



04-31 Victim Services Toronto

Status: Amended

Issued: 2024.08.27

Replaces: 2022.06.15

Rationale

Duties of Police Officers as outlined in the *Community Safety and Policing Act* include “assisting victims of crime”. The Toronto Police Service (Service) works in partnership with Victim Services Toronto to provide immediate assistance to victims. Victim Services Toronto operates a wide range of programs and services to address and support victims of crime and/or circumstances. The Victim Crisis Response Program is offered 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

This Procedure will assist members managing victims of crime who require the assistance of Victim Services Toronto.

Procedure

Victims and witnesses of crime shall not be asked their immigration status, unless there are bona fide reasons to do so.

Victims’ Bill of Rights

For the information of members, the following is the general thrust of the *Victims’ Bill of Rights*:

The people of Ontario believe that victims of crime, who have suffered harm and whose rights and security have been violated by crime, should be treated with compassion and fairness. The people of Ontario further believe that the justice system should operate in a manner that does not increase the suffering of victims of crime and does not discourage victims of crime from participating in the justice process.

Victim Services Toronto

Victim Services Toronto provides immediate crisis response, intervention and prevention services on a 24 hours a day, seven days a week basis. One of its main objectives is to provide support for front-line officers in dealing with victims of crime and/or circumstances.

Victim Services Toronto can assist persons under the age of 16 years, with verbal consent from the parent or guardian. However, referral for victims under 16 years of age must still be made to the appropriate child welfare agency.

Trained members of Victim Services Toronto may be called to assist police when incidents involve sudden death, assault, psychological or physical trauma, human trafficking, intimate partner violence or any other crime-related occurrence.

Victim Crisis Response Program

The Victim Crisis Response Program provides 24/7 crisis intervention, trauma management and practical assistance for victims and their families in the immediate aftermath of crime or sudden unexpected tragedy, on-scene or by telephone (as required). The Crisis Response Teams are comprised of professional Social Workers and extensively trained volunteers.

➔ *Victim Services Crisis Counsellors always accompany volunteers.*

Victim Quick Response Program (VQRP)

The VQRP is a program of last resort that covers financial costs resulting from crimes such as funeral expenses, crime scene clean-up, emergency home repairs, traditional Indigenous health services, and emergency counselling when the individual is in need of financial support and there is no other publicly funded service available. Access to these funds is dependent on meeting strict eligibility criteria. Victims must be referred to this program within 14 days of the crime.

This program also includes Standards for Victims of Human Trafficking, which were developed in order to specifically address the complexity and multi-faceted needs of human trafficking victims. Financial assistance for human trafficking victims is available to help cover costs such as:

- personal expenses;
- safety expenses;
- travel and related expenses;
- counselling expenses; and
- residential treatment expenses.

High Risk Support Services

High Risk Support Services promotes the safety of individuals and their families who are at a high risk of experiencing violence by an intimate ex-partner. The Case Coordinator works with clients to create comprehensive safety plans, reassess safety options as circumstances change, as well as provide advocacy, court accompaniment, linkages to community supports and assist with VQRP applications.

Case Management

Case Management provides short-term intensive assistance for victims of major crime and sudden tragedy who experience multiple barriers to accessing services. The services provided are tailored to the needs of each individual and include: emotional support, systems advocacy, financial assistance, safety planning, personal safety devices and assistance with accessing a wide range of programs, services and resources.

Trauma Dog Program

The Trauma Dog Program provides Victim Services Toronto clients with the comfort of a specially trained trauma dog. The trauma dog provides unconditional comfort of touch and warmth, in addition to a healthy distraction from the agony of grief and trauma. The trauma dog is also available to investigators to support victims and witnesses during the video statement process, court preparation meetings and other triggering meetings. All Victim Services Toronto clients are eligible for this program; however priority is given to child and youth clients not eligible for assistance through the Child and Youth Advocacy Centre (CYAC) support dog program.

Victim/Witness Assistance Program (VWAP)

Members of the Victim/Witness Assistance Program (VWAP) are employees of the Ministry of the Attorney General. The purpose of VWAP is to assist victims of crime through the court process. The VWAP program is available in every court location except 311 Jarvis Street. Service members may refer victims to VWAP when a charge has been laid and is proceeding through the courts. Service members can access VWAP through Victim Services Toronto or directly through the applicable court location.

Police Officer

1. When attending an occurrence or conducting a criminal investigation shall remain mindful of signs of victims' distress/trauma and determine the need for emotional and/or practical assistance. Where notification of Victim Services Toronto is recommended, or desired, shall
 - advise the victim of Victim Services Toronto
 - obtain the victim's permission to contact Victim Services Toronto
 - dial the **police use only** telephone number, from the scene, if possible
 - ➔ *The Victim Services Toronto "Police use only" telephone number shall not be given to anyone outside the Service.*
 - advise the victim if a member of Victim Services Toronto is attending
 - provide the victim with the public telephone number of Victim Services Toronto, if appropriate
 - arrange transportation of the victim to a shelter or place of safety, if necessary
 - maintain the location of the victim confidential
2. If the victim has a disability shall contact Victim Services Toronto or the appropriate community services to provide assistance including suitable transportation, care and shelter, if necessary.
3. If there is a language barrier shall comply with Procedure 04–09.
4. When handling property shall comply with Procedure 09–01.
5. If a member of Victim Services Toronto is attending the scene shall
 - advise Victim Services Crisis Counsellors of
 - the details of the incident
 - safety of the location
 - the location of any suspect or assailant
 - remain at the scene until their arrival, when possible, unless the situation and location is safe for the victim and Victim Services Crisis Counsellor
6. If required to leave the scene shall ensure

- the situation is not dangerous for either the victim or the Victim Services Crisis Counsellor
- the issues related to the victim's safety have been addressed
- members of Victim Services Toronto are not left alone in any violent or potentially violent situation

Case Manager

7. When dealing with victims of crime shall ensure additional assistance through Victim Services Toronto is obtained, where necessary.

Investigator – Detective Operations – Homicide

8. To ensure family members of homicide victims receive assistance shall
 - ensure the Toronto Police Operations Centre (TPOC) has notified Victim Services Toronto when a homicide occurs
 - ➔ *Victim Services Crisis Counsellors will contact the lead homicide investigator.*
 - ensure the lead homicide investigator advises Victim Services Crisis Counsellors of the location of family members as well as a preferred time for Victim Services Crisis Counsellors' arrival
 - ➔ *On location, the Victim Services Crisis Counsellor will introduce themselves to family/victim and offer assistance. If victims decline assistance, the Victim Services Crisis Counsellor will immediately leave the scene.*

Officer in Charge – Toronto Police Operations Centre

9. When notified of a homicide shall notify Victim Services Toronto.

Supplementary Information

Governing Authorities

Federal: Canadian Victims Bill of Rights

Provincial:

- Community Safety and Policing Act;
- Community Safety and Policing Act (Ontario Regulations)
 - O. Reg. 392/23, Adequate and Effective Policing (General)
- Victims' Bill of Rights

Associated Governance

Toronto Police Service Board:

- Adequacy Standards Compliance Policy
 - Part 5 LI LE-024 Intimate Partner Violence Occurrences
 - Part 5 LXI LE-034 Sexual Assault Investigations

- Part 5 LXXIV LE-047 Police Response to High-Risk Individuals
- Part 7 LXXVIII VA-001 Victim Assistance
- Board Policies
 - Special Fund
 - Victims and Witnesses without Legal Status

Toronto Police Service Procedures:

- 04–09 American Sign Language and Language Interpreters
- 05–01 Preliminary Homicide Investigation
- 05–04 Intimate Partner Violence
- 05–05 Sexual Assault
- 05–22 Elder and Vulnerable Adult Abuse
- 05–27 Criminal Harassment
- 05–32 Kidnapping
- 09–01 Property – General

Definitions

For the purposes of this Procedure, the following definitions will apply:

Bona Fide Reasons means

- a victim or witness who may possibly require or may seek admission into the Provincial Witness Protection Program;
- a Crown Attorney is requesting information for disclosure purposes;
- the information is necessary to prove essential elements of an offence, or;
- investigations where the circumstances make it clear that it is essential to public or officer safety and security to ascertain the immigration status of a victim or witness.

We are dedicated to delivering police services, in partnership with our communities, to keep Toronto the best and safest place to be.

Learn more about our [Service Core Values and Competencies](#) [here](#)

