

Victim and Witness Assistance

316.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that crime victims and witnesses receive appropriate assistance, that they are provided with information from government and private resources, and that the agency meets all related legal mandates.

316.2 POLICY

The Fresno State Police Department is committed to providing guidance and assistance to the victims and witnesses of crime. The employees of the Fresno State Police Department will show compassion and understanding for victims and witnesses and will make reasonable efforts to provide the support and information identified in this policy.

316.3 CRIME VICTIM INFORMATION

Every employee reporting or investigating a crime where a victim has suffered direct or threatened physical, psychological or financial harm as a result of the commission or attempted commission of a crime or delinquent act will ensure the victim has been provided with information about the existence of the local victim centers. This may be accomplished by providing the victim the *Marsy's Card* with the case report number noted on the card (Cal. Penal Code § 679.026). A Victim of Violent Crime form should also be provided if the victim suffered an injury as a direct or proximate cause of that crime.

If for any reason the investigating employee is unable to complete the above notifications such fact shall be noted in the related case report and the notifications should be completed by the assigned detective.

The Chief's Administrative Assistant is responsible for obtaining or publishing a *Marsy's Card* as described in Cal. Penal Code § 679.026 and making a sufficient supply of *Marsy's Cards* available to Fresno State Police Department employees.

316.3.1 OFFICER/INVESTIGATOR DUTIES

The reporting officer or assigned investigator is specifically tasked with the following:

- (a) Developing and implementing written procedures for notifying and providing forms for filing with the California Victim Compensation Board (CalVCB) to crime victims, their dependents or family (Government Code § 13962; 2 CCR 649.35; 2 CCR 649.36).
- (b) Responding to inquiries concerning the procedures for filing a claim with CalVCB (2 CCR 649.36).
- (c) Providing copies of crime reports requested by CalVCB or victim witness assistance centers. Disclosure of reports must comply with the Records Maintenance and Release Policy.
- (d) Developing in consultation with sexual assault experts a sexual assault victim card explaining the rights of victims under California law (Penal Code § 680.2).

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1. Ensuring that sufficient copies of the rights of sexual assault victim card are provided to each provider of medical evidentiary examinations or physical examinations arising out of sexual assault in the Fresno State Police Department jurisdiction (Penal Code § 680.2).

316.4 CRIME VICTIMS

Officers should provide all victims with the applicable victim information handouts that provide information on assistance services available.

Officers should never guarantee a victim's safety from future harm but may make practical safety suggestions to victims who express fear of future harm or retaliation. Officers should never guarantee that a person qualifies as a victim for the purpose of compensation or restitution but may direct him/her to the proper written department material or available victim resources.

Officers should provide victims/witnesses with a department business card in order to provide the department's phone number in the event the person has additional information or questions in the future.

316.4.1 VICTIMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Officers investigating or receiving a report involving a victim of human trafficking shall inform the victim, or the victim's parent or guardian if the victim is a minor, that upon the request of the victim the names and images of the victim and his/her immediate family members may be withheld from becoming a matter of public record until the conclusion of the investigation or prosecution (Penal Code § 293).

316.5 VICTIM INFORMATION

The Chief's Administrative Assistant shall ensure that victim information handouts are current and available in the police department lobby 24 hours per day. These should include as appropriate:

- (a) Shelters and other community resources for victims of domestic violence.
- (b) Community resources for victims of sexual assault.
- (c) Assurance that sexual assault victims will not incur out-of-pocket expenses for forensic medical exams, and information about evidence collection, storage and preservation in sexual assault cases (34 USC § 10449; 34 USC § 20109; Penal Code § 13823.95(a)).
- (d) An explanation that victims of sexual assault who seek a medical evidentiary examination shall not be required to participate or agree to participate in the criminal justice system, either prior to the examination or at any other time (Penal Code § 13823.95(b)).
- (e) An advisement that a person who was arrested may be released on bond or some other form of release and that the victim should not rely upon an arrest as a guarantee of safety.
- (f) A clear explanation of relevant court orders and how they can be obtained.
- (g) Information regarding available compensation for qualifying victims of crime (Government Code § 13962).

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- (h) VINE® information (Victim Information and Notification Everyday), including the telephone number and whether this free service is available to allow victims to check on an offender's custody status and to register for automatic notification when a person is released from jail.
- (i) Notice regarding U Visa and T Visa application processes.
- (j) Resources available for victims of identity theft.
- (k) A place for the officer's name, badge number and any applicable case or incident number.
- (l) The "Victims of Domestic Violence" card containing the names, phone numbers or local county hotlines of local shelters for battered women and rape victim counseling centers within the county and their 24-hour counseling service telephone numbers (Penal Code § 264.2).
- (m) The rights of sexual assault victims card with the required information as provided in Penal Code § 680.2.
- (n) Any additional information required by state law (Penal Code § 13701; Penal Code § 679.02; Penal Code § 679.04; Penal Code § 679.05; Penal Code § 679.026).

316.6 WITNESSES

Officers should never guarantee a witness' safety from future harm or that his/her identity will always remain confidential. Officers may make practical safety suggestions to witnesses who express fear of future harm or retaliation.

Officers should investigate allegations of witness intimidation and take enforcement action when lawful and reasonable.