

HARNEY COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S VICTIMS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Our mission is to involve victims and the community in a restorative process that diminishes the devastating impact of crime.

On November 2, 1999, the people of the state of Oregon adopted what is now Article I, Section 42 of the Oregon Constitution. This, the Crime Victims Bill of Rights, gives victims of crime specific rights: <http://www.leg.state.or.us/> (go to Oregon Constitution, Article I, Sec 42)

The Harney County District Attorney's Victims' Assistance Program has one employee and several dedicated volunteer advocates. We are charged with the multi-faceted responsibilities of advocating for the rights of victims of crime. Oregon Law, Oregon Revised Statutes and/or Oregon Administrative Rules mandate many of the services we provide. We provide comprehensive services to victims and witnesses of all types of crime with particular emphasis on serious crimes against persons and property, including, but not limited to:

- 1) Informing victims of their case status and progress;
- 2) Performing advocate duties for victims within the criminal justice system;
- 3) Assisting victims in recovering property damaged or stolen and in obtaining restitution or compensation for medical and other expenses incurred as a result of the criminal act;
- 4) Preparing victims for pending court hearings by informing them of procedures
- 5) Accompanying victims to court hearings;
- 6) Involving victims, **when possible**, in the decision-making process in the criminal justice system;
- 7) Assisting victims in obtaining the return of property held as evidence;
- 8) Assisting victims with personal logistical problems related to court appearances; and
- 9) Developing community resources to assist victims of crime;

In addition to these services the Victims' Assistance Division coordinates, facilitates and monitors a semi-monthly Victims' Impact Panel (VIP). This is a panel of victims or co-victims from our community who come together to speak to adult and juvenile offenders who have been convicted of drug/alcohol-related offense. These offenders are court ordered to attend the VIP where they hear about the devastation to families, friends and communities as a result of their offense.

Victims Advocates work one-on-one with the victim (and/or family members) through each step of the criminal justice system to provide crisis intervention, emotional support, information, resource referrals, and accompaniment to all court appearances.

Advocates are available 24 hours a day, 7 days per week, to be dispatched by 9-1-1, a police agency, or the Victim Assistance Division to respond to hospital, police station or crime scene.

Crime victims have “round-the-clock” access to their assigned advocate from the first meeting through the process of the case, and after disposition of the case if necessary, until the victim no longer requires the services of the advocate.

Our Victims Advocates are trained to be calm, resourceful and professional during the most stressful, emotionally charged situations. This is not an overnight process. We provide continuing education for our staff, assistance as necessary, professional and personal support, guidance and direction and the right to be heard. Some of the qualification to become an advocate are: must be 18 years or older; dedicated to the belief that victims have the right to support and accurate information; must be a good listener; have the ability to be non-judgmental; ability to be supportive without being directive; commitment to speak out when need for the well-being of the victim.

If you are a victim of crime or you know someone who is a victim of crime and needs assistance, information and/or referral or if you are interested in becoming a crime victims’ advocate please feel free to contact us at the Harney County District Attorney’s Office, 450 N. Buena Vista Ave., Burns, Oregon 97720 or call (541)573-8399 or e-mail to victimsassistance@co.harney.or.us.