

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

This edition of Empower is dedicated to the word "communication." As victim specialists within law enforcement, our mission and guiding principle is to ensure that survivors are heard and considered. The Victim Services Branch offers a wide range of services throughout the City with confidence and support by the Metropolitan Police Department.

The Family Liaison Specialists and the Major Case Victims units both work with survivors of homicide. While

the Victim Specialists Unit supports victims of domestic violence and sexual assault, all units act as a liaison between the Department and survivors. We do this by maintaining constant dialogue with families and survivors and by sharing critical information about community and government based resources.

Further, we advocate for doing what is in the best interest of victims and their goal of adjusting after victimization. We work tirelessly with various organizations on City-wide projects and initiatives. Our hope is that we are doing

this with the compassion that allows survivors to feel empowered and encouraged. We pledge to communicate and listen to the concerns, as well as the needs of victims and support them as they navigate the criminal justice process.

Sincerely,

Tyria Fields,
Manager

Upcoming Events and Activities

2009 National Center for Victims of Crime's (NCVC) National Conference—This year's conference theme is victim-centered, practice-based, research-informed. For more information or to register please visit the NCVC website at www.ncvc.org or call (202) 467-8700.

Host: The National Center for Victims of Crime

When: June 22-24, 2009

Where: Hyatt Regency Capitol Hill 400 New Jersey Avenue, NW Washington, DC 20001

Where: FOP Private Club 711 4th Street, NW Washington, DC 20001

Camp Forget-Me-Not — A free, three-day camping experience for Metropolitan DC area young people ages 6-16 who have experienced the death of a loved one. For more information and a camp application for campers and volunteers please call (202) 624-0010 or visit the Wendt Center at <http://www.wendtcenter.org>.

Host: The Wendt Center for Loss and Grieving

When: July 31, 2009 through August 2, 2009

Survivors of Homicide Support Group Meeting—This support group is for the loved ones of homicide victims. They meet the last Thursday of every month. For more information please call Survivors of Homicide at (202) 882-9190.

Host: Survivors of Homicide

When: Last Thursday of every month

Time: 7 PM to 8 PM

Where: Howard University Campus 530 College Street, NW Washington, DC 20059

NEXT OF KIN

Since May 2007, the Family Liaison Specialists Unit (FLSU) has hosted the Metropolitan Police Department's Next of Kin Meeting (NOK). On April 22, 2009, approximately 85 families participated in personal meetings with a homicide detective to discuss the status of their loved one's case. While waiting to meet the assigned detective, families participated in an open dialogue on the grief process co-facilitated by Deirdre Gardner and a member of the Victim Services Branch. Ms. Gardner is a licensed social worker at the Maryland Crime Victims' Resource Center. Families also had the opportunity to speak with a variety of service providers that offered assistance

in the following areas: housing/rental/utilities, emergency food, advocacy, financial, counseling/supports groups, legal/criminal justice, and the MPD Evidence and Control Branch. Many families, who expressed concerns about their grieving children, obtained information about programs and services while the children were occupied coloring pictures for the detectives.

FLSU staff also connected a family to a local program called "Operation Pretty and Polished." This program provides local teenagers with gowns, dresses, suits, shoes, tuxedos, jewelry, and other accessories for their high school prom. Younger children received teddy bears donated by Hugs Across America Inc, a

non-profit agency whose mission is to bring comfort to children in crisis through the hugs of teddy bears and messages of loving care.

The Victim Services Branch wishes to thank its participating partners: Catholic Charities' Children and Adolescent Mobile Psychiatric Service (CHAMPS), Crawford Consulting and Mental Health Services, Crime Victims' Compensation Program, Far Southeast Family Strengthening Collaborative, Latin American Youth Center, Department of Human Services' Strong Families Program, Survivors of Homicide, Inc., and Wendt Center for Loss and Healing.

Survivors of Homicide Coping with the Support of Community Organizations

Community organizations that assist families and friends with the loss of their loved ones realize that the survivors: are afraid to do or say the wrong things, so they do and say nothing. Unfortunately, those tactics usually intensify the isolation and alienation that many survivors feel.

Survivors are not alone and there are many organizations that are available to support them during this process. The organizations that provide these services are dedicated to meeting the crisis and long term needs of survivors who have lost loved ones to homicide. Through support, advocacy and assistance many organizations help survivors cope emotionally, stabilize economically and help survivors seek justices for their loved ones.

Advocates who are associated with these community organizations are often survivors themselves who have gone through the same experience. The advocates encourage other survivors to seek support groups to help them through the trauma and are able to provide a list of professional counselors skilled in working with grief, trauma and loss.

Many of the community organizations' goals for survivors are to ensure they receive the following services: victim compensation and emergency financial assistance, funeral assistance, personal advocacy, victim rights advocacy, media intervention/facilitation, law enforcement liaison, criminal justice advocacy, court accompaniment, phone support, peer counseling, support groups, monthly newsletter, homicide grief information and commu-

nity events and volunteer opportunities. Survivors actively participating in some of these services can enhance their ability for support, hope and healing.

The Metropolitan Police Department is committed to ensuring that no one has to endure the homicide of a loved one alone. We cannot change the tragic loss, but together we can empower survivors and try to prevent further victimization. Please feel free to contact the Victim Services Branch at 202-724-4339 or 202-645-6363. You can also add the email address for victim services which is victim.services@dc.gov. In addition, all survivors of homicide are encouraged to join the Metropolitan Police Department listserv at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/DCSurvivors>

Cell Phone Drive

NOTE: Cell phones may be donated with or without accompanying chargers, and all personal information must be erased.

In February 2009, the Victim Services Branch collaborated with the DC Coalition Against Domestic Violence and held a Cell Phone Drive. The Cell Phone Drive is a part of an important effort to assist victims trying to leave an abusive relationship.

When individuals at-

tempt to leave an abusive environment, the likelihood of a violent assault substantially increases and access to emergency services for victims can be critical. Victims can use a cell phone without an active service plan to call 911, which can provide the means for hope that help is a phone call

away during a domestic violence assault.

If you would like to donate a phone or need more information about the Cell Phone Drive, please call the Victim Services Branch at (202) 724-4339 or the DC Coalition Against Domestic Violence at (202) 299-1181.

Frequently Asked Questions

Crime Victims Compensation Program

Court Building A
515 5th Street, N.W., Room 109
Washington, D.C. 20001
Phone: (202) 879-4216
Fax: (202) 879-4230

Catholic Charities/Emergency Assistance Program

Stacie Thomas.
202-574-3442 (X303)

Q: What determines eligibility to receive Crime Victim's Compensation for burial assistance in homicide cases?

A: Families who have lost a loved one to homicide may be eligible for \$6,000 from the Crime Victim's Compensation Program (CVCP) to assist with funeral and burial services, if they meet the following two conditions:

1) Law enforcement agencies

were reasonably provided with information and all necessary cooperation was given from the next of kin.

2) Victim/claimant did not participate in, consent to, or provoke the crime that is the basis of the claim.

Q: What does the \$6,000 from the Crime Victim's Compensation Program cover?

A: Crime Victim's Comp-

sensation Program is not authorized to pay for any expenses for purposes of a repast including food and drinks. Families may use compensation to clothe the decedent for the funeral and/or burial, but not to purchase clothing for next of kin. Claims apart from the basic funeral/burial services will be examined on an individual basis, but do not guarantee coverage.

Letters - Kudos

I received your letter via my email and I want to thank you for the caring way that you have assisted me over the past year when I called about my son's case. I am very appreciative

for all of the information you provided and the compassion that you exhibited when I just wanted to vent... Again, thanks so much for everything.

Sincerely,
M. A. E.

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

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

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).



Comments from the Chief of Police

National Crime Victims' Rights Week was observed April 26 to May 2, 2009 throughout the country. This year's theme: 25 Years of Rebuilding Lives: Celebrating the Victims of Crime Act reminds us of the enhancements that the Metropolitan Police Department has made over the years in supporting victims of crime. The Metropolitan Police Department has taken tremendous efforts to mobilize victims and families that are at risk through community based activities. We, at the Metropolitan Police Department, have increased communications with victims and have given them a greater role in the criminal justice system, due to collaborations and partnerships with numer-

ous community-based organizations. Through various units and initiatives, the Department has also provided support services and educational programs to help victims and communities. Further, the men and women of the Metropolitan Police Department have taken the appropriate measures to protect the privacy of witnesses and victims. As we recognize this monumental phase in the area of victim services, we embrace these accomplishments and remain steadfast in our collective efforts toward additional achievements and support for victims. For more information on the Department's victim services programs and other initiatives, please contact the Victim Services Branch at (202)724-4339.



Metropolitan Police Department
Victim Services Branch/Family Liaison Specialists Unit
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