



POLICY AND PROCEDURE **NO. 475**

Victim and Witness Assistance

Massachusetts Police Accreditation Standards:
55.1.1, 55.1.2

Date Issued: January 4, 1994

Date Effective: July 6, 2026

Review Date: July 6, 2027

3 Pages

1. PURPOSE:

The purpose of this policy is to describe the assistance the Worcester Police Department extends to victims and witnesses of crime and to ensure that they are informed of their rights and of the services available to them.

2. POLICY:

It is the policy of the Worcester Police Department to treat victims and witnesses with dignity and respect, to inform them of their rights and of available services, and to provide appropriate assistance throughout their contact with the Department and the criminal justice process.

3. SCOPE:

This policy applies to all personnel who have contact with victims or witnesses. Assistance rendered during the preliminary and follow-up investigation is governed by Policy 503 (Criminal Investigations); next-of-kin notification is governed by Policy 535 (Deceased Persons).

4. DEFINITIONS:

Victim:

A person who has suffered direct or threatened physical, emotional, or financial harm as the result of the commission of a crime, and, where the victim is deceased or incapacitated, a family member or dependent as provided by law.

Witness:

A person who has knowledge of the commission of a crime and who may be called to provide information or testimony.

5. ASSISTANCE EXTENDED TO VICTIMS AND WITNESSES:

The Department extends the following assistance to victims and witnesses, as appropriate to the circumstances: information about their rights and about the victim and witness services available to them; referral to victim service and advocacy agencies; information relevant to their safety, including what to do if they are threatened or intimidated; the case number, where known, and information about the subsequent steps in the case; and a point of contact for

reporting additional information and obtaining the status of the case. Assistance during the investigation is governed by Policy 503. **MPAC 55.1.1**

6. DEPARTMENT ROLE AND CONFIDENTIALITY:

The Worcester Police Department's role in victim and witness assistance is to identify victims and witnesses, inform them of their rights and of the services available to them, render immediate assistance within the Department's capacity, and refer them to victim service and advocacy agencies for ongoing support. Services provided directly by Department personnel are the information, notifications, referrals, and safety guidance described in this policy, together with the investigative assistance described in Policy 503; specialized counseling, shelter, and sustained advocacy are provided through outside victim service agencies to which personnel shall refer. Personnel shall safeguard the confidentiality of victim and witness information, including a victim's or witness's identity and their role in the development of a case, and shall release such information only to the extent permitted or required by applicable law. **MPAC 55.1.2**

7. VICTIM AND WITNESS RIGHTS:

Consistent with the Victim Bill of Rights under M.G.L. c. 258B, personnel shall inform victims and witnesses of the rights afforded to them, including the right to information about the case and the criminal justice process, notification of significant proceedings and dispositions where applicable, protection from intimidation, and the opportunity to seek restitution. Officers shall provide this information as required by law.

8. VICTIM COMPENSATION:

Pursuant to M.G.L. c. 258A, officers shall inform victims of violent crime, and where the victim is deceased a dependent or family member, of the availability of victim compensation and of the requirement to file a police report and a claim within the time and in the manner required by that chapter. Compensation is available up to the statutory maximum and subject to the conditions established by law. Personnel shall not represent specific dollar amounts or deadlines that are subject to statutory change; current figures are maintained by the Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance.

9. CROSS-REFERENCES:

Policy 503 (Criminal Investigations); Policy 535 (Deceased Persons); Policy 451 (Domestic Violence); Policy 540 (Sexual Assault Investigations); M.G.L. c. 258A; M.G.L. c. 258B.

Per:

Paul B. Saucier
Chief of Police

Revisions:**July 6, 2026–**

Complete rewrite of the 1994 Notification to Victims of Crimes policy, retitled Victim and Witness Assistance to reflect its expanded scope. Anchors MPAC 55.1.1 (the type of assistance extended to victims and witnesses) and 55.1.2 (the Department's role in providing victim and witness assistance, the services provided by Department personnel, and the confidentiality of victims and witnesses, including their role in case development). The prior policy addressed only victim compensation under M.G.L. c. 258A; this policy adds the rights and notifications of the Victim Bill of Rights under M.G.L. c. 258B and extends coverage to witnesses. Removed the hardcoded \$25,000 compensation cap and the specific filing deadlines, which change by statute, in favor of references to the governing chapters. Investigative victim and witness assistance during the preliminary and follow-up investigation (55.2.2, 55.2.3, 55.2.4) is governed by Policy 503 (Criminal Investigations); next-of-kin notification (55.2.6) is governed by Policy 535 (Deceased Persons); these are cross-referenced rather than duplicated. Reformatted to the Department's ADA-compliant policy template. Updated signing authority.

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