

**MEMORANDUM**

March 14, 2002

TO: County Council

FROM: Karen Orlansky<sup>KO</sup>, Director  
Office of Legislative Oversight

SUBJECT: **Office of Legislative Oversight Report 2003-2, *Services to Victims and Witnesses of Crime in Montgomery County***

The Council's calendar for **March 18, 2002** includes the public release of Office of Legislative Oversight Memorandum Report 2003-2, *Services to Victims and Witnesses of Crime in Montgomery County*. Councilmembers received copies of the report under separate cover.

A joint Health and Human Services Committee and Public Safety Committee meeting on the report is scheduled for April 7, 2003.

**Members of the public can pick-up full copies of OLO Report 2003-2 in the Legislative Information Services office (5th floor COB) after the Council releases the report on Tuesday, March 18, 2003.**

c: M. Edgar, Council Secretary



# SERVICES TO VICTIMS AND WITNESSES OF CRIME IN MONTGOMERY COUNTY

March 18, 2003

Office of Legislative Oversight  
Report Number 2003-2

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Nearly 70,000 crimes were reported in Montgomery County in 2002. Because reported crime represents an estimated half of all violent crimes and an even smaller portion of property crimes, the actual number of crime victims in the County likely exceeds the number in official crime statistics.

The Office of Legislative Oversight identified two locally-funded victim compensation funds and 17 other government-based programs that provide a wide range of specialized services to victims and witnesses of crime in Montgomery County. Available services include crisis intervention and resource mobilization, counseling (short and long term), court accompaniment, assistance with completing court forms, notification about offender status and court dates, and reimbursement for crime-related expenses.

Some programs are designed for specific categories of crime victims, e.g., domestic violence victims, victims of hate/violence crimes. Other programs offer services, such as counseling, court accompaniment, and compensation, to victims of any type of crime.

In FY 03, the County funds approximately 80% of the more than \$5.5 million spent on government-based victim services in the County. State and Federal grants fund another 17%, with the balance paid for by the municipalities of Gaithersburg, Rockville, and Takoma Park.

OLO's primary recommendation is to evolve the structure of victim services programs into a coordinated, inter-disciplinary network of services. This recommendation addresses OLO's finding that the current array of programs in the County operate as related but disaggregated services. Both management and front-line program staff agree on the need to improve coordination between and among the different providers.

To accomplish this, OLO recommends that the Council formally request the County Executive, State's Attorney, and Sheriff to convene an inter-agency task force that is charged with integrating the different services into a coordinated system. Recommended actions include developing: a shared resource directory and victim database, written policies that clarify the roles and parameters of each program, joint training opportunities, and an inter-agency strategy to meet the growing need to serve non-English speaking victims.

As a positive example of coordinating victim services, the Council should commend the Montgomery County Police Department and Department of Health and Human Services for resolving a disagreement about which program will provide 24/7 emergency support services to adult rape/sexual assault victims. In addition, OLO recommends that the Council:

- Amend County law to consolidate the two County-funded victim compensation funds and seek State legislation that enables the County to request reimbursement from the State's victim compensation fund for eligible expenses paid locally;
- Lobby the State to evaluate and make continued improvements to the automated victim notification system (VINE); and
- Request OLO (or other entity) to conduct a companion study to this one that examines services provided to juvenile victims of crime in the County.

**OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE OVERSIGHT REPORT 2003-2**  
**SERVICES TO VICTIMS AND WITNESSES OF CRIME IN MONTGOMERY COUNTY**

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