

Empower!

GIVING VICTIMS AND THEIR FAMILIES A VOICE



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

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Welcome from Tyria Fields



Tyria Fields

When crime occurs, it affects entire communities. Moreover, families are often left in traumatic and chaotic situations. The Metropolitan Police Department understands this impact and has committed resources to provide quality support to victims and survivors of crime, as they struggle to deal with the aftermath of victimization. The Victim Services Branch is a direct response to recognizing the financial, physical and emotional impact that crime has on the families and communities.

The Victim Services Branch works in collaboration with and in support of the detectives who investigate

the cases. The Victim Services Branch is comprised of 10 civilians whose primary role is to be a voice and conduit between the detectives, families and the community. As victim services

professionals in law enforcement, our primary goal is to make sure that people who are victimized by crime understand their rights, have access to the criminal justice system, and have the opportunity to use supportive services. We help to make sure the victims are treated with dignity and respect, while promoting confidence in public safety. We understand the hurdles that can exist for survivors, as they seek the services they are entitled to and work to safeguard the victims' rights and liberties.

The Victim Services Branch strives to observe, protect, and assert crime victims' rights. This is done so that survivors and victims will more readily participate in their cases. It also fosters a belief in the criminal justice system. We acknowledge that the needs and desires of crime victims are complex and unique, yet very basic. They want to be safe and made whole. Victims and survivors want to have their emotional and physical wounds healed and restored. They want those responsible for crime to be held accountable. Most importantly, they want

to be listened to and heard.

In recognition of National Crime Victims Rights Week, April 13-19, 2008, the Metropolitan Police Department encourages participation in the many activities being held throughout the city. This year's theme: "Justice for Victims. Justice for All" reminds us that victims still face challenges to attaining justice. And it encourages us to support victims as they cope with the impact of crime. Even so, the Metropolitan Police Department is proud of its commitment to victims and survivors and we continue to work to make sure we are being attentive and responsive to victims and survivors. We hope that you will find our new publication *Empower!* to be informative. Please contact me, if you have any questions and/or concerns regarding the Department's victim services programs and initiatives.

Sincerely,

Tyria Fields,
Manager



The Victim Services Branch. From left to right: Laverne Harley, Tyria Fields, Dawn M. Christie, Kayce Simmons, Helen Hall, Esther U. Thomas, Carla Okonkwo, Bridgett Jones-Smith, Jennifer Murphy, and Marlene James.

Upcoming Events and Activities

Monday, April 14 Launch of Survivors Outreach Listserv. Join the Listserv at groups.yahoo.com/group/DCSurvivors

April 13-19 National Crime Victims' Rights Week: Since 1981, communities across the nation have held public rallies, candlelight observances, and commemorative activities to promote awareness of victims' rights and needs.

Wednesday, April 30 Next of Kin Meetings: MPD invites the immediate family members of Open Homicide Cases from 2005-2008 to join us for personal meetings with homicide detectives. Meetings are open ONLY to the immediate family or designees. Photo ID required. Appointments available 4-8 PM. Contact the Family Liaison Unit at (202) 645-6363 by Monday, April 28.

Frequently Asked Questions

NEXT OF K I N

Q: Who is the Next of Kin and how is the Next of Kin determined?

A: The Next of Kin (NOK) is any primary family member established by the Metropolitan Police Department District of Columbia's Standard Operating Procedure. The NOK is posted on the Priority List as follows:

Surviving spouse or legal representative of same; adult child; father/mother; adult brother/sister; adult grandchild; adult nephew/niece; paternal grandparent/maternal grandparent; paternal uncle/aunt or maternal uncle/aunt; adult child of paternal uncle/aunt or maternal uncle/aunt; paternal great grandparent or maternal great grandparent; brother/sister of paternal grandparents or brother/sister of maternal grandparents; kindred of spouse of the deceased, in accordance with the preceding order of priority.

- » For the purpose of this list, the term "adult" shall mean a person 21 years of age or over.
- » The oldest adult member of each class shall have priority claim over the others of same class.

Q: How is the identification made of a decedent and when is the Next of Kin notified?

A: In addition to information gathered at the scene, identification efforts will be continued by fingerprints, dental records and/or other methods. Once the decedent is identified, efforts will be made to notify his or her NOK. When a homicide occurs in the District of Columbia, every effort is made to contact the decedent's NOK, subject to verification of the decedent's and the NOK's identity.

Q: What is the role of the Next of Kin?

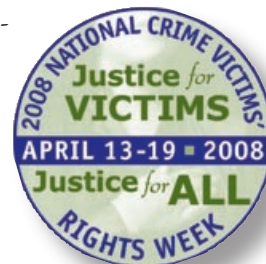
A: The NOK is the point of contact for MPDC and the liaison between MPDC and other family members. If the NOK is present at the homicide scene, he/she is expected to give information to the lead detective or his representative as to the decedent's identity. He/she will also be directed to the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner to make formal identification of his/her loved one. The lead detective has the discretion to divulge additional information on the scene to a person the detective has cause to believe is the NOK on a case by case basis. For example, if a decedent has been taken to a hospital, then the detective may divulge that information. As the investigation continues, the NOK will be advised of the progress and status of the case at designated times and upon his/her request.

Police Chief Recognizes Crime Victims Rights Week



Every year, the nation recognizes the rights and needs of crime victims and survivors during National Crime Victims Rights Week. This year, National Crime Victims Rights Week is April 13 to 19, 2008. It is during this time, that victim service providers, volunteers and community leaders come together to promote the awareness of victims' rights and work toward ensuring

these rights are continued. This year's theme: "Justice for Victims. Justice for All" reminds us to continue to fight for rights and liberties for victims. As the Metropolitan Police Department embraces Crime Victims' Rights Week, we recognize the relationships we have established and are com-



mitted to fostering new ones. As we continue to move toward "Justice for Victims. Justice for All," we stand committed to helping our communities remain safe and to ensuring that the rights of those who have been victimized by crime are protected.

Services That Can Help You and Your Family

Local Domestic Violence Resources

Break the Cycle

Break the Cycle – Washington, DC provides preventive education in schools and youth groups on teen dating violence, peer leadership opportunities, and free legal services to young people in the District, ages 12 to 22, who are in an abusive relationship. (202) 824-0707

House of Ruth

Offers a 24-hour hotline, shelter, and counseling for battered women and their children. (202) 667-7001

My Sister's Place

24-hour hotline, shelter, and counseling for battered women and their children. (202) 529-5991

Exploring the Criminal Justice Process

The Criminal Justice process includes the Metropolitan Police Department (MPDC), the Medical Examiner's Office, the United States Attorney's Office, Federal Bureau of Prisons, U.S. Parole Commission, and Court Services and Offender Supervision. All agencies work together to solve homicides that occur in the District of Columbia. The MPDC has a unique role in the criminal justice process.

When a homicide is committed, MPDC is the first responder to the crime scene. First responders may be uniform patrol officers and/or plain clothes detectives. The

uniform patrol officers secure the scene to protect evidence which may later be used to prosecute the offender. MPDC attempts to identify the victim, canvas the scene for evidence, collects the evidence and gathers names of any witnesses. The case is then assigned to a lead detective for the full investigation. The lead detective consults with the medical examiner for the cause of death; identifies and interviews the NOK, interviews witnesses, friends, etc., investigates the cause of death, makes an arrest, and presents the case to the U.S. Attorney's Office at the appropriate time.

Please contact the lead detective, if you have any

questions, concerns or information regarding the homicide. The detective will only share information with the NOK. However, keep in mind that some information must be kept confidential to protect the integrity of the case. The Family Liaison Specialists Unit can assist you in contacting the assigned detective.

For more information, please contact:

Metropolitan Police Department

Victim Services Branch-Family Liaison Specialists Unit
3244 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20020
(202) 645-6363
www.mpdc.dc.gov

Crime Victim Compensation Program Information

The CVCP assists victims and their families with the financial burden brought on by the aftermath of a violent crime. The following crime-related expenses are covered:

- » Medical treatment and medications
- » Mental health counseling (up to \$6,000 for children and \$3,000 for adults)
- » Funeral and burial costs (up to \$6,000)
- » Loss of wages, (80 percent

of net income up to one year or \$10,000, if employed at the time of the crime and supported by disability statement from physician)

- » Cleaning of a crime scene (up to \$1,000)
- » Replacement value of clothing held as evidence (up to \$100)
- » Reimbursement of a rental car when a vehicle has been damaged and/or used in a crime and is being held as evidence (up to \$2,000)
- » Temporary emergency shel-

ter (up to \$3,000), and moving expenses (up to \$1,500) where necessary for health and safety of the victim

- » Windows, doors, and lock changes for the safety of the victim (up to \$1,000)

For more information, please contact:

Crime Victims Compensation Program (CVCP)

515 5th Street, NW, Room 109
Washington, DC 20001
(202) 879-4216
www.dccourts.gov

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 James Family Liaison Specialist 645-9631 marlene.james@dc.gov
Bridgett Jones-Smith Family Liaison Specialist 645-5537 bridgett.smith@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
Jennifer Murphy Victim Specialist 727-6181 jennifer.murphy@dc.gov

The Major Case Victims Unit (MCVU) supports and educates survivors of homicide victims during the reinvestigation of unsolved homicide cases.

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

Letters

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
3244 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20020

Good Morning Detective Middleton,
Just wanted to thank you again and whatever officers that were involved in getting an arrest in [my son's] homicide, even though I know there are two more guys responsible, I'm still very grateful to have gotten this far.

I'm sure you are too, and understand my feelings of thinking nothing was being done on his case, I had no idea it took so long for things to happen, I guess because I'm not a police officer and nothing like this has ever happened to me.

Being a mother also, thank you for understanding, my not so nice e-mails to you or someone in your department.

And a special thanks to Marlene... she was always so kind, reading all my long, drawn-out e-mails, and always responding right back, with "Ms. [B], I'll see they get the message."

I know there is still a ways to go on his case, but I just wanted you all to know that I'm really grateful.

Thank you all!

—Ms. R.B.

All MPDC personnel have been "very sweet" to me and my family. I used to think the worst of the police department because of what I heard in the media or what others have said to me.

Words can not express the gratitude that I have for MPDC's staff, specifically, the Family Liaison Specialist, Marlene James and Det. Jed Worrell. I was very pleased with the assistance that was offered to me and my family."

—Ms. B.W.



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Victim Services Branch/Family Liaison Specialists Unit
3244 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20020

