

AN EVALUATION OF THE POLICE DEPARTMENT'S VICTIM ASSISTANCE UNIT



**OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE OVERSIGHT
REPORT NUMBER 2006-8**

August 1, 2006

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO) report evaluates the Victim Assistance Unit that the Montgomery County Police Department (MCPD) established five years ago to provide crime victims and witnesses with crisis intervention and other support services. The Council asked OLO to conduct a general assessment of the Victim Assistance Unit's operations, with a focus on how the Unit identifies victims, manages its caseload, and coordinates with other programs. In addition to obtaining views from staff (from inside and outside the Unit) on what is working well and any opportunities for improvement, the Council explicitly requested that OLO obtain feedback from a sample of crime victims who received services from the Unit.

BUDGET AND STAFFING

The Victim Assistance Unit is organizationally part of the Police Department's Major Crimes Division. The Unit's FY07 staffing complement consists of a full-time director and eight full-time victim advocates. The Director works out of the Community Services Division's office in Rockville and the advocates work out of other Police Department locations as follows: two advocates are assigned to the Wheaton-Glenmont District Station, one victim advocate is assigned to each of the other five District Stations, and one advocate is assigned to the Family Crimes Division.

The approved FY07 budget (personnel costs only) for the Victim Assistance Unit totals \$794K. The Unit does not receive a specific line-item budget amount for other operating costs. Between FY03 and FY07, the Unit's funding increased by \$200K (33%), due primarily to the addition of another victim advocate and annual compensation adjustments for existing staff.

IDENTIFYING CLIENTS AND PROVIDING SERVICES

Any victim or witness of a crime committed in the County is eligible to receive services from the Victim Assistance Unit. Family members of crime victims are also eligible. The Victim Assistance Unit primarily identifies potential clients by reviewing daily crime and event reports. In addition, officers notify the victim advocates of victims/witnesses in need of assistance, and victims themselves initiate contact with the Police Department.

The services provided by the Victim Assistance Unit vary by the type of crime and the specific unique needs of individual victims/witnesses. The Unit is well-positioned to address immediate needs; advocates then refer victims to other service providers who are set up to meet longer-term needs. The types of services provided by Unit staff include emergency services, referrals, case information and assistance, support services, and court-related services.

VICTIM ASSISTANCE UNIT CASELOAD

The Victim Assistance Unit places priority on serving victims of violent crimes, crimes against persons, and serious or traumatic property crimes. Victim advocates attempt to contact victims involved in priority incidents within 24 hours after an advocate learns about an incident. Over the past five years, advocates report working with crime victims/witnesses of nearly 35,000 cases. The Unit's annual caseload increased annually between 2002 and 2005. About 2/3 of the Unit's total caseload relates to property crimes, and 1/3 relates to crimes against persons.

COORDINATION AND SERVICE REFERRALS

The Victim Assistance Unit regularly coordinates services for individual victims/witnesses with other government, private, and non-profit programs. The Unit also participates in on-going victim services collaboration efforts within County Government as well as with other agencies. The Unit reports that staff regularly coordinate with at least 25 different departments, agencies, and programs.

The Victim Assistance Unit made 22,462 referrals since July 2002, with the annual number of referrals increasing each year through 2005. Advocates make referrals to one or more programs/services in person, by telephone, and/or as part of an informational packet mailed to a victim. Unit data show that almost 75% of all referrals were to the Victim Assistance and Sexual Assault Program (VASAP) and the Abused Persons Program (APP).

Program data for the past few years show that 8% of the victims referred by the Victim Assistance Unit to APP and 3% of the victims referred to VASAP "accept" the referral. Program staff define an "accepted referral" as when the Unit refers a victim to APP or VASAP and the victim contacts that program to inquire about and/or receive services. Research on victim services indicates that a low rate of accepted referrals is not uncommon because of the many reasons that individuals choose not to receive any victim services. The most frequent reasons victims decline services are because they receive the help they need from family and friends and/or they do not have the time to get involved with victim services programs.

PERFORMANCE RELATED TO ORIGINAL "BARRIERS TO SERVICE"

In 2001, when MCPD requested funding for a permanent victim services unit, the Department prepared a position paper for the County Council to justify the proposal. MCPD's position paper described five characteristics of the program structure in place and suggested each case offered an opportunity to improve the delivery of victim services. A review of program data and interviews with staff suggest that the Victim Assistance Unit has addressed, in whole or in part, each of the five "barriers to service."

- **A lack of consistent linkages to appropriate referrals from MCPD** – Victim Assistance Unit workload data indicate that the Unit provides the desired referrals. Providing program referrals, however, does not necessarily correlate with victims using those program's services as indicated by available "accepted referral" data.
- **A number of unserved or underserved victims, particularly victims of property crimes** – Victim Assistance Unit caseload data indicates that the Unit has provided services to victims in approximately 23,000 property crime cases between July 2002 and May 2006, which represents 66% of the Unit's total caseload during that period.
- **An inadequate level of trained, professional staff within MCPD** – MCPD now has professionally trained staff providing victim services out of each of the County's six district police stations. Unit staff report that victims of violent crime and serious or traumatic property crime receive direct outreach within 24 hours of an advocate learning about an incident.
- **A high volunteer turnover rate and lack of continuity in service** – The implementation of permanent staffing removed the barrier associated with volunteer turnover and service continuity.
- **Lack of departmental training regarding victimization and victim's needs** – MCPD has established a more consistent training procedure for staff related to victims of crime. These include both formal and informal training.

FEEDBACK ON COORDINATION AND SERVICE DELIVERY

OLO received feedback from staff within and outside of the Victim Assistance Unit about the Unit's coordination and service delivery. Police Department staff outside of the Victim Assistance Unit expressed strong support for the services provided by the Unit as a needed function within MCPD. Common themes among the feedback from Police Department staff include:

- District stations are the appropriate location for the victim advocates;
- Victim advocates leverage the time of other Police Department staff;
- Exact roles and usage of the advocates varies somewhat among the district stations;
- Over time, the victim advocates have gained legitimacy within different levels of MCPD;
- Spanish-speaking advocates in the Silver Spring and Wheaton-Glenmont stations are essential; and
- The Victim Assistance Unit has a strong internal and external customer service focus.

Both Police Department and Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) staff report that coordination between the Victim Assistance Unit and DHHS victim services programs has improved tremendously since 2003. Since OLO reported in 2003 that victim service providers needed to improve program coordination, MCPD and DHHS staff at all levels have worked on improving the coordination and collaboration between their respective victim services programs. Staff from both departments report that these efforts have resulted in substantial improvements.

OLO conducted a mail survey of a sample of 597 Victim Assistance Unit clients. OLO will present the complete results from the survey at the Public Safety Committee worksession on this report, tentatively scheduled for September 2006.

OLO RECOMMENDED ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

OLO's recommends the Council discuss four issues relating to the Police Department's services through the Victim Assistance Unit, as well as victim services across programs. OLO's specific recommendations for Council discussion are:

- 1. Results of OLO's Victim Assistance Unit Client Survey** – The Public Safety Committee should discuss with Police Department staff the results of the survey, the usefulness of the survey, and the need to regularly obtain some form of client feedback.
- 2. Opportunities to Further Improve Coordination** – Discuss potential implementation of four suggestions for coordination improvement suggested by Police Department and/or other agency staff.
- 3. Results of Victim Assistance Unit Referrals to APP and VASAP** – Discuss with the Victim Assistance Unit and other County staff potential strategies and a timeframe to determine the reasons behind the current rates of referral follow-up in Montgomery County.
- 4. Request a Victim Services Task Force Status Update** – Request a written progress update from the Victim Services Task Force and schedule a joint Public Safety/Health and Human Services Committee worksession to receive the update.

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CHAPTER I. AUTHORITY, SCOPE, AND ORGANIZATION OF REPORT

A. Authority

Council Resolution 15-1092, *FY 2006 Work Program of the Office of Legislative Oversight*, adopted July 26, 2005.

B. Purpose and Scope of Review

In FY02, the Montgomery County Police Department (MCPD) established a Victim Assistance Unit to provide crime victims and witnesses with crisis intervention and other support services. This OLO report responds to the Council's request to evaluate the MCPD Victim Assistance Unit five years into its operation. The scope of OLO's study included:

- A review of how the Unit identifies victims and witnesses to be served;
- An analysis of the Unit's workload;
- An assessment of the Unit's coordination with other programs that provide victim services, e.g. Abused Persons Program, Victim Assistance and Sexual Assault Program;
- The views of staff (from within and outside the Unit) about what is working well and opportunities for improvement; and
- A survey of victims/witnesses contacted by the Unit to obtain feedback about the services provided.

C. Organization of Report

Chapter II, Overview of MCPD Victim Assistance Unit, reviews the organization, history, staffing, and funding of the Unit.

Chapter III, Victim Assistance Unit Delivery of Services, reviews the type and level of services provided by the Victim Assistance Unit.

Chapter IV, Victim Assistance Unit Workload Data, summarizes and reports the available workload data for the Victim Assistance Unit.

Chapter V, Feedback on Victim Assistance Unit Coordination and Services, provides feedback from other Police Department staff and other victim services programs about how the Victim Assistance Unit delivers and coordinates services. It also describes OLO's survey of victims/witnesses about their perceptions of the services received from the Victim Assistance Unit.¹

¹ OLO conducted a mail survey of a sample of Victim Assistance Unit clients. OLO will present the complete results from the survey at the Public Safety Committee worksession on this report, tentatively scheduled for September 2006.

Chapter VI, Findings, presents the OLO's findings.

Chapter VII, Recommended Issues for Discussion, presents four issues OLO recommends for Council discussion.

Chapter VIII, Agency Comments, contains the written comments received from the Chief Administrative Officer on the final draft of the report.

D. Methodology

Office of Legislative Oversight staff members Craig Howard, Richard Romer, and Ben Stutz conducted this study. OLO gathered information through document reviews, general research, and interviews with staff members from the Montgomery County Police Department, Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services, the Montgomery County State's Attorney's Office, and the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office.

E. Acknowledgements

OLO received a high level of cooperation from everyone involved in this study. OLO appreciates the information shared and the insights provided by all staff who participated. In particular, OLO thanks: Assistant Chief of Police Deidre Walker, Captain Nancy Demme, Captain Kathi Rhodes, Captain Evelyn Cahalen, Captain Mitch Cunningham, Captain Tina Faass, Captain Darryl McSwain, Captain Patty Walker, Ellen Alexander, Nina Hernandez, Ann Miller, Shelley Lipton, Laurie Mombay, Linda Ridall, Julie Takai, and Nick Tucci from the Police Department; Dudley Warner, Gene Morris, Nadja Cabello, and Debbie Howard from the Department of Health and Human Services; Christina Miles from the State's Attorney's Office; and Hannah Sassoon from the Sheriff's Office.

CHAPTER II. OVERVIEW OF MCPD VICTIM ASSISTANCE UNIT

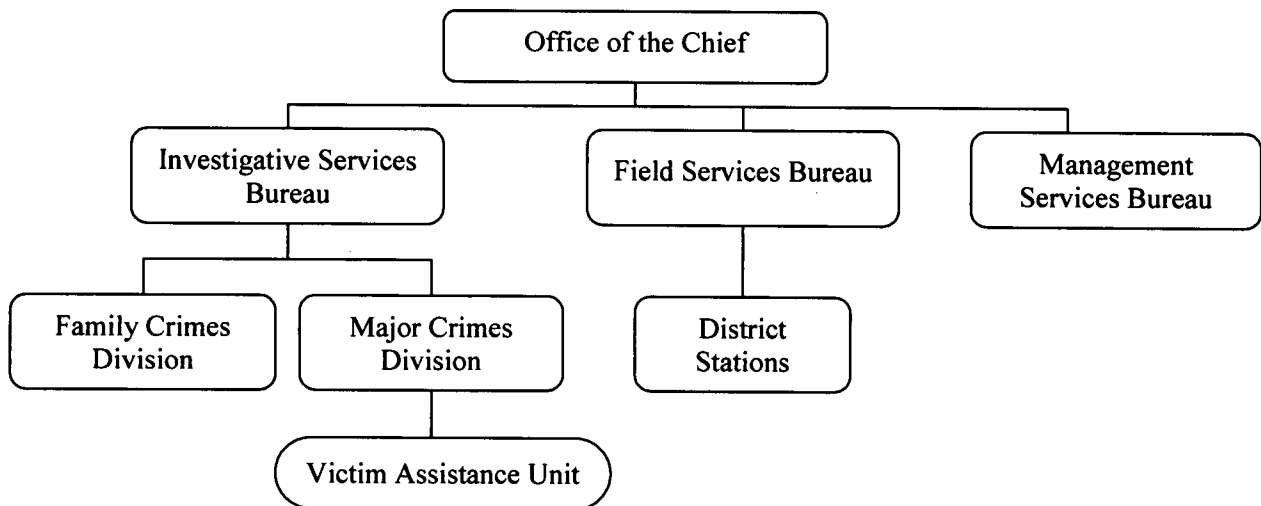
In FY02, the Montgomery County Police Department (MCPD) established the Victim Assistance Unit to provide services for victims and witnesses of crime in Montgomery County. This chapter reviews the organization, staffing, and funding of the Victim Assistance Unit. The chapter is organized as follows:

- **Part A** describes the organizational structure, mission, and history of the MCPD Victim Assistance Unit;
- **Part B** describes the staffing structure of the Victim Assistance Unit; and
- **Part C** lists the FY02 through FY07 approved personnel and operating costs for the Victim Assistance Unit.

A. MCPD Victim Assistance Unit Organizational Structure and History

The Victim Assistance Unit is organizationally part of the Major Crimes Division in the Investigative Services Bureau. Unit staff, as described in Part B of this chapter, are stationed in the Department's six District Stations and the Family Crimes Division.

Montgomery County Police Department – Partial Organizational Chart



MCPD's directive for the Victim Assistance Unit establishes the Department's policy for victim services. It states:

The department is committed to the fair, compassionate, and sensitive treatment of victims and witnesses of crime. This can be accomplished through the department's Victim/Witness Assistance Section by providing the highest quality of law enforcement while working in partnership with the community. This partnership will help to assure that victims/witnesses are afforded reasonable protection and timely information to assist them with recovering from the effects of crime.

The department recognizes that every victim needs and expects follow-up contact to recover from the effects of crime. The police officer's role as a first responder in this cycle of events is critical to the beginning of this process. The department cannot meet every need but does have a responsibility to increase victims'/witnesses' awareness and assist them in navigating the criminal justice system. (Source: MCPD *Function Code 1107*, ©1)

The Victim Assistance Unit's responsibilities are to identify victim and witness needs, provide crisis intervention and support, and refer victims and witnesses to other service providers that can meet longer term needs. The Victim Assistance Unit provided OLO with a written goal statement:

To respond to crime victims in a timely, sensitive manner with support, information and referrals to meet emergency and long-term emotional, financial and physical needs following a criminal victimization and to provide victims with information about their rights to be present, heard and to participate as fully as possible in the criminal justice process. (Source: Victim Assistance Unit, June 2006)

History of the Victim Assistance Unit. Before FY01, the Police Department had one full-time staff member who coordinated the delivery of victim services with assistance from community volunteers and AmeriCorps members.

In FY01, the Council approved funding for two victim assistants in the Wheaton-Glenmont District Station to provide services to victims of domestic violence. In FY02, the Council approved five additional workyears to enhance general victim assistance in each of the County's six District stations. Additionally, in January 2005 the Police Department transferred a victim advocate position to the Victim Assistance Unit from the Family Crimes Division, Domestic Violence Unit.

In 2001, when MCPD requested funding for a permanent victim services unit, MCPD staff prepared a position paper for the County Council to justify the proposal. This position paper described five characteristics of the program structure in place and suggested each case offered an opportunity to improve the delivery of victim services. The "barriers to service" MCPD identified at the time and the expectations MCPD envisioned for the new Unit are summarized below. (For more details, see the Public Safety Committee's worksession packet attached at ©4).

- **A lack of consistent linkages to appropriate referrals** – As first responders to a crime scene, the Police Department stated its officers and victim advocates can play a critical role in informing victims about the array of County services and providing referrals to access these services. MCPD stated that without a referral system based in the Police Department, most victims would never become aware of the services provided by programs such as the Victim Assistance and Sexual Assault Program and the Abused Persons Program.

- **Unserved and underserved victims** – As a law enforcement agency that responds to all types of crimes, MCPD stated that a victim assistance unit located in the Police Department would help address the needs of victims who did not fall under the purview of other victim services programs that traditionally focused on victims of violence. For example, MCPD noted no program currently existed to assist the approximately 18,000 victims of property crimes each year.
- **An inadequate level of trained, professional staff within MCPD** – Because the staffing level consisted of only one full-time professional victim services coordinator plus volunteers, MCPD stated that “only a handful” of the County’s victims of violent crime received any form of outreach from the Police Department, and victims of property crime received only a standard form letter.
- **A high turnover rate and a lack of continuity in service** – MCPD stated the use of volunteer staff created high turnover in personnel. As a result, the coordinator spent a large portion of time recruiting and training new volunteers; it also made it difficult to offer continuity of service to victims of the most serious crimes.
- **A lack of departmental training regarding victimization and victim’s needs** – With few staff and high turnover, MCPD reported it had been unable to establish a consistent training program for either new recruits or seasoned officers. Such training would address topics such as the needs of crime victims, appropriate county agency referrals, and laws protecting victim’s rights.

B. Victim Assistance Unit Staffing Structure

The FY07 staffing complement for the Victim Assistance Unit consists of one full-time director and eight full-time victim advocates. (The County’s personnel system classifies the director as a program manager and the victim advocates as client assistance specialists.)

The Director of the Victim Assistance Unit works out of the Community Services Division offices in Rockville. The eight victim advocates are stationed in other MCPD facilities. Seven of the advocates are assigned to the Police Department’s District Stations; one advocate is assigned to each District Station, except for the Wheaton-Glenmont District Station which has two advocates. One victim advocate works out of the Family Crimes Division offices in Rockville.

The advocates generally work regular business hours, although all have the flexibility to adjust work schedules to meet the needs of victims. In addition, the Unit’s Director is on-call evenings, weekends, and holidays to respond to serious crimes as needed.

The Police Department's 2006 long-range staffing plan, in which the Department projects its staffing needs over the next five years, recommends the addition of advocate positions in the Victim Assistance Unit. The MCPD plan, entitled *Staffing Protection Plan: FY 2006 to FY 2010*, calls for three additional victim advocate positions; two in FY 2009 and one in FY 2010. The *Staffing Protection Plan* describes how the Unit would use additional staff:

The addition of three staff members in the busiest districts (Montgomery Village, Silver Spring, and Germantown) would enable more comprehensive services. It also would allow for a second shift of victim assistance specialists so that there is coverage up to midnight to better reach victims who may only be able to be contacted after normal business hours. (Source: MCPD *Staffing Protection Plan*, Page D-13)

Current Staffing Level. As of July 2006, the Victim Assistance Unit has seven of the eight advocate positions filled. All seven District Station-based positions are filled, although one advocate has been on temporary duty assignment in the Media Services Division since the summer of 2005. MCPD temporarily assigned one of the two advocates from the Wheaton-Glenmont District Station due to a need for Spanish-language media services. MCPD reports no specific date exists for when the temporary assignment will end. MCPD filled the victim advocate position at the Bethesda District Station in May 2006; it had been vacant since June 2005.

The current vacancy in the Victim Assistance Unit is the position stationed in the Family Crimes Division that provides services to victims of domestic abuse cases charged as first degree assault. Since this vacancy occurred, the advocates in the district stations have added these victims to their caseloads. MCPD is currently reviewing a joint request from the Victim Assistance Unit and the Family Crimes Division to transfer the vacant position to the Family Crimes Division to provide a full-time staff person to coordinate evidence for domestic abuse cases. If the transfer request is approved, the advocates at the district stations would continue to provide services to all victims of domestic abuse.

Wheaton-Glenmont District Station Positions. As originally structured, the 4th District (Wheaton-Glenmont) Station received two victim advocate positions as part of a program to pilot police-based victim services. The original proposal envisioned one position would focus on general crime and one position would provide assistance to victims of domestic violence cases, and assist with other crime victims as time permitted. The proposal also expected the domestic violence-focused advocate would be able to provide on-scene support for domestic violence cases.

The program that evolved in practice was not able to achieve the original goal of on-scene victim support. According to MCPD staff, providing an on-scene advocate response for domestic violence calls created a potentially unsafe situation for the advocates when the responding officer eventually left the scene to respond to other calls. Also, MCPD staff report that crime trends changed after the pilot was initiated. Currently, both advocates provide services for all types of crime and the Police Department has worked on alternative solutions to provide on-scene assistance to domestic violence victims while minimizing safety concerns.

One of these alternatives is for the advocate to meet with the domestic violence victim in a public, off-site location. A second alternative is a protocol developed by the Police Department and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) where a responding officer can directly connect a victim to the DHHS Crisis Center. If an arrest is made in a domestic violence case and the crime scene is secure, an officer can contact the Crisis Center and directly hand the phone to the victim to speak with Crisis Center staff. Crisis Center staff will conduct an immediate safety assessment with the victim. DHHS staff report that in other jurisdictions of Maryland, this protocol is being tested for all domestic violence calls with promising results.

Victim Assistance Unit staff discussed the status of original 4th District model at an April 27, 2004 worksession of the County Council's Public Safety Committee (worksession packet attached at ©12).

C. FY03-FY07 Victim Assistance Unit Funding

The approved FY07 budget for the Victim Assistance Unit totals approximately \$794K; the budget funds personnel costs only. The Victim Assistance Unit does not receive a specific line-item operating budget. MCPD reports that all operating costs associated with the Victim Assistance Unit are from accounts categorized as "department accounts" (such as office supplies, printing, cell phones, mileage, banquets, etc.).

The Unit's funding increased by nearly \$200K (33%) between FY03 and FY07, due to the addition of one workyear and annual compensation adjustments for existing staff.

Table 1: Victim Assistance Unit Budget, FY03 – FY07

Cost Type	FY03	FY04	FY05	FY06	FY07 Approved
Personnel	\$595,600	\$595,491	\$572,505	\$706,521	\$793,637
Operating	--	--	--	--	--
Total Cost	\$595,600	\$595,491	\$572,505	\$706,521	\$793,637
Workyears	8.0	8.0	8.0	9.0	9.0

Source: MCPD, July 2006.

CHAPTER III. VICTIM ASSISTANCE UNIT DELIVERY OF SERVICES

This chapter reviews the type and level of services provided by the MCPD Victim Assistance Unit (the Unit). The chapter is organized as follows:

- **Part A** describes how the Victim Assistance Unit identifies its clients;
- **Part B** discusses how the Unit's victim advocates prioritize and manage their caseloads;
- **Part C** details the type of services provided by the Unit;
- **Part D** reviews how the Unit coordinates service delivery with other victim services programs;
- **Part E** highlights the Unit's public outreach and education efforts; and
- **Part F** reviews staff development and training for the Unit.

A. Identifying Clients

All victims or witnesses of crimes committed in the County are eligible for services from the MCPD Victim Assistance Unit. Families of residents who are victims of crime in the County are also eligible. Advocates rely primarily on police reports and direct referrals from patrol officers and investigators to identify potential clients.

The victim advocates assigned to the district stations identify most of the victims they eventually serve in crime or event reports filed by District officers. On a daily basis, the advocates at each district station read crime reports for incidents that occurred the previous day. They use the reports to identify the names and contact information of any victims or witnesses involved.

A patrol officer or investigator will also directly notify an advocate (in-person, via phone, or via e-mail) about a victim whom the officer interacted with who needs assistance. On rare occasions, an officer will call an advocate to the scene of a crime to provide immediate crisis intervention and assistance. Examples of cases where officers have called advocates to the scene of a crime include homicide cases where a victim's family members are present, domestic violence cases, and hostage situations.

An advocate also learns about victims through contact initiated by the victim. In some cases, an individual who learns about the services the County provides will visit the district station to seek assistance on his/her own. Individuals also learn about victim services by word of mouth and through MCPD community education and outreach efforts. In addition, MCPD trains police officers to provide each crime victim with a *Maryland Crime Victims and Witnesses: Your Rights and Services* brochure and a *Montgomery County Victim/Witness Assistance Information* sheet (©26) that includes contact information.

B. Caseload Management

Advocates prioritize the victims and witnesses to be served based on the type of crime. The Unit generally gives priority to victims of violent crimes, crimes against persons, and serious or traumatic property crimes. The Unit gives priority to victims of the following incidents:

- Assault
- Attempted suicide
- Battery
- Burglary
- Domestic violence
- Hate violence
- Homicide
- Indecent exposure
- Kidnapping
- Mental transports
- Missing persons
- Robbery
- Sudden death
- Stalking/Peeping Tom
- Threatening telephone calls
- Hit and run
- Larceny that involves traumatic circumstances or exceptional loss
- Commercial cases where an individual was traumatized

The advocates aim to call or visit a victim of a priority incident within 24 hours to identify a victim's specific needs and offer assistance. If an advocate is not able to reach an individual after multiple attempts to contact them, then the advocate sends an outreach letter offering services to the victim.

Advocates either call or send a letter to a victim of other (i.e. non-priority) crimes if the district station has a crime report or the advocate receives a referral. Unit staff report that this contact generally takes place between 24 hours and one week after the incident. These incidents typically include property crime, disorderly conduct, and commercial cases that do not involve trauma or threats to an individual. An advocate expresses concern and explains to a victim the types of services that are available. An advocate may also send a victim a packet of crime prevention information.

C. Services Provided

The specific services provided by the Victim Assistance Unit vary depending on the type of crime and on individual's needs. Since the Unit is located in the Police Department, an advocate from MCPD is typically the first victim service provider to learn about an incident, identify a victim, and contact a victim. This puts the Unit in a good position to address immediate needs, and then to refer victims to other service providers who are set up to meet longer term needs.

Once an initial contact is made, many victims/witnesses indicate that they do not need any services. If a victim requests assistance, an advocate begins by assessing both the immediate and long-term needs of the victim or witness. All services provided by the Unit are free of charge.

The specific services that the Victim Assistance Unit may provide for any given case include:

- Comfort at the crime scene;
- Locating emergency food, shelter, or other life essentials;
- Referrals for mental health and financial assistance with County agencies.
- Conducting risk assessment and safety planning for victims of domestic violence;
- Assisting in obtaining protective orders either through the courts or the court commissioner's office;
- Providing information about victim rights;
- Locating services outside the area for individuals victimized while visiting the County;
- Providing information about the court system;
- Court accompaniment (if the individual is not working with another agency that provides the service);
- Assisting in the application process for reimbursement from State and County compensation funds for medical bills, lost wages, funeral expenses, etc.;
- Assisting in obtaining information about restitution payment and collections,
- Obtaining police reports for victims/witnesses;
- Returning stolen property or property used as evidence;
- Providing information about on-going investigations, including the arrest of an offender;
- Intervening with landlords, employers, or creditors;
- Working with insurance companies on health or property benefits related to a crime; and
- Assisting in obtaining asylum under new immigrant protection legislation.

To meet additional needs, advocates refer victims/witnesses to other County, private, and non-profit service providers. Unit staff report that they most often refer individuals to the Department of Health and Human Services' Victim Assistance and Sexual Assault Program (VASAP) and Abused Persons Program (APP) for counseling, financial assistance/compensation, and other victim services. They also frequently refer victims to DHHS for other general support services, such as food stamps, job training, and assistance with child care.

The Victim Assistance Unit has worked closely with VASAP and APP to develop a direct referral system so that (with the victim's permission), an advocate from the Police Department can provide a victim's name and contact information directly to VASAP or APP. VASAP or APP staff can then initiate contact with the victim instead of waiting for the victim to call them. According to staff, this practice increases the likelihood that a victim will accept services.

Advocates close a case when a victim indicates that s/he no longer needs additional services and/or when a victim accepts the referrals to other service providers. Some victims do not accept referrals for additional services. In these situations, advocates keep the case open and follow up to check on the individual's safety and ongoing needs. This practice ensures that individuals who are not ready or willing to seek additional help do not fall through the cracks.

However, this follow-up procedure creates additional work for advocates and can result in cases remaining open for long periods of time. Due to confidentiality issues, an advocate cannot always access information to find out whether a victim followed-up on a referral. This can lead to a situation where an advocate keeps a case open even though the individual is receiving services from another provider.

Language Capacity. The Victim Assistance Unit has three staff members who are fluent in Spanish; they are stationed at the Silver Spring, Wheaton-Glenmont, and Bethesda District Stations. (As noted earlier, the advocate in Wheaton-Glenmont is on temporary duty assignment in the MCPD Media Services Division.) Another advocate who is fluent in sign language is at the Wheaton-Glenmont district station, and an advocate who is fluent in Russian is at the Germantown District Station. If a victim who needs services speaks one of these languages, other advocates will refer the victim to one of the bilingual staff member. If a victim speaks a different language, staff report they use the Language Line or other available community language resources to communicate with the victim.

Unit staff report working with the federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) office to obtain a federal grant to purchase a live video relay system for the hearing-impaired. The Unit reports that video relay cameras and computer equipment have been installed at several district stations, the courthouse, the central-processing unit, and the Crisis Center. The system assists people who are deaf or hearing impaired to communicate with staff throughout the County. It also has the capacity to provide live language interpretation for non-English speakers. The Unit hopes to activate this capacity soon.

D. Coordination and Service Referrals

Several public and non-profit organizations throughout Montgomery County offer a vast array of services for crime victims and witnesses. As one of the primary frontline agencies for this informal, countywide service delivery and referral network, the Victim Assistance Unit coordinates with other County departments, agencies, and programs, as well as other private and non-profit victim assistance programs throughout the County.

According to Victim Assistance Unit staff, an advocate's coordination responsibilities can range from a simple referral to a more formal coordination of multiple services. The box below displays the 25 departments, agencies, and groups the Unit coordinates with most frequently. The Unit also coordinates with other agencies or groups on a less regular basis.

GROUPS THE VICTIM ASSISTANCE UNIT COORDINATES WITH MOST FREQUENTLY:

- | | |
|---|--|
| • Victim Assistance and Sexual Assault Program | • State of Maryland Criminal Injuries Compensation Board |
| • Abused Persons Program | • National Alliance for the Mentally Ill |
| • Crisis Center | • MANNA Food Center |
| • Adult Protective Services | • Casa de Maryland |
| • Sheriff's Office/ALERT | • Spanish Catholic Center |
| • State's Attorney's Office | • Community Ministries |
| • Commission for Women | • Tahari Justice Center |
| • Conflict Resolution Center of Montgomery County | • Boat People SOS |
| • Human Rights Commission | • Commission on Aging |
| • Migrant and Refugee Cultural Support | • Community Support Services |
| • Pro Bono Counseling Services | • Assisted Living/Community Residential Services |
| • Adult Evaluation and Review Services | • Jewish Community Services |
| • Social Security Administration | |

Beyond coordinating services to address an individual victim's needs, the Unit also works with other service programs to address specific projects or issues. This can include coordination of existing service efforts to avoid duplication and fill any service gaps, or it can include collaboration on a new project or initiative.

The Victim Assistance Unit and the Abused Persons Program (APP) are jointly working on a project to provide a space for trained volunteers at the court commissioner's office at the Central-Processing Unit (CPU) in Rockville where victims must go to file interim orders for protection outside of business hours. The volunteers would assist victims who are seeking a protective order after-hours and on weekends. Unit staff report they have received approval for a volunteer advocate office at CPU after the renovations to the CPU are complete. The Victim Assistance Unit and APP are recruiting volunteers for the project, and APP will provide the training. Staff report that they hope to have volunteers in place by the end of 2006.

To avoid duplication of services, the Victim Assistance Unit and VASAP have developed an informal procedure for assisting victim in filing claims with the State of Maryland's victim compensation program. For victims eligible for this compensation fund, the programs jointly agreed on the set of circumstances that dictate which program assists the victim in filing the claim. If the victim is receiving other services from VASAP or is also filing for compensation from the VASAP-run County Victim Compensation Program, VASAP will provide the assistance. If the victim is not receiving other services or assistance from VASAP, the Victim Assistance Unit staff will assist with the State claim.

The Victim Assistance Unit reports it actively coordinates with other programs to:

- Train service providers;
- Conduct promotional and outreach activities;
- Collect holiday gift donations for child victims or children of victims in indigent families; and
- Seek grants for victim services.

E. Public Education and Outreach

Another responsibility of the advocates is to conduct education and outreach activities to inform the community about the Victim Assistance Unit's services. The advocates respond to specific requests and seek out additional public education opportunities. Victim advocates report they have conducted outreach activities at Casa de Maryland; the Long Branch Community Center; various homeowners' associations and church meetings; and community public safety events.

Additionally, the Unit reports they have:

- Published a dozen different articles in a local Spanish-language newspaper written by Latino victims who received services from the Unit;
- Developed a new public information sheet about victim services;
- Produced Public Service Announcements about victim services which have aired on the County's cable television channel; and
- Supplied a Spanish-speaking advocate to provide information about the Police Department and victim services on Spanish-language radio.

Office for Victims of Crime Public Awareness Grant. In FY06, the Victim Assistance Unit received a \$70K grant from the federal Office for Victims of Crime to conduct a pilot project that publicizes victim services to immigrant communities. In collaboration with other government and community-based programs, the Unit will use the grant funds to produce and distribute approximately one million informational pieces throughout the Silver Spring area.

The informational pieces, which include posters, flyers, bookmarks, and a victim services locator, will be published in English, Spanish, and French. The goal of the project is to educate and inform immigrant communities about the availability of victim services and increase the use of services. The victim services locator will explain how to obtain protective orders, how to file criminal charges, and how to register for VINE notification of offender status. Additionally, the brochure will provide contact information for more than 100 government, community, and faith-based programs that offer resources often used by victims of crime.

F. Staff Training and Development

The County's public safety training academy teaches police recruits how to identify victims' needs in general, assist victims of domestic violence, and inform victims about the services available from the Victim Assistance Unit. In addition, the victim advocates routinely participate in district station roll call and attend staff meetings to inform officers about victim services.

The Victim Assistance Unit conducts both informal and formal training activities for its own staff. Informally, the Unit holds a bi-weekly staff meeting where staff members present information about any unusual, difficult, memorable, and/or successful cases. These discussions serve as an informal training opportunity for other staff members who may experience a similar situation. Victim advocates also use these staff meetings to share ideas and ask for advice from their colleagues.

All Victim Assistance Unit staff also participate in professional advocacy training at the national, state, and local level. Since the Unit was established, advocates have attended:

- The US Department of Justice's Victim Assistance Academy;
- The State of Maryland's Roper Victim Assistance Academy;
- The Montgomery County Police Department and Department of Health and Human Services' Basic and Advanced Critical Incident Training;
- The National Organization for Victims of Crime's Basic and Advanced Capital Area Crisis Response Training; and
- The Maryland State Association of Victim Assistance in Law Enforcement's Role of the Victim Advocate in Law Enforcement.

Advocates have also attended numerous other trainings that addressed specific topics such as domestic violence, working with victims living in immigrant communities, childhood trauma, death and traumatic loss, human sexual trafficking, and conflict resolution.

Recognition and Awards. Both the Victim Assistance Unit and individual staff members have received recognition and awards from local, state, and federal agencies for the quality of their victim assistance work. The Unit has received the following awards:

- 2004 Montgomery's Best Honor Award for Customer Service;
- 2004 Montgomery County Department of Police Chief's Award; and
- 2005 Maryland Governor's Award for Outstanding Victim Assistance.

Individual staff members in the Victim Assistance Unit have received the following awards:

- 2003 Maryland Governor's Award for Outstanding Victim Assistance;
- 2004 Maryland Governor's Award for Outstanding Victim Assistance;
- 2004 US Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime Merit Award for Outstanding Victim Assistance Service;
- 2004 Montgomery County Human Right's Commission Hall of Fame; and
- 2005 Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence Annual Award.

CHAPTER IV. VICTIM ASSISTANCE UNIT WORKLOAD DATA

The MCPD Victim Assistance Unit collects and compiles a range of workload and performance data, including cases by type of crime, referrals made to other programs and services, and data on court accompaniments.

This chapter summarizes and reports the available workload and performance data for the Victim Assistance Unit.

- **Part A** presents information about the Victim Assistance Unit's caseload between 2002 and 2006;
- **Part B** presents information on the Unit's caseload by type of crime and by categories of crime between 2002 and 2006;
- **Part C** summarizes data on the Unit's referrals to other programs between 2002 and 2006, as well as presents limited data on accepted referrals; and
- **Part D** provides information on the Unit's court accompaniments between 2002 and 2006.

Victim Assistance Unit Data Management Practices. The Victim Assistance Unit uses a system of Victim Assistance Contact Records and case files to manage its workload and track activities.

Every advocate maintains a Victim Assistance Contact Record that tracks information about the specific services or referrals provided to each victim. An advocate establishes a Contact Record if s/he calls, meets with, or sends a letter to a victim or witness of crime. Each month, advocates submit a report to the Director of the Victim Assistance Unit that compiles information from their Victim Assistance Contact Records. The Unit compiles annual data for all staff on a calendar year basis.

Each Contact Record generally represents one criminal case, and the types of incidents that make up each case vary widely. As a result, a case may have one or more victims, e.g., family members of a homicide victim. Similarly, a case may have only one contact or multiple contacts with the same victim or victims.

The Victim Assistance Unit started collecting workload data in July 2002; approximately one year after the Unit was established. At OLO's request, the Unit provided workload and activity data for the four-year period, July 2002 through May 2006. On a calendar year basis, the data account for an initial partial year (from July 2002 to December 2002), three full years of operations (2003, 2004, and 2005), and a partial current year (January 2006 to May 2006).

A. Victim Assistance Unit Caseload

The caseload for the Victim Assistance Unit is an output or activity measure. The nature of victim assistance work is that an advocate's caseload depends, at least in part, on the crime rate and type of crimes committed.

Table 2 (below) shows the number of cases the Victim Assistance Unit handled each year since the Unit began collecting data in July 2002. To account for staffing vacancies and to allow for comparison of full- and partial-year data, Table 2 also shows the average number of cases for each advocate per month.¹ In sum, the data show:

- Between July 2002 and May 2006, the Unit recorded almost 35,000 cases;
- Over the first three full years of its operations, the annual caseload increased by 614 cases, from 9,602 in 2003 to 10,216 in 2005;
- Over the first three full years of its operations, the average monthly caseload per advocate increased from 114 cases in 2003 to 122 cases in 2005; and
- For the first half of 2006, the average monthly caseload per advocate dropped to 101 cases, a decrease of 17%. This average and the total number of cases through May 30th suggest there may be a decrease in the annual caseload for 2006.

Table 2: Victim Assistance Unit Caseload, 2002-2006

Caseload/Staff	Number of Victim Cases					Total 2002-06
	2002 (July-Dec)	2003	2004	2005	2006 (Jan-May)	
Number of Cases	2,123	9,602	9,732	10,216	3,020	34,693
Number of Victim Advocates*	7	7	7	7*	6*	6.9
Average Monthly Caseload per Advocate	51	114	116	122	101	107

*In 2005, the Unit's staffing complement of victim advocates increased to 8 workyears, but the equivalent of 1 workyear was unfilled due to a mid-year position vacancy and a mid-year temporary duty assignment. In 2006, the equivalent of 2 workyears were unfilled due to a position vacancy and a temporary duty assignment.

Source: MCPD Victim Assistance Unit, June 2006

B. Caseload by Type of Crime and by Category

The Victim Assistance Unit maintains information about its caseload by type of crime. Table 3 (page 17) shows the information for data collected since July 2002. The data show that over a four-year period, the most prevalent types of crimes that result in victim services are larceny (21%), other offenses (19%), and assault (18%).

¹ To account for staffing vacancies, OLO took the Unit's victim advocate staffing complement for each calendar year and subtracted any unfilled advocate positions. Advocate positions that were unfilled for part of a year were pro-rated. OLO did not include the Unit Director position in the calculation.

Table 3: Victim Assistance Unit Caseload by Type of Crime, 2002-2006

Type of Crime	Number of Victim Cases					Total 2002-06	Percent of Total
	2002 (July-Dec)	2003	2004	2005	2006 (Jan-May)		
Larceny	674	2,087	1,997	2,097	541	7,396	21%
Other Offenses*	268	1,559	2,152	2,154	548	6,681	19%
Assault	156	1,612	1,809	1,831	785	6,193	18%
Burglary	316	1,412	1,391	1,491	379	4,989	14%
Vandalism	334	1,519	887	987	260	3,987	12%
Robbery	137	794	798	848	273	2,850	8%
Aggravated Assault	201	567	586	686	197	2,237	7%
Rape - Child	20	12	41	51	7	131	0.4%
Rape – Adult	7	23	41	41	19	131	0.4%
Homicide	10	17	30	30	11	98	0.2%
Total Number of Cases	2,123	9,602	9,732	10,216	3,020	34,693	100%

*Other Offenses includes Purse Snatching, Auto Thefts, Harassment/Stalking, Threatening/Annoying Calls, DUI, Suicide, etc.

Source: MCPD Victim Assistance Unit, June 2006

OLO examined these data to determine the proportion of cases for crimes against property compared to crimes against persons. For purposes of this analysis, OLO categorized crimes against property and crimes against persons as follows:

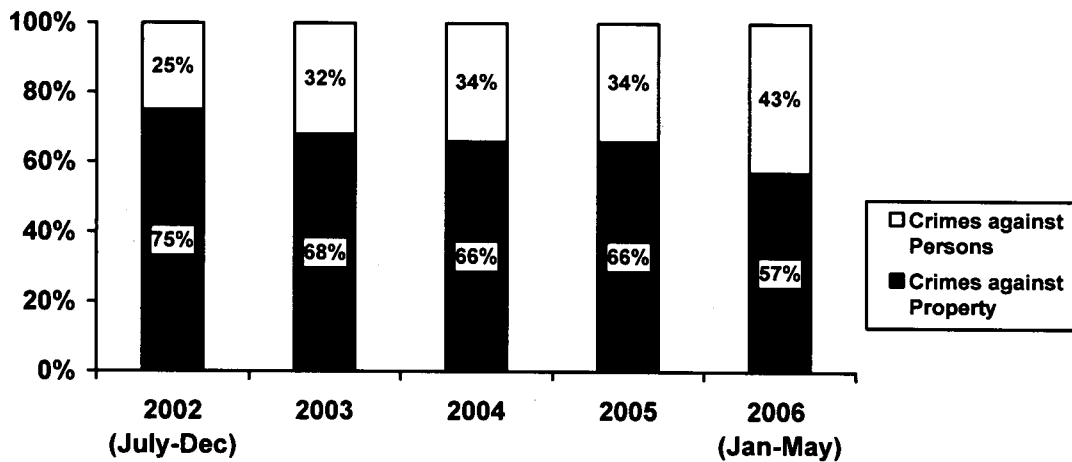
- **Crimes against property** includes larceny, burglary, vandalism, and other offenses.²
- **Crimes against persons** includes assault, aggravated assault, robbery, rape, and homicide.

The results of this analysis show:

- Since July 2002, 23,053 (66%) of the Unit's 34,693 total cases have been to assist victims of property crimes and 11,640 (34%) have been for crimes against persons.
- Annually, as shown in Chart 1 on the next page, crimes against property have represented between 57% and 75% of the Unit's cases.

² Although some of the burglary and other offenses cases could involve a person, Victim Assistance Unit staff estimate that the majority of those cases are crimes against property.

Chart 1: Victim Assistance Unit Cases by Crimes against Property and Crimes against Persons, 2002-2006



Source: MCPD Victim Assistance Unit and OLO, June 2006

C. Referrals to Other Programs

The Victim Assistance Unit records how many referrals the Unit makes to other agencies, programs, or services. An advocate may make a referral in person, by telephone, or as part of an informational packet mailed to a victim; in addition, an advocate may refer an individual to one or more programs and services. Data about the number of referrals reflects an advocate's efforts to connect an individual to one or more service providers; the data do not indicate whether an individual followed-up to contact the provider or subsequently accepted services.

Between July 2002 and May 2006, the Unit made 22,462 referrals to other programs. Table 4 (page 19) shows the referrals that the Unit reported making each year to each program. To account for staffing vacancies and allow for comparison of full- and partial-year data, Table 4 also shows the average number of referrals per advocate per month. The data show:

- Over the first three full years of its operations, the annual number of referrals the Victim Assistance Unit staff made increased by 4,080, from 4,470 in 2003 to 8,550 in 2005.
- Over the first full three full years of its operations, the average monthly referrals per advocate increased from 53 referrals in 2003 to 101 referrals in 2005.
- For the first half of 2006, the average monthly referrals per advocate has dropped to 70 referrals, a decrease of 31%. This average and the total number of referrals through May 30th suggest a possible decrease in the annual referrals in 2006.³

³ Unit staff report that the decrease in 2006 referrals is due in part to increases in the type property crime cases that typically do not generate any referrals.

- 73% of the Unit's referrals are to either the Victim Assistance and Sexual Assault Program (VASAP), 55%, or the Abused Persons Program (APP), 18%.
- On average, between 2003 and 2005 the number of referrals made to VASAP increased 23% annually and the number of referrals to APP increased 32% annually.

Table 4: Victim Assistance Unit Program Referrals, 2002-2006

Program	Number of Referrals					Total 2002-06	Percent of Total
	2002 (July-Dec)	2003	2004	2005	2006 (Jan-May)		
Victim Assistance and Sexual Assault Program	732	2,792	3,402	4,204	1,163	12,293	55%
Abused Persons Program	136	880	1,123	1,515	281	3,935	18%
Other	342	477	482	1,410	196	2,907	13%
Crisis Center	41	51	258	385	110	845	4%
Pro Bono Counseling Services	31	88	179	179	76	553	2%
Commission for Women	22	48	126	178	58	432	2%
Conflict Resolution Center	4	19	18	172	67	280	1%
Food Banks	9	11	82	122	46	270	1%
Adult Protective Services	16	51	56	74	29	226	1%
State's Attorney's Office	20	34	62	109	24	249	1%
MIRECS/Other Immigration Service	0	11	46	98	31	186	0.8%
Human Rights Commission	6	8	103	25	7	149	0.6%
Family Crimes Division	0	0	26	46	8	80	0.3%
Sheriff's Office (ALERT Team)	0	0	19	33	5	57	0.3%
Total Number of Referrals	1,359	4,470	5,982	8,550	2,101	22,462	100%
Number of Victim Advocates*	7	7	7	7*	6*	6.9	--
Average Monthly Referrals per Advocate	32	53	71	102	70	69	--

*In 2005, the Unit's staffing complement of victim advocates increased to 8 workyears, but the equivalent of 1 workyear was unfilled due to a mid-year position vacancy and a mid-year temporary duty assignment. In 2006, the equivalent of 2 workyears were unfilled due to a position vacancy and a temporary duty assignment.

Source: MCPD Victim Assistance Unit and OLO, June 2006.

Referrals for Crime Victim Compensation. Unit staff regularly provide referrals to one State and one County compensation program for crime-related losses if the victim meets specific program requirements. Both programs are “payers of last resort,” which means a victim must exhaust all other sources of payment, such as insurance, before a claim can be submitted. Additionally, the State program does not cover property loss and the County program is subject to income eligibility requirements.

Table 5 shows data about referrals for victim compensation. The Victim Assistance Unit has made 1,656 referrals for victim compensation since 2002. The data show the referrals are fairly evenly divided between the Montgomery County Compensation Fund (managed by VASAP) and the State of Maryland Criminal Injuries Compensation Board.

Table 5: Victim Assistance Unit Compensation Referrals, 2002-2006

Program	Number of Referrals					Total 2002-06	Percent of Total
	2002 (July-Dec)	2003	2004	2005	2006 (Jan-May)		
State of Maryland Criminal Injuries Compensation Board	56	206	247	299	60	868	52%
Montgomery County Victim Compensation Fund (VASAP)	62	132	181	315	98	788	48%
Total	118	338	428	614	158	1,656	100%

Source: MCPD Victim Assistance Unit, June 2006

Referrals for Service and Accepted Referral Data for APP and VASAP. As stated above, data about the number of referrals to other service providers reflects an advocate's efforts to connect an individual to a service provider; it does not indicate whether an individual followed-up to contact the provider or subsequently accepted services.

The research on victim services consistently shows that many victims choose not to take advantage of victim assistance services. According to the research, the most frequent reasons victims decline services are because they receive the help they need from family and friends and/or they do not have the time to get involved with victim services programs.

The fact that many of the victims who are contacted by an advocate choose not to pursue services affects the relationship between program data which tracks the number of referrals made and program data which reports the number of referrals accepted. Although one might anticipate a high degree of correlation between the data, in practice this is unlikely to occur because many victims voluntarily decline services.

APP and VASAP collect data to track the number of “accepted referrals” from various programs, including referrals from the Victim Assistance Unit. Program staff define an “accepted referral” as when one program (in this case the MCPD Victim Assistance Unit) refers a victim to APP or VASAP and the victim subsequently contacts that program to inquire about and/or receive services. APP and VASAP record an “accepted referral” when:

- A victim contacts APP or VASAP in-person or via telephone to receive or inquire about services and reports that they were referred by a Victim Assistance Unit staff member; or
- APP or VASAP contact a victim about available services after receiving (with the victim's permission) the victim's contact information directly from a Victim Assistance Unit staff member.

Since a victim may receive a referral from multiple sources and/or a victim may not remember who provided the referral, the “accepted referral” data may not reflect all referrals made by the Victim Assistance Unit that result in receipt of APP or VASAP services.

Table 6 compares the number of referrals the Victim Assistance Unit made to APP with the number of referrals to APP accepted from Victim Assistance Unit clients. The data show during a two and a half year period, advocates in the Victim Assistance Unit made almost 3,000 referrals to APP and staff at APP identified 225 clients (8%) who accepted a Victim Assistance Unit referral. The annual rate of acceptance ranged between 5% and 11%.

Table 6: Victim Assistance Unit Referrals to APP Made and Accepted, 2004-2006

Category	2004*	2005	2006 (Jan-May)	Total
Total Referrals to APP Made by the Victim Assistance Unit	1,123	1,515	281	2,919
Referrals to APP Accepted	123	78	24	225
% of Referrals to APP Accepted	11%	5%	9%	8%

*2004 was the first year APP disaggregated referrals from the Victim Witness Unit from generic Police Department referrals.

Sources: MCPD Victim Assistance Unit and Abused Persons Program, June 2006

Table 7 (page 22) compares the number of referrals Victim Assistance Unit made to VASAP with the number of referrals to VASAP accepted from Victim Assistance Unit clients. The data show during a two and a half year period, advocates in the Victim Assistance Unit made almost 8,800 referrals to VASAP and staff at VASAP identified 270 clients (3%) who accepted Victim Assistance Unit referral. The annual rate of acceptance ranged between 2% and 4%.

Table 7: Victim Assistance Unit Referrals to VASAP Made and Accepted, 2004-2006

Category	2004*	2005	2006 (Jan-May)	Total
Total Referrals to VASAP Made by the Victim Assistance Unit	3,402	4,204	1,163	8,769
Referrals to VASAP Accepted	133	95	42	270
% of Referrals to VASAP Accepted	4%	2%	4%	3%

*2004 was the first year that both the Victim Assistance Unit and VASAP had complete calendar year data available.

Sources: MCPD Victim Assistance Unit and VASAP, June 2006

D. Court Accompaniments

Victim Assistance Unit staff will accompany a victim, witness, or victim's family member to a court proceeding on an as-needed basis. The Victim Assistance Unit notes that court accompaniment is not a primary duty of the Unit since other programs provide this service. However, Unit staff will provide court accompaniment if another program requests it or if a victim requests this service and declines to use a different program. As shown in Table 8, Victim Assistance Unit staff provided over 1,200 court accompaniments between July 2002 and May 2006, primarily related to Protective/Peace Orders.

Table 8: Victim Assistance Unit Court Accompaniments, 2002-2006

Type of Court Proceeding	Number of Accompaniments						% of Total
	2002 (July-Dec)	2003	2004	2005	2006 (Jan-May)	Total	
Protective/Peace Orders	41	66	189	364	107	767	61%
Trial (District and Circuit)	12	11	25	27	13	88	7%
Other Court Proceedings	19	42	116	175	55	407	32%
Total	72	119	330	566	175	1,262	100%

Source: MCPD Victim Assistance Unit, June 2006

CHAPTER V. FEEDBACK ON VICTIM ASSISTANCE UNIT COORDINATION AND SERVICES

This chapter summarizes feedback about the Victim Assistance Unit's coordination and service delivery that OLO received from Unit staff, other Police Department staff, and other victim services program staff. This chapter also describes the survey of victims served by MCPD's Victim Assistance Unit that OLO is in the process of conducting; OLO will present the complete results from the survey at the Public Safety Committee worksession on this report, tentatively scheduled for September 2006.

The chapter is organized as follows:

- **Part A** summarizes the feedback received from Police Department staff about the Victim Assistance Unit's coordination and service delivery;
- **Part B** summarizes the feedback received from other victim services program staff about the Victim Assistance Unit's coordination practices; and
- **Part C** reviews the research on victim services outcome measures and describes the client survey of the Victim Assistance Unit client that OLO administered as part of this evaluation.

A. Feedback From Police Department Staff

With its decentralized staffing structure, the Victim Assistance Unit must coordinate service delivery with the Major Crimes Division, the Family Crimes Division, and the District Stations. OLO interviewed Police Department staff within and outside the Victim Assistance Unit to receive feedback about what is working well and potential opportunities for improvement.

1. Feedback from Victim Assistance Unit Staff

A consensus exists among Victim Assistance Unit staff that the decentralized structure of district station-based advocates works very well. Staff report a good working relationship with both the sworn district station staff, such as patrol officers, detectives, and command staff; and civilian staff, such as the crime analysts. The advocates report that they often bring victim issues to the attention of district station staff, and also try to regularly provide information on activities and major cases. Some advocates report they share their monthly workload information with their District Commander.

Victim Assistance Unit staff report that the timeliness and level of their involvement with victims of crime can vary based on the investigating officer. While many officers provide the advocate with case or victim information right away, others only do so later, with less priority placed on the immediacy of communicating with the Victim Assistance Unit.

Unit staff agree that coordination with other Police Department staff at the district stations has improved over time, especially as more patrol officers and investigators understand what services the advocates provide. In fact, the advocates view their acceptance by district station staff as one of the top improvements since MCPD established the Unit.

Victim Assistance Unit staff report that coordination within the Investigative Services Bureau works well. Unit staff state that investigators in the Major Crimes Division often notify an advocate of a significant crime and any possible victims before the advocate receives the police report. Similarly, Family Crimes Division investigators in the Domestic Violence Unit share and coordinate victim information with that advocate on a regular basis.

As part of the ongoing work related to the Council's actions on OLO Report 2005-4, Victim Assistance Unit staff report that they are working to increase internal coordination for services for juvenile victims of crime. According to the advocates, the organizational placement of the Unit within the Major Crimes Division increased the advocates' legitimacy with uniformed staff and helped them more fully integrate victim services into daily Police Department operations.

The advocates report that they work to "sell their services" to officers throughout the department. Overall they feel that their services and help have been well received. The advocates observe that new Police recruits coming out of the Public Safety Training Academy have had some training about the victim advocates' services and responsibilities. Several of the advocates report that they find it effective to introduce themselves to new officers and make their services known. Unit staff also generally agreed that the sniper case helped advance acceptance of victim services throughout the Police Department because department staff saw directly how the advocates could be of assistance both during and after an incident and its investigation.

Unit staff identified potential opportunities for improvement in three areas:

- **Additional staffing.** Three more positions could increase the number of victim advocates from one to two at each of the three busiest district stations (Germantown, Montgomery Village, and Silver Spring Districts), comparable to the staffing at the Wheaton-Glenmont District Station.
- **Transportation.** Providing County cars for use by the advocates would allow advocates to transport victims when necessary. Advocates cite transportation for victims as an "urgent need" area; they cannot use their personal cars because of liability issues.
- **Victims of Domestic Violence.** The ability to provide additional support services to victims of domestic violence through the district stations, such as help with child care, transportation, or temporary housing.

2. Feedback from Other Police Department Staff

To obtain feedback from Police Department staff outside of the Victim Assistance Unit, OLO conducted interviews with five District Station Commanders, the Captain of the Major Crimes Division, the Captain of the Family Crimes Division, and the Assistant Chief of Police for the Investigative Services Bureau.

Interviewees expressed strong support for the services the Unit provides and recognized the Unit as a “necessary” MCPD function. In general, MCPD staff described the Victim Assistance Unit staff as professional, knowledgeable, and extremely committed to providing quality services to victims of crime.

District stations are the correct location for the victim advocates. Those interviewed agreed that the current Victim Assistance Unit staffing structure, which locates victim advocates at each of the district stations, works well. In sum, staff observe that operating from the district station location:

- Allows victim advocates to comfort and assist any walk-in victims to the station;
- Helps to remind officers and investigators of the availability of services for victims and witnesses; otherwise, the advocate might be “out of sight, out of mind”;
- Helps to create a sense of ownership within the district for victim services; and
- Reduces the lag-time in the advocates learning about cases, and allows for more direct information flow between officers and advocates.

Victim advocates leverage the time of other Police Department staff. MCPD staff at the district stations and in the investigative branches report that interacting with crime victims and their families takes time. Having the advocates perform that function provides the patrol officers and investigators more time to take care of other tasks related to the incident. District station command staff report that, over time, officers are using the victim advocates to help leverage their own time so that officers can attend to their many other responsibilities. Subsequently, the officers have become more comfortable seeking out the assistance of the advocate.

Exact roles and usage of the advocates varies somewhat among the district stations. While the primary duties and services of the victim advocates are the same across the district stations, the role played by the advocates appears to vary somewhat among the stations. Some examples of slightly differing roles among district stations include:

- Several District Commanders report being more active than others in seeking out the assistance of their advocate in certain cases and calling the advocate to a crime scene on occasion;
- Only some of the district stations request the advocate to regularly attend administrative staff meetings and roll calls;
- Several District Commanders request the advocate to conduct community outreach whenever possible, especially in non-English speaking communities.

Over time, the victim advocates have gained legitimacy with different levels of MCPD staff. Several staff interviewed noted that it took time for patrol officers, investigators, and administrative staff to “warm-up” to the services provided by the victim advocates. However, once the staff members became comfortable with the advocates and better understood the services provided, the Victim Assistance Unit as a whole gained more legitimacy as a part of the Police Department.

Spanish-speaking advocates in the Silver Spring and Wheaton-Glenmont district stations are essential. Command staff from the Silver Spring and Wheaton-Glenmont District Stations report that Spanish-speaking advocates are essential in those stations due to the language demographics of those areas.

The Victim Assistance Unit has a strong internal and external customer service focus. Those interviewed agreed that staff members of the Victim Assistance Unit respond quickly and favorably to both the needs of the victims they serve as well as the other MCPD staff they work with. Despite not having a formal supervisory role, the District Commanders uniformly report that the advocates are very responsive whenever they are asked to perform a task. At the same time, MCPD staff report being impressed with how quickly and effectively the advocates respond to the needs of victims and witnesses.

Opportunities for improvement. A general consensus among those interviewed was that, from an internal Police Department perspective, the Victim Assistance Unit is running well and no major changes are needed to improve service delivery. Nonetheless, in the spirit of “continuous improvement,” the MCPD staff interviewed suggested two potential opportunities:

- Additional in-service training for Police Department staff in the district stations and in the investigative divisions to instruct new staff and remind veteran staff about the roles, responsibilities, and ways to utilize the victim advocates; and
- The Director of the Victim Assistance Unit could seek more opportunities to increase feedback and/or communication with the District Station Commanders.

Family Crimes Division staff stated an additional opportunity for improvement would be to add another advocate position for domestic abuse cases in the Family Crimes Division.

B. Feedback on Coordination with Other Victim Services Programs

The March 2003 Office of Legislative Oversight report, *OLO Report 2003-2: Services to Victims and Witnesses of Crime in Montgomery County*, identified the need to improve coordination among victim services providers. Specifically, OLO Report 2003-2 found that at the time research for the 2003 study was conducted:

The victim services programs in the County operate as related but disaggregated services. Both management and front-line staff agree on the need to improve coordination among the different providers...Specific examples include the need to develop parameters of services offered by each program and protocols for referring victims from one program to another. (Source: OLO Report 2003-2, Page 107)

Although this finding applied to coordination among all the victim services programs in Montgomery County, as part of this current evaluation, OLO sought feedback to assess whether the Victim Assistance Unit's coordination with other programs had changed since 2003. This section reports the feedback OLO heard during interviews with staff from the Victim Assistance Unit staff itself, the Abused Persons Program, the Victim Assistance and Sexual Assault Program, the State's Attorney's Office, and the Sheriff's Office.

1. Feedback from Police Department Staff

MCPD Victim Assistance Unit staff report that, from their perspective, coordination with other programs has improved significantly since 2003. Specifically, staff report improved coordination among the Victim Assistance Unit and the Department of Health and Human Services' Abused Persons Program (APP) and Victim Assistance and Sexual Assault Program (VASAP). Unit staff offered the following examples to show how coordination with APP and VASAP has improved:

- The Unit, APP and VASAP have developed procedures to clarify each program's role in providing services to victims.
- Each advocate in the Unit has a specific staff member contact in VASAP based on geographic area of the County. This arrangement allows for quicker and cleaner communication.
- The victim advocates in the Unit have a better understanding of what services other programs provide. As a result, the advocates report feeling more comfortable referring victims to other programs.
- The Unit has initiated several joint training opportunities with VASAP and other agencies in topics such as state compensation benefits, victims' rights legislation, human trafficking and domestic servitude, etc.

Additionally, Unit staff report that the development of standard operating procedures has greatly reduced and/or eliminated service overlap and improved the overall relationship with other victim service programs.

The development of positive working relationships also extends to management staff. Management staff in the Police Department report they have met regularly and developed a strong working relationship with management staff in the Department of Health and Human Services. Management staff in the Police Department report there are fewer coordination issues that require their attention or involvement.

2. Feedback from Other Programs

OLO spoke with staff from APP, VASAP, the State's Attorney's Office Family Violence Unit, and the Sheriff's Office Domestic Violence Unit to seek their perceptions and feedback about how their programs are coordinated with the Victim Assistance Unit. OLO asked staff to address the following three questions:

- How is coordination working with the MCPD Victim Assistance Unit?
- What are some examples or areas where coordination with the MCPD Victim Assistance Unit has improved or is working well?
- What opportunities, if any, exist to further improve coordination with the MCPD Victim Assistance Unit?

Abused Persons Program. Staff from the Abused Persons Program report that coordination with the Victim Assistance Unit works very well. Staff note that both programs display a strong interest in collaborating, and that has helped strengthen their working relationship.

APP staff also report that program coordination has improved at both the management and staff level. APP offered the following specific examples of areas where coordination with the Victim Assistance Unit is working well:

- The programs have offered cross-training opportunities to APP staff and advocates in the Victim Assistance Unit. As a result, staff in both programs have a greater understanding of each others' roles and responsibilities.
- APP and the Victim Assistance Unit have developed an enhanced referral process for more severe domestic abuse cases. This new process allows the MCPD advocates (with the victim's permission) to provide the victim's contact information directly to APP instead of relying on the victim to make the initial contact. APP reports that this practice results in cleaner communication and a greater chance of the victim accepting services.
- APP and the Unit have collaborated to provide volunteer assistance to victims seeking protective orders at the Central Processing Unit in Rockville after-hours and on weekends.

Victim Assistance and Sexual Assault Program. VASAP staff report that coordination with the MCPD Victim Assistance Unit has improved tremendously since 2003, specifically since the resolution of the coordination issues regarding outreach services for rape/sexual assault victims. VASAP reports that the coordination issues that arise are generally isolated incidents (not systematic problems) that are resolved quickly and professionally at the staff level.

As with APP, the improved coordination occurs at both the program management and field staff levels. VASAP staff cited the following specific examples of areas where coordination with the Victim Assistance Unit is working well:

- VASAP victim assistants and therapists and Victim Assistance Unit advocates have developed effective working relationships which have led to greater teamwork and more confidence that a victim will get needed services after a hand-off or referral.
- Referrals from the Victim Assistance Unit are getting to VASAP more quickly.
- VASAP and the Unit have collaborated on training efforts, such as the Victim Services 2000 conference.
- VASAP and the Unit have coordinated public outreach and education activities, such as the public information activities offered during Victim's Rights Week.
- VASAP and the Unit have developed an informal procedure to address which program provides assistance to victims who file claims with the State of Maryland victim compensation program. In an effort to avoid duplication of services, the programs jointly determined the circumstances under which each program's staff would provide the compensation program assistance.

VASAP staff suggested two potential opportunities to improve coordination with the Victim Assistance Unit:

- Both programs should continue to work on defining roles and responsibilities in written policies and protocols. This would not only help train new staff but would also serve as a useful reference point for veteran staff.
- VASAP and the Unit should hold a joint staff meeting or training session once a year for all staff to continue fostering and expanding the relationships among staff members of both programs.

State's Attorney's Office and Sheriff's Office. Staff from the State's Attorney's Office (SAO) Family Violence Unit and Sheriff's Office Domestic Violence Unit reported they primarily worked with the advocate position in the Victim Assistance Unit in the Family Crimes Division that handled domestic abuse cases charged as 1st Degree assault (both before and after MCPD transferred the position into the Victim Assistance Unit). Staff from both programs reported they had positive experiences working with that advocate position to coordinate services.

Since the advocates at the district stations now provide services to all domestic violence victims, the SAO Family Violence Unit staff report that they will need to develop a stronger relationship with the Victim Assistance Unit as a whole and work more closely with all of the advocates to coordinate services.

Similarly, Domestic Violence Unit staff in the Sheriff's Office also state they welcome the opportunity to enhance coordination efforts and work more closely with the advocates who work out of the district stations. Sheriff's Office staff suggest an area for increased collaboration could be to look at potentially increasing referrals to the Assessment, Lethality, and Emergency Response Team (ALERT) for Domestic Violence.

Staff from the SAO Family Violence Unit, the Sheriff's Office Domestic Violence Unit, and the MCPD Victim Assistance Unit held a joint meeting in July 2006 to begin discussing ways they could enhance coordination among their programs.

C. Feedback From Victim Assistance Unit Clients

As OLO's previous work on victim services reported, identifying and measuring the desired results of victim services is often difficult because it involves quantifying a victim's feelings and degree of recovery. At the same time, it is important for a victim services program to analyze whether the services it provides are those that victims need and want.

While recognizing that the results would be anecdotal and not statistically reliable, the design of this report included a survey to obtain feedback from a sample of victims served. To accomplish this, OLO conducted a mail survey of a sample of Victim Assistance Unit clients. OLO will present the complete results from the survey at the Public Safety Committee worksession on this report, tentatively scheduled for September 2006.

The highlights of the empirical research on measuring outcomes of victim services programs are summarized below. This information was previously reported in OLO's 2003 report on victim services. The research summary is followed by a description of OLO's survey.

1. Defining and Measuring Outcomes of Victim Services

Determining whether a victim services program is making a difference in victim's lives is substantially different than counting the number of victims served. No universal agreement exists among researchers about how to define the ultimate success or desired outcomes of victim/witness assistance programs. Moreover, the research literature suggests it is difficult to measure reliably whether programs that provide victim services achieve desired outcomes.

The research literature cites examples of both short and long-term outcomes of victim services programs. In the short term, victims:

- Are more knowledgeable about the justice system.
- Feel they have a choice to participate in the justice system.
- Are aware of programs that provide compensation/restitution to victims.
- Feel they are believed.
- Are kept physically safe.
- Experience reduced anxiety about testifying in court.

In the long-term, victims:

- Prevail over the trauma of their victimization.
- Realize they can move on.
- Participate in the justice process.
- Have positive experiences in the justice process.
- Recover financially.
- Are not re-victimized.

The complex and non-linear nature of victim services makes it difficult to determine the effectiveness of a specific intervention. Specific obstacles to conducting outcome evaluations of victim services programs that are cited in the literature include the following:

- Victims do not necessarily remember the services provided, or may actually erase the memory in an effort to forget the victimization;
- The involvement of multiple programs makes it hard to measure the effect of a specific service; and
- Victims often blur their views on the outcome of the criminal justice proceeding with feelings about the service received.

2. Survey of Victim Assistance Unit Clients

To obtain feedback about client perceptions of the Victim Assistance Unit's services, OLO mailed out a written survey to approximately 600 Victim Assistance Unit clients on June 20, 2006. As of this writing, OLO is still receiving responses and tabulating the results.

Sampling Methodology. OLO distributed 597 surveys to crime victims and witnesses contacted by the MCPD Victim Assistance Unit between October 2005 and May 2006. OLO asked Unit advocates at each of the five district stations which were staffed at the time to provide OLO with the contact information for approximately 120 clients.¹

¹ The only district station not covered in the survey was the 2nd District in Bethesda because that position was vacant during the October 2005 to May 2006 time period.

Survey Design. OLO worked with the Director of the Victim Assistance Unit to determine the design and content of the survey. The survey questions were selected to obtain feedback from Victim Assistance Unit clients on the following issues:

- What types of services victims used from the Victim Assistance Unit;
- Whether the victim found the services they received from the Victim Assistance Unit helpful;
- Reasons why victims were unable to or chose not to receive services from the Victim Assistance Unit;
- The level of services victims felt they received from the Victim Assistance Unit;
- If there were services the victim would have liked to receive but did not at the time of their contact with the Victim Assistance Unit; and
- Victims overall level of satisfaction with the services received from the Victim Assistance Unit.

A Victim Assistance Unit staff member translated the survey materials into Spanish for OLO. Each survey participant received the following materials:

- A one-page letter on OLO letterhead with information about the survey and its purpose written in both English and Spanish;
- A two-page survey instrument, printed on both sides of one sheet of paper. Both an English version and a Spanish version of the survey were sent to each participant;
- A postage-paid, return envelope.

A complete set of survey materials is included in the appendix beginning at ©28.

Survey Distribution and Mailing. OLO coordinated the printing and distribution of the survey with the County Government's internal Print Shop. After OLO mailed out the survey on June 9th, OLO learned that the postage-paid, return envelopes were inadvertently left out of the mailing. As a result, OLO re-sent the survey to the entire sample population on June 20th with a note (in both English and Spanish) explaining why the individual was receiving the survey for a second time.

CHAPTER VI. FINDINGS

This chapter presents the Office of Legislative Oversight's findings. The organization of findings parallels the chapters in the report.

OVERVIEW OF MCPD VICTIM ASSISTANCE UNIT

Finding #1. In FY02, the Montgomery County Police Department (MCPD) established the Victim Assistance Unit to provide support and services for victims and witnesses of crime.

The Victim Assistance Unit is located in the Police Department's Investigative Services Bureau, Major Crimes Division.

Until FY01, the Police Department had one full-time staff member who coordinated the delivery of victim services with the assistance of community volunteers and AmeriCorps members. In FY01 and FY02, the Council approved funding in MCPD for seven new civilian positions to create a permanent victim services unit. Additionally, in January 2005 the Police Department transferred a victim advocate position to the Victim Assistance Unit from the Family Crimes Division.

The Victim Assistance Unit's responsibilities are to identify victim and witness needs, provide crisis intervention and support, and refer victims and witnesses to other service providers that can meet longer term needs.

Finding #2. The Victim Assistance Unit includes nine workyears in FY07 at a cost of \$794K. The Unit employs a decentralized staffing structure.

The FY07 staffing complement for the Victim Assistance Unit consists of one full-time director and eight full-time victim advocates. The Director of the Victim Assistance Unit works out of the Community Services Division offices in Rockville. Seven advocates are assigned to the Police Department's District Stations (one advocate is assigned to each District Station, except for the Wheaton-Glenmont District Station, which has two advocates). The eighth advocate works out of the Family Crimes Division offices in Rockville.

The approved FY07 budget for the Victim Assistance Unit totals approximately \$794K; the budget funds personnel costs only. The Victim Assistance Unit does not receive a specific line-item operating budget. The Unit's funding increased by nearly \$200K (33%) between FY03 and FY07, due to the addition of one workyear and annual compensation adjustments for existing staff.

Finding #3. The Victim Assistance Unit has one position vacancy which is under consideration for transfer to the Family Crimes Division, and another position which is temporarily assigned to the Media Services Division.

As of July 2006, the Victim Assistance Unit has seven of the eight advocate positions filled. The current vacancy is the position stationed in the Family Crimes Division that provides services to victims of domestic abuse cases charged as 1st Degree assaults. MCPD is currently reviewing a joint request from the Victim Assistance Unit and the Family Crimes Division to transfer the vacant position to the Family Crimes Division to provide a full-time staff person to coordinate evidence for domestic abuse cases.

All seven District Station-based positions are filled, although one advocate is on temporary duty assignment. MCPD temporarily assigned one of the two advocates from the Wheaton-Glenmont District Station to the MCPD Media Services Division in the summer of 2005 due to a need for Spanish-language media services. MCPD reports no specific date exists for when the temporary duty assignment will end.

VICTIM ASSISTANCE UNIT DELIVERY OF SERVICES

Finding #4. The Victim Assistance Unit advocates identify clients through: reviewing crime or event reports, receiving direct notification from officers, or contact initiated by the victim.

Advocates rely primarily on police reports and police officers/investigators to identify potential clients. The victim advocates who work out of the district stations identify most of the victims they eventually serve in crime or event reports filed by District officers. On a daily basis, an advocate at each district station reads every crime report for incidents that occurred the previous day. They use the reports to identify the names and contact information of any victims or witnesses involved.

A patrol officer or investigator will also directly notify an advocate (in-person, via phone, or via e-mail) about individual victims who need assistance. On rare occasions, an officer will call an advocate to the scene of a crime to provide immediate crisis intervention and assistance.

Advocates also learn about crime victims who need assistance from the victims themselves. In some cases, an individual who learns about the services the County provides will visit the district station to seek assistance on their own. Individuals also learn about victim services by word of mouth and through MCPD community education and outreach efforts.

Finding #5. Victim Assistance Unit advocates place priority on victims of violent crimes, crimes against persons, and serious or traumatic property crimes. Advocates attempt to contact victims involved in priority incidents within 24 hours.

Each advocate prioritizes the victims to be served based on the type of crime. Advocates place priority on victims of the following incidents:

- Assault
- Attempted suicide
- Battery
- Burglary
- Domestic violence
- Hate violence
- Homicide
- Indecent exposure
- Kidnapping
- Mental transports
- Missing persons
- Robbery
- Sudden death
- Stalking/Peeping Tom
- Threatening telephone calls
- Hit and run
- Larceny that involves traumatic circumstances or exceptional loss
- Commercial cases where an individual was traumatized

After learning of an incident, the Unit reports advocates usually call or visit victims involved in these priority incidents within 24 hours to identify needs and offer assistance. The advocates either call or send a letter to victims of other (i.e. non-priority) crimes. The Unit reports that this contact generally takes place between 24 hours and one week after the incident.

Finding #6. The specific services provided by the Victim Assistance Unit vary by the type of crime and an individual's needs. The Unit is well-positioned to address immediate needs; advocates then refer victims to other service providers who are set up to meet longer term needs.

Services offered by the Victim Assistance Unit include emergency services, referrals, case information and assistance, support services, and court-related services. The specific services that the advocates may provide for any given case include:

- Comfort at the crime scene;
- Locating emergency food, shelter, or other life essentials;
- Referrals for mental health and financial assistance with County agencies.
- Conducting risk assessments and safety planning for domestic violence victims;
- Assisting in obtaining protective orders through the courts or the court commissioner's office;
- Providing information about victim rights;
- Providing information about the court system;
- Court accompaniment (if the individual is not working with another agency that provides the service);

- Assisting in the application process for reimbursement from State and County compensation funds for medical bills, lost wages, funeral expenses, etc.;
- Assisting in obtaining information about restitution payment and collections;
- Obtaining police reports for victims/witnesses;
- Returning stolen property or property used as evidence;
- Providing information about on-going investigations;
- Intervening with landlords, employers, creditors, or insurance companies; and
- Assisting in obtaining asylum under immigrant protection legislation.

Finding #7. The Victim Assistance Unit regularly coordinates services for individual cases with other government, private, and non-profit programs. The Unit also participates in on-going victim services collaboration efforts within Montgomery County government.

Public and non-profit organizations throughout Montgomery County offer a broad array of services for crime victims and witnesses. As one of the primary frontline agencies for this informal, Countywide service delivery and referral network, the Victim Assistance Unit coordinates with other County departments, agencies, and programs, as well as other private and non-profit victim assistance programs throughout the County.

According to Victim Assistance Unit staff, an advocate's coordination responsibilities can range from a simple referral to a more formal coordination of multiple services. The Unit reports it regularly coordinates with at least 25 different departments, agencies, and programs. The Unit works with these groups to provide service referrals to individual victims. It also partners with one or more groups to address specific issues or undertake special projects. For example, the Victim Assistance Unit reports it has actively coordinated with other County government programs to:

- Develop a project to provide volunteer assistance to victims seeking protective orders at the Central Processing Unit after-hours and on weekends;
- Develop procedures with other programs to avoid duplication of services;
- Train service providers;
- Conduct promotional and outreach activities;
- Procure holiday gift donations for child victims or children of victims in indigent families; and
- Seek grants for victim services.

WORKLOAD AND PERFORMANCE DATA

Finding #8. The Victim Assistance Unit has contacted victims in nearly 35,000 cases since July 2002. The Unit's annual caseload increased each year through 2005.

The caseload for the Victim Assistance Unit is one measure of the Unit's activity. Victim Assistance Unit advocates record each case where they contact the victim(s) either in-person, by phone, or by letter. A case is generally based on a police report for an incident and the types of incidents vary widely. As a result, a case may have one or more victims. Similarly, a case may have only one contact or multiple contacts with the same victim or victims.

Caseload data collected by the Victim Assistance Unit show that the annual number of cases increased from 9,602 in 2003 (the first full-year of available data) to 10,216 in 2005. However, the caseload data suggest a possible decrease in the annual caseload for 2006 based on a 17% decrease in the average monthly caseload per advocate through May 30th after accounting for staffing vacancies.

Finding #9. Victims of property crime offenses represent 66% of the Victim Assistance Unit's total caseload since 2002. Annually, crimes against property have represented between 57% and 75% of the Unit's cases.

The Victim Assistance Unit maintains information about its case files by type of crime. Since July 2002, the most prevalent types of crimes that result in victim services are larceny (21%), other offenses (19%), assault (18%), burglary (14%), and vandalism (12%).

Since the Unit maintains the caseload data by type of crime, the caseload also can be broken down by crimes against property (larceny, burglary, vandalism, and other offenses¹) compared to crimes against persons (assault, aggravated assault, robbery, rape, and homicide). Of the Unit's 34,693 cases since July 2002, 23,053 (66%) are for property crime offenses and 11,640 (34%) are for crimes against persons. Annually, property crimes have represented between 57% and 75% of Unit cases.

¹ Although some of the burglary and other offenses cases could involve a person, Victim Assistance Unit staff estimate that the majority of those cases are crimes against property.

Finding #10. The Victim Assistance Unit made 22,462 referrals since July 2002, with the annual number of referrals increasing each year through 2005. 73% of the total referrals were to two programs, the Victim Assistance and Sexual Assault Program and the Abused Persons Program.

The Victim Assistance Unit records how many referrals the Unit makes to other agencies, programs, or services. An advocate may make a referral in person, by telephone, or as part of an informational packet mailed to a victim, and an advocate may refer an individual to one or more programs and services. Data about the number of referrals reflects an advocate's efforts to connect an individual to a service provider; it does not indicate whether an individual actually contacted the provider or subsequently accepted services.

Referral data collected by the Victim Assistance Unit show that the annual number of referrals made by Victim Assistance Unit staff increased from 4,470 in 2003 (the first full-year of available data) to 8,550 in 2005. However, the referral data suggest a possible decrease in the annual referrals for 2006 based on a 31% decrease in the average monthly referrals per advocate through May 30th after accounting for staffing vacancies.

Two Department of Health and Human Services programs receive the majority of referrals, with 12,293 (55%) total referrals made to the Victim Assistance and Sexual Assault Program (VASAP) and 3,935 (18%) total referrals made to the Abused Persons Program (APP) since July 2002.

Finding #11. Between January 2004 and May 2006, data indicate an "accepted referral" rate of 8% for Victim Assistance Unit referrals to the Abused Persons Program and 3% for Unit referrals to the Victim Assistance and Sexual Assault Program.

Research on victim services that OLO conducted for a previous study found that many victims choose not to take advantage of victim assistance services. According to the research, the most frequent reasons victims decline services are because they receive the help they need from family and friends and/or they do not have the time to get involved with victim services programs. Although one might anticipate a high degree of correlation between the number of referrals made and number of referrals accepted, in practice this may not occur because many victims voluntarily decline services.

APP and VASAP collect data to track the number of "accepted referrals" from various programs, including referrals from the Victim Assistance Unit. Program staff define an "accepted referral" as when one program (in this case the MCPD Victim Assistance Unit) refers a victim to APP or VASAP and the victim subsequently contacts that program to inquire about and/or receive services. APP and VASAP also record a referral as accepted if program staff contact a victim about available services after receiving (with the victim's permission) the victim's contact information directly from a Victim Assistance Unit staff member.

Since a victim may receive a referral from multiple sources and/or a victim may not remember who provided the referral, the "accepted referral" data may not reflect all referrals made by the Victim Assistance Unit that result in receipt of APP or VASAP services. For the period between January 2004 and May 2006:

- APP identified 225 clients (8%) who accepted one of the Victim Assistance Unit's 2,919 referrals, with annual rates of acceptance between 5% and 11%; and
- VASAP identified 270 clients (3%) who accepted one of the Victim Assistance Unit's 8,769 referrals, with annual rates of acceptance between 2% and 4%.

Finding #12. Between July 2002 and May 2006, the Victim Assistance Unit made 1,656 referrals to victim compensation programs and provided 1,262 court accompaniments.

Unit staff provide referrals to one State and one County compensation program for crime-related losses if the victim meets specific program eligibility requirements. Victim Assistance Unit staff made 868 referrals to the State of Maryland Criminal Injuries Compensation Board and 788 referrals to the Montgomery County Victim Compensation Fund (administered by VASAP) since July 2002. Total compensation program referrals increased from 338 in 2003 to 614 in 2005.

The Victim Assistance Unit does not provide court accompaniment as a primary duty since other programs provide this service. However, Unit staff will provide court accompaniment when requested to do so by another program or when a victim requests this service of the Unit and declines to use a different program. Since July 2002, Victim Assistance Unit staff provided the following court accompaniment services:

- 767 times related to Protective/Peace Orders;
- 88 times for District or Circuit Court trials; and
- 407 times for Other Court Proceedings.

Finding #13. A review of program data and interviews with staff suggest that the Victim Assistance Unit has addressed, in whole or in part, each of the five "barriers to service" that MCPD identified when it requested funding for a permanent victim services unit in 2001.

When MCPD requested funding for a permanent victim services unit in 2001, MCPD staff prepared a position paper for the County Council's Public Safety Committee worksession to justify its proposal. This position paper described five characteristics of the program structure in place and suggested each case offered an opportunity to improve the delivery of victim services. A summary of each barrier from 2001 is listed below along with program data and information related to the status of the Unit's performance in addressing each.

- **A lack of consistent linkages to appropriate referrals** – In 2001, the Police Department stated that, as first responders to a crime scene, its officers and victim advocates can play a critical role in informing victims about the array of County services and providing referrals to access these services. MCPD stated that without a referral system based in the Police Department, most victims would never become aware of the services provided by programs such as the Victim Assistance and Sexual Assault Program and the Abused Persons Program.

Current Status: Victim Assistance Unit workload data indicate that the desired referrals are being made. Since July 2002, Unit staff have made over 12,000 referrals to VASAP, nearly 4,000 referrals to APP, and over 6,000 referrals to other programs. Of the total referrals made by the Unit to their programs, APP staff have identified 225 clients (8%) who accepted the referral and VASAP staff have identified 270 clients (3%) who accepted the referral.

- **A number of unserved or underserved victims** – In 2001, MCPD stated that a victim assistance program located in the Police Department would help address the needs of victims who did not fall under the purview of other victim services programs that traditionally focused on victims of violence. For example, MCPD noted no program currently existed to assist the approximately 18,000 victims of property crimes each year.

Current Status: Victim Assistance Unit caseload data indicates that the Unit has provided services to victims in approximately 23,000 property crime cases since 2002, which represents 66% of the Unit's total caseload during that period. Additionally, between 57% and 75% of the Unit's annual caseload is related to property crimes.

- **An inadequate level of trained, professional staff within MCPD** – In 2001, MCPD stated that because the staffing level consisted of only one full-time professional victim services coordinator plus volunteers, “only a handful” of the County's victims of violent crime received any form of outreach from the Police Department, and victims of property crime received only a standard form letter.

Current Status: MCPD now has professionally trained staff providing victim services out of each of the County's six district police stations. Victim Assistance Unit staff report that victims of violent crime receive direct outreach in-person or via a phone call within 24 hours of an advocate learning about an incident. Victims of most serious or traumatic property crime also receive direct outreach.

- **A high turnover rate and lack of continuity in service** – In 2001, MCPD stated the use of volunteer staff created high turnover in personnel. As a result, the coordinator spent a large portion of time recruiting and training new volunteers; it also made it difficult to offer continuity of service to victims of the most serious crimes.

Current Status: The implementation of permanent staffing removed the barrier associated with volunteer turnover. The permanent staff also provide continuity of service to victims of the most serious crimes.

- **Lack of departmental training regarding victimization and victim's needs** – In 2001, with few staff and high turnover, MCPD reported it had been unable to establish a consistent training program for either new recruits or seasoned officers. Such training would address topics such as the needs of crime victims, appropriate county agency referrals, and laws protecting victim's rights.

Current Status: MCPD has established a consistent training procedure for staff related to victims of crime. These include formal training (e.g. training for new officer recruits at the Public Safety Academy) and informal training (e.g. victim advocate participation in district station roll calls and/or staff meetings).

FEEDBACK ON VICTIM ASSISTANCE UNIT COORDINATION AND SERVICES

Finding #14. Police Department staff outside of the Victim Assistance Unit expressed strong support for the services provided by the Unit as a needed function within MCPD.

In general, Police Department staff interviewed described the Victim Assistance Unit staff as professional, knowledgeable, and extremely committed to providing quality services to victims of crime. Common themes among the feedback from staff include:

- District stations are the appropriate location for the victim advocates;
- Victim advocates leverage the time of other Police Department staff;
- Exact roles and usage of the advocates varies somewhat among the district stations;
- Over time, the victim advocates have gained legitimacy within different levels of MCPD;
- Spanish-speaking advocates in the Silver Spring and Wheaton-Glenmont district stations are essential; and
- The Victim Assistance Unit has a strong internal and external customer service focus.

A consensus among Police Department staff outside of the Victim Assistance Unit interviewed is that the Unit is running well and no major changes are needed to improve service delivery. However, staff interviewed generally agreed on two potential opportunities for improvement:

- Additional in-service training for Police Department staff on victim issues; and
- Increased feedback and/or communication opportunities between the Director of the Victim Assistance Unit and the District Station Commanders.

Finding #15. Both Police Department and Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) staff report that coordination between and among the Victim Assistance Unit and DHHS victim services programs has improved tremendously since 2003.

Since 2003, when OLO reported victim services providers needed to improve program coordination, MCPD and DHHS staff at all levels have worked on improving the coordination and collaboration between their respective victim services programs.

Staff from both departments report that these efforts have resulted in substantial improvements. Specific comments and examples noted by staff include:

- Staff from the Abused Persons Program report that the Victim Assistance Unit has shown a strong interest in collaboration, which has helped to produce good working relationships at both the program management and staff level.
- Victim Assistance and Sexual Assault Program staff report that coordination with the Victim Assistance Unit has improved tremendously since 2003, specifically since the resolution of the coordination issues regarding outreach services for rape/sexual assault victims. VASAP reports that whenever coordination issues arise, they are generally isolated incidents (not systematic problems) that are resolved quickly and professionally at the staff level.
- Victim Assistance Unit staff report that the development of standard operating procedures has greatly reduced and/or eliminated service overlap and improved the Unit's overall relationship with other victim service programs.
- Victim Assistance Unit staff also report having a better understanding of what services other programs provide, and being more comfortable referring victims to those programs because they know the client will receive the needed service.
- Other areas cited by MCPD and DHHS staff where coordination is working well include cross-training opportunities; developing enhanced referral processes; and coordinating public outreach and education efforts.

Areas suggested for potential coordination improvement are: continuing to work on defining roles and responsibilities in written policies and protocols; and holding an annual joint staff meeting or training session for MCPD and DHHS victim services staff.

CHAPTER VII. RECOMMENDED ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

This Chapter outlines four issues that the Office of Legislative Oversight recommends for Council discussion. The recommended discussion issues relate to the Police Department's services through the Victim Assistance Unit as well as victim services efforts across programs. The discussion issues include:

- The results of OLO's Victim Assistance Unit client survey;
- Victim Assistance Unit opportunities to further improve coordination;
- The process and results of Victim Assistance Unit referrals to the Abused Persons Program and the Victim Assistance and Sexual Assault Program; and
- Requesting a Victim Services Task Force status update.

DISCUSSION ISSUE #1 – The results of OLO's Victim Assistance Unit client survey.

At the Public Safety Committee worksession on OLO Report 2006-8 (tentatively scheduled for September 25, 2006), OLO will present the results from a survey of Victim Assistance Unit clients. OLO distributed a written survey instrument to nearly 600 Victim Assistance Unit clients in June 2006. As of this writing, OLO is still receiving responses and tabulating the results.

At the worksession, the Public Safety Committee should discuss with Police Department staff the results of the survey, the usefulness of the survey, and the need to regularly obtain some form of client feedback. Specific discussion topics should include:

- Whether the Police Department should continue using the same survey instrument and same survey methodology as a permanent method for obtaining client feedback on the Victim Assistance Unit;
- Whether the Police Department should create a different survey instrument and/or survey methodology to obtain client feedback on the Victim Assistance Unit;
- Whether the Police Department should consider using an entirely different method altogether to obtain client feedback on the Victim Assistance Unit; and
- Whether the type of information sought through the survey is useful from both a program management perspective for the Police Department and from a funding and oversight perspective for the Committee.

DISCUSSION ISSUE #2 – Victim Assistance Unit opportunities to further improve coordination.

Feedback from staff of multiple programs indicates that the Victim Assistance Unit has made substantial strides in coordinating with other victim services providers since the Unit was established in 2002.

Staff did, however, note a few areas where opportunities exist to improve coordination within the Police Department and with other victim services programs. The Council should discuss with Police Department staff the potential implementation of the following suggestions:

- Add in-service training for Police Department staff on victim issues;
- Increase feedback and/or communication opportunities between the Director of the Victim Assistance Unit and the District Station Commanders;
- Continue the definition of program roles and responsibilities in written policies and protocols; and
- Hold an annual joint staff meeting or training session for staff from MCPD and DHHS victim services programs.

DISCUSSION ISSUE #3 – The process and results of Victim Assistance Unit referrals to the Abused Persons Program and the Victim Assistance and Sexual Assault Program.

Program data indicate that the Victim Assistance Unit is very successful in contacting victims and providing appropriate referrals. However, Abused Persons Program (APP) and Victim Assistance and Sexual Assault Program (VASAP) data on “accepted referrals” indicate that: only 8% of the victims referred by the Unit to APP and only 3% of the victims referred to VASAP “accept” the referral. Program staff define an accepted referral as when the Unit refers a victim to APP or VASAP and the victim contacts that program to inquire about and/or receive services.

A low rate of accepted referrals is not uncommon. The research indicates that many victims choose not to receive any victim services for a variety of reasons. According to the research, the most frequent reasons victims decline services are because they receive the help they need from family and friends and/or they do not have the time to get involved with victim services programs.

Nonetheless, OLO recommends that the Council discuss with Victim Assistance Unit and other County staff (i.e., APP and VASAP staff) potential strategies and a timeframe to determine the reasons behind the current rates of referral follow-up in Montgomery County. Strategies to further understand the current referral acceptance rates could include surveys, interviews, or focus groups of individuals that did not follow-up on referrals.

The Council should request that program staff provide an update to the Council on these research efforts when completed, including a determination on whether the primary reasons behind the low rate of accepted referrals are personal choice or are instead barriers that could be removed, such as transportation, location of services, language, etc.

DISCUSSION ISSUE #4 – Request a Victim Services Task Force status update.

The Council, Executive, State's Attorney, and the Sheriff formed an inter-agency Victim Services Task Force in 2003, following Council action on the Office of Legislative Oversight's report on services to adult victims and witnesses of crime. The Task Force has worked to address the Council's recommendations for action as well as other initiatives to improve victim services. Following the April 2005 OLO report on services to juvenile victims and witnesses of crime, the Council requested that the Task Force expand its membership and work on additional tasks related to juvenile victims.

The Council has received two written progress reports from the Task Force – dated December 8, 2003 and February 8, 2005. Also, the Public Safety and Health and Human Services Committees held a joint worksession to discuss Task Force progress on December 8, 2003. The Task Force has not provided the Council with a status update since it expanded its membership to include work on juvenile issues.

While this report did not examine the implementation status of recommendations from those earlier reports, several of the suggestions to improve coordination described in this report relate to the work of the Task Force.

To follow up on the issues raised and endorsed by the Council, OLO recommends the Council formally request a written progress update from the Victim Services Task Force and schedule a joint Public Safety/Health and Human Services Committee worksession to receive the update.

CHAPTER VIII. AGENCY COMMENTS

The Office of Legislative Oversight circulated a final draft of this report to the County Government's Department of Police and Department of Health and Human Services. The final report incorporates technical corrections provided by the departments.

Written comments from the Chief Administrative Officer are included in their entirety beginning on the following page.

OLO greatly appreciates the time taken by everyone who reviewed the draft report.



OFFICES OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Douglas M. Duncan
County Executive

MEMORANDUM

Bruce Romer
Chief Administrative Officer

July 26, 2006

TO: Karen Orlansky, Director
Office of Legislative Oversight

FROM: Bruce Romer
Chief Administrative Officer

SUBJECT: Office of Legislative Oversight DRAFT Report 2006-8, An Evaluation of
the Police Department's Victim Assistance Unit

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide you with information and feedback as it relates to the above referenced document. Staff from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Department of Police (MCPD) have worked cooperatively to carefully review the OLO report and to provide detailed feedback. We would like to acknowledge the excellent work of Craig Howard who has prepared a thorough analysis of the Victim Assistance Unit including identifying the program's salient strengths, weaknesses, redundancy and gaps that require additional attention.

It is important to note that the review was comprehensive and as such, the report is quite detailed. Much of the information is contextual and research-based, so collectively, we have chosen to stipulate to the substance. The program coordinator, Ellen Alexander, has worked closely with OLO staff to provide some minor clarification, especially regarding joint training, which has been occurring regularly over the course of the past two years.

There are a number of positive indicators contained in the report, not the least of which is the notation regarding the unit's effectiveness with regard to addressing "barriers to service". Additionally, the unit has improved the coordination between the police department and other county agencies, especially those contained within HHS. We look forward to discussing this report with Council at a future date.

copies:

J. Thomas Manger, Chief, Montgomery County Police Department
Carolyn Colvin, Director, Montgomery County Department of Health & Human Services
Deidre Walker, Assistant Chief, Montgomery County Police Department
Craig Howard, Legislative Analyst, Office of Legislative Oversight



Office of Legislative Oversight Report 2006-8

AN EVALUATION OF THE POLICE DEPARTMENT'S VICTIM ASSISTANCE UNIT

APPENDIX

Description	Circle Number
Montgomery County Police Department <i>Function Code 1107: Victim/Witness Assistance Section</i>	©1
June 7, 2001 Worksession Packet of the County Council's Public Safety Committee: <i>Item #2, Victim Assistance Services (Montgomery County Police Department)</i>	©4
April 27, 2004 Worksession Packet of the County Council's Public Safety Committee: <i>Item #1, Briefing and Discussion – MC Police Department Victim Services</i>	©12
Montgomery County Department of Police <i>Victim/Witness Assistance Information Sheet</i>	©26
OLO Victim Assistance Unit Client Survey Materials • Survey Letters • Survey Instrument • Return Envelope	©28



VICTIM/WITNESS ASSISTANCE SECTION

FC No.: 1107

Date: 05-30-06

If a provision of a regulation, departmental directive, rule, or procedure conflicts with a provision of the contract, the contract prevails except where the contract provision conflicts with State law or the Police Collective Bargaining Law. (FOP Contract, Article 61)

Contents:

- I. Policy
- II. Victim/Witness Assistance *Section*
- III. Training for Department Personnel
- IV. Department Personnel Responsibilities
- V. Proponent Unit
- VI. Cancellation

I. Policy

- A. The department is committed to the fair, compassionate, and sensitive treatment of victims and witnesses of crime. This can be accomplished *through the department's Victim/Witness Assistance Section (VWAS)* by providing the highest quality of law enforcement while working in partnership with the community. This partnership will help to assure that victims/witnesses are afforded reasonable protection and timely information to assist them with recovering from the effects of crime.

- B. The department recognizes that every victim needs and expects follow-up contact to *recover from the effects of crime*. The *police officer's* role *as a first responder* in this cycle of events is critical to the beginning of this process. The department cannot meet every need, but does have a responsibility to increase victims'/witnesses' awareness and assist them in navigating *the criminal justice system*. (CALEA 55.1.1)

II. Victim/Witness Assistance Section

- A. *Authority and Responsibility*
The authority and responsibility for *the* administration and coordination of *the department's role* in a structured victim/witness assistance *program*, rests with

the director of the *Major Crimes Division*. Patrol and investigative responsibilities in providing victim/witness assistance are directed by the chiefs of those respective bureaus. (CALEA 55.1.3.a)

- B. *Contacting Victim/Witness Assistants*
Victim/witness assistants can be reached at their respective district station during regular office hours. After hours and on weekends, a message can be left for the district victim/witness assistant who will make contact during regular business hours. (CALEA 55.2.1.a)

C. *Outreach and Referral*

1. The department conducts an outreach program providing support, information, and referral *for* crime victims/witnesses. Outreach will be attempted to all crime victims/witnesses in their service area by telephone, letter, *and/or* brochure distribution. This program is designed to complement the services already being rendered by first responders and other agencies. (CALEA 55.2.3.a, 55.2.4.a, e)
2. The purpose of the outreach is to listen, answer questions, assess the victim's needs, and make the appropriate recommendations *and/or* referrals to service providers. Under no circumstances will the victim/witness assistants address issues requiring the knowledge or experience of a sworn officer. (CALEA 55.2.3.a)
3. Case outcomes will be monitored by two separate feedback mechanisms:
 - a. Victims will receive a follow-up call as deemed necessary to confirm outcome of recommendations. (CALEA 55.2.4.a)
 - b. A quarterly report on referral follow-through will be exchanged with collaborating agencies.

III. Training for Department Personnel

- A. *Victim/Witness Assistants*
Training will specifically address terms of confidentiality and associated penalties for breach of confidentiality or misuse of privileged

access as the issue relates to all department members. Victim/witness assistants undergo background investigations before acceptance. If accepted, they sign an MCP 573, "Confidentiality Agreement" during their orientation. (CALEA 55.1.3.b)

B. **Patrol Officers and Investigators**
Each district Victim/Witness Assistant will provide training and/or information on new laws to patrol officers and investigators at their assigned stations.

C. **Police Officer Candidates**
Police officer candidates are instructed in the following areas in recruit training, by academy instructors. (CALEA 55.1.3.a)

1. Rape and sexual offenses
2. Interviewing of witnesses
3. Domestic violence
4. Victim needs
5. Sexual harassment
6. Services provided by the VWAS

D. **Resource Information**
A library of journal references, books, and videotapes is maintained in the Volunteer and Community Resources Division to support ongoing education on victim/witness issues. (CALEA 55.1.3.a)

IV. Department Personnel Responsibilities

A. **District Commander and Supervisor Responsibilities**

Supervisors of the investigative sections and district commanders will provide the VWAS with all event reports. Trained volunteers will photocopy the event reports and return the reports for normal disposition. In instances where access to the complete report may compromise an on-going investigation, only the first page containing victim/witness information will be provided. The VWAS may also receive referrals directly from the victim, patrol officer, court commissioner, or any other county agency.

B. **VWAS Responsibilities**

1. The VWAS's SOP will address the delivery of victim/witness assistance services by victim/witness assistants in coordination with investigators assigned to follow-up on incidents.

2. Records will be maintained *by the VWAS* on all outreach attempts and referrals stemming from client contacts.
3. The VWAS will report annually to the Chief of Police concerning the victim/witness needs assessment and available resources.
4. Regular contact with service providers will be maintained to promote networking and collaboration on a systematic approach to needs assessment and service delivery. (CALEA 55.1.3.d)

C. **Victim/Witness Assistant Responsibilities**

1. Victim/witness assistants serve as liaisons between victims and the police, facilitating communication and easing demands on sworn officers by handling routine inquiries and requests. (CALEA 55.1.1)
2. Victim/witness assistants will work closely with the central and decentralized investigative sections.
3. Victim/witness assistants will deal with victims/witnesses with sensitivity and respect at all times while observing strict confidentiality.
4. As *directed by the assigned investigator or supervisor*, victim/witness assistants may ask specific questions of the victim/witness to ascertain additional facts relevant to the crime which may lead to further investigation or closure of the case. Any feedback or supplemental information derived from the questions will be provided to the assigned investigator or supervisor.

D. **Sworn Officer Responsibilities**

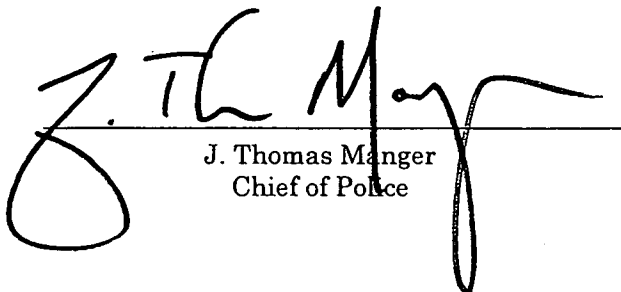
1. It is each officer's responsibility to ensure that, upon first contact, every victim/witness receives a copy of the Maryland "Crime Victims and Witnesses: Your Rights and Services" brochure which is provided by the Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention, and a copy of the "Montgomery County Victim/Witness Assistance Information Sheet. The officer will make a note in the initial report narrative that the brochures were given to the victim/witness. This distribution will ensure that all victims/witnesses and potential victims of crime are apprised of basic criminal justice procedures and how to contact a number of standard resources. (CALEA 55.2.3.a)
2. Officers will provide their name, telephone number, and case number to

- victims/witnesses and advise them how to report additional police information, seek a case status report, or obtain a copy of a police report. (CALEA 55.1.3.a, 55.2.3.c, d)
3. Victims/witnesses will be advised to call 911 in an emergency or the police non-emergency number, 301-279-8000, at any time, 24 hours a day, for non-emergency response or referral. (CALEA 55.2.1.b, 55.2.3.d)
 4. Victims/witnesses will be directed to the 24 hour crisis hotline, 240-777-4000, in crisis-related cases, *prior to clearing the call*. The Crisis Center serves as a clearinghouse for a number of county victim services under the Department of Health and Human Services. (CALEA 55.2.3.a)
 5. Victims/witnesses who have been threatened or fear intimidation will be encouraged to report these incidents to the department. A thorough investigation will be initiated by a police officer/investigator. Victims will be advised of appropriate courses of action, including crime prevention measures and legal avenues of recourse. Protection will be afforded to the extent reasonable and practical, consistent with the threat and department staffing levels. Criminal charges are encouraged utilizing Criminal Law 9-304 (Victim Witness Intimidation). (CALEA 55.2.2, 55.2.3.b)

V. Proponent Unit: *Major Crimes Division*

VII. Cancellation

This directive cancels Function Code 1107, effective date 03-03-00.

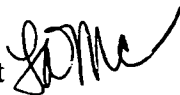


J. Thomas Manger
Chief of Police

MEMORANDUM

June 5, 2001

TO: Public Safety Committee

FROM: Linda McMillan, Senior Legislative Analyst 

SUBJECT: **Victim Assistance Services (Montgomery County Police Department)**

As a part of the FY02 operating budget, the Council approved five new Victim Assistance Workers for the Montgomery County Police Department. These new positions will provide enhanced general victim assistance service in each of the five main police districts. In addition, as a part of the efforts to improve the County's response to domestic violence, the Council previously approved two Victim Assistance Workers for the Wheaton-Glenmont District to focus on victims of domestic violence.

At your budget worksession, you heard from Ms. Ellen Alexander, Deputy Director of the MCPD Community Resources Division, about the need for permanent staffing for these services (previously, most victim services have been provided through Americorp or volunteers). The new staff will help better meet CALEA standards and improve outreach and responsiveness to a wide range of victims of both personal and property crimes.

This session will provide the Committee with an opportunity to have a fuller understanding of the goals of the Police Department. The Committee may specifically want to discuss:

- How will training for the new MCPD Victim Assistance Workers be provided? Will training be coordinated with DHHS, the Sheriff's Office, the State's Attorney's Office and others to assure these workers have information on existing programs?
- How will the new MCPD Victim Assistance Workers be assigned and supervised? Will they operate as a central unit? Will they have offices in the district stations? Will they be supervised both by the Community Resources Division and the district commander? Will they participate in roll-call or other staff meetings?

- What is the expectation for the relationship between the Victim Assistance Workers and the police officers in the district? Will officers be able to contact their district's worker directly? How will they work with the crime analysts?
- In the Wheaton-Glenmont District, what will be the relationship between the new generalist and the Victim Assistance Workers who are focusing on domestic violence victims?
- How will the Department work with the municipal policing agencies and Park Police to coordinate services and contacts?
- What are the CALEA standards and will these new workers allow us to meet the standards?

As background for this discussion, the following items are attached:

Attachments

Circle

Memo to Mr. Andrews with background and plans for enhanced victim services within the police department. (The Committee may want to use the list on circle 5 and 6 as a focus for the discussion on coordination with other programs.)

1 through 6

MCPD Victim Witness Assistance information provided on the County's web site.

7 through 9

DHHS Crisis, Income, and Victim Services information provided on the County's web site.

10 through 13

County Code excerpt regarding the Victim Advocate Program

14 through 18

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DEPARTMENT OF POLICE

Douglas M. Duncan
County Executive

Charles A. Moose, Ph.D.
Chief of Police

MEMORANDUM

To: The Honorable Phil Andrews
Chair, Public Safety Committee
Montgomery County Council

From: Ellen Alexander *E*
Deputy Director, Community Resources Division

Date: May 7, 2001

Re: Justification of Police-based Victim Advocates

First, allow me to thank you for your unwavering support in the area of victim services. I know that you are as committed as I to ensuring that all victims residing in Montgomery County have access to the sensitive and timely services they deserve. As we discussed at last Thursday's presentation by retired NYPD Commander Bratton, I have drafted a more formal position paper for your review as to the importance of funding full-time paid victim advocates in the Police Department. I hope it is helpful to you and other members of the Council in making this important decision. Additionally, as you may be aware, Chief Moose has moved my former division, the Volunteer and Community Resources Division, into a larger unit under his office. The Department's newest division is the Community Resources Division which will comprise the volunteer, victim assistance and intern programs, as well as the crime prevention unit, community education programs and a host of others that will better serve the citizens of Montgomery County. It is a move, I believe, that will do much to help the Department to better provide services and information in a collaborative proactive way to victims of crime.

Please feel free to have a member of your staff contact me if you should have any additional questions or need further clarification as to the critical need for these positions. I can be reached at (240) 773-5626. It has been a pleasure to work with you on this matter. Thank you.

Montgomery County Police-Based Victim Assistance Linking Victims to Services

Barriers to Service

1. Consistent Linkages to Appropriate Referrals

Montgomery County should take great pride in the programs and services they have set in place to provide victims of crime with valuable supportive and financial services to help them to begin to heal in the aftermath of crime. However, without proper referrals to these important services, victims may never become aware of the services available to them or the rights afforded to them by law as they navigate the justice process. Currently, the primary sources of victim services are provided by three agencies: The State's Attorney Office, the Abused Person's Program and the Victim Assistance and Sexual Assault Program.

At the current time, the **State's Attorney's Office's** victim assistance program primarily prepares victims whose cases will go to trial to deal with the emotional and logistical aspects of courtroom participation. *A vast majority of cases will never result in the arrest or trial of an offender; therefore, the program services offered by the State's Attorney's Office excludes many victims.* The **Abused Person's Program** primary function is to provide support and services to victims of domestic violence. *Their services are not typically available to general crime victims - even those suffering extreme cases of violent victimization.* The **Victim Assistance and Sexual Assault Program** provides counseling and financial assistance to victims of general crime - most notably to victims of sexual assault and surviving family members of murdered victims *but without a referral for service, they cannot provide these important services.* **The critical link to each of these highly skilled, professional programs is the law enforcement community.** The Montgomery County Department of Police plays a pivotal role in ensuring that victims learn of the vast array of supportive services provided by the Victim Assistance and Sexual Assault Abused Persons Programs, along with allied human service agencies. Without referrals from the Department, the vast majority of victims, especially those of violent crimes, are unlikely to learn of the services available to them.

The significance of law enforcement's role in responding to crime victims cannot be over-emphasized. Law enforcement personnel interact more often with crime victims than any other profession in the criminal justice system. The way that victims are treated by front-line law enforcement personnel shapes their expectations of how they will be treated throughout the entire justice process. As the first responders to most reported crimes, law enforcement agencies must ensure that victims are treated with sensitivity and provided essential information, emergency assistance and other services necessary in the immediate aftermath of victimization.

2. Underserved Victims

Most of the County's victim-related programs and services are geared to address the emergency financial and emotional needs of those victims suffering violent acts. The establishment and staffing of a law enforcement-based victim assistance program will begin to address the needs of thousands of victims who will never fall under the purview of established county and non-profit victim-related agencies. The Montgomery County Department of Police is not aware of any programs that currently exist that help the over 18,000 victims of residential and commercial burglaries, auto thefts, financial crimes and other property-related crimes from last year alone. Often these victims need supportive services and information -- the same as those victims of violent crime. Examples of these services include, but are not limited to:

- A. Reducing the potential for revictimization:
 - 1) Crime prevention strategies ranging from fraud and financial crimes to protecting personal property such as the home and/or automobile.
 - 2) Home and business security inspections.
- B. Increase security options
 - 1) Information and follow up on how to report threats or harassment from offenders or agents acting on their behalf.
 - 2) Information on the Victim Information and Notification Everyday (VINE) program.

Additionally, juvenile victims of general crimes, including physical assault, elderly crime victims and victims of alcohol-related crashes remain very real underserved populations within Montgomery County. Often these victims have financial or psychological issues stemming from their victimization and referral to the County's victim assistance programs is critical in the aftermath of the crime.

3. Lack of Trained, Professional Staff

Tremendous strides have been made by the county to deliver critically needed support and financial services to victims in Montgomery County. However, without the proper links/referrals to crucial supportive services provided by county-related agencies, a majority of victims will always remain unaware of the services available to them and the rights afforded to them by law. One of the greatest barriers to the implementation of victim/witness programs and services has been a lack of financial resources in which to pay for program services and costs, along with the necessary personnel needed to dispense and oversee program services. The Montgomery County Department of Police is no different. With limited county resources, the Police Department finds it difficult to expand its current program services to ensure that crime victims residing in Montgomery County receive the services and support they deserve without the appropriate staff to deliver critically needed services.

Specifically, during the first three-quarters of this year, 1174 persons residing in Montgomery County became victims of a violent crime. Of this number, 984 persons

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were victims of homicide, rape, robbery, or aggravated assault. Another 190 persons were injured or killed as the result of alcohol-related motor vehicle crashes for the same time period. No statistics are available detailing the number of children sexually abused for the 2000 calendar year but open cases requiring continuing investigation and/or prosecution average another 100 victims. Additionally, during the same time period, an additional 18,021 Montgomery County residents were victimized by crimes against property including residential and commercial burglary, larceny and auto theft. At the current staffing level, only a handful of the County's victims of violent crime receive any form of outreach from the Police Department – services critical following the aftermath of a violent offense. Victims of property crime basically receive little more than a standard form letter from the Unit. Overall, many victims are not receiving even a minimal level of victim assistance due to staffing shortages.

Current staffing levels within the Police Department's Victim Assistance Unit remain low. At the current time, the Police Department's dedicated Victim Assistance Unit has one full-time paid professional victim advocate who coordinates the victim assistance efforts throughout the Police Department. With the Police Department's current victim assistance staffing, victims of violent crime living in Montgomery County receive a less than one hour, on average, of victim assistance per calendar year. **Victims of non-violent crime either receive no services or less than four (4) minutes of service per calendar year.** In addition to trying to meet the needs of thousands of crime victims, the Coordinator is also for all administrative tasks related to the daily operations of the program.

Fairfax County is very similar to Montgomery County in its geographic, population and crime demographics. At the current time, Fairfax County Department of Police employs twelve (12) full-time victim advocates to provide services to crime victims – this number excludes clerical help. Recently Fairfax County hired an independent contractor to analysis the Department's Victim Assistance Unit. This final report showed that based on work load and current staffing levels the Unit's staffing requirement for victim advocates should be at a range of no less than sixteen (16) individuals – an addition of four (4) more staff members than current staffing levels.

4. Lack of Continuity in Service

Additionally, continual turnover in the Victim Assistance Unit's volunteer staff requires the Coordinator to spend an inordinate amount of her time recruiting and training new victim assistance volunteers. And while valuable in providing general information to crime victims, volunteers offer no continuity of service to victims of devastating crimes. For example, the weekly time average for the Department's volunteers is four (4) hours. This means that a victim can only make contact with their volunteer victim assistance worker during this four hour window or they must repeat their request for service, along with the circumstances of their crime to a new person each time they call in. It should also be noted that the Department's AmeriCorps program will not be funded for the coming fiscal cycle, therefore, reducing the pool of personnel who have been called upon in the past to help provide victim assistance coverage in each of the Department's District Stations.

5. **Lack of Departmental Training Regarding Victimization and Victim's Needs**

With current staff levels so low, the Department has been unable to establish a consistent training program for new recruits entering the Department, or in-house training to seasoned officers as to the needs of crime victims, county agency referrals, and laws mandating police-based services or information. A victim assistance caseworker in each District Station would favorably impact the training that the Department would like to conduct on a routine basis. With consistent training, officers would be better able to refer victims to appropriate services to address their crime specific needs

Conclusion:

If the Council favorably chooses to approve the Department's request to hire victim assistance caseworkers for each District Station to augment the Unit's current professional staff, services to crime victims would be drastically increased, as would opportunities to train new and existing police officers as to their legal obligations to victims and about the services available to victims throughout county. This training will significantly increase the referrals victims would receive to address their emotional and financial concerns following a criminal victimization. Police-based victim assistance services would include, but not be limited to:

- Information to victims concerning their rights to be informed, present, and heard in the justice process;
- Information concerning the on-going investigation, where appropriate, and including the arrest of an offender;
- On scene comfort, where appropriate;
- Risk assessment in cases of domestic violence;
- Referrals for emergency assistance for shelter, medical care and financial aid, if applicable;
- Non-therapeutic crisis intervention;
- Referrals for counseling services;
- Information on the recovery of stolen property;
- Assessment, where applicable for increased security options including the repair of broken doors, locks and windows, safety inspections of homes, information about VINE enrollment, availability of free cell phones and ADT alarm pendants, etc.;
- Transportation, where appropriate, to and from police line-ups, agency referrals, and medical exams necessary in the investigation of the case;
- Assistance in obtaining police reports to expedite the filing of health, auto or homeowner insurance or a crime victim compensation claim;
- Information about how to, and where appropriate, assistance in applying for ex parte and protective orders;
- Notification to the State's Attorney of cases involving threats, harassment, or intimidation;
- Landlord/employer, creditor intervention, where appropriate;
- Filing for county and state criminal injuries compensation funds;

- Assist in victim/witness relocation where appropriate; and
- Appropriate case handoff to allied criminal justice and community service agencies.

MEMORANDUM

April 27, 2004

TO: Public Safety Committee

FROM: Linda McMillan, Senior Legislative Analyst *Linda McMillan*

SUBJECT: **Briefing and Discussion – MC Police Department Victim Services**

At this session, Ms. Ellen Alexander, head of the Montgomery County Police Department's Victim Assistance Unit, will be present to brief the Committee on the how victim services are structured and provided by the Police Department. The Public Safety Committee has been meeting regularly with the Health and Human Services Committee on interagency victim services issues. This provides the Public Safety Committee with a more in-depth opportunity to discuss resources in the Police Department.

Attached at ©1 is the first quarter data from the Unit. At ©2-10 is a report prepared by Ms. Alexander for the joint Committees' December session (the Committees did not have time for this part of the discussion). The December report not only provides data on caseloads but describes the outreach that has been undertaken by the Department particularly in the Hispanic/Latino community. Lastly, as background an excerpt from the March 2003 OLO Report on victims services is attached at ©11-15.

The Committee expressed its interest in hearing from Ms. Alexander on the Department's outreach and services to victims of all types of crimes and specifically on the additional emphasis placed on responding to domestic violence in the 4th District (which has an additional Victim Assistance Advocate). Regarding the effort in the 4th District Ms. Alexander will discuss with the Committee some of the reasons why one of the original goals of having advocates regularly work on scene cannot be implemented at this time and how alternatives (such as having an advocate meet with the victim shortly after the incident but at a different site) are working.

There are no recommended budgetary changes for FY05. However, at a previous joint session, the Committees were told that the Department has been looking at where organizationally the Unit would operate most effectively with the expectation that it would move to the Investigative Services Bureau to allow better coordination with investigators and the domestic violence case worker in the Family Service Division.

**Statistics of Victim Outreach Provided by Montgomery County
Department of Police's Victim Assistance Unit for
The First Quarter of 2004**

Total Number of Outreach Efforts to Victims of Crime during the First Quarter of 2004 = **2,637**

Total Number of Outreach Responses to Domestic Violence Victims Department-wide = **423**

Assistance in Obtaining Peace/Protective Orders: **53**

Court Accompaniment to DV Victims in Violation of Protective Orders and Other Court-related Hearings: **31**

Total Number of Referrals Made to the Abused Persons Program During the First Quarter of 2004 = **328**

Total Number of Referrals Made to the Victim Assistance and Sexual Assault Program During the First Quarter of 2004 = **594**

First Quarter Statistics (2004)

Homicide: **6**

Sexual Assault and Rape (Adult – Felony and Misdemeanor): **22**

Sexual Assault and Rape (Child – Felony and Misdemeanor): **19**

Robbery: **198**

Aggravated Assault: **144**

Domestic Violence: **423**

Burglary: **344**

Assault and Battery (does not include DV cases): **223**

Child Abuse and Neglect: **3**

Elder Abuse and Neglect: **6**

Harassment/Stalking: **24**

Threatening Telephone Calls: **19**

Hit and Run: **3**

Driving Under the Influence: **3**

Violation of Temporary and Permanent Protective Orders: **22**

Larceny: **599**

Vandalism: **238**

Theft of Identity: **39**

Auto Theft: **105**

Others: (stalking, purse snatching, kidnapping, embezzlement, suicide (attempted and completed), walk-ins, juvenile crime, etc.): **197**

Highlights of Victim Program

Samples of Outreach Services to Inform the Public of General Victim Assistance Services

Below you will find just a small sampling of examples of community outreach that the Montgomery County Department of Police's Victim Assistance Unit provides both to the Wheaton Pilot and to the greater community. This outreach is in addition to any one-on-one victim assistance work they do with crime victims. The main purpose of this outreach is to better educate the community to the rights of crime victims and the services available to them should they become victims of crime.

Wheaton Pilot

- ❖ Launched monthly radio program (January of this year) on Radio America to inform members of the Hispanic Community of victim assistance services available, not only in the department but other agencies as well. Three monthly segments concerning Domestic Violence will air beginning April 30th. A companion web page is under development to provide further information on that month's topic, to provide resources and referrals for additional help, and to answer caller questions that were not answered on air due to time constraints. The web page will be entirely in Spanish.
- ❖ Appeared as a guest on Radio American, Christian radio "Camino al Cielo", Radio Viva 900 numerous times to address crimes impacting the Hispanic community.
- ❖ Appeared on the County's local Spanish cable television show and Univision TV to highlight services available to crime victims, in particular to those of Domestic Violence.
- ❖ Interviewed for numerous newspaper articles directly relating to the victims of the sniper shootings or to give information about general crime victim services to other types of crime victims, including domestic violence, both in English and in Spanish.
- ❖ Co-presented to the Joint Council of Churches and the Global Korean Church, as well as numerous Hispanic-service church groups or affiliations to better reach victims living in the Indonesian, Korean and Hispanic communities about domestic violence and protections provided under the U visas for those without legal status to enter the country.
- ❖ Assisted in the Coordination of a Community Fair in Wheaton to bring information about the police department and its victim services in an effort to reduce the fear that many immigrants have about police so that more crimes are

reported and to provide information on crime victim topics, most specifically, domestic violence.

- ❖ Conducted several community meetings, in partnership with the Mid-County Neighborhood Initiative, in the Bel Pre and Aspen Hill areas to survey and address concerns with community residents about crime, prevention and gang activity. Residents indicated they wanted to receive more information about domestic violence, gang activity and after care programs. This outreach is on-going and has proven to be successful in seeing an increase in reported criminal activity.
- ❖ Participation as the principle in the development and implementation of a Wheaton Community Food Bank to provide food to indigent residents, and in particular, victims of crime, who have been given first priority to the food. This was a wish of Lt. Joseph Mattingly, who died in the line of duty last summer.

Samples of Case Specific Responses throughout the Entire Victim Assistance Unit:

- ❖ Assisted in developing and implementing a community outreach strategy to reach members of the Hispanic Community affected by the recent Bounty Hunter case. Outreach included radio interview time to discuss the case and rights of citizens in working with bounty hunters and how to report in-proper contact, arranged meetings between the police department and victims of the bounty hunter case.
- ❖ Initiated and participated in several neighborhood meetings to discuss a specific crime that had occurred in the neighborhood that caused great fear or grief among neighborhood residents. Coordinated the involvement of allied agencies, where appropriate, i.e., the County's Crisis Center, VASAP, State's Attorney's Office or police department officials.
- ❖ Provided skills building training sessions over a course of six-weeks to residents of the Arc of Montgomery County's developmentally challenged residential facility to better educate themselves in crime prevention and what to do if they become victims of a crime.
- ❖ Over the last two years, has raised the money to provide and distribute food, toys and clothing to over two hundred children - who are either direct crime victims or the children of a crime victim during the Christmas holiday season.
- ❖ Responding to sites of commercial robberies where employees have been traumatized to provide on-scene crisis intervention or to coordinate a crisis response with the County's Crisis Center.
- ❖ On-going work with surviving members of or family members of deceased victims of the DC area snipers. Work crisis intervention from the day of shooting

to finding the money for Maryland's victims to attend the trial in Virginia Beach, VA and providing court accompaniment as there were no other programs to provide these services.

Unit Awards:

- ❖ Three members of the Unit have received Governor's Awards for Outstanding Services and Commitment to Crime Victims (2003, 2004)
- ❖ One member has been inducted into the Montgomery County Human Rights Hall of Fame for her work with minority communities within the County (2004)
- ❖ One member has received a Certificate of Merit from the U.S. Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime for her years of work in field and the program development of the Department's Victim Assistance Unit (2003)

Statistics of Victim Outreach Provided by Montgomery County Department of Police's Victim Assistance Unit for 2003

Summary: During 2003, a total of seven full-time victim advocates assisted victims of both violent and property crime throughout Montgomery County. One advocate is assigned to each of the Department's six (6) district police stations; however, Wheaton (4th District Station) has two advocates assigned as part of a Domestic Violence Pilot funded by the Montgomery County Council. Below are the figures reflecting the number of both general crime victims and domestic violence victims served during the calendar year 2003 (through November). At the end of this report, the reader will find statistics for victims served during the third and fourth quarters of 2002, the time period in which formal statistics were first kept.

- A. Total New Victims Receiving Outreach for 2003(through November): **8,977**
- B. Total Number of Outreach Responses to Domestic Violence Victims in the remaining five (5) district stations (outside of the Wheaton Domestic Violence Pilot) for 2003(through November): **1,005**
- C. Total referrals to the Abused Persons Program from all Six (6) District Stations (through November): **872**
- D. Total Number of Court Accompaniment made by Advocates in other five (5) District Stations: **99**

Wheaton Pilot Project Statistics for 2003

- A. Total Number of Outreach Responses to Domestic Violence Victims in the Wheaton (4th District Station) for 2003 (though November): **453**
- B. Total Number of Victims Referred to the Abused Persons Program by the Wheaton Pilot during 2003: **391**

Of those victims served under the Wheaton Pilot, the following occurred:

- ❖ 453 victims were contacted by phone outreach immediately following the aftermath of a violent reporting. If unable to reach the victim, or if victim was not interested in services, resource packets were sent to each victim and follow-up attempted.
- ❖ 126 victims were seen in person (met off-site when necessary).
- ❖ 89 victims were accompanied to court for a variety of reasons, i.e., to apply for temporary or permanent protective orders, attend violation of protective order hearings, or other court-related hearings.
- ❖ 3 domestic violence victims were met at the hospital.
- ❖ 5 visas were secured under the domestic violence exception.

- ❖ 7 victims were placed in the Shelter (three in out of county shelters).
- ❖ 6 victims were assisted in obtaining rental assistance for new housing.
- ❖ 8 victims received help in securing home furnishings and household items after leaving the violent home.

**Department-wide First Quarter Statistics for Most Frequently
Served Crime Types (2003)**

First Quarter Statistics

Total New Victims Receiving Outreach for this Quarter: 2,353

Homicide: 6
Rape (child): 9
Rape (adult): 18
Robbery: 173
Aggravated Assault (which also includes Domestic Violence cases): 361
Burglary: 268
Assault and Battery (which also includes the majority of Domestic Violence cases): 527
Other Sexual Offenses (child and adult): 16
Child Abuse and Neglect: 1
Elder Abuse and Neglect: 2
Harassment/Stalking: 23
Threatening Telephone Calls: 19
Hit and Run: 3
Driving Under the Influence: 3
Violation of Ex Parte: 17
Vandalism: 218
Theft of Identity: 23
Auto Theft: 136
Larceny: 441
Other: (sudden death, purse snatching, suicide and attempted suicide, station walk-ins, juvenile crimes, etc.): 89

Second Quarter Statistics for Most Frequent Crime Types (2003)

Total New Victims Receiving Outreach for this Quarter: 2,576

Homicide: 2
Rape (child): 4
Rape (adult): 14
Robbery: 247
Aggravated Assault (also includes domestic violence cases not classified specifically as DV): 301
Burglary: 309
Assault and Battery (also includes domestic violence cases not classified specifically as DV): 401
Other Sexual Offenses (child and adult): 26
Child Abuse and Neglect: 5
Elder Abuse and Neglect: 2
Harassment/Stalking: 48
Threatening Telephone Calls: 23

Hit and Run: 0
Driving Under the Influence: 2
Violation of Ex Parte: 34
Vandalism: 399
Theft of Identity: 15
Auto Theft: 242
Larceny: 394
Other: (sudden death, purse snatching, suicide and attempted suicide, station walk-ins, juvenile crimes, etc.): 108

Third Quarter Statistics for Most Frequent Crime Types (2003)

Total New Victims Receiving Outreach for this Quarter: 2,333

Homicide: 5
Rape (child): 6
Rape (adult): 5
Robbery: 201
Aggravated Assault (which also includes some Domestic Violence cases): 242
Burglary: 288
Assault and Battery (which also includes the majority of Domestic Violence cases): 385
Other Sexual Offenses (child and adult): 25
Child Abuse and Neglect: 4
Elder Abuse and Neglect: 4
Harassment/Stalking: 39
Threatening Telephone Calls: 13
Hit and Run: 0
Driving Under the Influence: 3
Violation of Ex Parte: 21
Vandalism: 341
Theft of Identity: 27
Auto Theft: 160
Larceny: 448
Other: (purse snatching, suicide and attempted suicide, station walk-ins, juvenile crimes, etc.): 116

Fourth Quarter Statistics for Most Frequent Crime Types (October and November only - 2003)

Total New Victims Receiving Outreach for this Quarter: 1,715

Homicide: 5
Rape (child): 3
Rape (adult): 6
Robbery: 116
Aggravated Assault (which also includes some Domestic Violence cases): 131
Burglary: 231
Assault and Battery (which also includes the majority of Domestic Violence cases): 345

Other Sexual Offenses (child and adult): 22
Child Abuse and Neglect: 0
Elder Abuse and Neglect: 1
Harassment/Stalking: 16
Threatening Telephone Calls: 21
Hit and Run: 0
Driving Under the Influence: 6
Violation of Ex Parte: 20
Vandalism: 176
Theft of Identity: 20
Auto Theft: 94
Larceny: 378
Other: (purse snatching, suicide and attempted suicide, station walk-ins, juvenile crimes,
etc.): 124

**Statistics of Victim Outreach Provided by
Montgomery County Department of Police's
Victim Assistance Unit for the Third and Fourth Quarters of 2002**

Please note: The Department's program was not formally started until the second quarter of 2002. During this quarter, much time was given to training of the newly hired Client Assistance Specialist and to allow them to acclimate to the station in which they were assigned. While some outreach was provided to crime victims, statistics were formally kept for the third and fourth reporting quarters. Therefore, the numbers provided below provide a snapshot of services provided only during for a six-month reporting cycle. However, it is estimated that an additional 1,000 victim contacts were made in May and June of this reporting period and are not reflected in the totals below.

- A. Total Number of Outreach Efforts to Victims of Crime for Third and Fourth Quarter of 2002: **4,274**
- B. Total Number of Outreach Responses to Domestic Violence Victims in 2002 (third and fourth quarter reporting only): **439**
- C. Referrals Made to the Abused Persons Program in 2002 (third and fourth quarter reporting only): **391**

Third Quarter Statistics (2002)

Total Number of Victims Receiving Outreach for this Quarter: **2, 123**

Homicide: 10

Rape (child and adult): 27

Robbery: 117

Aggravated Assault: 151

Domestic Violence: 227

Burglary: 266

Larceny: 674

Assault and Battery: 136 (This quarter's statistics may include domestic violence victims as well)

Vandalism: 334

Other Sexual Offenses: 33 (May include child sexual assault victims, misdemeanor sexual assaults, etc.)

Others: 148 (Stalking, Threatening Phone Calls, Auto Theft, Suicide, (attempted and completed), Walk-ins, Juvenile Crime, etc.):

Total victims receiving outreach for this quarter: **2, 123**

Total referrals made to the Abused Persons Program for this quarter: **164**

Fourth Quarter Statistics (2002):

Total victims receiving outreach for this quarter: 2,151

Total referrals made to the Abused Persons Program during this quarter: 227

Homicide: 15

Rape (child and adult): 12

Robbery: 144

Aggravated Assault: 187

Domestic Violence: 212

Burglary: 304

Larceny: 588

Assault and Battery: 212

Vandalism: 307

Other Sexual Offenses: (May include child sexual assault victims, misdemeanor sexual assaults, etc.): 23

Others: (Stalking, Threatening Phone Calls, Auto Theft, Suicide, (attempted and completed), Walk-ins, Juvenile Crime, etc.): 147

Major Outreach Efforts Specific to Domestic Violence Made During 2003 of the Wheaton (4th District Station) Domestic Violence Program

A. Task: Radio show participation on several Hispanic/Latino radio stations to address the issue of Domestic Violence and how to interact with the police department. This was done in an effort to reach members of the Hispanic/Latino population in the pilot station as a large percentage of its residents are from this culture and statistics bear out that there is significant under-reporting within this community.

Outcome: Increase in walk-in, self-reporting of domestic violence by Hispanic/Latino women within the Wheaton area, as well as the Silver Spring area. This program has been so successful that one of the Domestic Violence advocates was asked to host her own radio show on a bi-weekly basis addressing immigration issues as they relate to women seeking relief from domestic violence, how to apply for protective orders, where to seek help. The show will also address other issues relating to general crime and reporting. The airing of the show will begin early in February 2004.

B. Task: To better educate front-line officers to the pilot and the needs of domestic violence victims through increased station interaction of advocates and officers at general roll call briefings and other in-station training officers.

Outcome: Both advocates have noticed not only an increase in referrals but of actual officer-initiated, face-to-face meetings between the advocates and domestic violence victims. It is not unusual for officers to bring victims directly to the station (due to safety reasons of staff and victim) or to arrange meetings at other easily assessable locations such as the public library or fast food venues. These meetings currently take place at least five times a week. Advocates credit the early officer intervention with their on-going attendance at roll call meetings and being easily accessible within the station.

C. Task: To coordinate a Community Fair in the Wheaton area in conjunction with the County Executive's Office to better familiarize the Hispanic Community with the police department in an effort to increase reporting of general crime as well as domestic violence.

Outcome: The event was held during the summer and over 100 families attend the fair where they received written information about domestic violence and services available both from the police department and allied agencies. Oral information was also presented, as well as a question and answer time to reduce fears of reporting to INS. Seven women have come forward to press charges as a result of hearing the presentation. Other such presentations are planned for 2004.

D. Task: A community needs assessment concerning general safety issues was conducted in conjunction with the Mid-County Neighborhood Initiative held in the Wheaton area. An outcome of the meeting was the request for additional community

events on domestic violence and the resources available. In address this need, some of the above noted efforts were launched and will be increased (community fairs, additional work with Casa da Maryland, MIRECS, etc.) during the 2004 year.

E. Task: Development and taping of a video addressing issues surrounding the Hispanic/Latino community, including domestic violence and other forms of victimization in conjunction with the County Executive's Office will air on Channel 6 in the coming months numerous times as a method to get more information out to the public about police and county resources for topics such as victim rights, how to file for a protective order, court accompaniment, victim compensation, referrals to county victim and domestic violence programs, how to enroll in the VINE program and more information on the "U" visa.

Outcome: Unknown at this time as show will air after the first of the year.

F. Task: Strengthen partnerships with area clergy to educate them so they can better provide information and referral options to self-reporting domestic violence victims who may come to them for assistance.

Outcome: The Domestic Violence advocates have meet with many members of the Wheaton community clergy to provide information about the pilot, as well as the services provided both by the police and allied agencies in meeting the emotional and financial ramifications of leaving an abusive home. This information is not only directed to the clergy in their working with victims of domestic violence but also with children of sexual abuse (which is being reported more and more in the Hispanic/Latino community). Additionally, emphasis has been placed in identifying and working with clergy from the Korean and other Asian cultures as we are seeing an increase in the reporting or at least the seeking of resources from this community. This effort will continue in 2004, as the pilot will work with local clergy to establish a community food bank in Wheaton to help victims of domestic violence not only with food but in supplying household items and furnishings as well.

G. Task: Secure more community opportunities to speak about the pilot program.

Outcome: The Domestic Violence Advocates have addressed groups such as PTA meetings in the elementary and high school arenas, the Aspen Hill Civic Association, and to members of the Wheaton Hot Spot Planning Commission to name a few. In 2004, advocates and other program staff will continue to increase efforts to identify and seek invitations to other community events, especially in the Asian community, as well as increased venues in the Hispanic/Latino communities.



MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF POLICE

VICTIM/WITNESS ASSISTANCE INFORMATION



The Montgomery County Department of Police is committed to the fair, compassionate, and sensitive treatment of victims and witnesses of crime. Our commitment to victims and witnesses includes ensuring that victims and witnesses are afforded reasonable protection; are kept reasonably informed of case status and the arrest of any suspect; receive recovered stolen property promptly unless needed for court; and are given information and referrals that may aid in coping and recovering from the effects of crime.

COUNTY POLICE DISTRICT STATIONS:

1st District

1451 Seven Locks Road, Rockville, MD 20854

Main (301)279-1591

Victim Assistance (301)279-1817

2nd District

7359 Wisconsin Avenue, Bethesda, MD 20814

Main (301)652-9200

Victim Assistance (301)657-0149

3rd District

801 Sligo Avenue, Silver Spring, MD 20910

Main (301)565-7744

Victim Assistance (301)565-5736

4th District

2300 Randolph Road, Wheaton, MD 20902

Main (240)773-5500

Victim Assistance (240)773-5548

5th District

20000 Aircraft Drive, Germantown, MD 20874

Main (301)840-2650

Victim Assistance (301)601-1647

6th District

18749F N. Frederick Road, MV/Gaithersburg, MD 20879

Main (240)773-5700

Victim Assistance (240)773-5704

OBTAINING POLICE REPORTS

Copies of Accident Reports can be obtained at the district police station located in the district where the accident occurred. To obtain a copy of an Event Report (something other than an accident), direct your request in person or in writing to:

Montgomery County Police - Records Division

2350 Research Boulevard

Rockville, MD 20850 (240)773-5330

Walk-in hours: 7:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Monday-Friday

Payment is \$10.00 per report. Please provide the correct report number and payment with your request. Checks should be made payable to Montgomery County Government.

IMPORTANT POLICE INFORMATION

Emergency (24 Hours) 911

- To request police assistance if a crime is about to occur, is in progress, has just occurred, or if someone is in danger or at risk of being injured.

Non-Emergency (24 Hours) (301)279-8000

- To request police assistance where there is no reason to believe there is any physical danger. You may be referred to our Telephone Reporting Section (TRS).

Victim/Witness Assistance Unit (240)773-5626

- Assists victims in finding support, information, and appropriate sources within the community to help in the aftermath of crime. You may also contact the Victim Assistant at your district police station (numbers are listed in left column).

Family Crimes Division (240)773-5400

- Investigates child abuse, rape, and certain sex offenses involving victims under 18 years of age. Also handles reported cases of youth runaways.

Domestic Violence Unit (240)773-5050

- Investigates domestic violence cases of 1st Degree Assault, Strangulation, and Stalking.

Fraud Section (301)840-2590

- Investigates reports of credit card fraud, forgery, counterfeiting, and embezzlement.

Crime Prevention Information (301)840-2585

- Provides advice on how to protect your home or business, including information on Neighborhood Watch.

Crime Solvers Tip Line 1-866-411-TIPS

- Allows citizens to offer anonymous information about crime. Rewards are paid for information leading to the arrest and indictment of criminals or the capture of wanted persons.

Drug Tip Hotline (240)773-DRUG

- Allows citizens to offer anonymous information relating to illegal drug activity.

Gang Tip Hotline (240)773-GANG

- Allows citizens to offer anonymous information relating to illegal gang activity.

HOW TO FILE CHARGES

- Report the incident to the police.
- Obtain the report number from the officer.
- See a **District Court Commissioner** to file criminal charges. A warrant or a summons to appear in court may be issued for the offender. If a Commissioner declines to issue charges, you can request that the State's Attorney file charges against the offender.

District Court Commissioners:

Central Processing (24 hours) (301)610-7217

Silver Spring Courthouse (301)563-8550

Rockville Courthouse (301)279-1526

FOR YOUR REFERENCE

Report Number: _____ Date: ____/____/____

Officer's Name: _____

Telephone Number: _____

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE INFORMATION

If you have been hurt or threatened at home - this is a crime. Dial 911 and notify the police immediately. (*You do not have to be a U.S. citizen to receive help.*)

- If you are injured - seek medical attention. If you need emergency shelter or counseling, please call the **Abused Persons Crisis Line** at (240)777-4673.
- If you have left home and are in fear of harm if you return - call the police at (301)279-8000 to request they accompany you back home to get essential items such as clothing and medicine.
- All arrested individuals will be taken before a commissioner and may be released within two hours of the arrest.
- **In Domestic Violence Cases Only** - If the offender is arrested:
 1. The telephone number that you give to the police officer will be used to attempt to contact you, one time, in the event that the offender is released or posts bond within 12 hours of arrest; **and**,
 2. You may also contact the jail at (240)777-9795 to confirm if the offender has been released or admitted; **and**,
 3. If the offender is admitted to the jail, you must register for the VINE Service (1-866-634-8463) in order to receive notification of the offender's release.

Need to Know About an Inmate's Custody Status of Release?

Call 1-866-634-8463

The VINE® Service

What is VINE?

- VINE is a free, anonymous, fully automated service for crime victims and witnesses.
- VINE allows you to check the custody status of an inmate in the Montgomery County Detention Center and register to receive automatic telephone notification when the inmate is transferred or released.

EMERGENCY PROTECTION FROM DOMESTIC VIOLENCE (Protective Orders)

Protective Orders can temporarily remove the abuser from the home, order the abuser to stop the abuse and enter counseling, and award temporary custody of children. Protective orders include an INTERIM ORDER, which lasts up to two business days and can be issued by a District Court Commissioner when courts are closed; a TEMPORARY ORDER is issued by a Judge after a hearing and is good for seven days; and the last order of protection is a FINAL ORDER issued by a Judge, which lasts for up to one year with a possible extension of six months. Victims do NOT have to obtain an Interim Order first. The Interim Order is available to allow the victim immediate protection when the courts are closed. Violation of a Protective Order is a crime and should be reported to the Police Department (911) or the Sheriff's Office (240)777-7016.

To file for immediate emergency protection you may go to any of the three courthouses listed below (Monday-Friday before 4:30 p.m.). When the courthouse is closed (after hours or holidays) you may go to a District Court Commissioner at Central Processing to apply for a protection order.

50 Maryland Avenue, Rockville, MD
27 Courthouse Square, Rockville, MD
8552 Second Avenue, Silver Spring, MD
Central Processing Unit
1307 Seven Locks Road, Rockville, MD

CONCERNED ABOUT HIV EXPOSURE?

If you are the victim of an offense which may have resulted in exposure to HIV, you can obtain further information about your right under Maryland Law by contacting the State's Attorney's Office at 240-777-7300.

RESOURCE/REFERRAL INFORMATION

Emergency Food, Shelter, Financial, and/or Counseling Assistance

Montgomery County Crisis Center (240)777-4000

- 24 hour hotline and walk-in service to assist in situational or mental health crisis.

Victim Assistance and Sexual Assault Program

Crisis Line (24 hours) (240)777-4357

- Provides counseling and, in some cases, financial assistance to victims of general and sexual crimes.

Abused Persons Program

Crisis Line (24 hours) (240)777-4673

- Assists victims of mate-related physical abuse, including shelter and counseling services.

Conflict Resolution Center of

Montgomery County (301)942-7700

- Provides conflict mediation to help resolve ongoing disputes between families, neighbors, and other like parties.

Health and Human Services Emergency Services

Provides food stamps, medical assistance, temporary cash assistance, and other financially eligible services.

Germantown (240)777-3420

Rockville (240)777-4600

Silver Spring (240)777-3100

After 5:00 p.m. call (240)777-4000

Emergency Utility Assistance (240)777-4450

Emergency Food Hot Line (240)777-1245

Youth Crisis Hot Line (301)738-9697

Montgomery County Hot Line (301)738-2255

Montgomery County Government Agencies

Office of Child Support Enforcement 1-800-332-6347

Landlord/Tenant Affairs (240)777-3600

Child Protective Services (24 hrs) (240)777-4417

Adult Protective Services (24 hrs) (240)777-3000

Court-Related Numbers

State's Attorney's Office (240)777-7300

Sheriff's Office (240)777-7000

Family Services Division (240)777-9079



June 6, 2006

The enclosed survey concerns the services provided by the Montgomery County Police Department's Victim Assistance Unit. The Police Department's goal is to provide timely and informative services to victims of crime. The results of this survey will help make the Police Department's victim services as effective and responsive as possible.

You were randomly chosen to receive this survey among individuals contacted by the Victim Assistance Unit. This research survey is being administered by the Montgomery County Council's Office of Legislative Oversight.

Please take a few minutes to complete this survey. When you are finished, please return your completed survey in the enclosed, postage paid envelope. **Your answers to this survey are completely confidential.**

If you would like to speak with a Victim Assistant from the Montgomery County Police Department about victim services, you may include your contact information in the space provided on the survey or you may call the Victim Assistance Unit at (240) 773-5626.

If you have any questions, please call (240) 777-7877 or email olo@montgomerycountymd.gov.

La encuesta incluida es con respecto a los servicios proveídos por la Unidad de Asistencia para las Víctimas del Departamento de Policía del Condado de Montgomery. La meta del Departamento de Policía es proveer servicios informativos a tiempo a las víctimas de crimen. Los resultados de esta encuesta ayudará a los servicios para las víctimas del Departamento de Policía a ser más efectivo y responder con prontitud como sea posible.

Usted ha sido escogido al azar para recibir esta encuesta entre los individuos que la Unidad de Asistencia para las Víctimas se ha puesto en contacto. Esta encuesta de investigación está siendo administrada por la Oficina Consular Legislativa del Condado de Montgomery.

Por favor tome unos minutos para completar esta encuesta. Una vez que su encuesta esté completa, por favor regrésela en el sobre con estampilla incluido. **Sus respuestas a esta encuesta son completamente confidenciales.**

Si le gustaría hablar con un asistente para las víctimas del Departamento de Policía del Condado de Montgomery acerca de los servicios para las víctimas, usted debe incluir la información donde se le pueda llamar en el espacio proveído en la encuesta, o usted puede llamar a la Unidad de Asistencia para las Víctimas al (240) 773-5626.

Si usted tiene algunas preguntas, por favor llame al (240) 777-7877 o por correo electrónico a olo@montgomerycountymd.gov

Office of Legislative Oversight

100 Maryland Avenue, Rockville, Maryland 20850, 240/777-7990, FAX 240/777-7879

Printed on Recycled Paper





June 16, 2006

Enclosed is a second copy of our survey related to victim/witness services provided by the Police Department. Our first mailing did not include the postage-paid envelope for returning the completed survey. We apologize for this mistake and any inconvenience this may have caused you.

If you have already returned the survey, please disregard this second mailing. Again, we thank you for your time, as the results of this survey will help make the Police Department's victim services as effective and responsive as possible for other County residents.

16 de Junio del 2006

Adjunta se encuentra una segunda copia de nuestra encuesta relacionada con el servicio proporcionado por el Departamento de Policía a las víctimas/testigos. Nuestro primer correo no incluyó el sobre con el franqueo pago para devolver dicha encuesta. Nos disculpamos por nuestro error y por la inconveniencia que esto puede haber causado.

Si usted ya devolvió la encuesta, por favor ignore este segundo envío. Una vez más, le agradecemos por su tiempo, como resultado de esta encuesta el Departamento de Policía tratará de hacer más efectivo el servicio otorgado a las víctimas con el consecuente beneficio a todos los residentes del Condado.



2006 VICTIM SERVICES SURVEY

1. Have you received services from the Montgomery County Police, Victim Assistance Unit?

☐ Yes ☐ No or Not Sure (IF NO OR NOT SURE, PLEASE GO TO QUESTION #4)

2. For what type of event did you receive services?

☐ Violent Crime ☐ Property Crime

3. Please check each service that you received and whether you found it helpful: (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)

• Emergency Services

- ☐ Comfort at the crime scene.
- ☐ Assistance finding emergency food, shelter, or other life essentials.
- ☐ Assistance obtaining protective orders.
- ☐ Other: _____

Was the service Helpful?

☐ Yes ☐ No
☐ Yes ☐ No
☐ Yes ☐ No
☐ Yes ☐ No

• Referrals

- ☐ Referrals to counseling services.
- ☐ Referrals for other social services.
- ☐ Other: _____

☐ Yes ☐ No
☐ Yes ☐ No
☐ Yes ☐ No

• Case Information and Assistance

- ☐ Information about the case, the investigation, or obtaining police reports.
- ☐ Information about victim rights.
- ☐ Assistance getting back stolen property or property used as evidence.
- ☐ Other: _____

☐ Yes ☐ No
☐ Yes ☐ No
☐ Yes ☐ No
☐ Yes ☐ No

• Support Services

- ☐ Assistance dealing with landlords, employers, creditors, or insurance.
- ☐ Assistance with funeral and/or burial needs.
- ☐ Assistance applying for reimbursement from the State or County for medical bills, lost wages, funeral expenses, etc.
- ☐ Other: _____

☐ Yes ☐ No
☐ Yes ☐ No
☐ Yes ☐ No
☐ Yes ☐ No

• Court-Related Services

- ☐ Information about the court system or notification of offender status.
- ☐ Accompaniment to court events/trials.
- ☐ Other: _____

☐ Yes ☐ No
☐ Yes ☐ No
☐ Yes ☐ No

4. Please indicate any reasons that you were unable to or decided not to receive services: (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)

- ☐ Language problem
- ☐ Lack of child care
- ☐ Lack of transportation
- ☐ Did not have time
- ☐ Inconvenient hours of operation
- ☐ Had other sources of help or assistance
- ☐ Did not want further assistance
- ☐ Never contacted by the Victim Assistance Unit
- ☐ Other: _____

2006 VICTIM SERVICES SURVEY

- 5. Please circle the number that reflects your level of agreement with each of the following statements about the Police Department Victim Assistant that contacted you:**

The Victim Assistant:	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Acted in a professional and courteous manner.	1	2	3	4	5
Contacted me in a timely fashion after the victimization.	1	2	3	4	5
Made helpful referrals to other programs and/or services.	1	2	3	4	5
Provided useful information.	1	2	3	4	5
Provided information I needed and answered my questions	1	2	3	4	5
Was sensitive to my concerns, needs, and feelings.	1	2	3	4	5

- 6. At the time of your contact with the Victim Assistance Unit, were there other services that you would have liked to receive but did not?**

- 7. Since your contact with the Victim Assistance Unit, do you have any additional needs for services?**

- 8. Overall, how satisfied were you with the services you received from the Victim Assistance Unit?**

☐ Very Satisfied ☐ Satisfied ☐ Neutral ☐ Dissatisfied ☐ Very Dissatisfied

- 9. Additional Comments.** If you would like to provide additional comments, please do so here and feel free to attach additional pages if necessary:

- 10. OPTIONAL – If you would like a Victim Assistant to contact you to follow-up on any additional needs for services, include your contact information below.**

Name: _____ Phone Number: _____

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. If you have any questions, please call (240) 777-7877 or email olo@montgomerycountymd.gov

2006 ENCUESTA DE LOS SERVICIOS PARA LAS VÍCTIMAS

1. ¿Ha recibido usted servicios de la Unidad de Asistencia para las Víctimas de la Policía del Condado de Montgomery?

- ☐ Sí ☐ No o No estoy seguro/a (SI ES NO O NO ESTOY SEGURO/A, POR FAVOR VAYA A LA PREGUNTA NUMERO 4)

2. ¿Por qué tipo de evento recibió usted servicios?

- ☐ Crimen Violento ☐ Crimen de Propiedad

3. Por favor marque cada servicio que usted recibió y si encontró que le sirvió de ayuda. (MARQUE TODO EL QUE APLIQUE)

• **Servicios de Emergencia**

¿Fue el servicio de Ayuda?

- | | | |
|--|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ☐ Consuelo en la escena del crimen | ☐ Si | ☐ No |
| ☐ Asistencia de emergencia para comida, refugio u otros aspectos esenciales de la vida. | ☐ Si | ☐ No |
| ☐ Asistencia para obtener orden de protección | ☐ Si | ☐ No |
| ☐ Otro: _____ | ☐ Si | ☐ No |

• **Referencias**

- | | | |
|---|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ☐ Referencias a servicios de consejería | ☐ Si | ☐ No |
| ☐ Referencias a otros servicios sociales | ☐ Si | ☐ No |
| ☐ Otro: _____ | ☐ Si | ☐ No |

• **Información del Caso y Asistencia**

- | | | |
|---|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ☐ Información acerca del caso, la investigación, o como obtener reportes policiales. | ☐ Si | ☐ No |
| ☐ Información acerca de los derechos de las víctimas | ☐ Si | ☐ No |
| ☐ Asistencia en obtener de regreso propiedades robadas o propiedades usadas como evidencia | ☐ Si | ☐ No |
| ☐ Otro: _____ | ☐ Si | ☐ No |

• **Servicios de Apoyo**

- | | | |
|--|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ☐ Asistencia para lidiar con los propietarios de viviendas, enpleadores, acreedores, o seguros | ☐ Si | ☐ No |
| ☐ Asistencia con funeral y/o necesidades para entierro | ☐ Si | ☐ No |
| ☐ Asistencia para aplicar para la indemnización del Estado o Condado para las facturas médicas, pérdida de sueldo, gastos funerales, etc. | ☐ Si | ☐ No |
| ☐ Otro: _____ | ☐ Si | ☐ No |

• **Servicios Relacionados con la Corte**

- | | | |
|--|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ☐ Información acerca del sistema de la corte o notificación de la condición del ofensor | ☐ Si | ☐ No |
| ☐ Otro: _____ | ☐ Si | ☐ No |

4. Por favor indique algunas de las razones por las cuales usted no pudo o decidió no recibir los servicios: (MARQUE TODO EL QUE APLIQUE)

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ Problemas del idioma | ☐ Tuve otras fuentes de ayuda o asistencia |
| ☐ Falta de cuidados para niños | ☐ No quise más asistencia |
| ☐ Falta de transporte | ☐ Nunca recibí contacto con la Unidad de Asistencia para las Víctimas |
| ☐ No tuve tiempo | ☐ Otro: _____ |
| ☐ Horas laborales no convenientes | |

2006 ENCUESTA DE LOS SERVICIOS PARA LAS VÍCTIMAS

- 5. Por favor circule el número que refleje el nivel de estar de acuerdo con cada uno de los enunciados acerca de la Asistencia de Víctimas del Departamento de Policía que se puso en contacto con usted.**

Asistente de Víctimas:	Totalmente de Acuerdo	De Acuerdo	Neutral	En Desacuerdo	Totalmente en Desacuerdo
Actuó de manera profesional y cortés.	1	2	3	4	5
Se puso en contacto a tiempo después de ser víctima.	1	2	3	4	5
Hizo referencias de ayuda a otros programas y/o servicios.	1	2	3	4	5
Proporcionó información útil.	1	2	3	4	5
Proporcionó información que necesitaba y contestó mis preguntas.	1	2	3	4	5
Fue sensible a mis preocupaciones, necesidades y sentimientos.	1	2	3	4	5

- 6. ¿Al momento de tener el contacto con la Unidad de Asistencia para las Víctimas, hubo otros servicios que le hubiera gustado recibir pero no se dieron?**

- 7. ¿Desde que tuvo el contacto con la Unidad de Asistencia para las Víctimas, ha tenido usted algunas necesidades adicionales de servicios?**

- 8. ¿En su totalidad que satisfactorio fue para usted los servicios recibidos de la Unidad de Asistencia para las Víctimas?**

☐ Muy Satisfactorio ☐ Satisfactorio ☐ Neutral ☐ Insatisfactorio ☐ Muy Insatisfactorio.

- 9. Comentarios Adicionales.** Si le gustaría proveer comentarios adicionales, por favor hágalo aquí y siéntase libre de añadir páginas adicionales si es necesario:

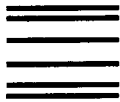
- 10. OPCIONAL.** Si le gustaría que un Asistente de Víctimas se ponga en contacto con usted para un seguimiento de algunas necesidades adicionales de servicios, incluya abajo su información de contacto.

Nombre: _____ Número de teléfono: _____

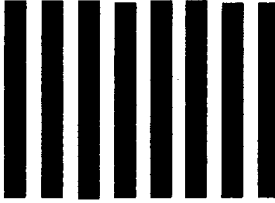
Gracias por tomar parte de su tiempo para completar esta encuesta. Si usted tiene algunas preguntas, por favor llame al (240) 777-7985 o por correo electrónico a: olo@montgomerycountymd.gov



OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE OVERSIGHT
100 MARYLAND AVENUE
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND 20850



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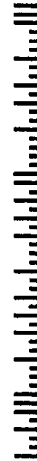


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ADDENDUM TO OLO REPORT 2006-8: VICTIM SERVICES SURVEY RESULTS

To obtain client feedback on the Victim Assistance Unit's services, OLO mailed out a written survey to approximately 600 Victim Assistance Unit clients. A copy of the survey instrument is attached as the last page of this addendum. This addendum describes the survey methodology and presents the results of the survey.

- **Part A** outlines the survey methodology and survey design;
- **Part B** describes the survey response rate;
- **Part C** presents data on overall satisfaction with the Victim Assistance Unit;
- **Part D** presents the respondents views on Unit staff;
- **Part E** presents results on the perceived helpfulness of Unit services;
- **Part F** summarizes data on reasons respondents did not receive services; and
- **Part G** provides additional data tables.

A. Survey Methodology and Design

In June 2006, OLO mailed 597 surveys to crime victims and witnesses contacted by the MCPD Victim Assistance Unit between October 2005 and May 2006. OLO asked Unit advocates at each of the five district stations which were staffed at the time to provide OLO with the names and addresses for 120 clients served during this period.¹

OLO worked with the Director of the Victim Assistance Unit to determine the design of the survey. The survey questions were selected to obtain feedback from Victim Assistance Unit clients on the following issues:

- What types of services victims used from the Victim Assistance Unit;
- Whether the victim found the services they received from the Victim Assistance Unit helpful;
- Reasons why victims were unable to or chose not to receive services from the Victim Assistance Unit;
- The level of services victims felt they received from the Victim Assistance Unit;
- If there were services the victim would have liked to receive but did not at the time of their contact with the Victim Assistance Unit; and
- Victims overall level of satisfaction with the services received from the Victim Assistance Unit.

OLO mailed each survey with the following materials in both English and Spanish:²

- A one-page letter on OLO letterhead with information about the survey and its purpose;
- A two-page survey instrument, printed on both sides of one sheet of paper; and
- A postage-paid, return envelope.

¹ The only district station not covered in the survey was the 2nd District in Bethesda because that position was vacant during the October 2005 to May 2006 time period.

² A Victim Assistance Unit staff member translated the survey materials into Spanish for OLO.

B. Survey Response Rate

OLO received 50 completed surveys, for an overall response rate of 8.4%. As OLO's previous work on victim services reported, the research literature indicates that victim surveys typically report very low response rates. In addition, the responses can be skewed because they only represent the views of victims who choose to participate.

Despite the limitations of the data collected, the literature indicates that the information can provide insight into how victims feel about the services they were offered and received. The results can also help to identify potential areas for program change and improvement.

The survey asked respondents to indicate whether they had received services from the Victim Assistance Unit and what type of criminal event they had received services for. As shown in Table 1 below, 62% of the respondents reported receiving services from the Unit, and 44% reported receiving services due to a violent crime event. 82% of respondents returned the English-language version of the survey.

Table 1: Survey Response Characteristics

Have you received services from the Montgomery County Police, Victim Assistance Unit?	
Yes	62%
No or Not Sure	38%
For what type of event did you receive services?	
Violent Crime	44%
Property Crime	20%
No Response	36%
Survey version used	
English-language	82%
Spanish-language	18%

Source: OLO, September 2006

C. Overall Satisfaction

The survey asked respondents to indicate their overall level of satisfaction with the services they received and their experience with the Victim Services Unit. The respondents were provided five categories (very satisfied, satisfied, neutral, dissatisfied, and strongly dissatisfied) to select from.

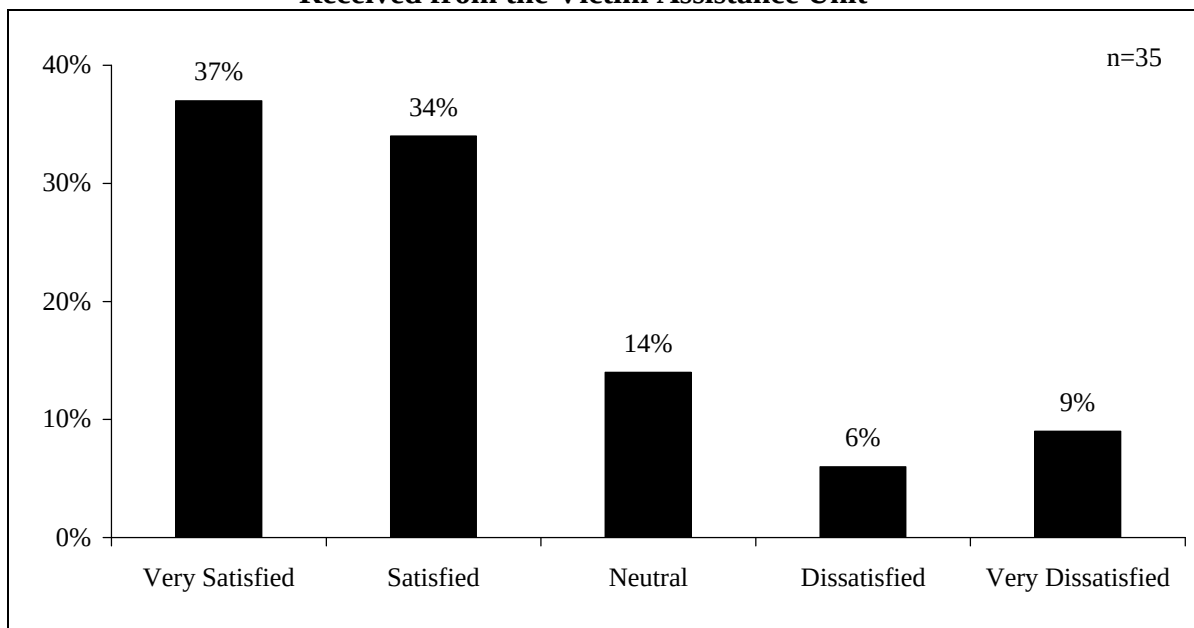
Table 2 provides a breakdown of the responses by level of satisfaction and by event type. Graph 1 shows the total responses by level of satisfaction. The data show that the majority of respondents, 71%, stated that they were Satisfied or Very Satisfied with the services they received from the Unit. Additionally, respondents involved in violent crime events were the most likely to provide a favorable satisfaction rating (i.e. a rating of satisfied or very satisfied).

Table 2: Survey Respondent's Level of Satisfaction with the Services Received from the Victim Assistance Unit

Event Type	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
Violent Crime (n=19)	53%	37%	5%	0%	5%
Property Crime (n=9)	33%	22%	22%	22%	0%
Unknown (n=7)	0%	43%	29%	0%	29%
Total (n=35)	37%	34%	14%	6%	9%

Source: OLO, September 2006

Graph 1: Survey Respondent's Overall Level of Satisfaction with the Services Received from the Victim Assistance Unit



Source: OLO, September 2006

D. Views on Victim Assistance Unit Staff

The survey asked respondents to indicate their level of agreement with six statements about the Victim Assistance Unit staff member the respondent was contacted by and/or received services from. The respondents were provided five categories (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree) to choose from for each statement.

Table 3 summarizes the percent of responses for each of the six statements that were favorable (if the respondent selected agree or strongly agree), neutral (if the respondent selected neutral), or non-favorable (if the respondent selected disagree or strongly disagree). A more detailed breakdown of this data by all five response categories and by type of criminal event is provided in Table 7 (page A-7). The data indicate that, in general:

- Respondents had favorable views of the staff member(s) they worked with; and
- Respondents involved in violent crime events were the most likely to provide favorable responses for each of the six statements.

Table 3: Summary of Survey Responses on Victim Assistance Unit Staff

The Victim Assistant:	Type of Response		
	Favorable	Neutral	Non-Favorable
Acted in a professional and courteous manner. (n=39)	80%	15%	5%
Provided information I needed and answered my questions. (n=38)	76%	11%	14%
Contacted me in a timely fashion after the victimization. (n=38)	71%	13%	16%
Provided useful information. (n=37)	70%	11%	19%
Was sensitive to my concerns, needs, and feelings. (n=40)	68%	18%	14%
Made helpful referrals to other programs and/or services. (n=36)	61%	17%	22%

Source: OLO, September 2006

E. Helpfulness of Victim Assistance Unit Services

The survey included a list of 13 different services in five service categories offered by the Victim Assistance Unit. The survey asked respondents to indicate each service they received (via a single checkbox next to the service type) and whether or not they found the service helpful (via Yes and No checkboxes after the service type).

Table 4 below lists each type of service and the percent of respondents who indicated the service was helpful or not. A more detailed breakdown of this data by type of criminal event is provided in Table 8 (page A-7). In general, the data indicates that respondents view the majority of services provided as helpful. Also, respondents involved in violent crime events were more likely to rate a service as helpful.

Several respondents provided an opinion of the helpfulness of a service without checking the box to indicate they had received the service. As a result, these data may present information on both the actual helpfulness for those who received the service and the perceived helpfulness for those who may not have received the service. Some of the “No” responses may therefore only reflect that a service was not applicable for a particular client (e.g., a victim of a property crime responding that assistance with funeral needs was not helpful when it is unlikely s/he was offered that service).

Table 4: Victim Survey Responses on Helpfulness of Victim Assistance Unit Services

Type of Service	Was the service helpful?	
	Yes	No
Information about the court system or notification of offender status. (n=20)	75%	25%
Information about the case, the investigation, or obtaining police reports. (n=26)	73%	27%
Information about victim rights. (n=28)	68%	32%
Referrals for other social services. (n=19)	68%	32%
Accompaniment to court events/trials. (n=14)	64%	36%
Comfort at the crime scene. (n=21)	62%	38%
Referrals to counseling services. (n=22)	59%	41%
Assistance getting back stolen property or property used as evidence. (n=17)	59%	41%
Assistance obtaining protective orders. (n=16)	50%	50%
Assistance applying for reimbursement from the State or County for medical bills, lost wages, funeral expenses, etc. (n=12)	42%	58%
Assistance with funeral and/or burial needs. (n=11)	36%	64%
Assistance finding emergency food, shelter, or other life essentials. (n=13)	31%	69%
Assistance dealing with landlords, employers, creditors, or insurance. (n=12)	25%	75%

Source: OLO, September 2006

F. Barriers to Service

The survey asked respondents to indicate any reasons that they were either unable to or decided not to receive services from the Victim Assistance Unit. The survey provided nine different reasons to select from, and respondents were allowed to select more than one reason. In total, 38 responses were provided to this question.

Table 5 shows the number of responses received for each category. The most common response was “Never contacted by Victim Assistance Unit.” While it may be the case that the individual who responded to the survey was not contacted by the Unit, these answers may also reflect individuals who do not realize s/he was contacted by the Unit or individuals who do not remember s/he was contacted by the Unit.

Two of the other more frequent responses – “Did not want further assistance” and “Had other sources of help or assistance” – are consistent with the research literature on reasons victims often decline victim services.

Table 6: Survey Respondent's Reasons for Not Receiving Services from the Victim Assistance Unit

Reason Unable to or Decided not to Receive Services	Number of responses
Never contacted by Victim Assistance Unit	12
Did not want further assistance	6
Other	6
Had other sources of help or assistance	4
Language problem	3
Did not have time	3
Inconvenient hours of operation	2
Lack of child care	1
Lack of transportation	1
Total	38

Source: OLO, September 2006

G. Additional Data Tables

This section provides additional data tables for survey responses related to Victim Assistance Unit staff and helpfulness of Victim Assistance Unit services.

Table 7: Survey Responses on Victim Assistance Unit Staff by Event Type

The Victim Assistant:	Event Type	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Acted in a professional and courteous manner	Violent Crime (n=21)	76%	24%	0%	0%	0%
	Property Crime (n=9)	44%	22%	33%	0%	0%
	Unknown (n=9)	44%	0%	33%	0%	22%
	Total (n=39)	62%	18%	15%	0%	5%
Contacted me in a timely fashion after the victimization	Violent Crime (n=19)	68%	16%	11%	0%	5%
	Property Crime (n=9)	22%	33%	11%	22%	11%
	Unknown (n=10)	50%	10%	20%	0%	20%
	Total (n=38)	53%	18%	13%	5%	11%
Made helpful referrals to other programs and/or services	Violent Crime (n=20)	55%	25%	5%	5%	10%
	Property Crime (n=8)	25%	13%	25%	25%	13%
	Unknown (n=8)	38%	0%	38%	0%	25%
	Total (n=36)	44%	17%	17%	8%	14%
Provided useful information	Violent Crime (n=20)	60%	25%	5%	0%	10%
	Property Crime (n=9)	33%	22%	11%	22%	11%
	Unknown (n=8)	50%	0%	25%	0%	25%
	Total (n=37)	51%	19%	11%	5%	14%
Provided information I needed and answered my questions	Violent Crime (n=20)	75%	15%	5%	0%	5%
	Property Crime (n=9)	44%	22%	11%	11%	11%
	Unknown (n=9)	56%	0%	22%	0%	22%
	Total (n=38)	63%	13%	11%	3%	11%
Was sensitive to my concerns, needs, and feelings	Violent Crime (n=21)	67%	19%	14%	0%	0%
	Property Crime (n=9)	33%	22%	22%	22%	0%
	Unknown (n=10)	40%	0%	20%	20%	20%
	Total (n=40)	53%	15%	18%	10%	4%

Source: OLO, September 2006

Table 8: Victim Survey Responses on Helpfulness of Victim Assistance Unit Services

Type of Service	Event Type	Was the service helpful?	
		Yes	No
EMERGENCY SERVICES			
Comfort at the crime scene	Violent Crime (n=15)	73%	27%
	Property Crime (n=2)	0%	100%
	Unknown (n=4)	50%	50%
	Total (n=21)	62%	38%
Assistance finding emergency food, shelter, or other life essentials	Violent Crime (n=9)	56%	44%
	Property Crime (n=2)	0%	100%
	Unknown (n=2)	0%	100%
	Total (n=13)	31%	69%
Assistance obtaining protective orders	Violent Crime (n=10)	70%	30%
	Property Crime (n=2)	0%	100%
	Unknown (n=4)	25%	75%
	Total (n=16)	50%	50%

Table 8, Continued: Victim Survey Responses on Helpfulness of Victim Assistance Unit Services

Type of Service	Event Type	Was the service helpful?	
		Yes	No
REFERRALS			
Referrals to counseling services	Violent Crime (n=17)	65%	35%
	Property Crime (n=2)	50%	50%
	Unknown (n=3)	33%	67%
	Total (n=22)	59%	41%
Referrals for other social services	Violent Crime (n=15)	73%	27%
	Property Crime (n=2)	50%	50%
	Unknown (n=2)	50%	50%
	Total (n=19)	68%	32%
CASE INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE			
Information about the case, the investigation, or obtaining police reports	Violent Crime (n=13)	85%	15%
	Property Crime (n=9)	67%	33%
	Unknown (n=4)	50%	50%
	Total (n=26)	73%	27%
Information about victim rights	Violent Crime (n=16)	81%	19%
	Property Crime (n=8)	62%	38%
	Unknown (n=4)	25%	75%
	Total (n=28)	68%	32%
Assistance getting back stolen property or property used as evidence	Violent Crime (n=7)	43%	57%
	Property Crime (n=6)	83%	17%
	Unknown (n=4)	50%	50%
	Total (n=17)	59%	41%
SUPPORT SERVICES			
Assistance dealing with landlords, employers, creditors, or insurance	Violent Crime (n=8)	38%	62%
	Property Crime (n=2)	0%	100%
	Unknown (n=2)	0%	100%
	Total (n=12)	25%	75%
Assistance with funeral and/or burial needs	Violent Crime (n=8)	50%	50%
	Property Crime (n=1)	0%	100%
	Unknown (n=2)	0%	100%
	Total (n=11)	36%	64%
Assistance applying for reimbursement from the State or County for medical bills, lost wages, funeral expenses, etc	Violent Crime (n=9)	44%	56%
	Property Crime (n=2)	50%	50%
	Unknown (n=1)	0%	100%
	Total (n=12)	42%	58%
COURT-RELATED SERVICES			
Information about the court system or notification of offender status	Violent Crime (n=8)	86%	14%
	Property Crime (n=3)	67%	33%
	Unknown (n=3)	33%	67%
	Total (n=20)	75%	25%
Accompaniment to court events/trials	Violent Crime (n=11)	73%	27%
	Property Crime (n=1)	0%	100%
	Unknown (n=2)	50%	50%
	Total (n=14)	64%	36%

Source: OLO, September 2006

2006 VICTIM SERVICES SURVEY

1. Have you received services from the Montgomery County Police, Victim Assistance Unit?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No or Not Sure (IF NO OR NOT SURE, PLEASE GO TO QUESTION #4)

2. For what type of event did you receive services?

- ☐ Violent Crime ☐ Property Crime

3. Please check each service that you received and whether you found it helpful: (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)

- | | Was the service Helpful? |
|---|--|
| • Emergency Services | |
| ☐ Comfort at the crime scene. | ☐ Yes ☐ No |
| ☐ Assistance finding emergency food, shelter, or other life essentials. | ☐ Yes ☐ No |
| ☐ Assistance obtaining protective orders. | ☐ Yes ☐ No |
| ☐ Other: _____ | ☐ Yes ☐ No |
| • Referrals | |
| ☐ Referrals to counseling services. | ☐ Yes ☐ No |
| ☐ Referrals for other social services. | ☐ Yes ☐ No |
| ☐ Other: _____ | ☐ Yes ☐ No |
| • Case Information and Assistance | |
| ☐ Information about the case, the investigation, or obtaining police reports. | ☐ Yes ☐ No |
| ☐ Information about victim rights. | ☐ Yes ☐ No |
| ☐ Assistance getting back stolen property or property used as evidence. | ☐ Yes ☐ No |
| ☐ Other: _____ | ☐ Yes ☐ No |
| • Support Services | |
| ☐ Assistance dealing with landlords, employers, creditors, or insurance. | ☐ Yes ☐ No |
| ☐ Assistance with funeral and/or burial needs. | ☐ Yes ☐ No |
| ☐ Assistance applying for reimbursement from the State or County for medical bills, lost wages, funeral expenses, etc. | ☐ Yes ☐ No |
| ☐ Other: _____ | ☐ Yes ☐ No |
| • Court-Related Services | |
| ☐ Information about the court system or notification of offender status. | ☐ Yes ☐ No |
| ☐ Accompaniment to court events/trials. | ☐ Yes ☐ No |
| ☐ Other: _____ | ☐ Yes ☐ No |

4. Please indicate any reasons that you were unable to or decided not to receive services: (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ Language problem | ☐ Had other sources of help or assistance |
| ☐ Lack of child care | ☐ Did not want further assistance |
| ☐ Lack of transportation | ☐ Never contacted by the Victim Assistance Unit |
| ☐ Did not have time | ☐ Other: _____ |
| ☐ Inconvenient hours of operation | |

2006 VICTIM SERVICES SURVEY

5. Please circle the number that reflects your level of agreement with each of the following statements about the Police Department Victim Assistant that contacted you:

The Victim Assistant:	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Acted in a professional and courteous manner.	1	2	3	4	5
Contacted me in a timely fashion after the victimization.	1	2	3	4	5
Made helpful referrals to other programs and/or services.	1	2	3	4	5
Provided useful information.	1	2	3	4	5
Provided information I needed and answered my questions	1	2	3	4	5
Was sensitive to my concerns, needs, and feelings.	1	2	3	4	5

6. At the time of your contact with the Victim Assistance Unit, were there other services that you would have liked to receive but did not?

7. Since your contact with the Victim Assistance Unit, do you have any additional needs for services?

8. Overall, how satisfied were you with the services you received from the Victim Assistance Unit?

☐ Very Satisfied ☐ Satisfied ☐ Neutral ☐ Dissatisfied ☐ Very Dissatisfied

9. **Additional Comments.** If you would like to provide additional comments, please do so here and feel free to attach additional pages if necessary:

10. **OPTIONAL** – If you would like a Victim Assistant to contact you to follow-up on any additional needs for services, include your contact information below.

Name: _____ Phone Number: _____

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. If you have any questions, please call (240) 777-7877 or email olo@montgomerycountymd.gov

AN EVALUATION OF THE POLICE DEPARTMENT'S VICTIM ASSISTANCE UNIT

**OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE OVERSIGHT REPORT 2006-8
SEPTEMBER 25, 2006**

SUMMARY OF REPORT

The Montgomery County Police Department (MCPD) established a Victim Assistance Unit five years ago to provide crime victims and witnesses with crisis intervention and other support services. Between July 2002 and May 2006, the Unit reports working with crime victims and witnesses of nearly 35,000 cases. About 75% of the 22,000 referrals made to other programs were to the Victim Assistance and Sexual Assault Program (VASAP) or the Abused Persons Program.

In sum, the Office of Legislative Oversight's evaluation found that the Victim Assistance Unit has successfully addressed each of the "barriers to service" identified in 2001 as the impetus for establishing the Unit. OLO's survey of 600 crime victims served by the Unit during this past year yielded a relatively low response rate (8.4%), which is consistent with other surveys of crime victims. However, 71% of those who did respond expressed that they were "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with the services received from the Unit.

OLO's recommends four issues for Council discussion: (1) Lessons learned from OLO's survey of the Unit's clients. (2) Opportunities for further coordination among victim services programs. (3) Results of the Unit's referrals to the Abused Persons Program and VASAP. (4) The status of work being accomplished by the Victim Services Task Force.

THE ASSIGNMENT

At the County Council's request, the Office of Legislative Oversight evaluated the Victim Assistance Unit of the Montgomery County Police Department (MCPD), with a focus on how Unit staff identify victims, manage its caseload, and coordinate with other programs. The Council explicitly requested that OLO's study include feedback from a sample of crime victims who received services from the Unit.

VICTIM ASSISTANCE UNIT - STRUCTURE, STAFFING, AND SERVICES

The Victim Assistance Unit is part of the Police Department's Major Crimes Division. The Unit's FY07 staffing consists of a full-time director and eight full-time victim advocates. One advocate is assigned to the Family Crimes Division while the other seven advocates are based in the Police District Stations.

Any victim or witness of a crime committed in the County is eligible to receive services from the Victim Assistance Unit. Family members of crime victims are also eligible. The Victim Assistance Unit's primary strategy for identifying potential clients is to review daily crime and event reports. In addition, officers notify the victim advocates of victims/witnesses in need of assistance, and victims themselves can initiate contact with the Police Department. The services provided by the Victim Assistance Unit vary by the type of crime and the unique needs of individual victims/witnesses.

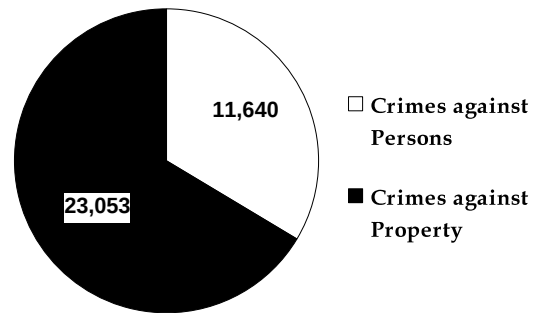
SERVICES OFFERED BY THE POLICE DEPARTMENT'S VICTIM ASSISTANCE UNIT

- Emergency Services
- Referrals
- Case Information and Assistance
- Support Services
- Court-Related Services

VICTIM ASSISTANCE UNIT CASELOAD

The Victim Assistance Unit places priority on serving victims of violent crimes, crimes against persons, and serious or traumatic property crimes. Over the past five years, advocates report working with crime victims/witnesses of nearly 35,000 cases. The Unit's caseload increased annually between 2002 and 2005. About two-thirds of the Unit's total caseload relates to property crimes, and one-third relates to crimes against persons.

Chart 1: Number of Cases, July 2002-May 2006

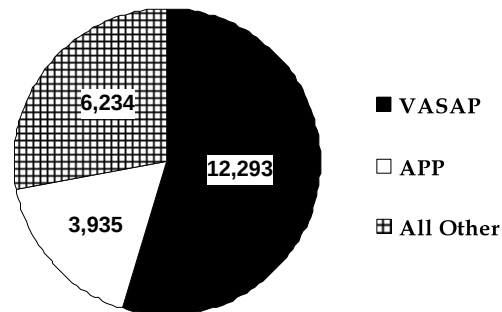


COORDINATION AND SERVICE REFERRALS

The Victim Assistance Unit regularly coordinates services for individual victims/witnesses with other government, private, and non-profit programs. The Unit also participates in on-going victim services collaboration efforts within County Government and with other agencies. An advocate's responsibilities to coordinate services range from simple referrals to more formal inter-agency coordination of multiple services.

Over the past five years, advocates report making nearly 22,500 referrals to other programs/services. The number of referrals made increased annually between 2002 and 2005. Advocates make referrals to one or more programs/services in person, by telephone, and/or as part of an informational packet mailed to a victim. About 55% of all referrals were to the Victim Assistance and Sexual Assault Program (VASAP) and 18% were to the Abused Persons Program (APP).

Chart 2: Number of Referrals, July 2002-May 2006



REFERRAL ACCEPTANCE

Program data indicate that the Victim Assistance Unit is very successful in contacting victims and providing appropriate referrals. However, program data for the past few years also show that 8% of the victims referred by the Unit to APP and 3% of the victims referred by the Unit to VASAP "accept" the referral. Program staff define an "accepted referral" as when the Unit refers a victim to APP or VASAP and the victim contacts that program to inquire about and/or receive services.

Research on victim services indicates that a low rate of accepted referrals is not uncommon because many individuals choose not to take advantage of victim services. According to the research, the most frequent reasons victims decline services are because they receive the help they need from family and friends and/or they do not have the time to get involved with victim services programs.

PERFORMANCE RELATED TO ORIGINAL “BARRIERS TO SERVICE”

In 2001, when MCPD requested funding for a permanent victim services unit, the Department prepared a position paper for the County Council to justify the proposal. MCPD’s position paper described five characteristics of the program structure in place and suggested each case offered an opportunity to improve the delivery of victim services. A review of program data and interviews with staff suggest that the Victim Assistance Unit has addressed, in whole or in part, each of the five “barriers to service.”

• A lack of consistent linkages to appropriate referrals

In 2001, the Police Department stated that, as first responders to a crime scene, its officers and victim advocates can play a critical role in informing victims about the array of County services and providing referrals to access these services. MCPD stated that a referral system in the Department would specifically help make victims aware of the services provided by VASAP and APP.

Current Status: Victim Assistance Unit workload data indicate that the Unit provides the desired referrals. Providing program referrals, however, does not necessarily correlate with victims using those program’s services as indicated by available “accepted referral” data.

• A number of unserved or underserved victims

In 2001, MCPD stated that a victim assistance program located in the Police Department would help address the needs of victims (e.g. victims of property crimes) who did not fall under the purview of other victim services programs that traditionally focused on victims of violent crimes.

Current Status: Victim Assistance Unit caseload data indicates that the Unit has provided services to victims in approximately 23,000 property crime cases between July 2002 and May 2006, which represents 66% of the Unit’s total caseload during that period.

• An inadequate level of trained, professional staff within MCPD

In 2001, MCPD stated that because the staffing level consisted of only one full-time professional victim services coordinator plus volunteers, “only a handful” of the County’s victims of violent crime received any form of outreach from the Police Department, and victims of property crime received only a standard form letter.

Current Status: MCPD now has professionally trained staff providing victim services out of each of the County’s six district police stations. Unit staff report that victims of violent crime and serious or traumatic property crime receive direct outreach within 24 hours of an advocate learning about an incident.

• A high turnover rate and lack of continuity in service

In 2001, MCPD stated the use of volunteer staff created high turnover in personnel and made it difficult to offer continuity of service to victims of the most serious crimes.

Current Status: The implementation of permanent staffing removed the barrier associated with volunteer turnover and service continuity.

• Lack of departmental training regarding victimization and victim’s needs

In 2001, with few staff and high turnover, MCPD reported it had been unable to establish a consistent training program for either new recruits or seasoned officers.

Current Status: MCPD has established a more consistent training procedure for staff related to victims of crime. These include both formal and informal training.

FEEDBACK ON COORDINATION AND SERVICE DELIVERY

OLO sought feedback from a range of stakeholders about the Victim Assistance Unit's coordination and service delivery. Police Department staff outside of the Victim Assistance Unit expressed strong support for the services provided by the Unit as a needed function within MCPD.

COMMON THEMES AMONG THE FEEDBACK FROM POLICE DEPARTMENT STAFF

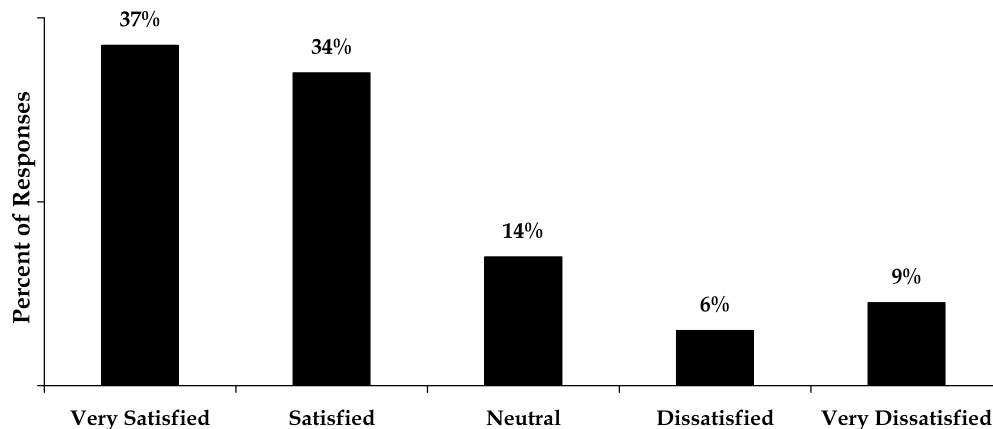
- District stations are the best location for the victim advocates.
- Victim advocates leverage the time of other Police Department staff.
- Roles and use of the advocates vary somewhat across the district stations.
- Spanish-speaking advocates in the Silver Spring and Wheaton stations are essential.
- The Victim Assistance Unit has a strong internal and external customer service focus.

Both Police Department and Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) staff report that coordination between and among the Victim Assistance Unit and DHHS victim services programs has improved tremendously since 2003. Since OLO reported in 2003 that victim service providers needed to improve program coordination, MCPD and DHHS staff at all levels have worked on improving the coordination and collaboration between their respective victim services programs. Staff from both departments report that these efforts have resulted in substantial improvements.

FEEDBACK FROM VICTIM ASSISTANT UNIT CLIENTS

OLO mailed out a written survey to obtain feedback from Victim Assistance Unit clients on overall satisfaction with the Unit, views on the Unit's staff, and the perceived helpfulness of the Unit's services. OLO's survey of 600 crime victims served by the Unit during this past year yielded a relatively low response rate (8.4%), which is consistent with other surveys of crime victims. However, 71% of those who did respond expressed that they were "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with the services received from the Unit. Overall, respondents that reported involvement in violent crime events were most likely to provide favorable feedback.

Chart 4: Level of Satisfaction of Victim Assistance Unit Clients



For a complete copy of OLO-Report 2006-8, go to: www.montgomerycountymd.gov/olo