

SPECIAL DIRECTIVE 20-12

TO: ALL DEPUTY DISTRICT ATTORNEYS

FROM: GEORGE GASCÓN   
District Attorney

SUBJECT: VICTIM SERVICES

DATE: DECEMBER 7, 2020

This Special Directive addresses issues of Bureau of Victim Services in Chapter 1.05.02 and Victim-Witness Relations in Chapter 8 of the Legal Policies Manual. Effective **December 8, 2020**, the policies outlined below supersede the relevant sections of Chapter 1.05.02 and Chapter 8 of the Legal Policies Manual.

**INTRODUCTION**

Supporting victims in their journey to becoming survivors is fundamental to community safety. When a person has been harmed, wronged, or experienced loss at the hands of another, they need justice and healing. The criminal justice system must ensure that they have the rights and resources necessary to defend themselves, as well as services to facilitate their re-entry to the community. Attention and resources must be directed to the victims whose lives may be forever changed by the act of another, as crime victimization takes away a person's power and safety and many endure the effects of trauma long after the justice system has completed its role. It is a sad reality that the vast majority of victims do not find justice in the system, as many offenders are not known, arrested, charged, or convicted. It is important for us to have a system that takes care of victims and survivors *regardless of the outcome of the criminal case*.

The Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office will pursue a system of parallel justice, where we not only seek legal prosecution of offenders, but also provide support services for victims in their evolution to becoming survivors. Below are the policies that shall be implemented immediately in connection with other services currently provided by the Bureau of Victim Services.

**POLICY**

1. The Bureau of Victim Services (BVS) will contact all victims of violent crime within 24 hours of receiving notification. This includes sexual assault, homicide, attempted homicide, domestic and intimate partner violence. Support will be provided to both victims/survivors as well as any children witnessed or were indirectly affected by violence and crime.

2. BVS will also contact the families of individuals killed by police and provide support services including funeral, burial and mental health services immediately following the death regardless of the state of the investigation or charging decision.
3. BVS will support survivors and all others harmed by violence and crime regardless of immigration status, reporting, cooperation or documentation.
  - a. Immigration status will not be asked or needed to secure Advocacy services, California Victims of Crime Compensation or Restitution.
4. BVS will establish a Victim Emergency Fund to provide immediate financial resources to victims and family members impacted by violent crime. to
  - a. This fund will help to compensate for expenses not covered by the California Victims of Crime Compensation (Cal VCB) including relocation, funeral and burial costs, and essential needs such as food, shelter, clothing expenses.

Additionally, BVS shall not require cooperation as a condition of offering services.

Furthermore, DDAs are directed to immediately stop seeking body attachments for victims.

***The policies of this Special Directive supersede any contradictory language of the Legal Policies Manual.***

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