

**Victim Assistance Center**

100 Centre Street  
Room 231  
New York, NY 10013  
212-335-9040  
212-335-9500 (TTY)

**Northern Manhattan Office**

163 West 125th Street  
Room 733  
New York, NY 10027  
212-864-7884

**Website**

<http://www.manhattanda.org>

# Services for Crime Victims, Witnesses, and their Families



CYRUS R. VANCE, JR.  
DISTRICT ATTORNEY





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DISTRICT ATTORNEY

Dear Friends,

Crime and its aftermath can be a difficult and painful experience. As District Attorney of New York County, I am committed to providing comprehensive services, through this office's Witness Aid Services Unit, to assist crime victims and witnesses who are involved in the criminal justice process. Please take some time to learn about the services that are described in this brochure so that the District Attorney's Office can be of help to you.

Sincerely,

Cyrus R. Vance, Jr.

## INTRODUCTION

The Witness Aid Services Unit assists crime victims, witnesses, and their families in overcoming the consequences of victimization and facilitates cooperation in the prosecution of criminal cases. Our goal is to provide a variety of court-related services, social services, and counseling services to meet the needs of victims, witnesses, and their families. The unit assists victims in understanding the criminal justice system, provides court-related information and information regarding victim's rights, and provides advocacy and support throughout the criminal justice process. The unit also works collaboratively with assistant district attorneys to assist victims and enhance the prosecution of cases.

The unit is, with a staff of 34, is comprised of five departments. Spanish speaking staff are available in each of the unit's departments. Interpreters for other languages are also available. All services offered by the unit are free of charge.

### The departments of the Witness Aid Services Unit are:

- Victim Assistance Center
- Social Services Department
- Counseling Department
- Notification Department
- Property Release Department

*"I never thought I would be a statistic, but having found myself as one, I am grateful for the many services offered by the Witness Aid Services Unit."*

Crime Victim

The Victim Assistance Center is a secure, comfortable, supportive environment where victims, witnesses, and their families are introduced to the extensive services available to them through the District Attorney's Office. Victims also receive information about their rights in the criminal justice system and are afforded an opportunity to provide information important to the prosecution of the case.

The Victim Assistance Center is located at 100 Centre Street, Room 231. The Center is open Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., and Saturdays and Sundays from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. The staff can be reached at 212-335-9040.

**The staff in the Victim Assistance Center:**

- orient victims to their role in the court process;
- serve as the liaison between victims and Assistant District Attorneys, the Police Department, the court system, and other criminal justice agencies;
- provide victims with case information and answer questions regarding the court process;
- provide information about an inmate's custody status and help victims to register for notification of an inmate's release from a correctional facility;
- assist with obtaining court orders of protection;
- arrange transportation to court for victims who are elderly, disabled, or injured – a wheelchair is also available; and
- prepare absence excusal letters for employers and schools.

The Social Services Department conducts interviews with victims, witnesses, and their families to assess their social, emotional, and financial needs. Based on this assessment, the social services staff provides direct services as well as advocacy and referral information.

The Social Services Department is located in both the District Attorney's downtown and Northern Manhattan Offices.

**The services available through the Social Services Department include:**

- Crisis intervention and support
- Assistance with safety services
- Referrals to shelters
- Compensation assistance
- Accompaniment to court
- Specialized assistance for child victims
- Advocacy for government entitlements
- Advocacy and referrals to community agencies

To learn more about these and other services, call the Social Services Department at 212-335-9040.

*“You have helped me in so many ways, physically, emotionally, and mentally. I can't begin to explain how much you have helped me to reach my lifelong goal of being totally independent and showing me there is a light at the end of despair, at the end of the tunnel.”*

Crime Victim

The Counseling Department helps victims deal with the psychological impact of victimization. Victims may experience symptoms such as anxiety, flashbacks, and difficulty sleeping, eating, and concentrating. The Counseling Department also assists victims with difficulties associated with their participation in the legal process.

The Counseling Department is staffed by New York State certified social workers who provide individual counseling for victims, witnesses, and their families on a short or long-term basis. Group counseling is available for specific victim populations, including victims of domestic violence and survivors of homicide victims. Assistance with the preparation of victim impact statements is also available through the Counseling Department.

The Counseling Department is located in both the District Attorney's downtown and Northern Manhattan Offices. Counselors are available Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Evening hours are available upon request. For more information or to make an appointment, call the Counseling Department at 212-335-9633.

The Notification Department contacts victims, by telephone and by mail, for the purpose of obtaining a corroborating affidavit. A corroborating affidavit is essential to the prosecution of a Criminal Court case. A signed affidavit verifies the accuracy of the charges made by the District Attorney's Office in the criminal complaint against the defendant. A signed affidavit also eliminates the need for the victim to appear in court unless the case goes to trial and the victim's testimony is required.

The Notification Department mails court-issued orders of protection to victims and assists victims in making requests for a written notification of an inmate's release from a state correctional facility.

For more information about the services provided by the Notification Department, call 212-335-9955, Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

*"The staff of the Witness Aid Services Unit were most helpful, knowledgeable, and informative. They handled themselves with a very high level of professionalism, courtesy, and true caring."*

Crime Victim

The Property Release Department assists victims in recovering stolen property held as evidence by the New York Police Department. The staff explains all applicable property release procedures, assists victims in recovering their property, and provides specialized assistance for victims who are elderly, disabled, or live out of the New York City area.

For assistance in obtaining a release of stolen property, call the Property Release Department at 212-335-9863, Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

*“Let me express my gratitude for your assistance in the matter concerning my property. It is nice to know that there are competent and helpful public servants like you who are committed to serving the people of our great city.”*

Crime Victim

Victims have certain rights in the criminal justice system. Depending upon the type and disposition of the case, a victim may be entitled to:

- make a statement to the Department of Probation for consideration by the judge when determining the defendant's sentence;
- make an oral statement to the court at the defendant's sentencing;
- request that restitution be considered as part of the defendant's sentence;
- be notified of the final disposition of the case;
- make a written or oral statement to the New York State Division of Parole for consideration when determining whether to parole an inmate from a state correctional facility;
- receive an automated and/or written notification of the release of an inmate from a city or state correctional facility; and
- protection from employer dismissal or penalties for attendance as a witness at a criminal action as long as the employer is notified at least one day in advance. Wages, however, may be withheld for the period of time the witness attends the criminal action.

To learn more about these rights, speak to any member of the Witness Aid Services Unit staff.

- Criminal cases are prosecuted by the District Attorney’s Office on behalf of the People of the State of New York.
- As a crime victim, you are a witness in the prosecution of your case.
- As a witness for the State, a victim has certain responsibilities to assist with the prosecution of a criminal case. These responsibilities may include the signing of a corroborating affidavit and providing testimony to a grand jury and at trial.
- If you receive a subpoena, you must appear in court as specified by that subpoena.
- A victim is under no obligation to speak about the facts of the case with anyone. If someone contacts you concerning the case, make sure that you ask that person to identify himself or herself.
- When you answer a question, you must tell the truth.
- If others advise you not to appear in court, or if you are threatened or harassed, immediately contact the Assistant District Attorney assigned to the case or the Witness Aid Services Unit at 212-335-9040.

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Docket Number

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Indictment Number

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Witness Aid Staff

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Witness Aid Staff’s Telephone Number

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Assistant District Attorney

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Assistant District Attorney’s Telephone Number

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\*NYSID Number

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Additional Information

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- \* The NYSID (New York State Identification) number is helpful when using the VINE Program. The VINE Program is a free 24-hour hotline that provides victims with custody information and an automated release notification regarding inmates in the custody of the New York City Department of Correction and the New York State Department of Correctional Services. To access VINE, please call 1-888-846-3469 (1-888-VINE4NY) or speak to any member of the Witness Aid Services Unit staff.