

# Empower!

GIVING VICTIMS AND THEIR FAMILIES A VOICE



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

Summer 2016 | Volume 8, Issue 3

## Message from Tyria Fields



Tyria Fields

**E**mpower! is a quarterly newsletter for families affected by violence in the District of Columbia. It is one effort to enhance communication with you. Communication when implemented effectively works wonders. It reduces barriers and increases the

opportunity for understanding. Open communication gives a sense of control in an otherwise out of control situation. The Victim Services Branch aims to share what's going on related to victim services not just in the Metropolitan Police Department, but also with those whom we

work closely with. Our hope is that *Empower!* meets your expectation in keeping you abreast on very personal issues. Through *Empower!*, the Metropolitan Police Department is empowering lives, one survivor at a time.

*Fields*

## Upcoming Events and Activities

You are cordially invited to attend

### Tragedy Effects All Tea

A Community of Healing

Sunday, August 28, 2016 2:00 pm to 5:00 pm

In the ballroom of the  
Historic Willard InterContinental Hotel  
1401 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20004

In support of the  
survivors, victims of homicide and violent crimes

RSVP  
By August 7, 2016  
online at <http://whoozin.com/TEA2016>

For more information please contact  
SKIP.122393@gmail.com 202-838-SKIP (7547)



## Ongoing

### General Adult Grief Group

NW Office: Wednesday, 6:30 PM – 8 PM

SE Office: Monday, 7 PM – 8:15 PM

This support group is for adults experiencing grief. This group is led by licensed clinicians, and members of the support group are encouraged to share their experiences in this safe and confidential space. With the help of experienced clinicians, members

of the support group will be guided through the grieving process and onto healing. For more information, please call the Wendt Center at (202) 204-5021 or visit their website at <http://www.wendt-center.org>



### Domestic Violence Support Group

Tuesday, 6 PM – 7:30 PM

Westminster Presbyterian Church  
400 I Street SW  
(Metro: Waterfront)  
Intended for survivors of domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking, this group is a supportive and safe environment provided by the

DC Volunteer Lawyers Project and My Sister's Place. Led by a social worker, survivors in this support group will have the opportunity to heal through sharing their stories and listening to the stories of other survivors. No support group meeting November 22, December 20, and December 27. For more information, please call My Sister's Place at (202) 529-5991 or email [supportgroup@mysistersplacedc.org](mailto:supportgroup@mysistersplacedc.org)

### Domestic Violence Resource Clinic

Wednesday, 1 PM – 3:30 PM

Westminster Presbyterian Church  
400 I Street SW  
(Metro: Waterfront)

This clinic provides free and confidential legal advice and referrals to survivors of domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. Services in English and Spanish are available to walk-in customers, and services in other languages are available by appointment. No clinic November 23, December 21, and December 28. For more information, please call the DC Volunteer Lawyers Project at (202) 425-7573 or email [clinic@dclvp.org](mailto:clinic@dclvp.org)

## August

### National Night Out

Tuesday, August 2

Join the MPD for the 33rd Annual National Night Out! This nationwide event is held in order to strengthen and celebrate the relationship between the police and the community. Law

enforcement officials will host community cookouts, athletic activities, youth events, and more. Stop by for food, music, and fun activities with the MPD! A list of activities in your district can be viewed at [www.mpdcc.gov/nno](http://www.mpdcc.gov/nno)

### My Comfort Zone Camp

Friday, August 19 – Sunday, August 21

This free, three-day camp in Virginia is created specifically for children (ages 7-17) who have experienced the death of a parent, sibling, or primary caregiver. Throughout the weekend, campers will hike, play games, and attend support groups led by grief specialists, and more. For more information, visit [www.comfortzonecamp.org/event/792/feed](http://www.comfortzonecamp.org/event/792/feed)

## October

### Victims' Fund Run 5K

Invite your friends for the 13th Annual Victims' Fund Run 5K Run/Walk! Entry fees will be donated to crime victims to assist with crime-related expenses. For more information, see [www.eventbrite.com/e/13th-annual-victims-fund-run-5k-run-walk-1-mile-walk-tickets-20734721109?aff=es2](http://www.eventbrite.com/e/13th-annual-victims-fund-run-5k-run-walk-1-mile-walk-tickets-20734721109?aff=es2)

### Domestic Violence Awareness Month

First observed in 1987 by the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, DVAM takes place annually in October with various events across the country. See [www.dccadv.org](http://www.dccadv.org).

—Mimi Yu

Guess Who's Added to Your Community Puzzle

Resources  
Victim Specialists  
First District (202) 645-9629  
Fifth District (202) 698-0079  
Sixth District (202) 698-0874  
Seventh District (202) 698-1278  
Headquarters (202) 727-6007

You've Guessed It... "Victim Specialists" have been added to your Community Puzzle and are currently located at the following Police Districts: 1, 5, 6, 7, and MPD Headquarters. The Victim Services Branch (VSB) of the Metropolitan Police Department is committed to assisting victims of crime, highlighting resources available, and referrals to community based organizations as needed. The Victim Specialists are present in your

community in order to assist as many victims as possible to educate them on the Department's supportive services as well as services available within the community. The Victim Specialist can provide emotional support, provide updates on your case, information on the criminal justice system, inform you of your rights as a victim, and serve as a liaison between you and the MPD sworn members. As the Victim Specialists emerge into your Community

Districts, we understand that we cannot change the victimizations or tragic loss of loved ones. However, together, we can empower victims and survivors by being an advocate and a source of information. The Victim Services Branch is always exploring enhanced measures to serve the citizens of the District of Columbia. For more information please contact **Tramaine New-some**, Victim Specialist Unit Supervisor (202) 727-6007. —Dawn Christie, MSW, CA

Frequently Asked Questions: Autopsy Report

**Q: How do I obtain a copy of my loved one's autopsy report?**  
  
A: Next of kin may request their loved one's autopsy report in writing, or in person at the Office of Chief Medical Examiner located at:  
OCME  
401 E Street, SW  
6th Floor  
Washington, DC 20024  
ATTN: Custodian of Medical Records  
  
**Q: What documentation do I need to provide the Office of Chief Medical Examiner with?**  
  
A: The Office of Medical Examiner requires all persons re-

questing to pick up an autopsy report in person, to notify the OCME medical records division at (202) 698-9111 prior to coming by the office. If the requester is not the legal next of kin, they will need notarized authorization from the next of kin to obtain the report. All requesters must provide a government issued ID and a check or money order made payable to the DC Treasurer for \$15. Requests made in writing may be sent to the above address and must include the following information:  
» Name of person making request  
» Relationship to the decedent

» Name of the decedent  
» Date of Death  
» OCME case number (can be found on death certificate)  
  
All written requests must also include a check or money order made payable to the DC Treasurer for \$15.  
  
**Q: If my loved one's remains were taken the Maryland State Medical Examiner's Office who do I contact for information on obtaining a copy of the autopsy report?**  
  
A: For information on obtaining a copy of your loved one's autopsy report from the Maryland Medical Examiner's Office, please call (410) 333-3271. —Megan Riley

MPDC-Homicide Survivors' Outreach Listserv



Stay in touch with your community by joining The MPD Survivors' Outreach Listserv at <https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/DCSurvivors>. The purpose of the Listserv is to enhance the communication between the Department, service providers, community organizations, and survivors of homicide victims. Additionally,

this site serves as a mechanism to strengthen partnerships between MPD, DC residents, and community organizations. MPD hopes to improve communication and coordination of services by posting Department announcements, meetings, and upcoming events, as well as providing an opportunity for community partners to do the same

by sending emails to [DCSurvivors-owner@yahoo.com](mailto:DCSurvivors-owner@yahoo.com). This site is not for the collection of information regarding homicide cases. Individuals with information regarding unsolved homicides should contact MPD at (202) 727-9099 or (202) 645-9600. For emergencies, call 911. —Carla Okonkwo

Consumer Rights: The Funeral Rule

Resources  
Federal Trade Commission  
[www.consumer.ftc.gov/articles/0300-ftc-funeral-rule](http://www.consumer.ftc.gov/articles/0300-ftc-funeral-rule)  
(877) FTC-HELP (382-4357)  
  
The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) is the nation's consumer protection agency.  
The FTC works to prevent fraudulent, deceptive and unfair business practices in the marketplace.

Planning a funeral can be a daunting task in the midst of grieving the loss of a loved one. To avoid the undue stress that can result from making financial decisions during an emotional time it is important to understand your rights. The Federal Trade Commission outlines your consumer rights according to the Funeral Rule as follows:  
» You have the right to choose separate funeral goods and services you want and do not have to buy packages.  
» The funeral provider must give you a General Price List (GPL) that states your right to choose what you want in writing.  
» You have the right to see a written casket price list and outer burial container price list before you see the products on display. These items are often listed on a price list separate from



the GPL. Get the price information before you see the products so that you may ask about lower priced products that may not be on display.  
» If state or local law requires you to buy any particular good or service, the funeral provider must disclose it on the statement it provides describing the funeral goods and services you have selected, with a reference to the specific law.  
» No process, product, or casket, regardless of its qualities or cost, will preserve a body forever. The law forbids funeral providers to claim that either

embalming or a particular type of casket will preserve the body of the deceased for an unlimited time.  
» The funeral provider cannot refuse to handle a casket or urn you bought elsewhere — or charge you a fee to do that.  
» Receive a written statement after you decide what you want and before you pay. This statement should show exactly what you are buying, the cost of each item, and the total cost immediately after you make arrangements.  
» The funeral provider who offers cremations must make alternative containers available.  
» You can't be charged for embalming that your family didn't authorize, unless it's required by state law. Ask if the funeral home offers private family viewing without embalming. —Megan Riley

MPD's Cold Case Next-of-Kin Meeting: Maintaining Communication with Survivors

Resources  
To obtain more information and resources on cold case homicides, please contact MPD's Victim Services Branch/Family Liaison Specialists Unit at (202) 645-6363 or visit <http://mpdc.dc.gov/page/unsolved-homicides>.

In many homicide investigations, the victim's surviving family members and friends provide law enforcement with information that is vital to identifying and charging the offender. The same is true in cold case homicides. It is important for law enforcement to maintain continued communication with survivors. This communication can be empowering for the families and give them a voice as their loved ones' case remains open. On Saturday June 11, 2016, the Metropolitan Po-



lice Department held the Next of Kin Informational Meetings for open 2006 cold case homicides. These meetings ensure that the communication between the Metropolitan Police De-

partment and survivors of homicide victims continues throughout the investigation. Families were given updates on their particular case and an opportunity to express any concerns about the investigation. Specialists from the Victim Services Branch were on site to provide emotional support, referrals to community-based organizations, as well as information about the Crime Victims Compensation Program and the criminal justice system. —Marlene Castro

# Coping in the Aftermath of a Mass Shooting

## Resources

For more information or resources contact the Victim Services Branch at (202) 724-4339 or (202) 645-6363.

Additional information on “Managing your distress in the aftermath of a shooting” can be found at: [www.apa.org/helpcenter/mass-shooting.aspx](http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/mass-shooting.aspx)

**M**ass shootings can affect people differently and unexpectedly. These events can have a lasting effect on the survivors, first responders, families and friends of those involved in the shooting. Watching the event on TV can also impact viewers. According to the American Psychological Association (APA), it is typical for people to experience a variety of emotions following a traumatic event. These reactions can include but is not limited to shock, sorrow, numbness, fear, disillusionment, grief, loss of appetite, lack of sleep and poor concentration.

The APA offers helpful tips following the days and weeks after a tragic event:

» **Ask for support** — Talk to people who care and will listen such as family and friends. It often helps to speak with others who have similar experi-

ences. It may be important to seek professional support if you feel you are unable to function or perform basic activities of daily living.

» **Strive for balance** — Balance negative or pessimistic thoughts by thinking of people and events which are meaningful, comforting, and encouraging. Striving for balance empowers and allows for a healthier perspective on the world around you.

» **Limit media exposure** — While it is important to stay informed, give yourself a break from the constant media coverage of the tragedy. The continuous exposure can actually increase stress. The images can be very powerful in reawakening feeling of distress.

» **Honor your feelings**—It is common to have a range of emotions after a traumatic

event. You may experience intense stress similar to the effects of a physical injury.

» **Take care of yourself** — Get plenty of rest, eat healthy, take time for your-self, and avoid drugs and alcoholic beverages.

» **Help others** — Find a local program where you can volunteer, helping others can be beneficial in coping with the tragedy.

» **If you have recently lost friends or family in this or other tragedies** — Remember that grief is a long process, allow yourself time to experience your feelings and to recover. Some people choose to stay home for a few days; others find that getting back into their standard routine can helpful when coping with the grief. Seek professional help when necessary.

—Marlene Castro



Metropolitan Police Department  
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