



Lunenburg Police Department

Policy Number: 1.37	Subject: Victim / Witness Services
Issue Date: 12/22/2021 Revision Date: 2/3/2022 Effective Date: 12/22/2021	Massachusetts Police Accreditation Standards Referenced: 55.2.2
Issuing Authority: <i>Chief Thomas L. Gammel</i>	

I. POLICY

- A. The Lunenburg Police Department will provide appropriate assistance to victims and witnesses who have been threatened or who, in the judgement of an officer, express specific and credible reasons for fearing intimidating or further victimization. [55.2.2]
 1. Such services may include:
 - a. Assistance in finding temporary shelter.
 - b. Transportation to and from court.
 - c. An untraceable cell phone.
 - d. Any other service requested that is within Department policies and guidelines.
 2. The assurance that all records and files of a victim/witness are held in confidentiality and that the role of the victim/witness in the case development is consistent with all applicable laws.
 3. The victim/witness will be given timely notice of upcoming events related to their case including when they will be required to attend court.
 4. Advise all victims/witnesses of the contact information of the Victim Witness Advocate of the Fitchburg District Court.
 5. Assure the victim/witness that their participation in the case will remain as confidential as the law allows, however, inform them that their identities will most likely be given to the defendant at some point of discovery.
- B. The Lunenburg Police Department will be a liaison with other governmental and non-governmental organizations that are concerned with the needs of victims and witnesses. The assistance of the prosecutor, the court, probation and parole agencies as well as rape crisis centers and domestic violence shelters should all be included. The purpose of liaison with outside sources of victim/witness assistance is two-fold:

1. To ensure that referrals to victims/ witnesses are based on accurate, up-to-date information regarding the services offered.
2. To maintain an ongoing, personalized system of communication in order to exchange suggestions and develop a cooperative work environment to better serve the victim/witness.

C. Lunenburg Police Department personnel that deal directly with circumstances involving the needs/rights of victims/witnesses receive training commensurate with their roles in the process. Sworn personnel receive instruction during basic training and during their annual in service training in accordance with Municipal Police Training Committee standards. Training updates are provided in the form of roll call training and/or formal classroom instruction. The training data used shall be in accordance with the standards set by the Massachusetts Criminal Justice Training Council and should reflect the findings of a periodic analysis of the needs and rights of victims/witnesses. Training based upon this analysis should meet the goals and objectives set forth by the agency.

D. Officers conducting a preliminary investigation are usually the first Police Officers contacting a victim/witness. The success or failure of victim/witness cooperation relies heavily upon the treatment received by the victim/witness during this initial meeting. Therefore, officers conducting preliminary investigations shall be prepared to render the following:

1. Advise the victim of their rights pursuant to M.G.L. Chapter 209A / 258E (Restraining or Harassment Order) and give them a copy of the Lunenburg Police Departments Abused Person's Notice of Rights form.
2. Provide the victim/witness with available information regarding counseling, medical attention, compensation programs, emergency financial aid and victim advocacy.
3. Advise the victim/witness on procedures to follow should a suspect or companion or family of the suspect intimidate the victim/witness.
4. Inform the victim/witness of the Lunenburg Police Department incident number assigned to their case and the subsequent procedures that will be followed in processing the case.
5. Provide the victim/witness with a direct telephone number to call should the victim/witness have any additional information to report or wishes to check on the status of the case.
6. If the suspect has been arrested, advise the victim/witness of this and inform them that the officers will remain on scene until the victim/witness feels safe. Advise the victim/witness of the charges against the suspect and that they will be immediately notified if they are released and any conditions of their release. Advise the victim/witness that at any time they may contact the Police Department for updates on the case.
7. Advise the victim/witness that they may contact the District Attorney's office and receive additional services.

E. Detectives or other officers assigned to conduct a follow up investigation shall be prepared to offer the victim/witness the following information and/or services:

1. If the impact of the incident seems to have been unusually severe or the victim/witness has required above average assistance, the assigned officer or Detective should contact the victim/witness within ten days to determine if their needs are being met.

2. Explain to the victim/witness the procedures involved in the prosecution of their cases and what their role will be.
3. Detectives shall schedule, whenever possible, all line-ups, interviews and other required appearances at the convenience of the victim/witness. If needed, the agency may provide transportation for the victim/witness.
4. Whenever possible, the Detective should arrange for the property of the victim/witness to be returned. This should not violate any Department regulation; should be within the scope of the law and should not violate any rule of evidence. Property held as illegal contraband or weapons used in the commission a crime shall not be returned unless so ordered by the court.
5. The Detective shall advise the victim/witness that they will be assigned a victim/witness advocate from the Fitchburg District Court. Additionally, advise the victim/witness that the officer will maintain contact with the assigned Victim Witness Advocate during the process that follows.