

	<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	<b>6.15</b>
		Original Issue Date	Reissue/Effective Date
		11/19/19	1/31/20
<p>Order Title:</p> <p><b>VICTIM/WITNESS ASSISTANCE - OPERATION</b></p>		Accreditation Standard: POSTC: 2.5.11, 3.4.15	Section
		6	
<p>Rescinds: 3.5.6</p>		<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Armando J. Perez, Chief of Police</b></p>	
		<p style="text-align: center;">Section Title INVESTIGATIVE FUNCTIONS</p>	

*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 operational procedures of its Victim/Witness Assistance Program.

## II. POLICY

It is the policy of the Bridgeport Police Department to establish procedures that govern the operation of our Victim/Witness Assistance Program. The guidelines established in this General Order are designed to ensure that victims and witnesses are treated with fairness, compassion, dignity, and receive professional handling. More importantly, the Department must make every reasonable effort to assure that the personal rights and safety of the victim or witness are protected by its 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 because of their effect on the delicate structure of the family unit and the community in general.

The Department's victim/witness assistance programs and activities will provide victims and witnesses of crime with all reasonable assistance, including in the following situations:

- Initial assistance and/or referrals
- Victims/Witnesses receiving threats and intimidation
- Preliminary investigations
- Follow-up investigations
- Arrest and post-arrest processing of suspect
- Notifying next-of-kin of deceased, seriously injured, and seriously ill persons

### III. PROCEDURE

#### A. Introduction

1. Department personnel shall be aware of victim and witness services that the Department other governmental or private sector organizations can offer regarding the need for medical attention, counseling, and emergency financial assistance. The victim/witness assistance information contained in this policy shall be available to the public on a 24-hour basis.

#### B. Assistance Provided by the Department

1. The Emergency Operations Center usually serves as the primary point of initial contact regarding information about victim/witness assistance and services. Members of the public are able to contact the Department 24-hours a day and receive a prompt response to any emergency situation or requests for information. Police Dispatchers and other personnel receiving these calls shall determine the caller's needs so that a proper response can be provided as follows:
  - a. An emergency situation requiring immediate police and/or EMS assistance
  - b. A non-emergency situation, generally requiring that the Dispatcher forward the call to the sector officer, supervisor, or a particular advocate, who shall then take the time to provide information about victim/witness assistance services that are supplied by the Department

#### C. Assistance Provided by Other Organizations

1. In addition to the State's Info Line (311), Department members may also serve as a point-of-contact 24-hours a day regarding victim/witness referral information that is provided by other organizations for victims/witnesses in need of medical attention, counseling, and emergency financial assistance.

#### D. Cases of Threats and Intimidation

1. No threat against a victim/witness is to be taken lightly, and all incidents shall be formally documented on a police report. In many instances, the threat may be significant enough to constitute a criminal offense. The Department shall provide appropriate assistance to victims/witnesses who have been threatened or who, in the judgment of the Department, have provided specific and credible reasons for fearing intimidation or further victimization.
2. What constitutes "appropriate assistance" is a judgment call that is determined

by the nature of the case, the resources available to the Department, and commensurate with the danger faced by the victim/witness. This could range from offering a frightened victim or witness words of encouragement, assisting in securing a restraining or protective order, or in extreme cases, arranging for protective custody in cases where the victim/witness's life is in danger. Assistance may also include:

- a. extra patrol, residence, or business checks
  - b. video surveillance
  - c. movement to a shelter agency
3. If the Department becomes aware of a danger, or potential danger, to a victim/witness who is not physically present within this agency's jurisdiction, it will promptly attempt to contact the victim/witness. In addition, the agency with jurisdiction shall also be contacted and the following steps taken:
- a. The supervisor of the agency shall be informed of the situation and requested to take reasonable precautions on behalf of the person.
  - b. Request that the Bridgeport investigating officer of the case be advised of any additional information received by that agency concerning the victim/witness.
  - c. Document the name of the persons who were advised from the other agency along with all pertinent information on the police report.
4. In all cases, a Supervisor shall be notified of the situation. In addition, notification shall be made to the following, as warranted:
- a. Victim/Witness Program Assistance Coordinator
  - b. Departmental Advocates
  - c. Criminal Investigators
  - d. Patrol Officers
  - e. Police Dispatchers

E. Providing Information About Available Services

1. Investigating officers will provide information to victims/witnesses about applicable services, including medical attention, compensation programs, emergency financial assistance, and victim/witness advocacy. A formal Bridgeport Police Victim Advocacy program exists (203-332-5532), who can provide assistance or further referrals for victims.

F. Providing Advice About Future Threats or Intimidations

1. Victims/witnesses will be advised what to do if threatened or intimidated by the suspect(s), the suspect(s) companions, friends, family, or associates. This may include the proper and most expeditious manner of reporting such

occurrences for documentation and investigation purposes. Connecticut General Statutes also protect victims/witnesses by addressing:

- a. Intimidation and bribery of a crime victim or witness
- b. Victim or witness protection orders

G. Providing Information About the Investigative Process

1. Victims/witnesses will be given the Department CFS number, when available, to reference the case, the name of the officer responsible for the report, and the subsequent steps in the processing of the case. This information may not be readily available at the time of the preliminary investigation. The information may be provided in a subsequent contact with the victim/witness, or the victim/witness may be instructed to call the agency during normal business hours to receive the information.

H. Providing Information About the Status of the Case

1. Victims/witnesses will be provided with the Department telephone number(s) to call to report additional information about the case, or to receive information about the status of the case. The investigating officer can meet this requirement by providing his/her business card. Normally, these cases get referred to the Detective Bureau and a detective will be designated as the contact for additional information unless the case is reassigned for follow-up investigation.

I. Recontacting the Victim/Witness Periodically

1. Investigators should periodically recontact victims/witnesses to determine whether their needs are being met. Information about additional security measures that a victim can take regarding property crimes and crimes against persons should be provided.

J. Explaining the Procedures in the Prosecution of Cases

1. Personnel who handle the follow-up investigation will explain to victims/witnesses the procedures involved in the prosecution of their case(s) and the role they play, or may be expected to play, in those procedures. The Shift Sergeant or Program Coordinator may perform or assist in the performance of this function if requested by the assigned officer.

K. Scheduling Line-ups, Interviews, and Other Appearances

1. If feasible or applicable, line-ups, interviews, and other required appearances should be scheduled at the convenience of the victim/witness, whenever possible and practical. If requested, and if possible, transportation should be

made available to the victim/witness if necessary.

L. Prompt Return of Victim/Witness Property Taken as Evidence

1. Victim/witness property taken as evidence will be returned as soon as possible, based on applicable evidentiary rules, property procedures, and where permitted by law assists the victim/witness in the recovery process. The officer assigned to the Property Room shall make arrangements for the return of property to owners.

M. Assigning a Victim Advocate During Follow-up Investigation

1. If, in the opinion of the Department, the impact of a crime on a victim/witness has been unusually severe and has triggered above average victim/witness assistance needs, Department advocates shall be contacted to assume responsibility for contacting the victim/witness periodically to determine whether needs are being met and who may be able to assist them during the follow-up investigation.
2. Whenever there is a traumatic incident such as a sexual assault, child abuse, or other incident which requires more than the average amount of victim/witness assistance, the victim/witness should be advised of the services of a victim advocate, such as those of the office of the Connecticut State's Attorney, family abuse shelters, etc., to assist them during the follow-up investigation.

N. Arrest and Post Arrest Processing of Suspect

1. Victims/witnesses shall be notified of the arrest of the suspected offender(s) by the arresting officer or criminal investigator as soon as practical. If contact with the victim/witness is not possible at the time of arrest, then arrangements shall be made with other Department personnel to handle the notification. The victim/witness should be informed of the suspect's arrest, the charges, the arrestee's custody status, and any changes to the custody status, i.e., release on bond.
2. In instances where the offender is arrested by another agency, and perhaps released on bond before this agency is notified, the notification of the victim/witness may be delayed. However, notification should be made as soon as practical to inform the victim/witness of the arrest and/or release on bond.
3. Whenever the Department becomes aware of changes in the arrestee's custody status, the Shift Sergeant shall arrange for notification to the victim or witness of the current status and location of the offender (if known).

O. Fear Reduction and Comfort to Victims & Witnesses

1. In circumstances where there is reason to believe that a victim/witness may experience fear of reprisal, intimidation, or extraordinary apprehension about testifying, department personnel involved in the case should arrange for court security personnel and/or Departmental officers to accompany them to the courtroom and sit with them during the proceedings.

P. Deaf and Hearing Impaired (Victim/Witness/Suspect)

1. Pursuant to C.G.S. § 46a-33, Bridgeport shall provide a “qualified interpreter” to any deaf or hearing impaired person, whether that person is a victim, a witness or a suspect. Bridgeport Police Department shall also provide a “qualified interpreter” to the parent or guardian of any minor child involved in an investigation whether the child is a victim, witness or suspect.