

**Information
For Victims
and
Witnesses
of Crime**



INTRODUCTION

As Federal law enforcement professionals, we are aware of and concerned about the problems you often experience as a victim or witness of crime. We understand the feelings of confusion, frustration, fear, and anger sometimes suffered as a result of the disruption of life which you have experienced.

The following information has been prepared to help you to deal with these problems and better understand how the federal justice system works. We have included important material on what services are available in this community to assist you as well as a description of your protections under federal law. We hope that this information will be helpful and we encourage you to contact the agent or officer assigned to your case if you have any questions

THE INVESTIGATION

The days and months ahead may be particularly stressful to you as a victim and/or witness. Even though this may be a difficult time for you and your family, your continued assistance is instrumental in apprehending the criminal and insuring that the aims of justice are fully achieved.

In 1982, Congress passed the Federal Victim/Witness Protection Act. This Act is designed to assist you to the fullest extent possible in recovering from the negative effects of crime. As part of this Act, you will be kept informed of the status of your case if you so request. The federal law enforcement official handling your case should remain your principal contact throughout the investigative process. If you have any questions, make sure to contact him or her as soon as possible.

A federal investigation can be both complex and time consuming. It may involve several organizations, some federal and some

local. Remember, your interests are important to us. It is normal to have questions and we are here to help answer yours.

IF AN ARREST IS MADE

If a defendant is apprehended - you will be advised of this fact, if you so request, as soon as possible. Since most federal criminal defendants are released on bond pending trial, you should not be surprised if this happens in your case. After the arrest, every effort will be made to keep you advised of both the status of the case and the whereabouts of the defendant.

Once a case is filed, you will be contacted by the Assistant U. S. Attorney assigned to handle your case. Each U. S. Attorney now has a victim/witness coordinator to help answer your questions and deal with your concerns during the corresponding stages of the pretrial and trial process. As a victim and/or witness of serious crime, upon your request, you should receive information on the following.

- Scheduling changes and/or continuances affecting your appearance or attendance at judicial proceedings
- The release or detention status of the accused
- The acceptance of a plea of guilty or as the result of a trial
- The date set for sentencing if the defendant is found guilty
- For victims, the opportunity to address the court at the time of sentencing
- The sentence imposed
- Advance notification of the defendant's release from custody

In addition, Federal Guidelines For Fair Treatment Of Victims And Witnesses provide that "The victim of a serious crime, or in the case of a minor child or a homicide, the family of the victim, should be consulted by the attorney for the Government in order to obtain the views of the victim or family about the disposition of any Federal criminal case brought as a result of such crime, including the views of the victim or family about -

- (A) dismissal;
- (B) release of the accused pending judicial proceedings;
- (C) plea negotiations; and
- (D) pretrial diversion program."

If you wish to be consulted, talk with the victim/witness coordinator or Assistant U. S. Attorney assigned to your case.

IF YOU WERE INJURED

Most states now provide crimes compensation assistance to victims of violent crime. If you do not have insurance to pay your medical bills, this program may be able to assist you. General information on crimes compensation in this area has been included. If you have any additional questions contact either the officer or agent handling your case or the crimes compensation representative serving your community.

If an individual is arrested and prosecuted you may also be eligible for restitution. Restitution is court ordered payment to you as a victim of crime. It is made by the offender for any out of pocket expenses you had as a result of your victimization. As a provision of the Victim/Witness Protection Act, the judge will consider restitution before passing sentence.

IF PROPERTY WAS STOLEN

If your property was stolen, we hope that we will be able to recover it as part of our investigation. If we do recover property we will notify you and make every effort to see that it is returned to you as quickly as possible. In those cases where this cannot be achieved, the Assistant U. S. Attorney assigned to your case will explain to you the reasons for retaining the property. Restitution may be available as part of a plan of prosecution, to help defray the costs of property not recovered or the costs of any repair which may be necessary

IF YOU NEED ASSISTANCE WITH YOUR EMPLOYER

Many victims and witnesses question how to best approach their employer and others at the work place during the course of the investigation. Call us, we will be happy to discuss your concerns in this area. If appropriate, we will contact your employer to discuss further the importance of your role as a victim/witness to the government's case.

IF YOU ARE THREATENED OR HARASSED

As a witness in the government's case, there is the possibility that you may be harassed. If anyone threatens you or you feel that you are being harassed because of your cooperation with this investigation, contact the officer or agent assigned to your case immediately. Additional penalties have been established for harassment and other threats as part of the Federal Victim/Witness Protection Act in order to further insure your safety. If you are threatened or harassed, we will discuss with you additional protective measures available.

THE EMOTIONAL IMPACT OF CRIME

Federal law enforcement is concerned about the emotional impact of crime on the victim. As a victim of crime you have experienced a form of crisis and not everyone reacts to a crisis in the same manner. Victims of crime however do report some common behavior patterns of which you may want to be aware:

- You may experience increased concern for your personal safety and that of your family
- You may have difficulty handling everyday problems and feel overwhelmed at times
- You may be more irritable than usual, often as the result of displaced anger toward the criminal
- You may encounter changes in eating and sleeping habits
- You may have trouble concentrating on your job
- You could be one of many victims who find that they go over the crime over and over, thinking about what you could have done differently or what could have gone wrong
- You will naturally be more cautious

ALL OF THESE FEELINGS ARE NORMAL AND THEY WILL PASS WITH TIME

Just as everyone reacts to crime differently, not everyone recovers in the same manner or within the same time frame. Successful recovery depends on the same factors affecting the recovery from any adult life crisis,

such as the loss of a loved one or an illness in the family. Factors affecting recovery include: the nature of the crime itself, how you were treated as a victim, your current state of mind, your internal strength and the amount of support you receive from family and friends

When you feel ready, you might wish to talk about your feelings with family or close friends. Positive supports are important at this time. It is helpful for some to have others listen. Only you know what's best for you.

IF YOU NEED ADDITIONAL HELP

The Federal Victim/Witness Protection Act has served to encourage the development and expansion of community based assistance to victims of crime. Feel free to contact the programs in your area. They are here to serve you. We have attached a current listing of programs and a brief description of the services they offer. Talking about the crime and the problems you are encountering is important. Making contact with a victim assistance program can be an important step in your recovery.

IMPORTANT NUMBERS

CRIMES COMPENSATION

**FEDERAL VICTIM WITNESS
COORDINATOR**

(Name)

(Phone No.)

CASE AGENT

(Name)

(Phone No.)

(Report No.)

ADDITIONAL PROGRAMS
