

Civilian Victim Services

Alaska

- The Anchorage Special Assault Unit (SAU) consists of 5 prosecutors and a paralegal who serves as the Victim/Witness coordinator for the unit. The Victim/Witness coordinator is responsible for notifying the victim of upcoming hearings and keeping the victim informed about the status of the case. The Victim/Witness coordinator in the office is a paralegal.
- The SAU does not provide victim advocate services; these are provided through a partnership with Standing Together Against Rape (STAR).
- The organization Standing Together Against Rape (STAR) is a twenty-four hour crisis intervention center providing crisis intervention services, legal advocacy services, and on-going support services to victims. STAR's involvement in a case begins as soon as a sex offense is reported.
- STAR advocates will accompany a victim through the investigation process and assist the victim throughout the court process, including accompanying the victim to meetings with the prosecutor and court appearances if the case is charged.
- STAR does not include attorneys and does not offer legal advice to victims.
- Under Alaska law, confidential communications between a sexual assault or domestic violence victim and the victim's counselor are privileged.
- STAR advocates are a part of the Sexual Assault Response Team, which includes the SART nurse, who conducts the forensic exam; the detective; and an advocate from STAR.

Maricopa County, Arizona

- Victim advocates are assigned in all sex crime cases. They address the victim's general questions about the criminal justice system and keep them apprised of the status of their case and resources available (counseling, therapy).
- Victim advocates are employed by police departments and the District Attorney's Office. At the police departments, victim advocates help officers support the victim in terms of crisis management, rather than with the judicial process. Where there aren't police advocates, community victim advocates work out of the advocacy centers and are present for victim support from the beginning of the investigation.
- Once a suspect is charged, the District Attorney's victim advocates get involved. They are organized like the Divisions and Bureaus in the District Attorney's Office, so in many cases a victim advocate will work with the same prosecutor.
- Once a case is charged there is a shift in responsibility from advocates involved at the advocacy center to a victim advocate from the prosecutor's office. Victim advocates become involved after the prosecutor makes a charging decision. The victim advocate

will provide general information, discuss potential plea offers, and even conduct a home visit.

- They have a victim advocate-victim privilege (that however does not extend to *Brady* material).
- The victim is prepared for trial by the prosecutor and victim advocate. If the victim has a victim counsel (VC), the VC may also help prepare the victim.
- Victim advocates do not provide counseling.
- Victim advocates are required to have a bachelor's degree and typically have worked as probation or parole officers or for other agencies. There is a training period before they begin shadowing experienced victim advocates. Typically they handle assignments on their own after a few months.

San Diego, California

Community Based Victim Advocates

- Notification of a sexual assault to law enforcement triggers the County's Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) process. Law enforcement responds and takes an initial report. If the victim consents, a designated SART facility (hospital or clinic) will be notified before law enforcement arrives with the victim.
- A SART nurse examiner and Rape Crisis Advocate are notified and respond.
- Victim advocate services are available to the victim at the time of the initial interview. These advocates are part of the SART team and work for a community based organization such as the Center for Community Solutions (CCS). Military advocates are also part of the SART team and could be called to respond if the victim is a military member and so desires.
- Community based advocates do have a victim advocate privilege.
- Victim advocates support victims by providing a number of services for crime victims, including victims of sexual assault. These services include a 24-hour hotline that provides immediate and confidential phone counseling, counseling services, accompaniment for victims at law enforcement interviews, court dates and sentencing hearings.
- Victim advocates also provide support and information for victims who are undergoing forensic exams and assist victims in making informed choices throughout the process.
- Advocates support the sexual assault victim during the medical-investigative examination, during follow-up care and during legal and judicial meetings and proceedings.
- Victim advocates typically have a four-year degree in a social services or criminal justice related field. They undergo a five week training period, which includes both

training and shadowing other advocates. Completion of the training is required for confidentiality to apply and is required before serving as a victim advocate.

Police Department Victim Advocates

- San Diego Police Department has a Crisis Intervention Unit which can provide short term support and referral services to victims of sexual assault and other types of crime. These advocates work with advocates from the prosecutor's office and local rape crisis centers affiliated with the SART.
- Police advocates do not have confidentiality that CCS or other community based advocates have.

District Attorney Victim Advocates

- The District Attorney's Office has victim advocates that work in many of the units, including the sexual assault unit. Their goal is to provide or arrange for services to meet the material, emotional, and informational needs of victims and witnesses.
- These advocates complete mandatory Entry-Level and Advanced Legal Victim Advocate Training. Advocates must demonstrate an understanding of victim's rights, dynamics of victimization, crisis intervention, cultural, ethnic and special needs assessments, and the Victim's Compensation Program.
- They will accompany the victim to interviews with law enforcement and prosecutors, if the victim requests.
- They do not have the confidentiality rights that community victim advocates possess.
- Victim advocates from the District Attorney's Office work with victims who are cooperating on the case. Victims that do not wish to pursue criminal prosecution are typically assisted by community based victim advocates.

Kent County, Delaware

- The police have a victim advocate who works with the victim up until the time the case is referred to the prosecutor.
- There are two attorneys and a social worker dedicated to the Sex Crimes Unit. As a matter of policy, the office employs social workers as victim advocates.
- The social workers have a master's degree and typically have prior experience in law enforcement. They are also sent to training seminars when available.
- According to the prosecutors, the social worker victim advocates are "crucial" to the office and are tasked with all contact with the victim, keeping them informed of the

proceedings, as well as managing all of the other services the victim may be authorized to receive (this has included compensation, subsidized housing, etc.)

- The victim advocates work as part of the prosecution team, and become involved in the case simultaneously with the prosecutor.
- The victim advocate immediately contacts the victim so that the prosecutor can meet with them. The victim advocate is present at each meeting with the prosecutor and keeps the victim informed of the case progress.
- The victim advocate will sit with the victim during court hearings and trial.
- The victim advocate also refer victims to community programs and work closely with victims whose cases have been referred to the prosecution, even if there is not enough evidence to go forward with the case.

The District of Columbia

Victim Advocates with the Police Department

- The Metro Police Department has a Victim Witness Unit within the Victim Services Branch. Personnel in this unit provide support, information and referrals to victims and survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence.
- Victim specialists with the MPD's Victim Services Unit works with Sex Assaults Unit detectives during the investigation, providing information, support and referrals to victims of sexual assault and their families during the investigation.
- The victim specialist also assists victims with the completion of the application for the Crime Victim Compensation Program.

Prosecution Victim Advocates

- The District of Columbia Office is unique in that it is also responsible for the prosecution of most local (non-federal) crimes occurring within the District. Prosecution of these crimes is handled primarily within the Office's Superior Court Division. The Division is divided into 4 different sections, including the Sex Offense and Domestic Violence Section.
- The sex offense and domestic violence section is supported by victim advocates. Members of the section work closely with other community organizations and agencies on issues related to domestic violence, sexual abuse, and crimes against children.
- The Victim Witness Assistance Unit of the US Attorney's Office provides assistance to victims and witnesses of serious crime while they are involved with the criminal justice system. Unit staff will also help victims understand how the criminal justice

system works and assist with restitution and services. The unit has a staff of 26, 17 of whom are victim advocates.

- The victim advocates, for the most part, are licensed social workers. The unit becomes involved with the case and victims when the case is charged.
- The Victim Services Unit provides: referrals to human services, medical, and other assistance agencies; accompaniment to court; special services for child, elderly, and handicapped victims; information on court proceedings and case status; language interpretation services, Crime Victims Compensation claim assistance; assistance with victim impact statements; and assistance with travel and lodging for out of area witnesses.
- In addition to those services provided by the Victim Witness Assistance Unit, several law enforcement agencies support victims. For example, the FBI has advocates who are assigned as soon as the FBI responds to a crime scene. Advocacy services are normally provided until indictment, but it is possible that the advocate could stay on the case longer.

Athens, Georgia

Community Based Victim Advocates

- Athens-Clarke County has a specialized special victims unit that is housed in a “Family Protection Center” near, but not co-located with, the police department.
- There are both system-based and community-based victim advocates.
- Prior to involvement by the District Attorney’s Office, victims are offered services through “The Cottage,” a community-based victim advocacy organization. The Cottage is an organization that provides victim advocacy services to the local area.
- The Cottage has one advocate, with a Master’s Degree in Social Work, on duty at any given time. Additionally, there will usually be two to three student interns from the local university.
- Involvement by advocates from The Cottage begins immediately at the time of report. For example, when a victim seeks treatment at a hospital, the hospital will report the incident as a mandatory reporter and will also call an advocate from The Cottage.
- Victims may also visit The Cottage prior to any police involvement. The victim advocate will meet with the victim to address immediate needs through crisis counseling and also discuss the victim’s options, which include 1) make a report to police; 2) receive a SANE exam without police involvement; or 3) do nothing.
- The Cottage offers regular counseling meetings and will refer victims to other practitioners for more in-depth counseling and group therapy.

- The victim advocate will often be present at the SANE exam and will stick with the client throughout the judicial process.

System Based Victim Advocates

- The District Attorney's Office has system-based victim advocates. The system-based advocates see their role primarily as explaining victim rights, getting the victim ready to face the accused at trial, providing crisis intervention, explaining the court system, and providing services that are court-specific.
- They do not offer long-term counseling.
- System-based advocates average eight to nine years of experience but some have significantly more.

Baltimore, Maryland

System Based Victim Advocates

- The State's Attorney for Baltimore City has a Victim and Witness Services Division which assists with crime victim restitution, notifying participants of court dates, serves as a crisis response team, and coordinates community outreach.
- They also have a social worker on staff who may work with the victim, if needed, when discussing a case which can't be charged or which is being dismissed before trial.

Community Based Services

- Advocates from Turnaround, Inc. provide initial victim advocate services to victims who report to the hospital because of a sexual assault case. They may also provide on-going services throughout and after a case, and whether or not charges are filed.
- Turnaround is a sexual assault/domestic violence center that provides counseling and support services to victims of sexual assault and domestic violence in Baltimore County. Turnaround also has a collaborative relationship with the Baltimore County Police Department (BCPD), such that when law enforcement is called to the scene, Turnaround will be notified and a victim advocate will also respond.
- BCPD does not have victim advocates, so Turnaround fills a gap in services.
- Turnaround advocates have no agenda except for support of victims.

- Both the police and prosecutors will refer or discuss Turnaround's services with victims. If a victim wants to report anonymously, or as a "Jane Doe," then the Turnaround advocate supports that choice.
- Turnaround victim advocates are considered fully trained after about 6 months on the job. In addition to 40 hours of standard training, they receive special training on sexual assault, sex trafficking, and domestic violence.
- Victim advocates are overseen by a Licensed Social Worker. During training, they learn to understand what their role is in the process, understanding trauma and how people walk through it. Turnaround advocates need to have an excellent understanding of the criminal justice system.
- Turnaround advocates are part of the SART team.
- Victim advocates do not sit in with the victim during interviews with the prosecutor. Prosecutors believe they cannot have a frank discussion with the victim if others are present in the room. They also are concerned that the victim advocate could become a potential witness.

Kent County, Michigan

- The Grand Rapids Prosecutor's Office has seven advocates called Case Managers, and clerical support staff and interns. Each case manager is assigned to a particular court, either in Grand Rapids or Kent County.
- Most of the Case Managers are very experienced, with some having over twenty years of experience. They have backgrounds in criminal justice, social work, or similar fields. Most began their work as an advocate through an internship with the Prosecutor's office or a related agency.
- The office funds at least three staff training programs per year. Attendees conduct in-house training after returning from training. The office also utilizes no-cost training put on by other agencies. There is also a video library with extensive training materials.
- Case Managers notify victims and witnesses of court dates and hearings, support victims at hearings and trial, explain the legal process to the victim and maintain contact to explain 'what happens next' as well as answer questions about a hearing or procedure that just occurred.

Specifically, Case Managers will:

- Contact the victim within 24 hours of the case being charged.
- Provide a brochure outlining victims' rights and a letter from the prosecutor to discuss option and set up an interview.

- Set up a meeting with the prosecutor and arrange that the victim be present at preliminary hearings
 - When applicable, assist the victim with filing Crime Victim's Compensation Claims.
 - Liaison between the victim, prosecutor, and investigators, including discussing the victim's wishes with the prosecutor, advocating for the victim when there are conflicts, and explaining the prosecutor's decisions and actions to the victim.
 - Accompany the victim to court hearings and trial, if requested by the victim.
 - Coordinate with community victim advocates and investigators regarding victim rights and options.
 - Assist the victim with preparation of a victim impact statement, and provide post- sentencing notifications for the victim.
- Case Managers do not respond to the scene to meet victims, and do not provide counseling services themselves. They will provide referrals for counseling and other services, and work.

Bronx, New York

- The Bronx has dedicated in- house social workers, counselors and victim advocates. These victim advocates and support personnel provide services to the victim whether a case being filed or not.
- The Crime Victims Assistance Unit (CVAU) provides victims with a variety of services. Major categories of services include Emotional Supportive Services, Client Advocacy Services, Emergency Assistance, Applications Assistance, Court Accompaniment, and Transportation Services.
- The victim advocates have good relationships with the rest of the prosecution team (ADA, law enforcement, investigators). The victim advocate gets most information about a case from the investigator or ADA so the victim is not subjected to a barrage of previously asked questions. A victim advocate may accompany a victim to the grand jury hearing, but they cannot go inside.
- They do NOT have confidentiality. Victim advocates do not sit in on interviews.
- There is great emphasis placed on a victim advocate's need to understand the criminal justice system, or the victim advocate will be ineffective. Victim Advocates are considered an "informed emotional presence," serving as a conduit of information from and to the ADA.
- The victim advocate stays with a victim throughout the process to reduce stress and the emotional hardship of feeling "re-victimized."
- The victim advocates have a four-year degree, usually in social work or psychology.

- The office has a training program which victim advocates must complete before assisting victims. It includes a two-week observation period, where the victim advocate will sit in the court room to observe. They also participate in unit training with the ADAs.
- There are times when a victim disagrees with the actions an ADA is taking or plans to take. Victim advocates will stand up to the ADA for the victim, to advocate for the victim's needs. If a victim does not want to proceed with a case, the prosecutor will usually follow up in thirty days to ensure the victim still does not want to go forward.
- The advocate also ensures that there is one person to stay with the victim throughout the entire case. They do not sit in with prosecutors during victim interviews, but can be present during SANE nurse examination if the victim wants an advocate to be present. Victim advocates also assist the victim to ensure that the victim is permitted to express any desires regarding plea offers that may be made.
- Victim advocates may continue to assist the victim following conviction at Parole Board hearings.

Brooklyn, New York

- The Brooklyn DA's office follows what they referred to as "victim-centric" prosecution. The office consults with victims on charging, pleas, and sentencing. They ensure that victim's decisions are not coerced and that they are informed, but their lack of concurrence does not prevent the DA's office from prosecuting.
- Brooklyn has twenty-five social workers employed by the prosecutor's office which is funded by grant dollars. There are also outside victim advocate organizations that are usually there to provide long term victim counseling. Victim's groups are very active in New York and they are typically non-profit organizations who work well with the ADA's office.
- To be part of the ADA's team, social workers must have a Master's Degree in Social Work/Bachelors in Social Work (or equivalent counseling field). They are trained in the criminal law process by the ADAs to understand the process well before assisting victims.
- There is a two-week training program for social workers that include: training by the ADA's, speakers, sexual assault victim testimonials, shadowing an experienced social worker, and on-the-job-training under a senior social worker who will sign them off when ready.
- A social worker will typically meet with a victim within an hour of an offense being reported. Social workers use a sensible approach with the victim; they walk them through the process and maintain a relationship throughout the investigation and trial. They are trained to listen to what the victim wants instead of challenging. They keep in touch with the victim through prosecution and provide updates of the case status.
- Social workers also conduct crisis counseling.
- Social Workers must turn over their notes if any *Brady Information* comes up.

- Since the office focuses on victim care, both the ADA and social worker take responsibility for informing the victim about court dates, adjournment, and relevant rulings/delays.
- A victim continues to have contact with the social worker even after trial. An assigned social worker will notify a victim as to jail release, parole, and other notifications.

Manhattan, New York

- Manhattan does not have in-house victim advocates. Victim advocate/social work services are provided by legal aid and other community service agencies through hospitals.
- Local victim advocate units and non-profit organizations maintain an open dialogue with the prosecutors, fostered by the bureau chief and her deputies.

Queens, New York

- Victim support services are provided through two supporting hospitals that have a Sexual Assault Response Team (SART). The advocates are social workers trained by the local prosecutor's office.
- Social Workers are also co-located in the prosecutor's office, but are employed by Mount Sinai hospital. Those social workers split their time between the prosecutor's office and the hospital.
- Social Workers are used to provide short term counseling to the victims, both before and after the trial process. They may sit with a victim during the investigation at the hospital to keep them company or accompany them to trial.
- The social worker may call to notify the victim of a trial date and administrative matters, but the prosecutor, paralegal and/or office staff generally maintains primary responsibility for notification.
- Prosecutors are the primary communicators with the victim about the progress of the case being that it can take over a year to get to trial. To that end, the prosecutors are also advocates for the victims. Prosecutors attempt to ensure the victim feels like they are being served by the prosecutor, despite what the outcome of the prosecution is.

Multnomah and Yamhill Counties, Oregon

- In Multnomah County there are two victim advocates who work for the police department. They primarily deal with cases that are not going to be sent to the prosecutor's office for charging review.
- Victim advocates also support the prosecution in Yamhill County. The Department of Justice provided funding to assist with victim advocate services being provided at the District Attorney's Office in the past ten years.

Multnomah County

- The District Attorney's Office has seven victim advocates supporting victims in all types of felony person crimes and domestic violence cases.
- There is an additional sixty-two volunteer advocates.
- The primary goal of the victim advocate program is to make the criminal justice system more responsive to victims of crime.
- Victim Advocates advise victims of their rights, and file a notice in court of which rights the victim wishes to invoke (as required by law to invoke certain rights). The Victim Advocate from the prosecutor's office will also assist the victim through the grand jury process, and is typically the first to meet face to face with the victim.
- They also ensure victims are notified of all hearings, including bail hearings, plea hearings and sentencing hearings where victims typically attend. Victim advocates accompany victims to these hearings, and will also ensure that at least one advocate (from either the D.A. Office, a community advocate, or both) are with the victim during trial.
- In addition, the Portland Police Department has two victim advocates who primarily deal with victims whose cases will ultimately not be referred to the District Attorney's Office for charging. Once a case has been referred to the District Attorney's Office and a Grand Jury has been convened, a victim advocate from that Office will assume responsibility for the victim.
- In most Oregon jurisdictions, there are no police based victim advocates. This creates a gap in the system for victims from the time of the initial report until the police report goes to the District Attorney's Office and the case is charged.
- A victim advocate will meet the victim at the hospital or the scene, when contacted by law enforcement. They provide information to the victim about the medical examination and law enforcement interview. If the victim wants to 'non-report,' the responding advocate will usually be a volunteer (e.g., from a nonprofit). (A victim can get a SANE exam but decide to 'non-report' in which case a victim advocate from a rape crisis center would provide victim advocate services, since the case will not be referred for prosecution.)

Yamhill County

- In Yamhill County, victim advocates work for the District Attorney's Office. They all attend a 4-day victim advocate training. They also use web-based training and law enforcement sponsored training.
- These victim advocates will respond to the crime scene or hospital when a victim reports a sex offense, even if they want to remain anonymous. (Note: victim

- advocates from the District Attorney's Office will only become involved if the case is reported to the police, or the victim reports to the hospital.)
- They also sit in on victim interviews with the detective. The victim advocate has considerable authority to pursue rights for the victim with the prosecutor and court. They are independent and will advocate for the victim even if it means disagreeing with the prosecutor.
 - Victim advocate services are provided on a 24 hour basis. Victim advocates in Yamhill County regularly provide the following services:
 - Contact on emergent and cold cases when police are called to a location
 - Court accompaniment
 - Victim services/counseling
 - Assistance obtaining sexual assault restraining orders/victim impact statements
 - Meet with victims and therapists
 - Respond to health department if victim there
 - Ensure victim rights/file notice with court
 - Notify victim of court hearings
 - Primary contact/liaison with prosecutors
 - There is no victim advocate privilege for victim advocates within the prosecutor's office.
 - There are also community based victim advocates, who work well with the District Attorney victim advocates. Community Victim Advocates have a less trusting relationship with police than do advocates from the DA Office.

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

District Attorney's Office

- The Trial Division has a Victim/Witness Services unit. Victim/witness coordinators assist witnesses and victims throughout the criminal proceedings: notifying them of upcoming hearings, arranging transportation to court, providing support and guidance, and addressing issues of intimidation and harassment. The unit also assists crime victims with the Pennsylvania Crime Victims Compensation Board.
- Advocates in the Victim/Witness Services unit typically hold a bachelor's degree. There is an internal training process focusing on the criminal justice system.
- Victim advocates are crucial to keeping the victim informed about every proceeding, and bridging the "information gap."
- The advocates are also available to return calls during the day when prosecutors are in court. Advocates, both those employed by or working with the prosecutor, are considered very knowledgeable about the criminal justice system and are able to explain it to victims.

- The prosecutors contract with both Women Against Abuse (WAA) and Women Organized Against Rape (WOAR) to provide victim advocacy services at preliminary hearings. These groups also help with safety planning, provide a twenty-four hour hotline and counseling services to victims.
- The Victim Advocate role is viewed as very important. They are able to convey the victim's desires and expectations about the case to the prosecutor even when the victim isn't present. The level of information and the 'plain English' explanations they provide back to the victim about case progress and difficulties reduces misinformation and helps more victims stay with the process through trial.

Community-Based Services

- WOAR is a non-profit whose mission is to eliminate sexual violence through specialized treatment services, comprehensive prevention education programs, and advocacy for the rights of victims of sexual assault. WOAR provides free counseling for victims of sexual violence. The counselors have a Master's degree in Counseling or Social Work.
- Court Advocates have a bachelor's level degree. There are some positions that don't require a degree for entry level advocates. This allows advocates to move up within the organization as their education and experience grows.
- Services include a 24-hour hotline, medical accompaniment, adult drop-in groups, counseling and support, accompaniment to court hearings, and support during the court process. They are not present during the police interview but will sit outside the interview room and be available if the victim needs an advocate.
- WOAR has a very good relationship with prosecutors in the SVU. They often provide training to prosecutors and police. In addition, the District Attorney's Office contracts with WOAR, to provide victim advocate services at the preliminary hearing.
- WOAR victim advocates typically have a MA in Social Work.
- WOAR and other community based advocates generally are more focused on victim needs; advocates in Victim/Witness Services generally are more focused on assisting the victim through the process.
- WAA is a non-profit organization primarily focused on providing services for victims of domestic violence. Services include emergency safe haven, transitional housing, legal services, behavioral healthcare, hotline counseling, community education, and advocacy.
- There is a victim-advocate privilege in Pennsylvania. This includes community-based advocates such as WOAR.

Austin, Texas

Austin Police Department

- The Austin Police Department has a victim services unit that provides both full time and volunteer counselors who are available 24 hours per day, seven days per week.
- Counselors provide crisis stabilization services to adult victims, family members, and witnesses. Crisis stabilization services include crisis counseling, advocacy, information and referral, support services to unit detectives, assessments, short-term counseling, court accompaniment, and liaison.
- It is a requirement that a counselor be assigned to all cases involving a felony sex crime against an adult 17 or older, as well as other sex crime cases when victims/witnesses require assistance.
- In addition to police advocates, victim services are provided by SafePlace, a rape crisis center that provides victim advocate and counseling services to victims for the duration of the case.
- Detectives will typically arrange their interview with the victim to include the Victim Services Counselor. Prior to the interview, the detective and counselor will discuss the counselor's role. In some cases, the counselor will meet with the victim before the interview to provide crisis stabilization counseling, assess the victims function level or ability to undergo an interview, and/or explain to the victim what the interview will be like. If agreed to by detective and counselor before the interview, a counselor may be present during the interview. If present, the counselor might only offer emotional support if the victim is distressed or may assist in the interview.
- Counselors may also be present/assist at composite drawing appointments, photo arrays, live line-up viewings, and pretext phone calls. Victim service counselors work with the victim until the case is submitted to a prosecutor or longer if the victim requests.
- All full time counselors have at least a Master's degree in a mental health field and are trained in crisis response, the court system and area resources. They are able to call the prosecutor to answer any questions they may have about a particular case or the criminal justice system and procedures generally.
- There is no privilege between victim and victim advocate, regardless whether the advocate is a counselor from law enforcement, a Victim/Witness coordinator from the District Attorney's Office, or is from another source (e.g., a rape crisis center).

District Attorney's Office

- The Victim Witness Division is staffed with counselors who work as part of a team with attorneys, investigators and secretaries from the Trial, Grand Jury, and the

Family Justice Divisions. When needed, victim/witness staff will also work with the Appellate and Special Prosecution Divisions.

- A Victim/Witness counselor will work with the victim once the case has been submitted to a prosecutor. Prosecutors consider them very valuable, especially for preparation before the Grand Jury hearing.
- One of the major goals of the Victim Witness Division is to help victims of crime and protect their rights. The mission of the Victim/Witness Unit is to reduce victim and witness apprehension about participation in the prosecution of a case and to increase their willingness and ability to testify effectively and without fear.
- A variety of services are provided, including: short term counseling services and crisis intervention, information on the court and criminal justice system, court preparation and accompaniment, assistance with Victims Compensation Claims and Victim Impact Statements, and referral services for sources of assistance. In addition, staff members supervise bachelors and masters level social work college interns.
- The Victim/Witness division also provides witness coordination services. These services are extended to subpoenaed witnesses and include court information, travel and lodging arrangements, assistance with reimbursement forms, interpreter services and special services required by persons with disabilities.
- Counseling referral services are also available for witnesses.

Non-Government Organizations

- The Texas Association Against Sexual Assault (TAASA) is a statewide coalition that oversees 84 rape crisis centers in Texas. It provides resources and training to rape crisis centers and pursues policy goals that provide support services to victims. TAASA engages in community outreach and education, as well as providing training to law enforcement. It has provided very little training to date to prosecutors and judges but would be willing to do so. TAASA believes that further training could potentially increase the number of cases that are charged or taken to trial.
- TAASA has provided training for law enforcement officers, especially in smaller jurisdictions where there is a lower budget for training. Training has focused on education about “victimology,” counter-intuitive behavior by victims, what PTSD and trauma looks like, and types of sex offenders.

Arlington County, Virginia

- The Commonwealth’s Attorney’s office has a total of 3 Victim-Witness Liaisons (VWLs) on staff. They work for the Commonwealth’s Attorney. They are involved in all sexual assault cases. While the neighboring jurisdictions of the City of Alexandria and Fairfax use members of local advocacy groups and police advocates at the time the investigation begins, Arlington County Commonwealth’s Attorney Office does not.

- Generally, as soon as the police make an arrest and submit their report, the VWL from the District Attorney's Office will make an attempt to contact the victim. The VWL's duties include explaining the prosecution function and criminal justice system, as well as potential limitations regarding their role in the case to the victim. The VWLs coordinate victim services, accompany victims to court hearings and sit in on prosecutor interviews. VWLs advise victims of victim rights in the criminal system and provide written forms.
- If there is a conviction, they will assist with preparation of a victim impact statement and make sure it gets to the court. If a Presentence Investigation Report is prepared, the VWL will make sure the Probation Officer includes it in the Report. The victim is permitted to present an impact statement without being cross-examined. In addition, the VWL will advise the victim of the right to restitution.
- In addition to providing direct assistance, VWL refer victims to appropriate services including counseling services. They will continue to interact with victims even if a prosecution does not go forward.
- VWLs do not have any privilege or confidentiality vis-à-vis victims in Virginia. Prosecutors report that the services of a VWL are very helpful.

Snohomish County, Washington

- Victim advocates employed by the Snohomish County Prosecutor's Office staff the Special Assistant Unit (SAU) as well as other criminal units. They are involved in every case assigned that is received from law enforcement, both charged and uncharged.
- In addition, community-based victim advocates are also available to support victims, but do so more often with child victims or on homicide cases. Both types of advocates are physically located at Dawson Place, as well as elsewhere in the community. Every case will have a victim advocate; in some cases an SAU victim advocate and a community-based victim advocate will both be used on a case.
- Victim advocates in the SAU will typically have a background in counseling or social work. Like prosecutors, they will generally begin as advocates on misdemeanor domestic violence cases and progress to a felony unit.
- SAU victim advocates have no privilege, so they explain to victims that they may need to tell the prosecutor or others about their contact.
- Their duties include helping the victim understand and navigate the justice system, addressing concerns, scheduling appointments, discussing charging decisions, and ensuring the victim's concerns and desires are conveyed to the prosecutor. They also work to protect victim rights by ensuring that victims are notified of bail hearings and other court dates and they are permitted to be present and their views are accounted for when appropriate.

Excerpts from JSC-SAS Report Appendix

- Prosecutors consider victim advocates full partners and they are able/encouraged to represent the victim's views, even if the victim's views or opinions are different from those of the prosecutor assigned to the case.
- Community-based advocates are always available to victims. They are able to sit with the victim during law enforcement interviews, and/or attend meetings and interviews with the prosecutor if the victim requests.