

What Now?

Information and Support for Victims of Crime in NSW



New South Wales Government
Attorney General's Department
Victims Services



New South Wales Government

Attorney General's Department

Victims Services

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Attorney General's Department of NSW

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For alternative formats such as Braille, audiotape, large print or computer disk, contact Diversity Services
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diversity_services@agd.nsw.gov.au

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Introduction

The information in this booklet is intended to give victims of crime an introduction to support and services available to victims of crime in NSW.

The booklet is divided into five sections dealing with support, needs, rights, advice for families and friends, and complaints and contacts.

Further information for victims of crime in NSW is available on:

Website..... www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/vs

You can also contact the **Victims Support Line** 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Phone.....(02) 8688 5511

Freecall..... 1800 633 063

TTY.....(02) 8688 5575

Other support services for victims of crime are listed at the back of the booklet.

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Section 1:

Support

- Normal reactions to a crime
- Recovering from a crime
- Talking to someone
- Increasing your safety
- Your notes

Normal reactions to a crime

"At first, I was shocked and numb.

As the weeks went on, I would forget things and lose track of time."

*"I became scared of everything,
scared to stay home and scared to go out."*

"I wondered if I would ever get back to normal."

Some normal reactions to being a victim of a crime include:

- not sleeping or having nightmares
- blaming yourself
- experiencing swings in your mood
- not being able to concentrate
- feeling fearful
- not being able to stay on your own
- worrying about everyday things
- not being able to talk about what happened or not being able to stop talking about what happened
- going over and over in your mind what happened
- feeling no-one really understands
- feeling others blame you for what happened
- feeling people don't believe you

Remember, it was not your fault.

Depending on the impact of the crime, it can take up to eight weeks to feel more in control again. However, for some, it may take longer.

Everyone is affected differently - the important thing is that you get the help you need, when you need it.

Recovering from a crime

Some things that have helped other victims of crime are:

- taking time to think through what you need
- making your own decisions wherever you can
 - this helps to increase your sense of control again
- not expecting too much of yourself
 - you're already coping with the effects of a crime
- remembering you are still the same person you were before the crime
- doing something each day - big or small - to care for yourself, for example, exercise, seeing a friend, buying a bunch of flowers, making an appointment you need
- keeping notes or a journal
- re-establishing your normal routine as soon as possible
- eliminating any unnecessary stresses

Several important areas for recovering from a crime are:

- talking to someone you trust - talking can help you stop feeling alone and to make sense of what happened
- increasing your safety
 - increased safety can help reduce your fear
- getting answers to your questions
 - correct information can help deal with confusion
- taking extra care when doing everyday things, like driving etc.

You have the right to be treated with courtesy,
compassion, cultural sensitivity and respect.

Charter of Victims Rights

Talking to someone

Talking to someone can help you begin to make sense of what happened. However, it is your decision who you talk to about the crime. It is your choice how much you want to talk about the crime at any stage.

Talking to your partner and children lets them know how you are feeling. If they are also affected by the crime, you could ask them who they'd like to talk to.

Talking to families and friends who you can trust can help. Even if they do not understand completely, at least the people you trust will be aware of how you feel.

Your GP can advise you on dealing with stress, sleep problems, anxiety or depression.

If you decide to talk to your employer about the effect of the crime on you, this can be helpful as it allows you and your employer to work out what level of work you can cope with and can assist your return to work. Some people ask their union to assist them.

If you are called as a witness in court, you should not discuss your case in any detail until after the court case. Counsellors and police officers will do everything they can to protect the confidentiality of your information.

Seeing a counsellor has helped many victims of crime to make a quicker recovery. For more information about counselling, see page 13. If you find it difficult to talk to anyone, you may find it useful to call the **Victims Support Line**.

Victims Support Line

Phone.....(02) 8688 5400
Freecall..... 1800 633 063
TTY.....(02) 8688 5575

Remember, you do not need to cope alone.

Increasing your safety

After a crime, you may need to take extra steps to protect yourself.

If you are in fear of the offender, you may need protection orders. You can contact the police or a legal service to ask about Apprehended Violence Orders.

If you need to secure your home better, you can ask your local police for advice on ways to do this.

In cases of domestic violence or cases of harassment, such as by your landlord or your neighbour, you may need specialised support to help you deal with the intimidation you are experiencing. You can ask the police for advice on your situation. You can also ask the police for information if the offender is a young person.

If you are required to attend court, you can ask for your name and address to be kept confidential from the offender throughout any court hearings. You can ask the police officer working on your case or the Police Prosecutor about this.

If you are worried about your safety while the offender is in prison or when the offender is released from prison, you can contact a Victims Register, see page 26.

At any point, you can also contact the **Victims Support Line** to find out more about protecting yourself, especially in domestic violence or harassment situations.

You have the right to protection from the offender.
Charter of Victims Rights

Your notes

These pages have been included to help you keep track of your thoughts and feelings about the crime. Making your own notes can also help you work out what information and support you might need.

Some victims of crime gradually adjust over the first eight weeks and decide that they do not need further support or information. Others find they recover better by seeking support or information as they need it.

If you decide to make your own notes, it can be useful to do this daily at first, then weekly or fortnightly as you begin to see your progress. If you run out of space, you could use a notebook to continue making your notes.

Your notes are not meant to take the place of getting support. If you decide to get support, for example, by seeing a counsellor, you can use your notes when talking to your counsellor about what you need.

Date

How did I cope this week?

One thing that improved was.....

My main difficulty at present is

The thing that helps me most is

I still need

Next week I will try

Section 2:

Needs

- Getting answers to questions
- Counselling
- Legal help
- Contacting the police
- Going to court
- When an offender is a young person
- When an offender is in prison
- Your notes

Getting answers to questions

If you would like to call someone and talk about the support you need, you can call the **Victims Support Line** . The Victims Support Line is answered 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Victims Support Line

Phone.....(02) 8688 5400

Freecall..... 1800 633 063

TTY.....(02) 8688 5575

You can also look up information for victims of crime on:

Website..... www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/vs

Others services such as counsellors, the police and court staff can also help.

You have the right to the information and support
you may need, where it is available.
Charter of Victims Rights

Counselling

*"My family and friends were great at first,
but now they wish I would get over it, and I can't..."*

*"Sometimes, I seem to be improving but other days,
I lose my temper for no reason."*

"I wish I knew what I needed."

A counsellor can help you to understand your reactions to what happened and help you find ways to deal with the effects you are experiencing. You can discuss what you want from counselling with the counsellor of your choice.

In many cases, 6-8 sessions of counselling is enough to feel you are coping better. However, everyone is affected differently. It is your choice to see a counsellor and it is up to you and your counsellor to decide how many sessions you should have.

Remember that counselling is not about going over what has happened to you in lots of detail. It is about helping you deal with the negative effects on your day to day life.

Counselling is provided by a number of agencies. To help you find the right counsellor, you can ring the **Victims Support Line**. If the crime involved violence, you may be eligible for free counselling under the Approved Counselling Scheme. To ask about the Scheme, contact the Victims Support Line. Application forms are also available on the website.

If you need help to work out what to do,
you can ring the Victims Support Line.

Legal help

If you are a victim of crime, you may not need legal advice or a solicitor. This is because the police will investigate the crime and decide whether to lay charges, or, if the offender is 10-18 years, whether to caution the offender or refer them to a youth justice conference.

If the case goes to court, you are likely to be called as a witness. However, generally, you will not need legal advice or a solicitor. This is because the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP) prosecutes criminal cases on behalf of the community. The police or the Witness Assistance Service (WAS) at the ODPP can give you the information you need about the progress of the prosecution and about attending court.

However, if you need information on legal resources, you can contact **Law Access**.

Law Access

Toll free..... 1300 888 529
TTY..... 1300 889 529

You can also contact the **Legal Aid Commission of NSW** who can provide information and contacts for the legal service you require. Legal Aid has a head office in Sydney and 20 metropolitan and regional offices.

To make an appointment on other matters or at another location, contact your nearest office.

Legal Aid Commission of NSW

Phone.....(02) 9219 5000
TTY.....(02) 9219 5126

The Chamber Magistrate at your nearest Local Court may also be able to provide information about legal options available to you.

Contacting the police

In life-threatening situations or in emergencies, you should ring the **Emergency Services**.

Emergency Services

Phone..... 000

To report a crime, you should contact the **Police Assistance Line (PAL)** (call from anywhere in NSW for the cost of a local call) or the Local Area Command.

Police Assistance Line (PAL)

Toll Free 131 444

If you have reported the crime to the police, they will give you a COPS event number. They may decide to take your statement about what happened.

If you want information about any investigation relating to the crime against you, you should ring the police and give them your COPS event number or ask for the officer who took your statement.

From that point onwards, the officer in charge of the investigation will tell you if any charges are to be laid and the date of any court hearings. On occasion, the police will not be able to provide information because it may harm the investigation.

You should also contact the officer in charge if you have other questions related to being a victim of crime such as how to get Apprehended Violence Orders or secure your home better.

If you are threatened or harmed by the offender again, you need to report this to the police immediately.

You have the right to information about any investigation unless it may harm the investigator.
Charter of Victims Rights

Going to court

If you want information about any court hearings involving a crime you have reported, you will need to speak to the officer in charge of the investigation or the solicitor in charge of the matter at the **Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP)** or see their website.

Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions

Website.....www.odpp.nsw.gov.au

If you have to go to court as a witness, or you want to be at the court hearing, it can help to reduce your anxiety if you get information and support beforehand.

Information about being a witness is available on a video, *Your Day in Court*. The video runs for 30 minutes and answers many questions about court procedures in NSW. For a copy of the video, you can ask at your library or contact the Local Court in your area.

Another useful resource is **Courtwise** which is a website that provides detailed information designed to help witnesses and their families and friends about going to court.

Courtwise

Website.....www.courtwise.nsw.gov.au

Going to court *continued*

Further information and support for preparing for court and attending the court hearing may be available from the **Witness Assistance Service (WAS)** at the **Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP)**.

The WAS can also refer you, if you wish, to specialist court support services, such as court support for victims of domestic violence or sexual assault, relatives of a homicide victim, or children and their carers.

If the victim is a child who is going to court, it is important that the child and their carers receive specialist court support well before the date of any court hearing.

Witness Assistance Service, ODPP

Phone (Head Office)(02) 9285 2502
Toll free (outside Sydney) 1800 814 534
TTY(02) 9285 8646

For toll free callers wanting to speak to a regional WAS officer please ask the Head Office switchboard operator to put you through to the regional office where the WAS officer is located.

You have the right for your privacy
to be protected during any court hearings.
Charter of Victims Rights

When the offender is a young person

For all but the most serious offences, police may warn, formally caution, or refer a young offender (usually this means someone under 18 years of age) to a youth justice conference. Police are guided by the *Young Offenders Act*, and must inform the victim when they decide to divert a young offender from court. Courts may also caution or refer to a conference. Cautions are usually chosen for less serious offences than conference referrals.

For police, a caution is a serious response. Police must inform any victim that they have given a caution and may ask the young offender to write a letter of apology to them.

Youth justice conferences give victims an opportunity to tell young offenders how they have been affected by the offence. Together with others present at a conference, victims decide what can be done to address the harm caused to them. A conference convenor will contact and meet with victims prior to the conference and will allow them time to consider whether they wish to participate. Victims have a say about the venue and time for a conference and are full participants in the process. Victims who decide not to attend but want the young person to hear how they have been affected may write down or record their story on audio or videotape for the conference. Victims who participate in a conference will be informed in writing whether the person has done everything that they agreed to do in the conference.

Victims may decide at this time they would like to see a counsellor before they participate in a conference. If so, they can speak with the conference convenor or contact the **Victims Support Line** at Victims Services.

For further information about youth justice conferences, contact the **Youth Justice Conferencing Directorate**, Department of Juvenile Justice.

Youth Justice Conferencing Directorate

Phone..... (02) 9219 9400

Website.....www.djj.nsw.nsw.gov.au

When the offender is in prison

If the offender in your matter is sentenced to prison and you are concerned for your safety when he or she is released, you can ask to be listed on a Victims Register. For more information about Victims Registers, see page 26.

If you are listed on a Victims Register, you will be informed when the offender is granted any leave or parole. This gives you the opportunity to decide whether you wish to make a submission to the Department of Corrective Services. For more information about submissions, see page 27. In some cases, victims decide they want to meet the offender while they are still in prison. There are several conditions for a meeting, which is arranged by the **Restorative Justice Unit**, Department of Corrective Services.

If you are interested in finding out more about meeting the offender in a Victim Offender Conference or through Protective Mediation, you can contact the Restorative Justice Unit.

Restorative Justice Unit

Phone.....(02) 8346 1054

For further information, see the Restorative Justice section on the **Department of Correctives Services** website.

Website.....www.dcs.nsw.gov.au

You have the right to know about
offender's custody classification and release.
Charter of Victims Rights

Your notes

"Is the offender going to be charged?"

"Do I have to go to court?"

"Do I need a solicitor?"

"What if the offender comes back?"

After the crime, you may find you have many questions. Some questions may be able to be answered straight away. Other times, you may have to wait until the information becomes available.

Working out what you want to know and who you could ask can help you make sense of the legal and court system. It can also help you know your rights as a victim of crime.

You can use these pages to make notes of your information needs. If you run out of space, you can use a notebook.

For further information about services for victims of crime, you can contact the **Victims Support Line** or check the **Victims of Crime** website. Other services for victims of crime are listed at the back of the booklet.

Victims Support Line

Phone.....(02) 8688 5400

Freecall..... 1800 633 063

TTY.....(02) 8688 5575

Victims of Crime

Website..... www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/vs

Date

I have a question about...

1.
.....
.....

2.
.....
.....

I could ask...

1.
.....
.....

2.
.....
.....

My results so far are...

1.
.....
.....

2.
.....
.....

I still need to find out...

1.
.....
.....

2.
.....
.....

Section 3:

Rights

- Charter of victims rights
- Victim impact statements
- Victims registers
- Making submissions about offenders
- Claiming counselling and/or compensation



Victims Services
Attorney General's
department of nsw

CHARTER OF VICTIMS RIGHTS

Victims Rights Act 1996

1 Courtesy, compassion and respect

A victim should be treated with courtesy, compassion, cultural sensitivity and respect for the victim's rights and dignity.

2 Information about services and remedies

A victim should be informed at the earliest practical opportunity, by relevant agencies and officials, of the services and remedies available to the victim.

3 Access to services

A victim should have access where necessary to available welfare, health, counselling and legal assistance responsive to the victim's needs.

4 Information about investigation of the crime

A victim should, on request, be informed of the progress of the investigation of the crime, unless the disclosure might jeopardise the investigation. In that case, the victim should be informed accordingly.

5 Information about prosecution of accused

1. A victim should be informed in a timely manner of the following:

- a) the charges laid against the accused or the reasons for not laying charges,
- b) any decision of the prosecution to modify or not to proceed with charges laid against the accused, including any decision to accept a plea of guilty by the accused to a less serious charge in return for a full discharge with respect to the other charges,
- c) the date and place of hearing of any charge laid against the accused,
- d) the outcome of the criminal proceedings against the accused (including proceedings on appeal) and the sentence (if any) imposed.

2. A victim should be consulted before a decision referred to in paragraph (b) above is taken if the accused has been charged with a serious crime that involves sexual violence or that results in actual bodily harm or psychological or psychiatric harm to the victim, unless:

- a) the victim has indicated that he or she does not wish to be so consulted, or
- b) the whereabouts of the victim cannot be ascertained after reasonable inquiry.

6 Information about trial process and role as witness

A victim who is a witness in the trial for the crime should be informed about the trial process and the role of the victim as a witness in the prosecution of the accused.

7 Protection from contact with accused

A victim should be protected from unnecessary contact with the accused and defence witnesses during the course of court proceedings.

8 Protection of identity of victim

A victim's residential address and telephone number should not be disclosed unless a court otherwise directs.

9 Attendance at preliminary hearings

A victim should be relieved from appearing at preliminary hearings or committal hearings unless the court otherwise directs.

10 Return of property of victim held by State

If any property of a victim is held by the State for the purpose of investigation or evidence, the inconvenience to the victim should be minimised and the property returned promptly.

11 Protection from accused

A victim's need or perceived need for protection should be put before a bail authority by the prosecutor in any bail application by the accused.

12 Information about special bail conditions

A victim should be informed about any special bail conditions imposed on the accused that are designed to protect the victim or the victim's family.

13 Information about outcome of bail application

A victim should be informed of the outcome of a bail application if the accused has been charged with sexual assault or other serious personal violence.

14 Victim impact statement

A relevant victim should have access to information and assistance for the preparation of any victim impact statement authorised by law to ensure that the full effect of the crime on the victim is placed before the court.

15 Information about impending release, escape or eligibility for absence from custody

A victim should, on request, be kept informed of the offender's impending release, or escape from custody, or of any change in security classification that results in the offender being eligible for unescorted absence from custody.

16 Submissions on parole and eligibility for absence from custody of serious offenders

A victim should, on request, be provided with the opportunity to make submissions concerning the granting of parole to a serious offender or any change in security classification that would result in a serious offender being eligible for unescorted absence from custody.

17 Compensation for victims of personal violence

A victim of a crime involving sexual or other serious personal violence should be entitled to make a claim under a statutory scheme for victims compensation.

Charter of victims rights

The Charter of Victims Rights gives all victims of crime in NSW a number of rights, including:

- to be treated with courtesy, compassion, cultural sensitivity and respect;
- access to services, information and support, depending on your needs;
- protection from the offender where necessary;
- information about any investigation; and
- protection of your privacy.

Depending on your situation, you may also have the right to:

- make a Victim Impact Statement;
- be listed on a Victims Register;
- make a submission to the Department of Corrective Services; or
- claim counselling and/or compensation.

For further information on your rights under the Charter of Victims Rights see the Charter on page 23. If you have a complaint you can contact the **Victims of Crime Bureau**.

Victims of Crime Bureau

Phone.....(02) 8688 5400
Freecall..... 1800 633 063
TTY.....(02) 8688 5575

For further information about Victim Impact Statements, Victims Registers, making a submission to the Department of Corrective Services or claiming counselling and/or compensation, see pages 25-28.

Victim impact statements

When the offender is sentenced, you may have the right to make a victim impact statement.

A victim impact statement is your statement about the impact of the crime on you. Normally, they are about 2-3 pages long and are written in your own words. Your statement is handed to the judge or magistrate in the sentencing court.

It is your decision whether you want to make a victim impact statement.

Staff at the **Witness Assistance Service (WAS)** at the **Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP)**, or at the **Victims of Crime Bureau**, can discuss requirements for victim impact statements with you and send you the *Victim Impact Statement Information Package*. You can also ask your counsellor or court support worker to assist you.

If you would like to know more about making a victim impact statement, you can contact the **WAS** at the **ODPP** or the **Victims of Crime Bureau**.

Witness Assistance Service, ODPP

Phone.....(02) 9285 2502
Freecall..... 1800 814 534
TTY.....(02) 9285 8646

Victims of Crime Bureau

Phone.....(02) 8688 5400
Freecall..... 1800 633 063
TTY.....(02) 8688 5575

If you wish to make a victim impact statement, you should let the person in charge of the case know as soon as possible.

Victim Impact Statements
Charter of Victims Rights

Victims Registers

If you are in fear of the offender while they are in prison or after they are released, you can ask to be listed on a **Victims Register**.

Each department that has responsibility for offenders in custody has a Victims Register.

If you want to be listed on a Victims Register, or you would like more information about how a Register works, you can contact one of the following **Registers**:

Community Liaison Officer - Department of Corrective Services

Phone.....(02) 8346 1374

Victims Register Officer - Department of Juvenile Justice

Phone.....(02) 9219 9400

Forensic Patient Victims Register - NSW Health

Phone.....(02) 8372 3070

Information about any change
in the offender's custody status and release
Charter of Victims Rights

Making submissions about offenders

If the offender is in prison and you are told by the Victims Register that he or she may be due for release, you may have the right to make a submission to the State Parole Authority or to the Department of Corrective Services.

A submission is a statement about your feelings about the offender's release. It is usually about two pages and is written in your own words.

If you would like more information about making a submission to the State Parole Authority or to the Department of Corrective Services, you can contact the **Restorative Justice Unit** for a *Submissions Concerning an Offender in Custody Information Package*.

If you have questions about the process of making a submission, you can contact the Restorative Justice Unit:

Restorative Justice Unit

Phone.....(02) 8346 1054

Submissions to the Parole Board
Charter of Victims Right

Claiming compensation

Victims of violent crime may be eligible to apply for counselling and/or compensation.

Information about victims counselling and/or compensation is available from the Victims Support Line or from the **Victims Services** website

Victims Services

Website.....www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/vs

To find out if you may be eligible to apply for counselling and/or compensation you can contact the **Victims Compensation Tribunal**.

Victims Compensation Tribunal

Phone.....(02) 8688 5511

Freecall..... 1800 069 054

TTY.....(02) 8688 5575

Website.....www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/vs

You are not required to have a solicitor to make an application for counselling and/or victims compensation. However, if you would like to contact a solicitor, you can ring the **NSW Law Society's Solicitor Referral Service** and ask for a solicitor who is experienced with victims compensation claims. Victims Services will generally pay your solicitor's fee in accordance with a set rate and reasonable costs will also be paid. These costs are paid over and above the amount of compensation awarded.

NSW Law Society's Solicitor Referral Service

Phone.....(02) 9926 0300

Freecall..... 1800 422 713

Section 4:

Advice for families and friends

- Effect of crime on families and friends of victims
- Advice for families and friends supporting a victim
- Advice for parents or carers supporting your child who is a victim

Effect of a crime on families and friends of victims

Families and friends of someone who has been a victim of crime can also be affected by what has happened to you. Relatives of the victim, their friends, workmates and neighbours are often shocked and upset by hearing what happened to someone they know.

Their reactions may vary from sympathy for the victim to wanting revenge for the crime or not knowing what to do. Families and friends of the victim may also feel some of what the victim is feeling such as blaming themselves, feeling less safe for a time or becoming overly protective.

Families and friends of victims may also need support and information. They may need time to work out what they feel. They also want to know what they can do to help the victim.

Often, families and friends of victims like to do something they feel would be useful in the situation. This can comfort the victim and the victim may remember an offer of support for a long time after the event.

Advice to families and friends supporting a victim

More than anything, victims of crime appreciate the chance to talk to someone who really listens and who does not judge them.

If you wish, you can offer support to the victim. It is often enough to simply ask the victim what they want, rather than giving them advice. They may want to go over what happened several times.

It is normal for victims to forget things, be more anxious than usual, have trouble sleeping or eating and not be able to work. The victim may appreciate your practical, or even financial, support for a time. If you are not sure how to help, ask the victim.

Victims recover in their own time and in their own ways. At times, they can feel frustrated they are not recovering more quickly. While this is normal, you might find your patience is also tested.

How much you can help, depends on the victim's needs and your needs. If you find you cannot offer support, simply let the victim know you are unable to help.

If you find you are becoming upset yourself, it is worth seeking your own support. Taking steps to help yourself can also have the effect of motivating the victim to take their own steps to recovery.

If the weeks go by and you become concerned the victim is not making at least some recovery from the crime, you may want to talk to someone such as your GP or a counsellor about what could be done to help the victim.

Advice for parents or carers supporting your child who is a victim

Supporting your child who is a victim is similar to helping an adult victim of crime.

Most of all, children need adults who are willing to listen carefully to their concerns and who do not judge them for what has happened, or for any problems they may have.

It is important that you are willing and able to talk to your child about how they are feeling and what they need. Some children may find it hard to talk about what happened, and how they feel, and this is normal. If your child sees you are not overwhelmed by their feelings and behaviour, they will be less concerned about talking freely with you.

Simply letting your child know they can talk to you when they are ready, is an important message. Sometimes, having the assistance of a counsellor can help you and your child to talk about what happened.

Although you need to show your support and understanding, it is usually most helpful to your child to keep their usual routines.

It can be useful to your child's teachers and others to know that your child is a victim of crime. However, it is your, and your child's, choice who you tell. You may want to ask others to protect your, and your child's, privacy.

Children who have been victims of crime need to be reassured from time to time that the crime was not their fault. It often helps a child to be told simply that their parents, family, friends and teachers know that the crime has happened and that they are sorry - or even upset - as they believe it should not have happened. However, it is usually unhelpful, or even harmful, for your child to hear details and discussion of adults' reactions. Finding your own supports is the best way to be then able to support your child.

As parents or carers, you may experience strong reactions and emotions to think of your child as a victim of crime. You may even feel like you have failed in your job as a parent. This is not true. The offender has done the wrong thing, not you. If you are finding it difficult to handle your reaction when dealing with your child’s situation, this is normal. To assist your child, and your child’s brothers and sisters, however, you need to find ways to deal with your feelings.

Usually, talking to someone you trust is important. You may need to do this regularly, especially at first. You may want to talk over your concerns about your child with others such as your child’s teacher or your GP. Most schools have a counsellor who could discuss your needs, and your child’s needs, with you.

You can be guided by your reaction and your child’s reaction. If your guidance and support seems to reassure your child, this may be enough to help your child recover from a crime. However, if you are finding your child difficult to manage or you are feeling depressed or overwhelmed, you need to seek professional help.

There are specialist services for victims of crime who are children e.g. counsellors who specialise in working with children and their carers, and helping children prepare for court.

For information and support to help a child victim, contact the **Victims Support Line**.

Victims Support Line

- Phone.....(02) 8688 5400
- Freecall..... 1800 633 063
- TTY.....(02) 8688 5575

Section 5:

Complaints and contacts

- Choosing a service
- Making a complaint
 - *Police*
 - *Solicitors*
 - *Charter of Victims Rights*
 - *Assistance with complaints*
- Your notes
- Additional victim support services

Choosing a service

The services listed in this booklet offer information and support for all victims of crime. However, some victims may also choose a service according to their background or the type of crime they experienced.

If you are **Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander**, you may prefer to contact an Aboriginal service such as Aboriginal Legal Services or Land Councils or the Aboriginal WAS Officers at the Sydney, Newcastle and Dubbo Offices of the Director of Public Prosecutions (see page 25 for contact details).

If you are from a **non-English speaking background**, you may prefer to call an interpreter before contacting a service.

Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS)

Phone..... 131 450

Or you may prefer to go to a service for your community and ask a worker to help you contact services for victims.

If you are a **young person**, and you would like someone to talk to about the help you need, there are youth services who you could talk to. If you have a youth worker helping you, you can still contact the services listed in this booklet. You can ring the **Victims Support Line** to help you find a youth service.

If you are a **child, or a parent or carer, or someone who is concerned about a child's safety**, you should contact a service that specialises in helping children. You can ring the **Victims Support Line** to ask about services for children. Or you may call the **DoCS Helpline**.

DoCS Helpline

Phone..... 131 111

If you are a **victim of sexual assault or domestic violence or you are a relative of a homicide victim**, you may prefer to contact a service that specialises in assisting victims of these types of crime.

If you are a **victim who has an intellectual disability** and you do not understand everything that is happening, you should ask for an explanation. If you have any problems getting the service you need, you could ask someone from your family or a disability service such as the **Intellectual Disability Rights Services** to help you.

Intellectual Disability Rights Services

Phone.....(02) 9318 0144

If you have **another disability such as hearing or sight impairment, or a psychiatric or physical disability**, there are a number of associations such as the Deaf Society or the Schizophrenia Fellowship that can assist.

If you are **gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender**, there are services such as the **Gay and Lesbian Counselling Line** and the **Anti-Violence Project** that can advise you about specialist support services.

Anti-Violence Project

Phone.....(02) 9206 2116

Freecall..... 1800 063 060

Gay and Lesbian Counselling Line

Phone.....(02) 8594 9596

Freecall..... 1800 184 527

Remember, if you would like to discuss your choice of service, or you have any difficulties contacting a service, you can ring the **Victims Support Line**.

Victims Support Line

Phone.....(02) 8688 5400

Freecall..... 1800 633 063

TTY.....(02) 8688 5575

You have a right to services where they are available.
Charter of Victims Rights

Making a complaint

Most services you contact will provide information about other services as well. If you ask, most services will also look into any problems you have with them and do what they can to help you.

If you do not receive the service you needed, ask for further help. If you disagree with a decision made by a government service, you can ask for reasons for their decisions and any options for review.

➤ Police

If you are not getting the information you need from the police, you should explain to the officer concerned your reasons for wanting further information. If you are still not satisfied with the information provided by the officer, or if you have a complaint, you should ask to speak to a senior officer or write to the Local Area Commander of the police station concerned.

If you have a complaint about how any investigation has been conducted, you can contact the **Ombudsman's Office**:

Ombudsman's Office

Phone.....(02) 9286 1000
Freecall..... 1800 451 524
TTY.....(02) 9264 8050

➤ Solicitors

If you do not understand your solicitor's advice, or you still have questions, you should ask your solicitor to explain. If you wish to make a complaint about your solicitor, you can contact the **Office of the Legal Services Commissioner**.

Office of the Legal Services Commissioner

Phone.....(02) 9377 1800
Freecall..... 1800 242 958
TTY.....(02) 9377 1855

➤ **Counsellors**

If you are not satisfied with your counselling, you could try talking to the counsellor about your concerns. Depending on the counsellor’s response, you might find this is enough to improve things.

However, if your counselling does not improve or you have a complaint about your counsellor, you will usually need to put your complaint in writing to the counsellor’s professional association.

➤ **Charter of Victims Rights**

If you have a complaint about a possible breach of your rights under the Charter of Victims Rights, you should contact the **Victims Support Line**:

Victims Support Line

Phone.....(02) 8688 5400
 Freecall.....1800 633 063
 TTY.....(02) 8688 5575
 Website..... www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/vs

➤ **Assistance with complaints**

At any time, if you have a complaint about your treatment as a victim of crime, you may contact the Victims Support Line to discuss what steps might be taken to improve your situation.

If you wish the Victims of Crime Bureau to investigate your complaint under the Charter of Victims Rights, your complaint should be made in writing and addressed to:

The Manager
 Victims of Crime Bureau
 Locked Bag 5118
 Parramatta NSW 2124

Your notes

As a victim of crime, you may need to contact different agencies and deal with a number of people over time.

It is important that the agencies and people you deal with provide services in a courteous, respectful and compassionate way. It is also important that you receive accurate information and where possible, you receive a referral to services that could help you.

If you do not receive the service you think you should have received, you may wish to follow up.

As a victim of crime, I have a right to.....

When I asked for support or information from (service) on (date),
 I rated the result as:

1. (service) (date)
 poor okay good

2. (service) (date)
 poor okay good

3. (service) (date)
 poor okay good

4. (service) (date)
 poor okay good

I would like to follow up on.....

To follow up, I could:

- discuss it with
- contact the service and ask to speak to.....
- write to the manager of the service
- I could ask for help from

Additional victim support services

In life-threatening situations or emergencies, you should call the Emergency Services by dialling 000.

The services listed in this booklet are part of a wide network of possible support and services for victims of crime in New South Wales. They have been included in this booklet to give you a starting point when choosing the service you need.

- You can call 13 numbers from anywhere in NSW for the cost of a local call.
- You can call 1800 numbers for no charge.
- TTY numbers are for people who have a hearing or speech impairment and use a Telephone Typewriter.

Telephone Interpreting Service (TIS)

Phone..... 131 450

National Relay Service

TTY..... 133 677

Victims Support Line

Phone.....(02) 8688 5400

Freecall..... 1800 633 063

TTY.....(02) 8688 5575

Website..... www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/vs

You can call the Victims Support Line 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Staff provide information, support and referral for victims of crime, their relatives and friends.

DOCS Helpline

Phone..... 132 111

If you are concerned that a child has been abused, or is at risk of being abused, you should contact the Department of Community Services Helpline.

Victims Registers

Department of Corrective Services.....(02) 8346 1374

NSW Health - Forensic Patients Register(02) 8372 3070

Department of Juvenile Justice(02) 9219 9400

Domestic Violence Line

Freecall..... 1800 656 463

TTY 1800 671 442

Website..... www.community.nsw.gov.au

If you or your children are affected by domestic violence, you can call 24 hours a day to talk about what you can do. You can also ask about other domestic violence services such as legal services or court support schemes.

Sexual Assault Services

Sexual Assault Services provide specialist advice on all aspects of men, women and children who have been sexually assaulted. To contact your nearest Sexual Assault Service, please call a public hospital in your area and ask for the contact.

Law Access

Freecall..... 1300 888 529

TTY 1300 889 529

Website..... www.lawaccess.nsw.gov.au

LawAccess NSW is a free service providing a single point of access to legal and related assistance services in New South Wales. The service is available 9am - 5pm, Monday to Friday (excluding public holidays).

Enough is Enough

Phone.....(02) 9542 4029

Website.....www.enoughisenough.org.au

Support for all victims of crime, cooperative justice education programs, support for victims of road trauma.

Homicide Victims Support Group

Phone..... (02) 8274 8900

Freecall..... 1800 191 777

Website..... www.hvsgnsw.org.au

Provides 24 hour information or support when someone has been murdered and support groups for family members.

VOCAL - Hunter

Phone.....(02) 4926 5826

Website..... www.vocal.org.au

Support for all victims of crime in the Hunter region, victims of road trauma, court support, community education.

