

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

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### **Hours of Operation:**

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

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

### **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 sexual assault. 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.

Whenever possible the Emergency Crisis Response Program refer the caller to the Sexual Assault Centre of Quinte & District( SACQD) and the Domestic Violence Sexual Assault Response Program(DVSARP) recognizing that, in a time of crisis, the caller may not wish to call another agency, but prefer to talk to the person with whom contact was first made. If she/he declines the referral, Victim Services will proceed with the provision of support.

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 sexual assault to 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/he may be staying if and only if the location is determined to be safe by police services.
- To be eligible for the Support Link 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 Sexual assault 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. Victim Services personnel will offer to contact the Sexual Assault Centre of Quinte & District for a Sexual Assault Worker to meet the victim at the hospital. The victim will be informed of the services available at the Hospital from the Domestic Violence Sexual Assault Response Program.

Victim Services staff and/or volunteers have the authority to transport a client in their own vehicle, or travel in a taxi or police cruiser with a client.

Victim Services staff and/or volunteers can also provide support to a client's partner, family members and friends with any disclosure dependent upon client's consent.

If there is no immediate emergency or risk and the caller does not wish to report the crime, Victims Services personnel will offer emotional support and information about community support services of victims of sexual assault. They will also advise that a Sexual Assault Evidence Kit can be completed by DVSARP at Belleville General Hospital or Trenton Memorial Hospital and retained if the victim wishes to report the crime at a later date.

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 sexual assault** 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. When accompaniment to the hospital is required VS will contact SACQD and request a SAW meet at the hospital.

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.

If the victim has chosen to make a report to the police and wants to have a Sexual Assault Evidence Kit completed, the victim will be advised to: Not take a shower or bathe; not to go to the washroom unless necessary; not eat or drink anything; bring a change of clothes, including shoes to the hospital.

### **3. VICTIM QUICK RESPONSE PROGRAM**

When a victim of sexual assault requires immediate emergency expenses for crime scene cleanup, emergency home repairs to secure premises, accommodation and 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 sexual assault at their request or an officers request. Priority attention will be directed toward providing appropriate referrals for longer term support such as the Sexual Assault Centre of Quinte & District 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 of 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.