

Victim Services

New County Program To Help Victims Of Serious Crimes

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Sometimes the victim is the first person forgotten in the aftermath of a serious crime.

But a new program, established by the county's probation office, is designed to make sure that doesn't happen.

Called the Victim Services Department, the program relies on trained workers to counsel and help the victims of serious crimes in the area.

The volunteers may find child care for the victim, emergency cash, shelter or transportation. They may also help with funeral arrangements, next-of-kin notification, and arrangements for temporary companionship.

But, whatever they do, they provide support and assistance to those who may be victimized by crime, according to a probation department spokesman.

At the outset, the program will concentrate on aiding victims of violent crimes with attention being given to senior citizens, according to the spokesman.

Referrals will be made by local police and sheriff's agencies. However, anyone can call and ask for assistance from the program's volunteers. The worker will call on the victim and ask if they need assistance. In most cases, the volunteer will be there the same day the crime is committed.

The volunteer will help victims understand how the criminal justice system works, help them take advantage of community programs which can help them, and give support to those who may be traumatized by the crime, said a spokesman.

"The worker's primary role is one of support. The worker knows how to get things done, has answers to questions, and the means to find answers where none seems to exist," according to a project description of the program.

The program, while staffed with two CETA-paid workers, relies on volunteers. Anyone wishing to volunteer for the program should contact the county's probation office.

"The tragedy of violent crime, perhaps because of its unpredictability and senselessness, is something few can prepare for. The Criminal Justice community cares about the oft-neglected victim and encourages groups or individuals to offer their own support and services," the report says.