

Empower!

GIVING VICTIMS AND THEIR FAMILIES A VOICE



A Publication of the Metropolitan Police Department's Victim Services Branch

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Message from Tyria Fields



Tyria Fields

Spring is here! And it is the time for renewal, hope and new opportunities. April also celebrates National Crime Victims' Rights Week and all that it entails. Specifically, April 24-30, 2022 is National Crime Victims' Rights Week and communities across the nation honor victims and

the professionals who support them. This year's theme-rights, equity, for all victims-is particularly relevant as the Victim Services Branch continues to uplift victims as they seek justice and resolve and display resilience following a victimization. Through determination, the Metropolitan Police Department is commit-

ted to encouraging victims to explore their rights as well as promoting access and equity. Please let us know how we can be of service to you.

Upcoming Events and Activities

April

National Crime Victims' Rights Week

Monday, April 25 // 11 am-2 pm

We hope you'll come by to visit our public safety information table and meet your local police officers.

Cleveland Park Library, 3310 Connecticut Avenue, NW

CONTACT:

Sharon Daugherty, Community Outreach Coordinator, Victim Services Branch sharon.daugherty@dc.gov
Lauren R. Taylor 301.608.3708

May

DC Regional Academy on Family Violence

Thursday, May 5 & Friday, May 6 // 8 am-5 pm

Join us for engaging topics, presenters, and powerful stories from brave survivors! We will be hosting the 1st DC Regional Academy on Family focusing on the intersection of child abuse and domestic violence. If your work intersects with children, youth or adults impacted by child abuse and/or domestic violence, please save-the-dates for this hybrid conference.

LOCATION:

The Children's National Research & Innovation Campus
1174 13th Place NW

REGISTER/QUESTIONS: CAPCSpecialEvents@childrensnational.org

June

Camp Forget-Me-Not/Camp Erin DC

SESSION I: (ages 6-9 years old)

Saturday, June 25

SESSION II: (ages 10-12 years old)

Saturday, July 9

SESSION III: (ages 13-17 years old)

Saturday, July 23

Be a part of this free bereavement camp for youth who are grieving the death of a significant person in their lives. As the nation continues to navigate the impact of a pandemic, the Wendt Center will offer children and teens ages 6 to 17 the opportunity to attend a one-day, outdoor, camp experience that combines grief education and emotional support with fun, traditional camp activities. Led by bereavement professionals and caring volunteers, campers are provided a safe environment to explore their grief, learn essential coping skills, and make friends with peers who are also grieving. The camp is not designed as a replacement for therapy but as an enjoyable opportunity to explore grief where a child's self-expression is heard, valued and honored.

LOCATION:

Farren's Stable in Washington DC. Camp programming will take place indoors and outdoors.

REGISTER: www.wendtcenter.org/camp-forget-me-not-camp-erin-dc

Public Safety Presentation

Thursday, June 16 // 6:30-7:30 pm

During National Gun Violence Awareness Month, Victim Services Branch and the Second District will provide info on services we provide and resources for your safety.

LOCATION:

Cleveland Park Library, 3310 Connecticut Avenue, NW

CONTACT:

Sharon Daugherty, Community Outreach Coordinator, Victim Services Branch sharon.daugherty@dc.gov

Second Annual #EndGunViolenceCity-wide Conference

Wednesday, June 29

Every walk of life impacted by the gun will be offered a safe space, learning space, and healing space to belong to! This is how we #PREVENT-gunviolence together!

Sponsoring Agency:

The T.R.I.G.G.E.R. Project - True Reasons I Grabbed The Gun Evolved From Risks

REGISTER: Email join@thetriggerproject.org if you wish to collaborate, coordinate, or sponsor this conference.

July

36th Annual National POMC-Parents of Murdered Children Conference

Thursday, July 21-24

Let's get together! We're hosting a new event, and we'd love to see you there. Register soon because space is limited. We hope you're able to join us!

Sponsoring Agency:

National Parents Of Murdered Children, Inc. <https://pomc.org/>

LOCATION:

Sheraton Westport Lakeside Chalet, St. Louis, Missouri

REGISTER: www.eventbrite.com/e/2022-pomc-national-conference-st-louis-mo-registration-204591567887?aff=erelexpmlt

CONFERENCE CO-CHAIR: Connie Sheely (507) 358-4017 cjholbrook82@hotmail.com

CONTACT:

Conference Co-Chair: Connie Sheely (507) 358-4017 cjholbrook82@hotmail.com

—Sharon Daugherty

National Crime Victim Rights Week Next of Kin Meeting

Resources

For more information on future NOK Meetings contact the Family Liaison Specialists Unit at (202) 645-6363.

In observance of the National Crime Victims' Rights Week, the Metropolitan Police Department's Victim Services Branch held its annual Next of Kin Meeting for family members of open homicide cases from 2019-2020. The 2022 NCVRW theme emphasizes the importance of helping crime victims find justice by enforcing victims'



rights, expanding access to services, and ensuring equity and inclusion for all. The Metropolitan Police Department recognizes the importance of helping survivors find justice for their loved ones through the investigative process. Victim Specialists provide supportive services and resources to make sure survivors of homicide victims have access to the

Crime Victims Compensation Program, the criminal justice system, updates on their loved one's cases, and information regarding victims' rights. The Next of Kin Meeting is an opportunity for families to meet with the detective investigating their loved one's case. The meetings are held three times a year; however, families are encouraged to call to schedule a meeting throughout the year.

—Marlene Castro

Homicide Reduction Partnership: Helping Survivors Find Their Justice

Resources

For more information on this topic visit:

- www.state.gov/what-is-trafficking-in-persons
- <https://polarisproject.org>

On Friday, February 18, 2022, Mayor Muriel Bowser and Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) Chief Robert J. Contee III announced the Homicide Reduction Partnership (HRP), a combined effort to reduce violent crime in the District of Columbia. With this new partnership, MPD will focus resources and intelligence-led policing strategies in collaboration with local and federal law enforcement and criminal justice partners, District government agencies, and

community partners. HRP will focus on reducing violent crime within four Police Service Areas in Wards 7 and 8 throughout the entire 2022 calendar year. These areas accounted for 21% of all murders citywide in 2021.

As a Victim Specialist supporting this partnership, I have been tasked with engaging property managers, government agencies, and community-based organizations to increase trust in the police and DC Government by providing supportive services and resources to the commu-

nity. Recently, HRP members conducted a community walk in the Wheeler Terrace community where tenants shared their vision of having more community-friendly policing. They also invited law enforcement to come back to engage with the young people and have a positive presence in their complex. This is one way we see HRP incorporate this year's National Crime Victims' Rights Week theme to expand access to services and help survivors find their justice.

—Mark Timberlake



RIGHTS, ACCESS, EQUITY, for all victims

National Crime Victims' Rights Week | April 24-30, 2022

Making the Most of Virtual Support: Expanding Services for all Victims

Over the past two years, many victims and survivors have been unable to access support and resources in the same manner as before. The pandemic has made it difficult to meet in person with a counselor, support group, loved ones, and the community. This reality has added a complicated layer to the grieving process for many. Despite various virtual resources available throughout the pandemic, many people have found it difficult to access or benefit from them and struggled to cope with grief and trauma in isolation. As COVID-19 restriction continues to lift it is important to make it a priority to seek supportive services as needed. Self-care and support are not only important for you, but also for your loved ones and the community as a whole.

The 2022 National Crime Victims' Rights Week (NCVRW) theme emphasizes Rights, access, equity, for all victims. In observance of NCVRW, we want to encourage survivors, victims, and their families to take the step to access the services available in your community. Many services have evolved to virtual platforms in order to expand access, below is a list of tips to ensure you get the most out of your virtual experience:

- » Keep in mind that it is completely normal to feel awkward or nervous engaging in virtual therapy for the first time.
- » Plan ahead and find a comfortable, quiet, and private location for your appointment.
- » Add a reminder to your calendar or set an alarm for your appointment.

- » Check your internet connection in advance. If your internet is unreliable, plan to go to a public library or location with reliable Wi-Fi for the appointment.
- » Sort out any technical issues in advance including charging your phone or device and ensuring your camera is working.
- » Limit distractions by putting devices on "do not disturb" and notifying others in the location that you need privacy.
- » Make a list ahead of time of things you would like to focus on. Don't be afraid to ask for specific things you need or would like to cover in the support session.
- » Be present don't try to multitask, but treat this as if it were an in-person appointment.
- » Practice naming your emotions since body language is difficult to rely on in a virtual setting.
- » Ask for guidance on how to participate in Virtual Support Groups and when it is appropriate to share. Know how to mute your microphone when it is not your turn to speak.

Request other options or referrals if virtual support does not work for you.

The following resources include individual counseling, referral hotlines, and support groups that can offer a starting point for your healing journey.

- » **DC Department of Behavioral Health:** The Access Helpline at (888) 7WE-HELP or 1-888-793-4357 (get referrals to support resources in DC)/ <https://dbh.dc.gov/service/access-helpline>

- » **Dr. Renetta Weaver:** (240) 416-9650 (Individual and Group Counseling) - Zoom Support Group for Family Members of Gun Violence is held every Sunday from 12-2pm on Zoom. Please call to register.
- » **Wendt Center for Loss and Healing:** (202) 624-0010 (Individual Counseling/Support Groups)/ www.wendtcenter.org/resources/community-resources
- » **Maryland Crime Victims Resource Center:** (301) 952-0063 (Find support resources and groups in MD)/ www.mdcrimevictims.org
- » **Washington Medstar Trauma Survivor's Support Group:** (202) 669-5123 (meets the 2nd Wednesday of each month 6:00-7:30 pm)/ www.medstarhealth.org/classes-and-events/the-trauma-survivors-support-group
- » **Capital Caring Health:** (844) 447-4383 (several support groups in VA, MD & DC)/ www.capitalcaring.org
- » **Compassionate Friends/DC Chapter:** (202) 394-2851 (Support Group for parents that have lost a child)/ www.compassionatefriends.org/chapter/tcf-of-the-district-of-columbia
- » **Latin American Youth Center:** (202) 319-2229 (Trauma Support for Youth Ages 12-21)/ www.layc-dc.org/mental-health-treatment



Stalking Is Year-Round

In the January edition of our “Now you Know” Roundtable, we honored Stalking Awareness Month.

January 2022 marked the eighteenth National Stalking Awareness Month (NSAM), an annual call to action to recognize and respond to the serious crime of stalking. Stalking and online/cyber stalking is a series of actions that make you feel afraid or in danger. Stalking is real and it can happen to anyone.

Guest panelists were **Dana Michelle Fleitman**, Associate Advisor, Stalking Prevention, Awareness, and Resource Center (SPARC) of AEquitas and **Senior Sergeant Alberta Holden**, Paternity Warrant, Civil Protection Order and Domestic Violence Units, Investigative Services Bureau, Criminal Investigation Division, Metropolitan Police Department.

Information was provided on what stalking is and what to do if you or someone you

know becomes a victim of this crime. We also discussed what to expect when you call the police and ultimately how serious this crime is.

Q: Can I be stalked by a loved one?

A: Most often is it someone you know and may have had a deeply connected relationship with.

Q: I don't want to ruin their life if I place a restraining order against them. What will happen to them?

A: They will be served the order instructing them to stay

away from you. Sometimes that is enough to let them know how serious their actions are and what your boundaries are. If they continue to harass you, there will be progressive consequences for their behavior, which is on their part.

We invite you to view the half-hour video and learn more about how to protect yourself: “MPD Now You Know Roundtable Stalking Edition” at <https://youtu.be/TqKaKqNzS2c>

—Sharon Daugherty

MPD Works to Improve Equity, Access for Victims

Crime Victims have encountered justice inequities for many years. The pandemic has unveiled social and system discriminations that continue to plague a victim's ability to receive justice. The Metropolitan Police Department, Victim Services Branch (VSB) recognizes those obstacles and have implemented departmental policies to alleviate disparities. The 2022 National Crime Victims' Rights Week (NCVRW) theme—rights, access, and equity for all—is the cornerstone of VSB's mission and policies. VSB will like to highlight some of our work efforts that correlate to NCVRW's theme.

Rights

Victims are often dismayed from contacting the authorities due to prior experience(s) with insufficient notifications, poor treatment, lack of protection and more. VSB's Victim Specialists act as an information liaison between the victim and law enforcement. Victim Specialists ensure victims are heard and treated with respect, receive timely information and

notification(s), safety concerns are affirmed and addressed, and additionally, victims are provided with appropriate resources. VSB delivers these services in various methods to assist all, including those without immediate contact means.

Access

Limited access to resources can hinder a victim's recovery. To enhance service referrals to fit victims' need, VSB has cultivated relationships with community partners. Victim Specialists communicate with advocacy agencies like DC SAFE to refer victims of domestic violence for housing and other safety needs. VSB understands how crime victims are often confronted with crime-related expenses. Victim Specialists regularly inform victims of DC Superior Court's Crime Victims Compensation Program so survivors are aware of financial and reimbursement assistance. Moreover, VSB recognizes the many intersections of violence. Based upon individual needs, VSB connects victims with housing, mental health, food, employment and

other agencies to ensure they receive wraparound, sustainable resources.

COVID presented challenges in accessing government buildings. VSB will like to acknowledge DC Domestic Violence Superior Court's creativity in making TPO/CPO's accessible to victims while government and community buildings were closed to the public. Creating a QR code and online portal was innovative and compatible with current electronic systems. VSB was able to print the code, post it in public areas and use it while interacting with victims. Making the petitions available for download was also a resourceful alternative. Thankfully, these workarounds presented straightforward avenues for victims, advocates and other professionals to navigate, safety plan and file petitions.

Equity

VSB acknowledges that no crime or victim are the same. The department encounters and respectfully services all unique diversities. For example, to support inclusion, Victim Specialists work with MPD's

Liaison units (Asian; Deaf and Hard of Hearing; Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender; and Latino) to ensure communities are represented, treated fairly and referred to community-specific resources. Language is also primary barrier for our non-English speaking victims. VSB proudly partners and communicates with the Language Line program to accurately interpret information and relay resources.

VSB is committed to ensuring that NCVRW's theme remains in the fabric of our work and service delivery. VSB honors crime victims and the milestones that have been achieved to shine awareness on imbalanced treatment. Despite the difficulties of COVID, VSB adapted to change to minimize disruptions in our service delivery to victims. As time progresses, VSB will remain steadfast in ensuring equitable, inclusive and responsive care is rendered to all victims. VSB renews our commitment in supporting a victim-centered culture that empowers a victim's right to justice and healing.

—Torie Stone

Sexual Assault Awareness Month: Building Safe Online Spaces Together

Resources

National Sexual Violence Resource Center. www.nsvrc.org/saam

April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month. This year's theme, "Building Safe Online Spaces Together", invites us to examine how we can all work cohesively to safeguard our online communities and interactions shared using technology. Many people use online platforms every day for networking, socializing, learning, and even entertainment. Since technology is such a huge part of our lives, it is important that we build online spaces that are safe for everyone by activating community-level prevention, participating in bystander intervention, and practicing digital consent.

Community-Level Prevention

One of the best ways to build safer spaces online is by activating community-level prevention. Community-level prevention focuses on setting community expectations, boundaries, and policies that hold users accountable for how they engage on a platform. This model focuses on the overall safety of all users and enforces consequences on those who violate community rules. Ensuring that spaces promote inclusivity for all users is a key strategy in community-level prevention. By enforcing a zero-tolerance policy against victim-blaming and problematic language, platforms can steer the culture away from negative engagement. We can also influence the culture of platforms by showing support for victims of online harassment, avoiding content that promotes toxic behavior, and ensuring that as consumers of these sites, we hold companies accountable to maintaining community guidelines.

Bystander Intervention

Bystander intervention is another integral part of building safe online spaces. The National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC) defines bystander intervention as "interrupting a harmful, hateful, predatory, or inappropriate scenario by directly intervening, de-escalating, disrupting, or distracting" (Building Safe Online Spaces Together, 2022). Bystanders have a front-row seat to activity that platform moderators may not see. By reporting comments, posts, videos, and other images that violate community guidelines, we may prevent further harm from occurring. Another way we can practice intervention is by holding our friends, family members, and followers accountable for what they post. One more bystander intervention strategy is recognizing suspicious content. Often abusers, bullies, and perpetrators will utilize victims' social media accounts to further humiliate and/or control them by posting nude pictures, financial records, and other personal information about the victim. These types of posts should be immediately flagged and reported to the site. By participating in bystander intervention techniques, we each play a significant role in keeping our online communities safe.

Digital Consent

Digital Consent provides a framework for how we choose to respectfully interact with others in digital places by asking permission. It is a key factor in building safe online spaces as it involves us communicating our boundaries and respecting the boundar-

ies of others. We can practice digital consent in several ways such as asking permission prior to posting a group picture online, telling a significant other that a flirty text thread should not be shared with others, or asking someone's permission prior to video calling them. It is important that we understand that peoples' boundaries, including our own, may change from day to day; however, it is our responsibility to communicate our consent and adhere to that of others.

We each play an important role in keeping our online spaces safe. By joining communities that engage in community-level prevention, we effectively convey the type of online environments we choose to occupy. By participating in bystander intervention, we can strongly aid in prevention of online sexual assault and/or harassment. Practicing digital consent is a great way to ensure that everyone's boundaries are being acknowledged and respected, including our own. By employing this three-pronged approach, we can proactively create safer online communities where we, our family, and friends spend much of our time. The District of Columbia has resources available that provide direct services to victims of sexual assault. Should you or someone you know need assistance locating resources, contact MPD's Victim Services Branch at **(202) 727-6007** or the National Sexual Assault Hotline at **(800) 656-4673** (24/7) or visit the National Sexual Violence Resource Center at www.nsvrc.org.

—Ashley McHenry

Letters & Kudos

Share Your Story

Send a letter detailing your experiences — positive or negative — to victim.services@dc.gov or send via US Mail to:

■ **Family Liaison Specialists Unit**
101 M Street SW
Washington, DC 20024

Thanks for Your Professionalism

Hello Megan, I pray everything is well with you. Attached is the lost wages document for Vanessa Outlaw.

I so appreciate you and all you do in helping those affected by tragedies of violence. We could not have gotten through this process with your kindness and professionalism. It doesn't go unnoticed.

Thank you,
—D.S.

Subject: Good Morning Beautiful!

Good morning Ms. Carla!
I wanted to show my gratitude to you and the Crew for all of your hard fought work and efforts in making The 2021 Tree Of Remembrance Ceremony so soulful and beautiful! If you only hear it from one person, I would like for you all to know how important it is to this girl right here who loves the magnificent person whom I'm so blessed to call brother, how much it means to my being that his beautiful life is being cele-

brated in such a way. I must say, my Grandchildren loved, loved loved the Christmas gift bag full of toys, thank you!

Some people may not stop to think in our everyday lives, we're all fighting battles and that you guys are on the battlefield in your work and personal lives so that makes your efforts that much more appreciated.

This is just a quick note that I've been meaning to write to you for awhile and quite simply, I just want to say thank you to you and the Crew, thank you!

Grateful,
—B.C.



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