

Cobb County Police Department

Policy 6.05

VICTIM/WITNESS ASSISTANCE

Effective Date: July 20, 2012	
Rescinds: Policy 6.05 “Victim Assistance” (December 20, 2007)	
Related Orders: None	
Issued By: Chief J.R. Houser	Page 1 of 3
The words “he, his, him,” which may appear in this policy, are used generically for clarity and ease of reading. These terms are not meant to imply gender and relate to all employees of the Department.	

It is the purpose of this policy to emphasize the needs of victims/witnesses and the responsibilities of officers to provide support, information, and guidance for these individuals.

I. POLICY

It is the policy of this Department to enhance the treatment of victims/witnesses and survivors of crime and non-criminal crisis situations by providing the assistance and services necessary to speed their physical and emotional recovery, and to support and aid them as they continue to interact with the criminal justice system.

II. DEPARTMENT ROLE

- A.** Periodically, the Department policy on victim/witness assistance, as well as the implementation and delivery of victim/witness assistance by Department personnel, will be reviewed with the Victim/Witness Units of the Cobb County District Attorney’s Office and the Office of the Solicitor General.
- B.** The Department recognizes the importance of confidentiality in its dealings with victims and witnesses. Employees should make every effort to protect victims and witnesses records, files, and the victim/witness role in the development of a criminal case to the extent consistent with applicable law.
- C.** Periodically, the Public Information Officer should ensure the public and media are informed about the Victim/Witness Assistance Program.
- D.** The Department works closely with the Victim/Witness Units of the Cobb County District Attorney’s Office and the Office of the Solicitor General. These units assist victims and witnesses with referrals, court proceedings, victim compensation and also periodically offer training to Department personnel.

III. THREATENED VICTIMS/WITNESSES

Appropriate assistance will be provided to victims/witnesses who have been threatened or who, in the opinion of the officer/detective, express specific, credible reasons for fearing intimidation or further victimization.

- A.** “Appropriate assistance” should be determined by the nature of the case and resources available, and, if possible, should be commensurate with the danger faced by the victim/witness. “Appropriate assistance” may range from placing a victim in protective custody, to offering a frightened witness words of encouragement.
- B.** Generally, “appropriate assistance” will be provided by the officer/detective during preliminary and follow-up investigations. Once an arrest has been made, the Victim/Witness Unit of either the Cobb County District Attorney’s Office or the Office of the Solicitor General will be responsible for providing assistance.

IV. PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATIONS

Before leaving the scene, whether or not an arrest is made, officers must define the victim/witness assistance to be rendered during the preliminary investigation. This should be accomplished by:

- A.** Informing the victims/witnesses about the case number, if known, and subsequent steps in the processing of the case.
- B.** Advising the victim/witness what to do if the suspect or the suspect’s companions or family threatens or otherwise intimidates him.
- C.** Providing the victim/witness with a copy of the Georgia Crime Victim Bill of Rights pamphlet, generated by the Cobb County District Attorney’s Victim/Witness Unit, which contains:
 - 1. Information for the victim/witness about applicable services, e.g., counseling medical attention, compensation programs, or emergency financial assistance, and victim advocacy.
 - 2. Telephone numbers that the victim/witness may call to report additional information about the case or to receive information about the status of the case.

V. FOLLOW-UP INVESTIGATIONS

Officers/detectives will provide, at a minimum, the following victim/witness services during follow-up investigations:

- A.** Contact the victim/witness periodically to determine whether needs are being met, if the impact of a crime on a victim/witness has been unusually severe and has triggered

above-average need for victim/witness assistance.

- B.** Explain to victims/witnesses the procedures involved in the prosecution of their cases and their role in those procedures, if not an endangerment to the successful prosecution of the case.
- C.** Schedule line-ups, interviews, and other required appearances at the convenience of the victim/witness and, if needed, provide transportation, if feasible.
- D.** Return promptly victim/witness property taken as evidence (except for contraband, disputed property, and weapons used in the course of the crime), where permitted by law or rules of evidence, if feasible.
- E.** The Victim/Witness Units of the Cobb County District Attorney's Office and the Office of the Solicitor General will only assign a victim advocate after an arrest has been made. However, they may provide assistance for referrals prior to the arrest, if necessary.