

## Your Rights as a Victim of Crime

*As the victim of a crime, you have certain rights in the criminal & juvenile justice system. These rights include but are not limited to those listed below.*

*You have the right to:*

- Receive information on community services, availability of victim compensation, your role in and the stages of the criminal and juvenile justice systems.
- Be informed, present and heard at all crucial stages and if desired, submit a Victim Impact Statement. If incarcerated, you may submit a written statement.
- A prompt and timely disposition of the case so long as it does not interfere with the rights of the accused.
- Receive information about protection from intimidation, Attorney General address confidentiality, the prompt return of property, assistance with employers or creditors, requesting and receiving restitution and confidentiality in certain cases.
- Be consulted by the State Attorney's Office in certain felony cases and to be notified about scheduling changes, judicial proceedings, arrest, release from incarceration, escape of offender and placement in work release.
- Be present during the trial even if subpoenaed, unless the court finds otherwise.
- Assert your victim rights through the State Attorney's Office. Request that the offender attend a different school than the victim or victim's siblings.
- Review portions of the pre-sentence investigation prior to sentencing. However, information gathered regarding a juvenile case cannot be revealed, except as necessary in pursuit of legal remedies.
- Have a Victim Advocate present at deposition. A victim is not required to attend depositions in a correctional facility unless the victim is incarcerated.
- Transportation, translator services, separate waiting rooms when practical.
- Notice, at the earliest possible opportunity, if the person charged with the offense, which involves transmission of body fluids, has tested positive for hepatitis or human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection.
- Request hepatitis or HIV testing when a defendant is formally charged with a sexual offense, or certain other offenses, involving transmission of bodily fluids; or specific sexual offenses involving a minor child, elderly or disabled adult. The victim shall be given results within two weeks after receipt by the court.

*Please see your victim counselor for an explanation of these rights, as well as any additional rights and information about services provided.*

## Important information

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Law Enforcement Agency

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Officer/Detective

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Agency Report Number

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Date of Offense

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Victim Assistance Counselor

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Court Case Number

## Helpful Websites

State Attorney's Office [www.sao13th.com](http://www.sao13th.com)

Florida Dept. of Corrections [www.dc.state.fl.us](http://www.dc.state.fl.us)  
(*Fl. Offender Population Information (VINE)*)

Florida Government Offices [www.myflorida.com](http://www.myflorida.com)  
(*All State Government and Victim Compensation Forms*)

Hills. County Sheriff's Office [www.hcso.tampa.fl.us](http://www.hcso.tampa.fl.us)  
(*Arrest/Warrant Information*)

Hills. County Government [www.hillsboroughcounty.org](http://www.hillsboroughcounty.org)  
(*Information and Referrals*)

Hills. County Clerks Office [www.hillsclerk.com](http://www.hillsclerk.com)  
(*Court Case Info, Domestic Violence Forms*)

The Spring of Tampa Bay, Inc. [www.thespring.org](http://www.thespring.org)

The Life Center [www.lifecenteroftampa.org](http://www.lifecenteroftampa.org)



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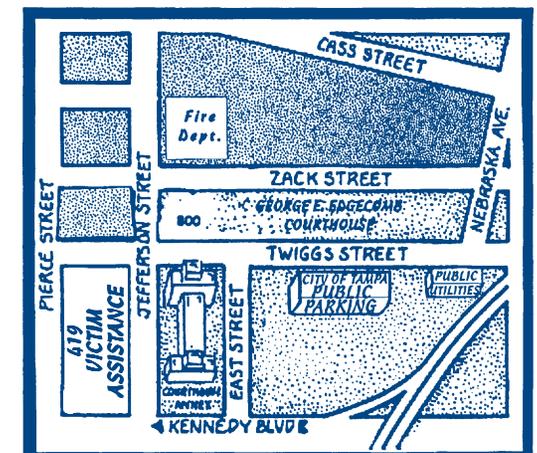
## VICTIM ASSISTANCE PROGRAM 272-6472

*!victimassistance@sao13th.com*

## Information for Crime Victims

*A guide to the services of the Victim Assistance Program and information for victims, including safety planning for Domestic Violence victims.*

### 419 N. Pierce Street



*Victim Assistance Program Funded by the Hillsborough County Board of County Commissioners.*

**A Message  
from State Attorney  
ANDREW H. WARREN**

Dear Fellow Citizen,

As you look around at your friends, family and business associates, it is difficult to imagine that any of you may become a victim of a crime. Unfortunately, with the alarming increase of violent crimes, the sad reality is that each and every one of us is likely to be a victim of crime at least once during our lifetime.

In the aftermath of violence, crime victims must often cope with physical pain, psychological trauma, financial loss and a criminal justice system that seems confusing and overwhelming.

The Hillsborough Board of County Commissioners and I recognize that the way to ensure the needs of victims are addressed is through a combined effort. We are committed to meeting these needs through our Victim Assistance Program.

This brochure explains some of the services available to victims. Please take a moment to read it carefully and feel free to contact the Victim Assistance Program for additional information.



**The court process can be confusing and often intimidating. We are here to help victims of crime with a variety of problems associated with the crime. The services listed are provided throughout the criminal justice process, without charge.**

**General Assistance** We will provide you with information about the criminal justice system and your role in the case, as well as the various stages of prosecution. We will act as your advocate with your employer, landlord, creditors and other agencies to assist you with financial, emotional and physical hardships which often follow a victimization. We will also help you solve problems that may be caused by the necessity of court appearances and provide other services as needed.

**Courtroom Assistance** We will escort you to hearings and depositions and assist you in seeking the return of your property when no longer needed as evidence. We will serve as your liaison with the State Attorney's Office and all law enforcement agencies.

**Your Input as a Victim** Victims have the right to be present and heard at crucial stages of their case. We can help you in completing a Victim Impact Statement.

**Notification of Hearings** We will notify you in advance, when possible, of crucial court hearings. You may receive an automated phone call or an email to advise you of court dates, so it is important that you advise us of best way to notify you.

**Emotional Support** We can provide you with emotional support for your feelings of anger, frustration, loss, etc. Additional counseling is available upon referral.

**Financial Assistance** The State's Bureau of Victim Compensation provides financial assistance to eligible victims who have received physical injuries as a result of the crime. Benefits may include help with medical bills, lost wages, funeral expenses and limited death benefits. Additionally, any victim of domestic violence may also be eligible for funds to assist with relocation.

**Information & Referral** We maintain a current directory of community agencies that provide assistance to crime victims.

**Juvenile Cases** Please contact the Victim Assistance Program directly at (813) 272-6472.

# INFORMATION FOR VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

**No One – Not your spouse or someone you live with has the right to hit you or threaten you with violence – No One**

If you think you may be involved in a violent relationship, help is available. Are you abused? Answer these questions:

## **Does your spouse or partner . . .**

- Threaten to hurt you or your children?
- Refuse to let you have contact with your family or friends?
- Throw things or destroy your personal belongings?
- Accuse you of having affairs?
- Tell you that you are stupid, fat, ugly or call you names?
- Blame you and tell you that you are the cause of all the problems?
- Say you never do anything right?
- Abandon you, leave you places or lock you out?
- Take or hide your keys, important papers or your mail?
- Forbid you to work or refuse to give you money for things you need for yourself or child?
- Force you into unwanted sexual practices?
- Hit, kick, shove, grab or shake you or your children or generally react to problems in a violent manner?

**If you answered YES to any of these questions, contact the Victim Assistance Program 272-6472**

## **A Victim of Abuse may . . .**

- \* Become isolated from family and friends.
- \* Have hope that the abuser will change.
- \* Believe the violence won't happen again.
- \* Accept blame for the abuse, tries hard to "make things right."
- \* Blame abuser's behavior on alcohol or drug use, or a bad childhood.
- \* Develop low self-esteem.
- \* Have feelings of hopelessness

## **Children in Violent Homes May . . .**

- \* Become isolated from family and friends.
- \* Exhibit emotional problems, excessive crying, become withdrawn or shy.
- \* Have difficulty making friends or fear adults.
- \* Suffer from depression and excessive absences from school.
- \* Use violence for solving problems at school and at home.
- \* Be at greater risk of being a runaway, being suicidal or committing crimes.

**Remember: Children do not have to be abused themselves in order to be impacted by violence in the home.**

## **The Law Protects You . . .**

If you are being physically or sexually abused or threatened, or believe you may become the victim of domestic violence from:

- A former spouse
- A family or household member who was or is living in your household; or
- A person with whom you have a child in common regardless of whether you have lived together.

## **Here are Your Rights**

There is a special law in Florida to protect you.

**YOU HAVE THE RIGHT** to ask your Law Enforcement Agency to file a criminal complaint, if one has not already been filed.

**YOU HAVE THE RIGHT** to go to court and file a petition requesting an Injunction for Protection. This involves completing forms, which you must swear to, that explain to the Judge what type of protection you need and who you are afraid of or who is abusing you.

This Injunction or Protective Order is available at no cost by going to the courthouse, Clerk of the Circuit Court's Office. You must be able to provide a current address so that the person abusing you can be served. Once the Judge signs the Injunction, there will be a hearing within 15 days. You must attend the hearing. This order may include some or all of the things listed below, or anything else the Judge feels necessary to protect you and your children.

- Order the abuser not to commit any further acts of violence against you.
- Order the abuser to leave the home you share and stay away from your home, work or school.
- Restrain the abuser from any contact or further acts of abuse as a "no contact" condition of pretrial release which will prevent the abuser from being within 500 feet of your residence, vehicle, school, business, or place of employment.
- Order the abuser to pay for support of you and your minor children; or
- Make any other orders necessary to protect you and your children.

## Safety Planning - What You Can Do

Consider taking any or all of the following steps which could keep you and your children safe from further violence:

- If an argument seems unavoidable, try to have it in an area that has access to an exit and not in a bathroom or anywhere there are weapons.
- Practice how to get out of your home safely. Identify which doors, windows, elevators, or stairwells would be best.
- Identify a neighbor you can tell about the violence and ask that they call the police if they hear a disturbance in your home.
- Devise a code to use with your children, family, friends and neighbors when you need police.
- Leave money, an extra set of keys, copies of important documents and extra clothes with someone you trust or store them away from your house.
- Determine who would be able to let you stay with them or lend you some money.
- Memorize the shelter phone number and keep some change or a calling card on you at all times.

### What to do if you are being stalked:

- \* **Keep** a log of incidents including the date, time, what happened and the names and addresses of any witnesses.
- \* **Keep** any e-mails, letters, faxes, items, etc. left for you by the stalker.
- \* **Inform** people you know that you are being stalked and ask them not to give out any personal information about you.
- \* **Show** a picture of the stalker to people you know.
- \* **Report** the stalking to the police.

## Safety Planning

### Once You Get an Injunction

There are several types: domestic, dating, sexual and repeat violence. See your Victim Counselor for assistance with your Injunction.

- Keep your Injunction with you at all times.
- Change your phone number, purchase an answering machine or have someone screen your calls, if possible.
- Devise a safety plan for getting to your car when leaving home or work.
- Change the locks on your doors and add locks or safety devices to your windows.
- Inform your children's school, day care, etc., about who has permission to pick them up.
- Inform neighbors, landlords and employers that you have an Injunction and ask them to call the police if the batterer comes around.
- Report any threats, intimidation or harassment to law enforcement immediately.

**Free 911 Cell Phones are available  
ask your Victim Counselor.**

### REMEMBER . . . LEAVING THE ABUSER IS THE MOST DANGEROUS TIME FOR YOU.

#### What to take when you leave

- Identification
- Driver's License
- Children's Birth Certificate
- Money
- Lease, Rental Agreement, Deed
- Checking/Savings Books
- Insurance Papers
- House and Car Keys
- Medications/Medical Records
- Address Book
- Pictures
- Social Security Card
- Public Assistance ID
- School Records
- Work Permits/Green Cards
- Passports
- Divorce Papers
- Jewelry
- Children's Small Toys

## Helpful Phone Numbers

### Fl. Offender Population Info. (VINE)

1-877-846-3435

### Legal Offices

|                         |                    |
|-------------------------|--------------------|
| State Attorney's Office | 272-5400           |
| Victim Compensation     | 1-800-226-6667     |
| Bay Area Legal Services | 232-1343           |
| Witness Aid             | 274-1566           |
| Injunction Office       | 276-8100, ext.4356 |

### Non-Emergency Police Departments

|                         |          |
|-------------------------|----------|
| Sheriff's Office        | 247-8200 |
| Tampa Police Dept.      | 231-6130 |
| Plant City Police Dept. | 757-9200 |
| Temple Terrace Police   | 989-7110 |
| USF Police Dept.        | 974-2628 |

### 24-Hr. Crisis Hotlines

|                                     |                 |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------|
| The Spring Shelter                  | 247-7233 (SAFE) |
| Crisis Center                       | 234-1234        |
| Abuse Hotline                       | 1-800-962-2873  |
| <i>(Adults, Children, Disabled)</i> |                 |

### Support Groups & Counseling

|                 |          |
|-----------------|----------|
| The Centre      | 251-8437 |
| The Life Center | 237-3114 |

## Downtown Judicial Offices

### George Edgecomb Court Facility

#### 800 E. Twiggs Street

- INJUNCTION OFFICE—2nd Fl.
- Child Support Office
- Mediation Programs
- Juvenile Drug Court

### Courthouse Annex – 800 E. Kennedy OR

#### 801 E. Twiggs Street

- Felony, Misdemeanor & Juvenile Courtrooms

### 419 N. Pierce Street

- Victim Assistance Program, 3rd Floor
- State Attorney's Office
- Witness Aid Center
- Traffic Courts