

MISSION

It is the mission of the Victim/Witness Services Unit of the Philadelphia District Attorney's Office to advocate on behalf of all crime victims and witnesses in Philadelphia. We provide direct assistance from the time of arrest through the disposition of a case and afterward as needed.

SERVICES

- **Property Return**
- **Release Notification Offender Release, Transfer, or Escape**
- **Restitution**
- **Transportation**
- **Victim Impact Statement (VIS)**
- **Victim/Witness Waiting Rooms**
- **Victim's Compensation Assistance Program (VCAP)**
- **Witness Fees**

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

AS A VICTIM OF CRIME IN PENNSYLVANIA YOU HAVE THE FOLLOWING RIGHTS:

To receive basic information concerning the services available for victims of crime.

To be accompanied at all criminal and all juvenile proceedings by a family member, a victim advocate or other person providing assistance or support.

In cases of personal injury crimes, burglary, or driving under the influence involving bodily injury, to submit prior comment to the prosecutor's office on the potential reduction or dropping of any charge or changing of a plea.

To provide prior comment on and to receive notice of release decisions, and to be immediately notified if the offender escapes in cases where the offender is sentenced to a state prison,

To receive notification of any release or escape of the offender, in addition to any relevant conditions imposed prior to release, in personal injury crimes, where the offender is sentenced to a local correctional facility,

To receive notice when an offender is committed to a mental health facility from a state prison and of the discharge, transfer or escape of the offender from the mental health facility, and;

To have assistance in the preparation of, submission of and follow-up on the financial assistance claims for the state Victims' Compensation Fund.

RESTITUTION

As a victim of a crime, you may be entitled to restitution. Restitution is intended as a financial payment paid by the defendant to compensate for damages and expenses incurred by the victim as a direct result of the crime. You may request restitution for your damaged or stolen property, as well as any medical expenses incurred. Restitution can only be ordered if the defendant is found guilty. Restitution must be ordered at the time of sentencing. Therefore, it is important that you submit your request as soon as possible.

It is important to fill out the questionnaire and send it back as soon as possible. For additional questions or information, you may contact your Assistant District Attorney or the Victim Services Unit at (215) 686-8027.

Once ordered, the defendant is responsible for making payment to the victim or witness by way of the Philadelphia Adult or Juvenile Probation Offices. You may contact Adult Probation at (215) 683-1453 or (215) 683-1466 or Juvenile Probation at (215) 686-7058 for the status of your restitution. If the offender is in a State Prison you should contact the Office of the Victim Advocate for payment status at 1-800-322-4472 or www.pbpp.state.pa.us/ova.

FAQ

DO I NEED AN ATTORNEY?

It is not necessary for you to have an attorney. The Assistant District Attorney for the Commonwealth represents your interests.

HOW DO I GET A VICTIM/WITNESS COORDINATOR TO ASSIST ME?

For most types of crimes, a victim/witness coordinator will contact you by telephone before any court hearing takes place. You may also call the Victim/Witness Services Unit main phone number at 215-686-8027 or e-mail DA.Victimservices@phila.gov to be directed to the appropriate coordinator.

WHAT SHOULD I DO TO PREPARE FOR COURT?

If you need assistance with transportation or language interpretation, please notify the Victim/Witness Services Unit at least two business days before your scheduled court appearance. Dress appropriately. Court is a serious occasion, and dress should reflect that. Make sure that you eat something before appearing in court, as you may need to spend several hours in the courtroom or waiting room.

HOW LONG WILL I NEED TO BE IN COURT?

The court process can be very long. Even if you were asked to arrive to court first thing in the morning, it is possible that you will need to wait for a large part of the day for your turn to be called to testify. Bring any medicines you will need through the course of the day, and provide for appropriate child care.

IS THERE A VICTIM/WITNESS WAITING ROOM?

The Office of the District Attorney operates waiting rooms for victims and witnesses, their families, and other support people. There are waiting rooms in both the Criminal Justice Center (1301 Filbert Street, Room 105) and Family Court (1501 Arch Street, 9th Floor).

HOW MANY TIMES WILL I NEED TO GO TO COURT?

The number of times you go to court depends on a lot of things, including the type of crime that was committed and whether or not everyone who is supposed to appear in court does so.

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I NEED HELP GETTING TO AND FROM COURT. IS TRANSPORTATION ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE?

Yes, unfortunately only in limited cases. The Office of the District Attorney can only coordinate a ride for you if you are elderly, disabled, or traveling from out of state. If you require further assistance, please speak to the ADA working on your case or contact the Victim/Witness Services Unit for more information.

WILL I BE PAID FOR MY TIME AS A WITNESS?

You are entitled to a small fee for each time you have appeared in court. These fees cannot be paid until the case is finished. Ask the ADA about your fees on the last day of trial.

IS THERE PARKING AVAILABLE?

The District Attorney's Office has negotiated a special parking rate for victims and witnesses attending court. Parking is available at the PPA AutoPark @ the Gallery Mall at 10th and Filbert Streets.

For additional information please call the main number, 215-686-8027 or e-mail DA.Victimservices@phila.gov.

Philadelphia District Attorney's Office



Victim Services Unit

*Striving to help Victims, &
Witnesses Understand, and
Exercise Their Rights
Under the Law.*

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