



The BCSAO Community Newsletter

Working Together with the Community, Businesses, Law Enforcement, and Government, We Can Make a Difference!

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Features

Patricia C. Jessamy	1
Crime Victim Notification	1
Victim Information and Notification Everyday	1
BCSAO Community Liaison Program	2
Community Conferencing Center	2
7th Annual Victims' Fund Run & Walk	2
Family Bereavement 17th Anniversary	2
Fourth Year for Identity Theft Unit	2
Services for Crime Victims	3
Helpful Telephone Numbers	3
Seniors Corner	4
Frequently Asked Questions	4
BCSAO Numbers	4

Crime Victim Notification

In 1996, the Maryland General Assembly passed legislation that gave victims of violent crime the right to be notified of all court proceedings, and if the offender is incarcerated, the right to be notified of his or her release. Individuals who are interested in being notified of post-trial hearings and events should complete and return a Victim Notification Form. For additional information on Crime Victim Notification forms and how to obtain them, call (410) 396-1897.

Victim Information and Notification Everyday

Victim Information and Notification Everyday (VINE) is a free, fully automated information and notification telephone service. The State of Maryland provides all victims and victim representatives with a second system of notification for your privacy and convenience. VINE will provide you with court case and jail status information 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. You may also register with VINE to receive phone notification the day before an upcoming court hearing, or after the release or escape of an offender. While VINE may provide you with automated notification, do not rely on VINE solely for your notification of court hearing events or local jail/state prison information. Contact the Assistant State's Attorney who handled the case, or the BCSAO's Victim/Witness and Community Services Division at (410) 396-1897 for all your court-related questions or concerns.



Dear Community Resident:

For many years, victims of crime were virtually invisible in the laws and policies that govern our justice system. Today, considerable progress has been made in recognizing the rights and meeting the needs of crime victims and witnesses.

This edition of our newsletter highlights services offered to victims and witnesses. If you have been a victim of a crime, you are reminded to complete and return your crime victim notification form.

You may register for notification concerning the status, parole, escape, or release of an offender through Victim Information and Notification Everyday (VINE).

The Baltimore City State's Attorney's Office (BCSAO) has victim advocates who work daily to serve victims and witnesses at the Circuit Court. We also have nine Community Liaisons, one for each police district, who serve as liaisons between victims and witnesses of crimes, the courts, and neighborhood and community organizations. We have licensed social workers in our Family Bereavement Center who provide grief counseling to survivors of homicide victims. Our witness assistance coordinators work with victims and witnesses who may be in imminent danger.

Our 7th Annual Victims' Fund Run and Walk will be held on Saturday, April 21, 2007. This event enables us to maintain an emergency fund available to crime victims who need help in covering the cost of victimization and who meet the established criteria. The fund covers expenses such as broken windows and locks and the replacement of identification cards. You are invited to participate in the Fund Run and Walk. For additional information, call (410) 396-1897.

It is only through working together that we can make a difference.

Sincerely,

Patricia C. Jessamy

State's Attorney for Baltimore City

Fourth Year for Identity Theft Unit

The Identity Theft Unit of the Baltimore City State's Attorney's Office is now entering its fourth year of operation. This unit helps combat the increasing problem of criminals providing false personal information to police officers in order to avoid prosecution. Criminals often use relatives' personal information when being charged. The BCSAO's Identity Theft Unit resolves approximately 1,000 cases a year. The victim of identity theft may be asked to come, in person, to the Hargrove Courthouse and meet with the investigator about the matter, sign an affidavit declaring that they are a victim of identity theft, and state whom they believe stole their identity. The victim should also bring in any information about the potential identity thief and any photos of the person. An investigation is begun, and if identity theft is suspected, a warrant for the thief's arrest is drafted and upon his or her arrest prosecution begins. The Unit will also file a Change of Name petition with the Court to get cases placed into the name of the proper defendant and out of the victim's name. For additional information, contact Mr. Jim Burlas, Investigator, BCSAO Identity Theft Unit, Hargrove District Courthouse, 700 E. Patapsco Avenue, Baltimore, Maryland 21225 or via phone at (410) 878-8442.

Community Conferencing Center

The Community Conferencing Center provides a highly participatory, community-based process for people to transform their conflicts into cooperation, take collective and personal responsibility for their actions, and improve their quality of life. The Center believes people will generate creative and lasting solutions to their conflicts when everyone affected by a conflict is given a safe forum to tell his or her story, and to be part of the solution. Through partnerships with people, neighborhoods, government, and institutions, the Community Conferencing Center helps Maryland communities resolve serious community and behavioral conflicts, as well as unlawful acts that result in harm to citizens and their communities. The Center also coordinates efforts by providing training, technical assistance, and evaluation services. If you would like any additional information, or would like to learn more about how community conferencing can help your community, please call (410) 889-7400 or visit www.communityconferencing.org.

7th Annual Victims' Fund Run and Walk

Mark your calendar to participate in the BCSAO's 7th Annual Victims' Fund Run and Walk on Saturday, April 21, 2007 at 9:00 a.m. in Patterson Park. All proceeds from the 5K run and walk or 1 mile walk go toward the Crime Victims' Emergency Fund for victims of crime in Baltimore City.

The race provides a major source of funding that helps crime victims cover the unexpected costs of victimization that are usually not covered by insurance, such as the repair or replacing of broken doors and locks, windows, counseling, medical services, crime scene clean-up, and help with re-obtaining stolen identification. Please note that all victims must meet the established criteria.

The pre-registration fee before April 21st is \$20.00 and \$25.00 on race day. Hundreds of runners and walkers are expected to participate again this year. Call (410) 396-1897 for a registration form, or register online at www.charmcityrun.com.

Family Bereavement Center Observes 17th Anniversary

In March of 2007, the Family Bereavement Center (FBC) will observe its 17th anniversary of providing daily services to surviving family members and friends of homicide victims. The FBC opened in March of 1990, and the response to the center has been overwhelming. Since opening, more than 4,300 individuals have utilized FBC services.

A variety of services are provided to families and friends traumatized by the murder of a loved one. The clinical staff provides individual, family, and group counseling to both adults and children. On April 26, 1995, a memorial garden for homicide victims was created in memory of the individuals who were senselessly murdered in Baltimore City. The memorial garden is located in Cylburn Arboretum Park, 4915 Greenspring Avenue. The garden serves as a serene setting where families can visit and remember their loved ones.

The FBC has also participated in events aimed at educating the public and promoting survivor healing and coping with the grief process. The program is administered by the Baltimore City State's Attorney's Office, and is funded by a Federal grant. For additional information on the Family Bereavement Center, call (410) 396-7351.

BCSAO Community Liaison Program

In 1999, the Baltimore City State's Attorney's Office secured Federal Funding to establish a Community Coordinator program to provide services to Baltimore City residents. Now known as "Community Liaisons," there are a total of nine (one for each police district), who serve as liaisons between victims and witnesses of crimes, neighborhoods, community organizations, and criminal justice agencies. The main goal of the Community Liaisons is to establish communication amongst the BCSAO, citizens, Police Officers, and Courts, and to improve citizens' understanding of court proceedings. In addition to serving as a liaison between the criminal justice system and the community, Community Liaisons have several other responsibilities. They attend community meetings to listen to concerns, identify options and possible solutions to the issues, secure victim and community impact statements, flag cases for prosecution that are of interest to the community, and convey noteworthy case and disposition information to community members.



Shown are the State's Attorney's Office's nine Community Liaisons.

Services for Crime Victims

The following is information on services victims and their families should be aware of once a defendant has been sentenced:

Crime Victim Notification

Individuals who are interested in being notified of post-trial hearings and events should complete a Crime Victim Notification form. In 1996, the Maryland General Assembly passed legislation that gave victims of violent crime the right to be notified of all court proceedings, and if the offender was incarcerated, the right to be notified of their release. For additional information, call (410) 396-1897.

Parole and Probation

The Maryland Division of Parole and Probation established the Office of Victim Services in 1998 to provide direct and coordinated services to crime victims whose offenders are under community supervision. Parole results from the mandatory or conditional release from prison of an offender who has served a portion of their sentence in jail. The parolee is also supervised by a parole agent. Probation is a court-ordered sanction allowing offenders to remain in the community under the supervision of a parole agent. The Office of Victim Services is able to assist with the following: information and referral, victim notification, needs and risk assessment, restitution assistance, victim impact statements, and case status information. For additional information, call (410) 585-3517.

Division of Corrections

The Maryland Division of Correction Victim Services Program is committed to assisting victims of crime. The Victim Services Program provides information to victims of an inmate's release from incarceration, if an inmate escapes or returns from the escape, the death of an inmate, victim impact statements, and safety plans. For additional information on the custody status of an inmate, call (410) 585-3331

Parole Commission

A defendant may request to be considered for a parole hearing after serving a percentage of their sentence. The Victim Services Division of the Maryland Parole Commission specifically assesses and addresses the needs of victims throughout the parole process. Victims have the right to submit a written victim impact statement, meet with the Parole Commissioner, attend an open parole hearing and speak, if eligible. For additional information call (410)585-3200.

Attorney General's Office Victim Services

After a defendant is sentenced he or she has 30 days to file an appeal. The defendant may ask a higher court to review the trial. The higher court may affirm or reverse the decision. If reversed, a new trial may be scheduled. The Attorney General's Office Victim Services Unit notifies crime victims and victims' family members of court events related to their case or conviction on appeal. For additional information, call (410) 576-6380 or (888)743-0023.

Helpful Numbers

Illegal Drugs	(410) 685-DRUGS
Fire, Police & Ambulance	911
Non-Emergency Services	311
Community Law Center	(410) 366-0922
Community Mediation	(410) 516-1981
Illegal Gun (GunStoppers)	(410) 685-GUNS
Metro CrimeStoppers	(410) 276-8888
Family Helpline	(410) 685-0525
Poison Control Center	(410) 528-7701
Rape Crisis Center	(410) 828-6390
Transit & Traffic	
Emergencies	(410) 396-3050
Baltimore City	
Switchboard	(410) 396-3100
Commission on Aging	
and Retirement	(410) 396-4933
Baltimore City Community	
Relations	(410) 396-3141
Baltimore City Health	
Department	(410) 396-4398
Baltimore City Department	
of Education	(410) 396-8700
Department of	
Social Services	(410) 396-4600
Baltimore City Department	
of Recreation	(410) 396-7900

Legal Services

Housing Court	(410) 396-4140
Legal Services for	
the Elderly	(410) 396-1322
Office of the	
Public Defender	(410) 333-4900
Office of the	
Attorney General	(410) 576-6300

Community Liaisons Numbers

Central	(410) 878-8450
Southeastern	(410) 878-8575
Eastern	(410) 878-8598
Northeastern	(410) 878-8587
Northern	(410) 878-8186
Northwestern	(410) 878-8171
Western	(410) 878-8162
Southwestern	(410) 878-8447
Southern	(410) 878-8446

Baltimore City State's Attorney's Office
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Seniors Corner

Senior citizens sometimes become a victim of crime, wander off alone and become disoriented, or become sick. In 2006, a campaign was undertaken by the Baltimore City Police Department to institute the Senior Citizen Bracelet Program in order to help address these concerns.

Each senior citizen's bracelet number is kept on file. The file contains personal identification information such as: the member's home address, telephone number, medical alerts, vehicle information, and emergency contact information. There is no charge to receive the identification bracelet. The Police Department has been able to identify 9,000 seniors who reside in Baltimore through bracelet requests they have received. The bracelets are made of a non-corrosive silver metal, and are inscribed with a membership number. When a senior citizen is assaulted, seriously injured, or hospitalized, the Senior Citizen Liaison Officer responds to the location of the crime. If the person is wearing a bracelet, identification is made, and the emergency contact person is called.

For additional information, or to obtain a bracelet, call (410) 339-2245.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What happens if the defendant threatens or harasses me to keep me from testifying in court?

As a victim or witness, you have the right to be safe. It is against the law to intimidate a State's witness. If the defendant or any other person threatens you or tries to intimidate you, call the police immediately and notify the Assistant State's Attorney in your case.

2. As a crime victim, do I need to hire an attorney?

No, you do not need to hire your own attorney. The Assistant State's Attorney assigned to your case represents you in court for criminal matters.

3. My automobile or license tag was taken without permission. I was not an eyewitness. Do I need to appear in court?

Yes. In order to successfully prosecute the case, the law demands that prosecutors prove a) ownership, b) that the person in possession did not have permission to take the item, c) any applicable damage(s) and d) the value of the item. Furthermore, this proof can only be made via the testimony of an in-court witness. Please bring all documents showing ownership of the stolen property, including your vehicle registration and title, and/or any records of cost related to the theft.

Baltimore City State's Attorney's Office

Victim Witness and Community Services
(410) 396-1897

Family Bereavement Center
(410) 396-7351

Wabash District Court
(410) 878-8161

North Avenue District Court
(410) 878-8575

Hargrove District Court
(410) 878-8440

Domestic Violence Unit
(410) 396-7444

Housing Unit/Nuisance Abatement
(410) 396-4140

Juvenile
(443) 263-8100

Child Support
(410) 347-2011

Administrative Offices
(410) 396-4001

Contact the State's Attorney's Victim Witness and Community Services Division to be placed on the newsletter mailing list or receive it electronically. We welcome your comments and suggestions. Call (410) 396-1897 or e-mail us at mail@statattorney.org. You may also view the newsletter online at www.statattorney.org.