

The Victim Assistance Program

The Henderson County Sheriff's Office recognizes the psychological, physical and financial problems that crime victimization creates for the victims and their families. The staff of the Victim Assistance Program is genuinely concerned about how the crime has affected your life. They are committed to providing assistance and support by listening to your concerns and responding fully to your needs for information, explanation and services.

As a victim of crime, you are likely to experience feelings of shock, fear, anger, helplessness, and confusion. These reactions are a normal response to crime, whether it is a personal injury or a property crime. At the time when your emotions are most intense, you may find yourself having to deal with a complex maze of people and procedures. Without previous experience or exposure to the agencies involved in handling your case, you may find the situation confusing, frightening or frustrating. The staff of the Victim Assistance Program can answer your questions, provide you with appropriate referrals, and offer you continuing support and guidance as you cooperate with the criminal justice system.

Who is the Victim Assistance Program Designed to Help?

The Victim Assistance Program offers support and services to victims of sexual assault, robbery, kidnapping, domestic violence, and aggravated assault. Family members who have suffered the loss of a loved one as a result of homicide will also be eligible for program services. If you are a victim of crime, but live outside our jurisdiction, The Victim Assistance Program will provide you with appropriate referrals.

How do I Receive Support and Services?

You may contact the program by calling (828) 694-2706 between the hours of 8:00 am and 4:30 pm Monday through Friday.

Referrals are also accepted from law enforcement, and criminal justice personnel. The program also screens police reports and contacts victims by letter or telephone to offer the services of the program. Participation in the program is voluntary.

Services

The following services are confidential and free of charge to victims of felony crimes:

- Crisis Intervention and short term counseling
- Assistance with emergency food, clothing, shelter, and transportation needs
- Counseling and Support Group referrals
- Referrals to social service and criminal justice agencies for needed information and services
- Explanation of the criminal justice system and the victim's role in that system
- Accompaniment, information, and emotional support during law enforcement and court procedures
- Orientation to courtroom setting
- Assistance in securing victim compensation benefits when applicable
- Assistance with preparation of a Victim Impact Statement
- Property return assistance
- Employment intervention to explain time missed from work due to cooperation with law enforcement investigative procedures
- Assistance if you are intimidated, harassed or threatened
- Personal safety and crime prevention information
- Accompaniment to Parole Hearings

Victim's Rights

The criminal justice system has traditionally ignored the special needs of the victims, while focusing on protecting the rights of the accused. But that is changing.

It is the policy of the State of North Carolina that victims of crime be treated with dignity, compassion, and respect; that they be informed about the progress and outcome of their case, and that damages done to them be considered by the court as it decides their case.

As a Victim of crime, you have the right:

- To be given information about the Criminal Justice System
- To be given information about the crime
- To confer with the prosecuting attorney
- To be notified of all hearings related to case prior to plea negotiation, trial, conviction, dismissal, restitution, etc.
- To receive restitution – and that restitution be docketed as a civil judgment to eliminate the victims need to hire an attorney for any civil proceedings in the future
- To be heard at sentencing of the accused and at other times deemed appropriate by the court
- To be notified of escape, release, proposed parole, pardon or commutation of the criminal sentence
- To present views and concerns to the Governor or any agency considering action that could result in release of the accused, prior to such action becoming effective
- To receive information about the conviction or final disposition and sentence of the defendant

Victim Compensation

The State of North Carolina has a program to reimburse innocent victims of crime who suffer medical expenses and lost wages as a result of being a victim of crime. Victim's Compensation will pay up to \$30,000.00 for medical expenses and lost wages (up to \$300.00 per week for a maximum of 26 weeks). If the victim dies as a result of the crime a maximum of \$5,000.00 may be paid to the survivors for funeral expenses.

To be eligible for benefits under the North Carolina Victim Compensation Program:

- The Claim must reflect economic loss of at least \$100.00
- The Claim must be filed within one year
- The incident must be reported within 72 hours
- The claimant must not have contributed to the criminal conduct, nor be in violation of criminal law at the time of the incident
- The claimant must fully cooperate with the law enforcement, courts, and the Crime Victims Compensation Commission
- Compensation may not be paid for personal property or any expense paid by insurance or other sources
- Compensation is not awarded for lost/damaged property or pain/suffering
- Compensation is not awarded for injury or loss that is a result of violation of a motor vehicle law other than Driving While Impaired



To file for Victims Compensation Benefits, the victim should contact the Victim Assistance Program at (828) 694-2706 or the North Carolina Victim Compensation Program at 1-800-826-6200

Chaplains

The chaplain program of the Henderson County Sheriff's Office is utilized to help meet the needs of its employees and offer spiritual guidance to staff and crime victims.

Our chaplains do some or all of the following:

- Counsel members of our department
- Counsel the families of law enforcement officers and other department personnel
- Visit sick or injured officers and departmental personnel in homes and hospitals
- Make death notifications
- Provide assistance to victims
- Serve as part of a department's Crisis Response Team
- Assist at suicide incidents
- Serve as liaison with other clergy in the community
- Work with the victim services director

Sheriff Davis is very supportive of the Chaplain's Ministry and believes it is a vital resource to all employees and to the citizens of Henderson County.