

DALTON POLICE DEPARTMENT

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I. Policy

It is the policy of the Dalton Police Department to treat all victims and witnesses of criminal activity with fairness, compassion, and dignity. The Department is committed to the development and implementation of appropriate assistance programs and activities for victims and witnesses. The Department shall work cooperatively with, and assist the members of, the Victim / Witness Assistance Program (VWAP) for the Conasauga Judicial Circuit of Georgia and other related agencies.

II. Victim / Witness Assistance Program

- A. Victims of crimes have certain rights that have been recognized by the Georgia General Assembly and written into law. Passage of victim-related bills outline law enforcement’s obligations to victims under the law.
- B. Through a collaborative effort between the Department and the Conasauga Judicial Circuit’s VWAP, victims / witnesses shall have the following rights:
 1. To be informed of the criminal justice process, notified of the release from custody of offenders, and informed about the various stages of the judicial process prior to trial.
 2. To certain compensation, when eligible.
 3. To due process in criminal proceedings.
 4. To professional and aggressive prosecution within the bounds of the law.
 5. To assistance with their employers concerning court appearances.
 6. To confidentiality of their identity and role in the case development, to the extent consistent with the Georgia Open Records Act.
- C. This program shall also attempt to provide the following assistance through the VWAP or District Attorney’s Office with support from this Department and other law enforcement agencies:

1. Referral to social agencies in the community that provide emergency care, food, shelter, clothes, and support
 2. Preparation and orientation for court appearances
 3. Escorts and moral support in the courtroom
 4. Information regarding the status and disposition of cases
 5. Return of property and assistance with restitution
 6. Assistance in applying for crime victim's compensation
 7. Other appropriate information or assistance that is needed
- D. Details of this program and links to VWAP resources are made available on the Department's website and through social media.

III. **Preliminary Investigations**

- A. The primary responsibility for providing assistance to a victim or witness shall be that of the initial responding Officer(s) to a scene.
- B. At the point of initial contact with the victim or witness of a crime, and after emergency assistance has been rendered, **if required**, the initial responding Officer(s) shall render the following services in addition to performing other normal investigative measures:
1. When applicable, provide each victim / witness of a crime with a Crime Victim's Bill of Rights notification. The Bill of Right's Notification provides the case number, name of the Officer working the case, and information regarding the applicable services provided by the VWAP.
 2. Inform the victim / witness of the subsequent steps in the processing of the case.
 3. Provide a telephone number that the victim / witness may call to report additional information about the case or receive information about the status of the case.
 4. Advise the victim / witness to call 911 if the suspect, the suspect's companions, or the suspect's family threatens or otherwise intimidates him or her.
 5. Advise the victim / witness to call 911 if he / she needs any additional assistance with victim / witness services.
 6. Refer the victim / witness to other service agencies, both private and public, that may be of assistance.

IV. **Follow-up Investigations**

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- A. Scheduling line-ups, interviews, and other required appearances shall be at the convenience of the victim / witness, whenever feasible. Factors that shall be considered in scheduling these activities include the physical, financial, and emotional well-being of the victim / witness.
- B. If necessary, the Department shall provide transportation to and from the required appearance for the victim / witness.
- C. Whenever feasible, the property taken from the victim / witness as evidence by the Department shall be promptly returned (with the exception of contraband, disputed property, and weapons used in the commission of a crime).
- D. Whenever there is a traumatic incident, which requires more than the average amount of victim / witness assistance, the Officer / Investigator shall re-contact the victim / witness within a reasonable amount of time to determine whether further assistance is required.
- E. The investigating Officer or Investigator shall explain to the victim / witness the procedures involved in the prosecution of their case and their role in these procedures. Caution shall be used to explain these procedures in such a manner as not to endanger the successful prosecution of the case.
- F. If required, the investigating Officer or Investigator shall refer the victim / witness to the VWAP for assignment of an advocate and ensure copies of incident and / or supplemental reports are forwarded to the DA's Office, [if required](#).
- G. [The investigating Officer or Investigator shall notify the victim / witness of significant developments in the investigation, such as when warrants have been obtained for the suspect and when an arrest has been made. The assigned VWAP advocate shall be responsible for making victim / witness notifications of the suspect's post-arrest processing events, including indictments and / or bond hearings.](#)

V. **Threatened Victims / Witnesses**

- A. Threats to any victims or witnesses shall be documented by an incident report and forwarded to the Criminal Investigations Division for follow-up.
- B. Appropriate assistance and / or protective measures shall be determined by the nature of each individual case, the level of threat, and the resources available to the Department.
- C. Appropriate assistance may range from the arrest of the individual making any threats to simply talking with the threatened victim / witness.
- D. If the Department becomes aware of danger to a victim or witness, every effort shall be made to promptly contact and offer any [appropriate](#) assistance and / or protective measures to the threatened person.
- E. If danger to a victim or witness is occurring outside this jurisdiction, the investigating Officer or Investigator learning of such threat shall also notify the

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appropriate jurisdiction.

VI. **Review of Assistance**

- A. The Criminal Investigations Division Commander or his / her designee shall complete a documented review of victim / witness assistance needs and available services within the Department's service area at least once every two years.
- B. This review is designed to identify appropriate victim / witness services that the Department can provide without duplicating services offered elsewhere in the community, whether by another government agency or by a private-sector organization.

This policy supersedes any previous policies issued.

BY ORDER OF

CHIEF OF POLICE

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