**Sample Internal Partnership Protocol—Victim/Witness Interviews[[1]](#footnote-1)**

**PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this protocol is to establish consistent guidelines for victim services personnel assistance during victim/witness interviews.

**PROCEDURE:**

1. Investigators will notify and coordinate with the assigned victim services personnel when they plan to schedule an interview with a crime victim or witness. Investigators may also request that the victim services personnel contact the victim/witness to schedule the interview. Logistical concerns, such as the need for transportation assistance or short-term accompaniment of children or vulnerable adults during the interview, will be identified by the assigned victim services personnel.
2. When the victim/witness arrives for the scheduled interview, the victim services personnel will meet the victim/witness in the lobby, adhere to established check-in procedures, and escort the victim/witness to the victim services office. The victim/witness will be assessed for respite needs (e.g., beverage, snack, blanket, shoes).
3. If additional people (other victims or witnesses, family members, etc.) who are not being interviewed by investigators are present with the victim/witness and
	1. the interview is being held after regular business hours, or
	2. if the interview is likely to last beyond regular business hours,

the victim services personnel will adhere to established check-in procedures and escort these individuals to the victim services office to wait.

1. The victim services personnel will review the following information with the victim/witness prior to the interview:
	1. Roles of the parties involved in the criminal justice process (e.g., law enforcement officer, investigators, prosecutors, victim services personnel, crime scene personnel)
	2. Limits of confidentiality
	3. What to expect during the interview process (e.g., description of the room, format of the interview, procedure for crime scene personnel involvement—related to photos and/or evidence collection, procedure for taking breaks, location of restrooms and water fountains)
	4. What to expect during the investigative process and the overall criminal justice system
2. The victim services personnel will offer to accompany the victim/witness during the interview. If the investigator determines that victim services personnel should not be present during the interview, the investigator will notify the victim services personnel of this in advance, so this option is not offered to the victim/witness. If the victim services personnel accompany the victim/witness during the interview, the victim services personnel will identify themselves by name and position, so this information is recorded during the interview process.
3. Prior to engaging in the victim/witness interview, the investigator and victim services personnel will discuss their respective roles and expectations related to the interview process.
4. The investigator will meet the victim/witness in the victim services office and escort the victim/witness to the interview room.
5. During the interview, the victim services personnel will provide emotional support for the victim/witness.
6. The victim services personnel will not participate in the interview, ask questions, interject comments or opinions, or discuss resources with the victim/witness during the interview. The victim services personnel may communicate with the victim/witness during the interview under the following circumstances:
	1. The victim services personnel may check on the victim’s/witness’s emotional state by asking questions such as “Are you doing okay?” or “Would you like to take a break?”
	2. The victim services personnel may provide support and encouragement by making statements such as “You are doing great” or “We are almost finished.”
	3. The victim services personnel may assist if the victim services personnel believe the victim/witness has misunderstood or misinterpreted something the investigator said or asked. The victim services personnel may provide the victim/witness a neutral prompt such as “Would you like the investigator to explain that again?”
	4. The victim services personnel may assist the victim/witness in utilizing relaxation techniques such as deep breathing or grounding.
7. After the interview is completed, the victim services personnel will escort the victim/witness to the victim services office. The victim/witness will be offered a drink and snack.
8. The victim services personnel will review community resources and provide additional services (e.g., safety planning), as appropriate.
9. The victim services personnel will escort the victim/witness and any other individuals who came with the victim/witness out of the building.

Victim/Witness Interview Protocol, [*revision date*]

1. International Association of Chiefs of Police, [*Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services – Template Package II: Protocols & Documentation*](https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/LEV/Publications/Template%20Package%20II_11.02.20.pdf) (Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services (LEV), 2019). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)