

VICTIM SERVICES HASTINGS, PRINCE EDWARD, AND LENNOX & ADDINGTON COUNTIES

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Hours of Operation:

Business office is open Monday to Friday 8:30 to 4:00 p.m.

On-call volunteers available for Police and Fire services 24 hours a day 7 days a week

Introduction

Victim Services of Hastings, Prince Edward, and Lennox & Addington Counties offers an Emergency Crisis Response program, Support Link program and Victim Quick Response Program all funded through the Ontario Victim Services Secretariat of the Ministry of the Attorney General.

Emergency Crisis Response Program is mandated to assist police and other emergency service providers in meeting the emotional and practical needs of victims of crime, tragic circumstances, including victims of partner abuse. Staff and/or professionally trained volunteers offer timely compassionate support and connect victims with appropriate community services as well as providing follow up contact ensuring victims receive and will continue to receive assistance, if required.

Emergency Crisis Response Program accepts referrals from police, other emergency service personnel and community agencies. All services provided through Victim Services are accessible to victims on a voluntary basis, with no cost. All services are confidential.

Support Link program is designed to address the need to enhance the safety of individuals identified at risk of domestic violence, sexual assault and/or stalking. The objective of the program is to lessen the impact of crime and trauma through support services to victims. As well as to increase the victims level of empowerment.

Support Link accepts referral from police services, victim services, shelters, crown attorney, sexual assault centres, and other community agencies. Self referrals are not accepted.

Victim Quick Response Program is designed to provide the victims of violent crime with quick access to resources including immediate emergency expenses, short-term counselling and funeral expenses.

Victim Quick Response Program accepts applications from victims who within 14 days have reported the crime to police services: or in the case of domestic violence or sexual assault, reported to a shelter, sexual assault centre, hospital or community agency that provides service to victims. The victim, immediate family member or custodian of a child can request assistance.

More specifically, Victims Services:

- Provides telephone crisis support, emotional support, information, and referrals to victims of crime.
- Provides practical assistance, such as transportation and accompaniments, to hospitals, shelters, and police stations.
- Advocates on behalf of victims of crime, tragic circumstance, and disaster as necessary.
- Provides safety planning.
- Provides 911 phone to those meeting eligibility criteria.
- Provides funding for short term counselling, funerals and immediate emergency expenses.

Some of these services are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week through referral by emergency services, such as the police; office hours are Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Self-referrals are accepted during regular office hours only.

It is especially important that victims of partner abuse understand the following in relation to the services provided by Victim Services:

- Visits will be made to the victim's residence or any other location where she may be staying if and only if the location is determined to be safe.
- Victims Services will not provide mediation, conflict resolution or counselling services for the victim and her abuser when visiting on-site.
- To be eligible for the SupportLink Program, crime must be reported to police and Victim Quick Response program; the victims situation must be reported to an appropriate agency (see below).
- To be eligible for the Victim Quick Response Program the application must be received within 14 days of the report of the crime to police services or appropriate agency.

Overview of Specific Procedures and Services

1. CRISIS RESPONSE SERVICES

When a victim of partner abuse is referred to or contacts Victim Services the responding staff member or volunteer directs priority attention to the immediate physical safety of the caller.

Questions pertaining to the caller's location, the assailant's location, possible physical injuries, and the need for immediate medical and/or police intervention are used to determine if emergency assistance is required. If so, the caller will be encouraged to call 911 or, alternately, Victims Services personnel will contact 911 on behalf of the caller.

In the event that medical or police services are required, Victim Services personnel will offer transportation and/or accompaniment services to the hospital or police station. If there is no immediate medical emergency and the caller wishes to leave her residence, Victim Services personnel will offer transportation and/or accompaniment to Three Oaks Foundation.

If there is no immediate emergency or risk and the caller does not wish to leave her residence, Victims Services personnel will offer emotional support and information with priority attention to exploring issues relating to the cycle of violence, the dynamics of power and control within an abusive relationship, the impact of violence on victims and their children, and appropriate safety planning. Referrals to Three Oaks Foundation, community-based counselling, Mental Health agencies and private therapist will be provided. In those instances when charges have been laid, Victim/Witness Assistance Program information will be given. Victim Services personnel will make every effort to respond to the immediate needs and concerns of the caller in addition to offering options for additional support and assistance.

2. ON-SITE VISITS AND ACCOMPANIMENTS

In those instances when **police respond to a domestic incident** and determine that the victim might benefit from immediate, on-site support, the responding officers will request permission from the victim to contact Victims Services and arrange for an on-site visit. Victims Services staff or volunteers will meet with a victim at her residence, the police station, the hospital, or any other location that is identified by the responding officers as appropriate and safe.

Victims Services staff and volunteers will attend at a victim's residence only in those instances when the responding officers confirm that:

- the suspect is in custody
- the suspect is not an imminent risk to the safety of the staff member/volunteer, and/or
- the officer(s) will be remaining on-site.

In the event that the accused returns home while Victims Services personnel are visiting on-site, the staff member or volunteer will immediately leave the residence regardless of the behaviour or actions of the accused and with or without the victim.

In the event that the victim remains in the home and Victims Services personnel have reason to believe she may be in any danger, they will contact 911 upon leaving the home and request police assistance.

In the event that the victim leaves with Victims Services personnel, she will be offered transportation to a safe location, such as Three Oaks Foundation.

Victims Services personnel will not provide on-site mediation services to victims and their partners or on-site supportive counselling to abusive partners. Services are not provided to perpetrators of violence.

3. VICTIM QUICK RESPONSE PROGRAM

When a victim of partner abuse requires immediate emergency expenses for crime scene cleanup, emergency home repairs to secure premises, accommodation is no secure housing options are available or transportation, the program may provide funds for these services. The program can also provide funding for early intervention counselling for victims to help reduce the impact of the crime. The program may also provide funds for funeral expenses of victims of homicide.

4. FOLLOW-UP SERVICES

After the initial crisis intervention, Victims Services will provide additional emotional support, information, and referrals to victims of partner abuse at their request or an officers request. Priority attention will be directed toward providing appropriate referrals for longer term support during any follow-up contact with victims.

Accessibility

Services are available in English. Wheelchair accessible services are available in Hastings, Prince Edward and Lennox & Addington Counties.

Accountability

A representative from Victim Services participates on the QCCAV. Complaints or concerns regarding the quality or nature of services received or not received through Victim Services of Hastings, Prince Edward, Lennox and Addington Counties should be brought to the attention of the Executive Assistant. If not satisfied with response, individuals may speak to the Executive Director; any complaints involving the Executive Director are addressed in writing to the Chair of the Board of Directors. Complaints are addressed in compliance with the written policies and procedures of the organization.