

OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY VICTIM-WITNESS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM BUDGET REQUEST

- PRESENTED BY SHELLY HALL

BRIEF HISTORY

- Services began in 1989
- The mission is to provide a multitude of services to crime victims throughout circuit
 - Notify crime victims of all affairs related to the offender
 - Inform and explain the process of the criminal justice system
 - Liaison to available resources

GROWTH OF OFFICE IN PAST 12 YEARS

- 300% growth with no increase in CCG's contribution
 - Increase from 4 to 13 Victim Advocates
 - Increase from a \$200K budget to a \$700K budget
 - In 2008, Victim-Witness served 1,191 crime victims
 - In 2019, Victim-Witness served 11,751 crime victims

GROWTH OF OFFICE IN PAST 12 YEARS (CONT)

- Current Funding comes from 3 sources
 - Federal Grants - 67%
 - LVAP 5% Funds - 27% (Local Victim Assistance Program)
 - City Contribution - 6%
- Excessive burden due to judicial growth
 - Superior Court Criminal Judges (7 Judges who expect an advocate in their courtroom)
 - Rapid Resolution Program

CONSTITUTIONALLY MANDATED SERVICES

- Georgia Crime Victim Bill of Rights, O.C.G.A. § 17-17-1
 - Criminal Justice System shall provide notification of a case to crime victims throughout all phases of the criminal justice process
 - Any court serving crime victims is mandated to provide services
 - Elevated constitutional protection with the passing of Marsy's Law
 - Passed 1/1/19
 - Provides a recourse to violations of a victim's rights
 - Recourse

DUTIES OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

- O.C.G.A. 15-18-23. Counties duties to maintain offices
 - The governing authority of the county or counties comprising each judicial circuit shall provide all offices, utilities, telephone expenses, materials, and supplies as may be necessary to equip, maintain, and furnish the office or offices of the district attorney in an orderly and efficient manner.

AUTHORITY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

- O.C.G.A. 15-18-20. Authorization to employ additional personnel.
- (a) The district attorney in each judicial circuit may employ such additional assistant district attorneys, deputy district attorneys, or other attorneys, investigators, paraprofessionals, clerical assistants, victim and witness assistance personnel, and other employees or independent contractors as may be provided for by local law or as may be authorized by the governing authority of the county or counties comprising the judicial circuit. . . .
- (b) Personnel employed by the district attorney pursuant to this Code section shall serve at the pleasure of the district attorney and shall be compensated by the county or counties comprising the judicial circuit, the manner and amount of compensation to be paid to be fixed either by local Act or by the district attorney with the approval of the county or counties comprising the judicial circuit.

JUVENILE COURT

- Current Situation in Juvenile Court
 - Juvenile Court currently does not have a Victim Advocate
 - Victim-Witness has no funding for position
 - Numerous grant requests have been denied
 - Future requests will not be accepted for submission

JUVENILE COURT (CONT)

- Current Situation in Juvenile Court (Cont)
 - Violent crimes and increased gang activity
 - 400+ cases in Juvenile Court during last 6 months
 - 332 identified as VICTIM CRIMES
 - 288 identified as receiving NO services
 - 288 substantial violations of each victim's constitutionally protected rights
 - Every violation may have legal ramifications for the city

JUVENILE COURT (CONT)

- Solution
 - City to fund a Juvenile Court Victim Advocate for Muscogee County Juvenile Court
 - G-14 Pay Grade
 - Total Salary with Benefits - \$46,940

SUMMARY/CONCLUSION

- All efforts to locate and obtain funding have been exhausted
- Mandates must be met or endure consequences
- Responsibility falls to our local criminal justice system and CCG
- Questions