



**MYRTLE BEACH POLICE DEPARTMENT
ADMINISTRATIVE REGULATIONS
& OPERATING PROCEDURES**

Subject: *Police Victims Advocate
& Canine Support Program*

Number: 711

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Rescinds:

Dated:

Approved By:

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish the Police Victims Advocate and Canine Support Program.

II. POLICY

The Victims' Bill of Rights is the governing philosophy of the Myrtle Beach Police Department in dealing with victims. In this regard, the department recognizes that:

1. Victims have a right to be treated with dignity and compassion.
2. Victims have a right to protection from intimidation and harm.
3. Victims have a right to be informed concerning the criminal justice process.
4. Victims have a right to reparations.
5. Victims have a right to the preservation of property and employment.
6. Victims have a right to due process in criminal court proceedings.
7. Victims who are very young, elderly, handicapped, or who have special needs have a right to special recognition and attention by all criminal justice, medical, and social service agencies.

III. PROCEDURE

- A. Department personnel will ensure the confidentiality of all victims, as well as their role in case development, to the extent consistent with applicable law.
- B. Police Victims Advocate (PVA)
 - 1. The position of Police Victims Advocate (PVA) is established as an integral part of the Investigative Division under the direction of the Family Services Sergeant.
 - 2. The PVA will bear primary responsibility for the administration of the Police Victim's Advocate & Canine Support Program of the Department in accordance with directives, including, but not limited to:
 - a. Maintaining computer tracking of all incidents of violent offenses.
 - b. Tracking all contacts and referrals of victims of violent offenses.
 - c. Preparing copies of taped initial telephone calls received from victims of violent offenses who request a police response.
 - d. Provide all victims of violent offenses with assistance in obtaining proper Orders of Protection from appropriate source(s) if applicable.
 - e. Ensure protection needs of victims are met, through whatever means is appropriate.
 - 3. The PVA will receive copies of incident reports and ensure appropriate assistance is provided to victims of the following events, including but not limited to:
 - a. Sexual Assault.
 - b. Victimization of Children.
 - c. Domestic Violence.
 - d. Victimization of Elderly.

- e. Surviving families in cases of non-natural deaths.
 - f. Burglary, Robbery, or vandalism where various types of aid may apply.
 - g. Serious injury, whether or not criminal activity is involved.
 - h. Victims who have been threatened or who, in the judgment of the Family Service Sergeant, express specific, credible reasons for fearing intimidation or further victimization.
 - i. Other events as deemed appropriate by the Chief of Police or their designee.
4. The PVA will provide the office of the Chief of Police with an in-depth analysis of the victim assistance needs and available resources within the service area at least biannually. This analysis will include, but not be limited to:
- a. The extent and major types of victimization within the service area.
 - b. An inventory of information and service needs of victims, in general, and special victims, such as those victimized by domestic violence, abuse and neglect, sexual crimes, and drunken drivers.
 - c. Victim assistance and related community services that are available within the service area and from other sources.
 - d. Identification of unfulfilled needs.
 - e. Identification of needs that are appropriate for this department to meet.
5. The PVA will maintain active memberships in organizations specifically directed at providing assistance and aid to victims as may be appropriate in the furtherance of the Department's program.
6. The PVA will ensure that all victims are provided with appropriate assistance during the follow-up investigation, arrest, post-arrest processing of suspects, and trial phases of violent crimes, including but not limited to:

- a. Re-contacting the victim periodically to determine whether needs are being met, where the impact of the crime has been unusually severe and has triggered above-average need for victim assistance.
 - b. Explaining to victims the procedures involved in the prosecution of their cases and their role in those procedures, provided the explanation does not compromise the successful prosecution of the case.
 - c. Assisting in scheduling of line-ups, interviews, and other required appearances at the convenience of the victim, including arranging for transportation if feasible.
 - d. Insuring that property taken as evidence is properly returned promptly (except for contraband, disputed property, and weapons used in the course of the crime), where permitted by law, department policy, or rules of evidence if feasible.
7. The PVA will coordinate with the victim advocate within the office of the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit Solicitor, the City of Myrtle Beach Municipal Court, and such representatives of other area agencies, as appropriate, in furtherance of the Department's assistance program.
8. The PVA will, through media interviews, public appearances, and in other manners deemed appropriate by the Chief of Police, inform the public and media about the victim assistance services provided by the Department.
9. The PVA will ensure current and accurate information is available to the Public Information Unit, as well as to each patrol officer, investigator, and supervisor, in order to provide 24-hour assistance as required. Updates will be prepared and published as needed.
- C. The Public Information Unit will serve as the direct, single point of contact on a 24-hour basis for providing victims with the office hours and contact information for the department's PVA.
- D. Patrol Officers and Investigators
 1. Patrol officers and investigators will work with the PVA to ensure that all victims are provided with:

- a. Information about applicable services, e.g., counseling, medical attention, compensation programs, or emergency financial assistance and victim advocacy.
 - b. Information as to what to do if the suspect, the suspect's companions, or family threatens or otherwise intimidates them.
 - c. Information about the case number and subsequent steps in the processing of the case.
 - d. A telephone number that the victim may call to report additional information about the case or to receive information about the status of the case.
 - e. Assist in the prompt return of victim property taken as evidence (except for contraband, disputed property, and weapons used during the crime) where permitted by law or rules of evidence.
- E. The PVA will liaise with the City of Myrtle Beach Victims Advocate regarding case correspondence and updates to reduce duplication and increase communication.
- F. Support Canine
 - 1. The PVA will utilize the support canine as needed as a resource as support for victims (to include internal staff) providing:
 - a. Support during counseling sessions, interviews, or when experiencing difficulties related to the case for victims.
 - b. Support during courtroom testimony, depositions, or other related case investigation meetings for victims.
 - c. Support during critical incidents, when we experience reactions or difficulties related to the circumstances, for victims, witnesses, and employees.
 - d. Support as designated by the Chief of Police or their designee.