
Victim Services

601.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The Victim Services Division (VSD) was created in 1981 to respond to crime victims' psychological and emotional needs. This is achieved through crisis intervention, counseling, advocacy, education, information, and referral for victims of crime and trauma, individuals with mental illness, witnesses, families of crime and trauma victims, first responders, investigative units, and on a larger scale, the neighborhoods and communities in which they live.

VSD also provides assistance to criminal justice personnel, the community and others in non-crime situations. The overall mission is to positively impact the quality of life for Austin residents by assisting victims/survivors, and families/neighborhoods who have experienced crime and/or trauma.

601.2 VICTIM SERVICE DIVISION PERSONNEL RESPONSE

- (a) VSD personnel shall respond immediately to any request for assistance.
- (b) VSD personnel shall automatically be dispatched on the following incidents:
 - 1. Partial or Citywide disasters (e.g., aviation, criminal, natural or man-made).
 - 2. Any death of an APD employee.
 - 3. All adult and child sexual assaults regardless if it just occurred or is a delayed report.
- (c) VSD personnel shall be notified of the following call types if needed:
 - 1. Homicides, suicides, child deaths, and fatality collisions.
 - 2. Robberies & aggravated robberies (e.g., banks, restaurants, motels).
 - 3. Aggravated assaults (child, family or adult).
 - 4. Family violence.
 - 5. Child/elderly abuse or neglect.
 - 6. Hostage/barricade incident and SWAT/hostage negotiator call outs.
 - 7. Attempted suicides.
 - 8. Any death of an APD employee's family member.
 - 9. Unexpected death of any City employee.
- (d) Officers on the scene of any incident may request VSD personnel when they determine assistance may be needed.
- (e) VSD personnel may respond to an incident without being requested, but only when a scene is determined to be safe.
- (f) VSD personnel shall be contacted by the officer if the victim requests their services.

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601.3 ON-SCENE PROCEDURES

- (a) When VSD personnel are dispatched or respond to an incident and the scene is deemed safe, counselors shall:
 - 1. Immediately notify the officer in charge that they are present.
 - 2. Stand by for an officer to complete their contact and release the subject(s) to the counselor.
- (b) VSD personnel may be left at the scene only if the officer and counselor agree the scene is safe.
 - 1. If the officer deems the scene is unsafe and needs to return to duty, VSD personnel must:
 - (a) Take any subjects to a safe location (e.g., a Department facility, shelter, friend's/family's residence); or
 - (b) Leave the scene and advise the subjects of community resources and referrals.
- (c) VSD personnel who respond to a scene are required to complete a supplement documenting their observations and actions.

601.4 SUPPORT SERVICES PROVIDED

- (a) VSD personnel provide trauma-counseling, referrals and follow-up services to victims, witnesses, survivors, and community members. These services are provided through counselors working with the various Patrol, Support, and Investigative Units of the Department.
- (b) VSD personnel provide death notification services in conjunction with the Travis County Medical Examiner's Office and the appropriate investigative unit.
- (c) VSD personnel are responsible for notifying victims/survivors of violent crimes of their:
 - 1. Potential eligibility for compensation under State law and the assistance available in filing a claim; and
 - 2. State constitutional rights.
- (d) VSD personnel are also responsible for coordinating the Department's policies and procedures concerning General Order 607 (U-Visa Nonimmigrant Status Certifications).

601.4.1 CRIME VICTIM LIAISON

The Austin Police Department VSD is the designated crime victim liaison for the Department. As the liaison, the VSD is responsible for ensuring that crime victims are afforded the rights granted to them under 56.02 of the Texas Code of Criminal Procedures. VSD personnel will be the point of contact for individuals requiring further assistance or information from the Austin Police Department regarding benefits from crime victim resources. This includes notifying victims/survivors of violent crimes their potential eligibility for compensation under State law and the

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assistance available in filing a claim. VSD shall also be responsible for maintaining compliance with all legal mandates related to crime victims and/or witnesses.

601.5 INFORMATION FOR ALL VICTIMS OF CRIME AND TRAUMATIC EVENTS

All Department personnel, including officers, are responsible for providing victims of crimes against persons and traumatic events with victim assistance information. This information is contained in the English (pink) and Spanish (yellow) brochures entitled "Victim Assistance Information". These brochures are provided to the Department by Victim Services personnel upon request.

- (a) Information for victims include:
 - 1. APD incident report number, when applicable.
 - 2. Appropriate Investigative Unit, when applicable.
 - 3. Information on appropriate internal and external referrals.
 - 4. Information on crime victims compensation.
 - 5. Notice to adult victims of domestic violence.
 - 6. Recognizing intimate partner abuse.
 - 7. Information for parents on child exposure to family violence.
 - 8. Safety planning.
 - 9. Rights of crime victims.

601.6 COMMITMENT TO TRAINING

VSD personnel provide training on basic victimology, procedures, special services, types of victims, trauma impact and reactions. This training is provided to:

- (a) APD Cadet classes.
- (b) Department in-service training.
- (c) Communications.
- (d) Community groups.
- (e) Other law enforcement agencies.
- (f) State and federal agencies.

