

## Victim and Witness Assistance

### 336.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that crime victims and witnesses receive appropriate assistance, that they are provided with information from government and private resources, and that the agency meets all related legal mandates.

### 336.2 POLICY

The Barstow Police Department is committed to providing guidance and assistance to the victims and witnesses of crime. The employees of the Barstow Police Department will show compassion and understanding for victims and witnesses and will make reasonable efforts to provide the support and information identified in this policy.

### 336.3 CRIME VICTIM LIAISON

The Chief of Police may appoint a member of the Department to serve as the crime victim liaison. The crime victim liaison will be the point of contact for individuals requiring further assistance or information from the Barstow Police Department regarding benefits from crime victim resources. This person shall also be responsible for maintaining compliance with all legal mandates related to crime victims and/or witnesses.

#### 336.3.1 SPECIFIC VICTIM LIAISON DUTIES

The Chief of Police shall designate a crime victim liaison officer as liaison to the Victim-Witness Assistance Program office. It shall be his/her responsibility to forward copies of police reports requested by the local victim centers to verify the criminal activity upon which the application for assistance is based. The liaison officer shall carry out the functions required by state law; and devise and implement written procedures to notify and provide the required compensation information. The Release of Records and Information Policy in this manual regarding the release of reports shall be followed in all cases (Government Code § 13962(b); 2 CCR 649.35; 2 CCR 649.36).

### 336.4 CRIME VICTIMS

Officers should provide all victims with the applicable victim information handouts.

Officers should never guarantee a victim's safety from future harm, but may make practical safety suggestions to victims who express fear of future harm or retaliation. Officers should never guarantee that a person qualifies as a victim for the purpose of compensation or restitution, but may direct him/her to the proper written department material or available victim resources.

### 336.5 VICTIM INFORMATION

The Police Services Supervisor shall ensure that victim information handouts are available and current. These should include as appropriate:

- (a) Shelters and other community resources for victims of domestic violence.

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- (b) Community resources for victims of sexual assault.
- (c) Assurance that sexual assault victims will not incur out-of-pocket expenses for forensic medical exams (42 USC § 3796gg).
- (d) An advisement that a person who was arrested may be released on bond or some other form of release and that the victim should not rely upon an arrest as a guarantee of safety.
- (e) A clear explanation of relevant court orders and how they can be obtained.
- (f) Information regarding available compensation for qualifying victims of crime.
- (g) VINE® information (Victim Information and Notification Everyday), including the telephone number and whether this free service is available to allow victims to check on an offender's custody status and to register for automatic notification when a person is released from jail.
- (h) Notice regarding U-Visa and T-Visa application processes.
- (i) Resources available for victims of identity theft.
- (j) A place for the officer's name, badge number and any applicable case or incident number.
- (k) Any additional information required by state law (Penal Code § 13701; Penal Code § 679.02; Penal Code § 679.05; Penal Code § 679.026).

#### **336.6 WITNESSES**

Officers should never guarantee a witness' safety from future harm or that his/her identity will always remain confidential. Officers may make practical safety suggestions to witnesses who express fear of future harm or retaliation.

Officers should investigate allegations of witness intimidation and take enforcement action when lawful and reasonable.