall include, at a minimum, the following elements:
 - 1) Informing new civilian employees of the Department's victim/witness assistance program. Since many non-sworn personnel (dispatchers, clerks, etc.) many have contact with the public during their normal working day, it is important that they be aware of the program. They should at least be able to provide knowledgeable information to the public regarding this program, and who will be able to assist them with their future needs.
 - 2) Training of newly hired police officers, through the Employee Orientation Program and/or the Field Training and Evaluation Program. Police are among the first responders to a scene and should have the necessary knowledge and skills to assist victims and witnesses, whether it is accomplished directly by their personal involvement, or by referral to an agency that can provide the service.
- b. An annual retraining program shall be developed for all department personnel. This training shall reflect the findings of periodic analysis that is conducted. This retraining will serve as a refresher on the particulars of the program, and bring all personnel up to date on any new services, agencies, or needs of victims and witnesses. This information can be disseminated through roll call training and at

monthly staff meetings.

B. Implementation and Delivery of Victim/Witness Assistance Services

1. The Detective Bureau Commander or designee shall oversee the implementation and delivery of the program. The Chief of Police may, from time to time, assign other agency members to assist the coordination in certain activities, such as developing written policy and procedures, research, analysis, or delivery of particular victim/witness needs. Although the Detective Bureau Commander or designee may not necessarily deal directly with all victims and witnesses, this person shall:
 - a. Train, guide, and monitor the activities of those who do as first responders, such as dispatchers and patrol officers, and those who do during follow-up investigations, such as criminal investigator, various Department advocates, and community volunteers.
 - b. Act as a liaison with other governmental and private social services and agencies that the Department will come into contact with.
 - c. Ensure that victim/witness services are rendered to agency personnel and their families following line-of-duty deaths or serious injury, in conjunction with efforts of the Employee Assistance Program and other Department support services.
 - d. Create a victim/witness referral manual that is accessible to all department personnel, and ensure that this manual is kept up to date.
2. The Victim/Witness Assistance Coordinator shall set yearly goals and objectives, bearing in mind the needs of victims as determined by analysis of their needs, and the available services within our area to meet these needs. Goals and objectives should be obtainable and measurable. The needs of those with the most serious problems should be met first, along with developing services and programs that are designed to address these problems. Neglecting to make attainable goals and objectives will be at the expense of the victims.
3. The Detective Bureau Commander or designee) will complete a review of the Department's participation, activities, and liaison in the local and state victim/witness assistance program every three (3) years.

C. Confidentiality of Victims/Witnesses

1. As in the rights of privacy for the arrestee, these same rights of privacy shall apply to victims and witnesses. Records and files that contain the names of victims and witnesses shall be kept in an area with limited access, thereby

maintaining the confidentiality of their role in case development.

2. Records pertaining to any victim/witness may be inspected or examined as necessary by Department personnel for case development to the extent consistent with Department policy, the Connecticut Public Records Act, and other applicable laws governing the access of public records. Unless otherwise directed by law, the records and files of victims and witnesses and their role in case development will be kept confidential.

D. Providing Information About Victim/Witness Assistance Services

1. The Department will periodically inform the public and media about the Department's victim/witness assistance services. The primary mechanisms for the distribution of this information can be accomplished in a variety of ways, including:
 - a. Articles in local newspapers
 - b. Public Cable TV Programs
 - c. Information on the Department's pre-recorded telephone message program
 - d. Pamphlets, brochures and other department publications
 - e. Citizen Police Academies
 - f. Information distributed to Neighborhood Watch groups and at other meetings
 - g. Contact with victims and witnesses
 - h. Bridgeport Police Department website
2. Additional information may be provided as special circumstances and/or situations arise within the community, and/or to specific target groups within the community. The Department will maintain contact with other criminal justice agencies and with public and private sector agencies and organizations concerned with victim/witness needs and rights.

E. Relationship With Other Agencies

1. The Department, through the Training Division and others, shall maintain a close liaison with other criminal justice agencies, governmental and nongovernmental agencies, organizations concerned with victim/witness rights and needs, and the public in general. These agencies have been identified through the analysis in this order and are contained in the Department's resource manual for victim/witness assistance. The Training Division Commander or designee's objectives shall be:
 - a. To be knowledgeable of outside sources that assist in victim/witness efforts.

- b. To have the Department base referrals on accurate and up-to-date services offered by these sources.
 - c. To maintain a channel of communication so that the Department can effectively serve the needs of victims and witnesses.
- 2. The Training Division Commander or designee shall also be responsible for keeping the community informed as to the Program's services, including a list of services available through public and social service agencies, such as shelters and traveler's aid organizations. First responders and criminal investigators who come into direct contact with victims/witnesses should also keep the community informed of such information. In addition, this information can also be provided by School Resource Officers, Domestic Violence Advocates, and Senior Citizen's Advocates; and through Department programs such as Citizen Police Academies.