

PROVINCE OF ONTARIO
MINISTRY OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

CROWN POLICY MANUAL

March 21, 2005

VICTIMS OF CRIME

PRINCIPLES

Crown counsel owe victims a special responsibility of candor and respect. Crown counsel are both advocates for the prosecution and “Ministers of Justice”. While a criminal prosecution is not aimed solely at pursuing the victim’s interests but rather at promoting the public interest, Crowns should display sensitivity, fairness and compassion in their dealings with victims.

To the degree that is consistent with this dual role, Crown counsel should ensure that the interests of victims, including harm suffered by them and their privacy interests, are considered at every stage in the prosecution.

Victims should have access to information about the court process, including victim/witness assistance, and the status of the case in which he or she is involved.

Access to General Information: Crown counsel should promote victims’ understanding of the structure and operation of the criminal justice system and the role of the victim. The Crown Attorney in each jurisdiction should facilitate victims’ access to information by:

- Providing copies of available pamphlets or other written material about the criminal justice system
- Directing victims to other resources, such as publications and websites.

Access to Case Specific Information: In cases where serious emotional, physical or psychological harm has occurred to the victim or to the victim’s family, the Crown Attorney in each jurisdiction should ensure:

- A system is in place to identify these cases, and

- Victims are informed in a timely fashion of matters, that potentially affect their security, and of significant changes in the status of the case.

Victims with Special Needs: Where a victim has special needs, particularly communications needs, Crown counsel should make every effort to ensure that full access to, and participation in, the criminal justice system is accorded that victim. Victims with special needs include those individuals who, because of age, or any impairment of an intellectual, emotional, physical or sensory nature, are unable, without assistance, to fully access the criminal justice system, or to understand or be understood by the participants in the system.