

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

As we interact with survivors of crime, a common theme seems to prevail—the need to stay informed and kept abreast on the status of his/her case. This edition of Empower is dedicated to highlighting the importance of effective communication. The Metropolitan Police Department has taken grand measures to ensure that victims of crime have access to individuals who are charged with investigating cases. Additionally, the Victim Services Branch works effortlessly to ensure that we are attentive and re-

sponsive to victims' needs. As a result, we encourage families and friends to attend various Next-of-Kin (NOK) events held throughout the course of the year. These meetings provide opportunities for NOKs to interact with the detective, who is investigating the case. These meetings allow NOKs to share information in a confidential environment with the assigned detective. Likewise, the assigned detective can share information about what is happening with the case. During the NOK meetings, survivors of homicide are also reminded of com-

munity-based supportive services. The NOK meetings provide a forum for survivors of homicide, and families engaged throughout the investigative process. There are other opportunities to have enhanced communications as well. We encourage you to visit the MPD's website (<http://www.mpd.c.dc.gov/>) to learn about other meaningful and engaging opportunities.

Sincerely,

Upcoming Events and Activities

Maryland's Annual Family Conference for Homicide Survivors 2010: "A Day of Healing"

The Honorary Chairs, Congressman Elijah Cummings & News Anchor Stan Stovall and sponsors are providing many resources for survivors, including panelists, advocates, workshops for all ages, and different vendors.

When: Saturday, September 11, 2010
8:30 am-4:30 pm
Where: Carl J. Murphy Fine Arts Center
Morgan State University
2201 Argonne Drive
Baltimore, Maryland 21251
Contact: Roberta's House Family Grief Support Center
(410) 235-6633 or see registration form at www.robertashouse.org or email info@robertashouse.org

Registration Fee: \$15 Adult // \$10 Child
\$35 Family up to five

2010 National Center for Victims of Crime (NCVC) National Conference

This year's conference will take a multidisciplinary approach to sharing promising practices, effective programs and policies that are victim-centered, practice-based, and research-informed.

When: Tuesday, September 14 – Thursday, September 16, 2010
Where: Hilton New Orleans Riverside
Two Poydras Street
New Orleans, LA 70130
Contact: National Center for Victims of Crime
2000 M Street, NW Suite 480
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 467-8700 or visit website at www.ncvc.org

The "Torch of Hope" Annual Prayer Luncheon

This event is for Survivors of Crime Victims and Parents of Deceased Children. Come prepared to receive messages of hope in spite of your loss. You will leave knowing you are not alone and that support and resources are available to you—A SURVIVOR. The event is being hosted by Torch of Hope, Inc., Christine Jackson, Founder, and Phillip C. Jackson, Vice President.

When: Saturday, September 18, 2010
11 am-3 pm
Where: Boys & Girls Club of Greater Washington
1901 Mississippi Ave., SE
Washington, DC 20020
Contact: Please RSVP by Monday, September 6, 2010
(202) 256-9947

Submitted by Dawn M. Christie

NEXT OF KIN

On June 25, 2010, families and loved ones of victims of homicides that occurred in the District of Columbia 2006 and earlier participated in the Metropolitan Police Department's Next-of-Kin (NOK) meeting. Participants got details about the progress of cases still under investigation and were encouraged to report new information. Individuals learned about retrieving personal property and accessing reward posters.

Presentations about the Major Case Unit were made by Acting Captain Michael Farish and Detective Daniel Whalen, who explained that the mission of MPD is to support victims of crime to the fullest extent possible.

Tyria Fields, Manager of the Major Case Victims Unit, expounded on the services provided by victim services staff that includes case management, referral services, advocacy and emotional support. Information on the rights of victims and

Crime Victims Compensation was also given. A unique arrangement of printed materials for mental health support was provided, including a variety of clinical services; self-help guides to grief, loss and trauma; and memorial ideas. Both the morning and evening sessions of the June 2010 NOK meeting were held at the Metropolitan Police Headquarters, 300 Indiana Avenue, NW, Washington, DC.

Submitted by La Verne Harley

Frequently Asked Questions About Social Security Survivor Benefits

For more information:

Social Security Administration: call 1-800-772-1213 or visit <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs/10084.html> to apply or find an office location near you

Crime Victims Compensation Program: (202) 879-4216

Q: Am I eligible for survivor benefits through social security after losing my loved one to homicide?

A: To receive benefits, the deceased person must have worked a job (or jobs) where social security was deducted from their paycheck for a certain period of time dependent on their age. The amount of benefits paid out to eligible survivors varies depending on the decedent's average lifetime earnings, and the survivor's age and relationship to the decedent.

Members of the family who may be eligible for survivor's benefits include: widows, widowers (and divorced widows and widowers), children and dependent parents of the deceased.

Q: Are survivor benefits available for the decedent's dependent children?

A: A deceased worker's unmarried children who are younger

than age 18 may be eligible to receive benefits. Children can get benefits at any age if they were disabled before age 22 and remain disabled. Children may receive 75 percent of the worker's benefit amount.

The spouse or child of the decedent may be eligible for a one-time death payment of \$255 if the decedent worked long enough.

Q: How do I apply for survivor benefits for myself or my child?

A: Survivor's benefits should be applied for promptly because, in some cases, benefits will be paid from the time you apply and not from the time the worker died.

Next-of-Kin may apply by telephone or at any Social Security office. Certain information will be required and must be original documents or copies certified by the agency that issued them.

The information necessary to apply for survivor benefits includes:

- » Proof of death—either from a funeral home or death certificate;
- » Your Social Security number, as well as the deceased worker's;
- » Your birth certificate;
- » Your marriage certificate, if you are a widow or widower;
- » Your divorce papers, if you are applying as a divorced widow or widower;
- » Dependent children's Social Security numbers, if available, and birth certificates;

If the dependent children of a homicide victim do not qualify for social security survivor's benefit, they may be eligible for a one time "Loss of Support" benefit from the Crime Victims Compensation Program.

Submitted by Megan Riley

MPD Invites Homicide Survivors to Join Special Email List Group

For further information contact:

Carla Okonkwo
Supervisor of the Family Liaison Specialists Unit
(202) 645-9629 or carla.okonkwo@dc.gov for more information.

The Metropolitan Police Department Homicide Survivors Outreach Email List Group serves as a communication tool for the police department, service providers, community organizations and the survivors of homicide victims in Washington,

DC. This email list group was created to enhance support for survivors, improve communication and coordination of services in the District. In addition, it helps strengthen partnerships between MPD, the citizens of the District of Columbia and community organizations.

Please join the email list group to receive MPD's victim services-related news, get updates on community activities and alerts about upcoming events. Join the email list group at: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/DCSurvivors>.

Submitted by Carla Okonkwo

National Night Out 2010 a Success!



Members throughout the Metropolitan Police Department participated in National Night Out (NNO) on August 3, 2010. National Night Out is an annual crime prevention event held across the nation during the first week of August. The objective of National Night Out is to bring out neighbors, residents and businesses in local communities to turn on lights and gather together to stand up against crime. Events usu-

ally include activities like neighborhood cookouts, HIV testing, health screenings, activities for youth, music and moon-bounce, bingo for seniors, home and bicycle safety, court watch program and information on local community agencies.

The MPD's Victim Services staff provided outreach and information at this year's kick-off event on the field of Trinidad Recreation Center, in the Seventh Police District in South-

east DC. Additionally, members of the Victim Services Branch attended NNO events at the Columbia Heights Education Center in the Third District; on the Fourth District field adjacent to Coolidge High School; and at Oxon Run Park located at Livingston Road, SE. The outpouring of community support made each event a great success!

Submitted by Helen Hall

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month

For further information onto:

Victim Services Branch, activities during Domestic Violence Awareness Month contact

Kayce Simmons
Victim Specialist
Victim Services Branch
(202) 724-2215

For more information about the Crime Victims Compensation Program, contact CVCP at (202) 879-4216.

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month. This event was created following the "Day of Unity," hosted by the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence in October of 1981. Domestic Violence Awareness Month (DVAM) is now recognized nationwide and has been instrumental in highlighting the dangers of domestic violence. Through grassroots outreach efforts, media events, and client advocacy, the domestic violence awareness movement uses the testimony of victims to educate

the public. Throughout the month of October, coalitions and agencies host programs and events within the community to inform people about domestic violence. Stakeholders use that time to explain what domestic violence is, who it affects, and available resources.

One of the major obstacles for victims of domestic violence is lack of funding. Inadequate funds leave victims to fend for themselves as they try to access safe housing, transportation, and counseling. One of the integral stakeholders assisting with this problem is the

Crime Victims Compensation Program (CVCP). CVCP assists victims of violent crime with the financial burdens brought by tragic occurrences through reimbursement or direct payment to providers for necessary services. Some of those services include payment for medical treatments, medications, mental health counseling, funeral and burial cost, lost wages, crime scene clean up, temporary emergency shelter, and moving expenses.

Submitted by Kayce Simmons

How May We Assist You?

Victim Services Branch

Tyria Fields Manager 724-4339 tyria.fields@dc.gov

Family Liaison Specialists Unit

Carla Okonkwo Supervisor 645-9629 carla.okonkwo@dc.gov
Marlene Castro Family Liaison Specialist 645-9631 marlene.castro@dc.gov
Megan Riley Family Liaison Specialist 645-5537 megan.riley@dc.gov

The Family Liaison Specialists Unit (FLSU) provides support services to homicide victims and survivors throughout the investigative process.

Victim Specialists Unit

Helen Hall Victim Specialist 727-6007 helen.hall@dc.gov
Kayce Simmons Victim Specialist 724-2215 kayce.simmons@dc.gov
Esther U. Thomas Victim Specialist 727-6006 estheru.thomas@dc.gov

The Victim Specialists Unit (VSU) provides support, information, and referrals to victims and survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault.

Major Case Victims Unit

Dawn M. Christie Senior Victim Specialist 727-7139 dawnm.christie@dc.gov
Laverne Harley Victim Specialist 727-5391 laverne.harley@dc.gov

The Major Case Victims Unit (MCVU) provides supportive services to secondary victims of unsolved homicides. Additionally, this unit offers victim services and assistance to victims of violent assaults in the District of Columbia.

Please Note: All numbers are area code (202).

Letters - Kudos

A card was received from a family. It reads, "I can't thank you enough, but I hope you know I appreciate everything you've done."

Mrs. Carla Okonkwo

Thanks for everything you did for me and my family. You were very sweet, and nice to us and thanks for what you did for my brother's son.

Everybody says that they do. But you all did and are still doing...

N.J.

What a blessing, you are.

C.J.

Very informative and uplifting...

G.V.

Share your story

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

Victim Services Branch

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

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