WEST NORRITON TOWNSHIP POLICE DEPARTMENT

Subject: Victim/Witness Policy		Policy # 4.5.1
Accreditation 4.5.1		
Effective Date: July 23, 2008	Revised Date: May 19, 2023	
By Authority Of: Chief Michael A. Kelly	Signature: Michael A. Kelly	

4.5.1 Victim/Witness Policy

A. Policy

It is the policy of the West Norriton Township Police Department to adhere to the guidelines of the amended Pennsylvania Crime Victims Act 85-2002 (Senate Bill 380) that took effect on August 27, 2002.

B. Purpose

The West Norriton Township Police Department is committed to the development, implementation, and maintenance of programs designed to provide victim and witness assistance to any person coming into contact with the West Norriton Township Police Department either as a victim or witness. It is also the policy of the West Norriton Township Police Department to assure that the rights and safety of victims or other witnesses are protected.

C. Rights of Victims and Witnesses

1. It shall be the policy of the West Norriton Township Police Department to treat all victims and witnesses with fairness, compassion and dignity. The responsibility of courteous treatment to victims cannot be delegated to other agencies, but must be assumed by all members of the police department. The West Norriton Township Police Department is committed to the development, implementation and continuation of appropriate victim/witness assistance programs and activities to include the following objectives:

   a. Protect the victim/witness from further harm
   b. To nurture cooperation between the police and the victim/witness
   c. To enhance willingness on the part of the victim/witness to assist in the prosecution of criminal offenders.

2. Chapter 49, Subchapter B of the Crimes Code of Pennsylvania outlines procedures to help ensure that the victim/witness remains free from intimidation.

3. Statutory provisions designed to ensure that victims and witnesses are advised of the existence of available services require officers to give each victim of a crime the booklet

entitled "RIGHTS AND SERVICES AVAILABLE TO VICTIMS OF CRIME IN PENNSYLVANIA" developed by the Office of Victims' Services and obtain a signed receipt that such notice was given within 24 hours. This booklet contains the following information:

a. Pennsylvania's Victim's Bill of Rights
b. Victim's Responsibility
c. Agencies to assist the victim
d. Domestic Violence Victim's Rights
e. Crime Victim's Compensation Information
f. Victim's Compensation Claim Form

D. Procedures

1. The goal of the West Norriton Township Police Department is to strive to maintain an atmosphere for victims/witnesses that is free of fear and promotes communication between victims/witnesses and law enforcement personnel.

2. The objectives to attain this goal include, but may not be limited to:

   a. Supervise and guide the activities of first responding officers who come into direct contact with victims/witnesses, such as patrol officers and criminal investigators.
   b. Ensure that all officers are informed of all existing department and community victim/witness assistance programs serving both the public and department personnel. All officers and employees shall be familiar with Crime victims' compensation and this information is included in trainee's Curriculum.
   c. Ensure that all department personnel are informed and kept up to date on current victim/witness programs for the area.

3. While the West Norriton Township Police Department does not provide victim/ witness services it is a referral agency to the area agencies that do. As such, all officers of the West Norriton Township Police Department shall be familiar with what agencies are available and what services they provide. All officers shall be made aware of the West Norriton Township Police Department Victim/Witness Services Manual.

4. Officers responding to or investigating a crime shall provide basic information on the rights and services available for crime victims and the availability of crime victim's compensation to the direct victim or, if appropriate, a member of the direct victim's family. The information shall be provided when the agency has first contact with the direct victim or , if appropriate, a member of the direct victim's family or as soon as reasonably possible. The information shall be in a written notice in a manner or form developed by the Office of Victim's Services. This information shall be included in the officer's report.

5. The West Norriton Township Police Department shall be responsible for ensuring that officers provide the notifications required under this policy.

6. All victim/witness information shall be kept on a confidential basis and not released to the public.

7. The victim of a personal injury crime shall be notified within 24 hours of the arrest, filing or forwarding of a complaint against a suspect and shall be notified within 24 hours of the escape of the suspect in their case.

8. Any property belonging to the victim that was seized for evidence in the case shall be returned, if the prosecutor determines the evidence is no longer needed.

E. The Act provides certain responsibilities of Law Enforcement Agencies; West Norriton Township Police Department Members will follow the following:

1. With personal injury crimes, law enforcement agencies shall make reasonable efforts to notify the victim of the arrest of the suspect as soon as possible. However, the West Norriton Twp. Police shall provide victim information to the Arraignment Court. The Arraignment Court shall notify the victim of the arrest. Unless the victim cannot be located, notice of the arrest shall be provided by the the Arraignment Court not more than twenty-four hours after the preliminary arraignment.

2. In personal injury crimes, all law enforcement agencies, sheriffs, deputy sheriffs and constables shall notify the victim of an inmate's escape from the custody of the law enforcement agency, sheriff, deputy sheriff or constable.

3. All West Norriton Township police Officers are to carry a supply of these forms for issuance to victims of crimes. When such a victim exists, the officer will then attach to his report a copy signifying that he/she provided the victims of the crime the necessary information needed by the victim to pursue their rights.