

APPLETON POLICE DEPARTMENT POLICY		TITLE: Victim Crisis Response Program	
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I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish operational guidelines for the Appleton Police Department Victim Crisis Response Program.

II. POLICY

The Appleton Police Department has created the Victim Crisis Response (VCR) Program to support the efforts of law enforcement officers by providing crime victims with immediate support services and referral information. It is the policy of the Appleton Police Department that volunteer personnel from the VCR program will respond to crime scenes at the specific request and under the direction of law enforcement officers to render services to victims. Volunteer members of the VCR program have no statutory authority and are not to be considered law enforcement officers.

III. DISCUSSION

IV. DEFINITIONS

V. PROCEDURE

A. VCR Program Structure

1. The Deputy Chief of Operations or his/her designee will oversee the VCR program.
2. A police department employee will be designated as the VCR coordinator and shall be responsible for administration of the program.

B. VCR Program Goals

1. Enhance the quality of justice by satisfying the emotional, social, and informational needs of crime victims and witnesses.
2. Increase the willingness of victims and witnesses to cooperate with police and prosecutors after they have reported a crime.
3. Improve officer efficiency and reduce workload by shifting primary responsibility for on-scene emotional support services for victims and witnesses of crime to trained volunteers.

C. Scope of VCR Services

1. Render emotional support, intervention services and reassurance for victims, witnesses and their families.
2. Provide information about investigative procedures.
3. Provide information about the criminal justice system
4. Provide information and referral for emotional, legal, financial and social needs.
5. Ensure connection with other victim/witness assistance programs.

D. VCR Operational Guidelines

1. Volunteers will normally respond to a crisis referral as a team of two.
2. All VCR volunteers shall identify themselves upon arrival at any scene. While at any scene, VCR program volunteers shall display proper identification at all times.
3. Upon arrival on scene, VCR personnel shall follow and abide by all lawful directives of the investigating officer and/or police supervisor.
4. At no time will VCR personnel enter the crime scene without clearance from the investigating law enforcement officer.
5. If an officer will not be present at the scene when VCR volunteers arrive, they should obtain as much information as possible prior to responding to

the scene.

6. Contact with the victim, family of the victim, and witnesses still at the scene should occur as soon as possible after arrival of the VCR volunteers. This contact will be in cooperation with the need of the officers to secure the crime scene and conduct their investigation.
7. Upon contacting the victim, family of the victim, and/or witnesses the VCR volunteers will immediately identify themselves.
8. Before rendering services, the VCR volunteer should inform all parties that any information provided, even that of a sensitive nature, will be conveyed to police officials.
9. The minimum services to be provided in every VCR/citizen encounter include:
 - a. Determination of the victim/witness' expectations;
 - b. Explanation of what is currently occurring
 - c. Provision of emotional support;
 - d. Establishing means for follow-up to include providing business cards, VCR literature, and appropriate pamphlets/information.
10. If, at any time, VCR volunteers should become aware of any safety risks, such as the presence of dangerous weapons, they shall immediately inform an officer.
11. VCR volunteers shall advise the service desk personnel when they have concluded their services.
12. VCR volunteers shall document each instance of service delivery and forward it to the VCR coordinator within 24 hours of the incident.
13. VCR personnel will conduct follow-up services within 72 hours of the initial contact to ensure that information and resources originally provided were appropriately addressed.
14. Any injury received while performing VCR duties must be reported immediately to a police supervisor.

E. VCR Intervention Techniques

1. Encourage and enable the victim to share sensitive aspects of the incident by providing emotional support.
 2. Encourage the victim or witness to ask questions if they are unsure, concerned or frightened.
 3. Explain the process of investigation, custody, and prosecution and provide information regarding issues such as return of property, repair or replacement of stolen or damaged property, clean up procedures, alternate housing needs, dealing with the media, etc..
 4. Reassure the victim that follow-up services will be forthcoming and that VCR volunteers will act as a "bridge" to long term support services.
 5. Assist the victim to regain a feeling a safety and security, including connection with an informal support system that can be accessed as the need arises.
 6. Provide active listening and crisis intervention to victims, witnesses, and family, centered around issues of anger, fear, guilt, distrust, loneliness and loss of control. The volunteer will reinforce normalcy of these feelings considering the nature of the situation.
 7. Provide referral information and/or forms that will assist the person in obtaining appropriate services, including crime/victim compensation, alcohol or drug counseling, mental health support groups, domestic violence counseling, anger management/violence control groups, etc..
 8. Assist in coordinating transportation to shelter, if necessary. VCR volunteers will not transport victims. They will seek the assistance of relatives, neighbors, or police officers in moving victims/witnesses to different locations.
 9. Provide linkage with the appropriate Victim/Witness Program. Introduce victims to the VINE program and instruct the victim in matters relating to the release of the perpetrator from custody.
 10. Assist with application to the Crime Victim Compensation Program.
- F. Officer Operational Guidelines
1. As a general rule, officers shall request the assistance of VCR volunteers

whenever a victim or witness has experienced a significant incident involving a real or perceived threat of their personal safety or welfare or a tragic personal loss.

2. Examples of incidents warranting involvement of VCR volunteers include:
 - a. Homicide;
 - b. Suicide;
 - c. Infant or child death;
 - d. Traffic fatality;
 - e. Unexpected or unexplained death;
 - f. Armed robberies;
 - g. Burglaries (occupied dwelling);
 - h. Stranger to stranger crime;
 - i. Violent crimes involving great bodily harm;
 - j. Crimes of violence against the elderly;
 - k. Adult sexual assault;
 - l. Any crime involving a distraught victim.
3. Officers in need of VCR services shall make the request through the service desk.
4. When requesting VCR services, officers should be prepared to provide the following information:
 - a. Name of the victim/witness and suspect, if available;
 - b. Location for response including address, telephone number and directions, if necessary;
 - c. Type of incident;
 - d. Any specific request from the officer at the scene;
 - e. A law enforcement contact person and phone number.
5. When a VCR volunteer responds to a scene, officers must assess risk factors and take appropriate steps to ensure the safety of the volunteer.
 - a. If either the officer or volunteer feels the risk is too great to allow the VCR volunteers to remain on the scene, the officer will remain until the service delivery is complete or the officer will provide an alternative, secure location.
 - b. A key component in completing the risk assessment is whether the perpetrator is in custody or whether he or she continues to pose a

threat.

6. When the services of a VCR volunteer are utilized, officers shall note in their offense report the involvement of the VCR volunteer.

G. Existing Victim Assistance Programs

1. It is the intent of the Appleton Police Department that the Victim Crisis Response Program will enhance existing victim services, rather than duplicating services that are presently available from other agencies in the community.
2. In cases involving the following situations, other agencies are designated as the primary victim assistance provider. Existing protocols and procedures regarding the involvement of those agencies will remain intact.
 - a. Sexual Assault or Domestic Violence Cases: VCR Program volunteers will respond to the scene upon request in these cases. However, existing resources of the Sexual Assault Crisis Center and the Harbor House Domestic Abuse Shelter will continue to be called by the police officers. VCR Program volunteers may accompany a victim for medical treatment or provide other assistance to the victim(s), family member of the victim(s) and/or witnesses.
 - b. Child Abuse Cases: The appropriate county Human Services/Child Protection Agency shall be the primary agency providing victim assistance in these cases. Upon request by the investigating officer, volunteers of the VCR Program will respond to the scene of a crime against a minor when child protective issues are not present.
 - c. Mental Health Cases: The appropriate county Human Services Agency will continue to be the designated provider for cases involving mental health issues, including attempted suicide, threats to harm oneself / others, etc.. VCR Program volunteers should only be contacted in these types of cases when assistance is needed that is outside the scope of the county Human Services Agency.

H. Release of Information/Reports

1. Information or reports received or created by VCR volunteers will only be

released to members of the Appleton Police Department. VCR volunteers will release no information to sources outside the department.

2. VCR volunteers shall keep the identities of crime victims they have assisted, as well as any sensitive information that may have been divulged to them, confidential.

1. VCR Commitment

1. Volunteers will be expected to commit to no fewer than two shifts per month over a one-year period. (Approximately 15 to 20 hours per month.) These hours may be donated in the areas of victim-response, volunteer meetings, advanced training, administrative assistance, schedule development, speaking engagements, training new volunteers or other approved projects.
2. Volunteers will be expected to provide time availability information so shifts can be scheduled at least one month in advance. Hours of assignment are within the discretion of the VCR coordinator.
3. If a volunteer is unable to fulfill his or her commitment, they will be responsible for notifying the VCR coordinator.
4. In the event of an illness or an emergency, the VCR coordinator or other staff member should be contacted as soon as possible so backup coverage can be arranged.

- J. Professionalism

1. Volunteers shall remain in compliance with the policies and procedures of the VCR program.
2. Volunteers are expected to establish and maintain an effective, professional working relationship with victims. Volunteers may not give their home telephone number or home address to crime victims nor should a personal relationship be pursued. If necessary, the crime victim can reach the volunteer through the general business number of the Appleton Police Department.
3. The volunteer will be expected to act in a professional manner. Courteous demeanor and language is expected at all times while on duty. Volunteers shall avoid the use of profanity, abusive or obscene language and shall

refrain from making inappropriate comments regarding race, ethnicity, age, religious beliefs, sexual orientation or handicap status.

4. When on duty, the volunteer is acting as a representative of the Appleton Police Department. Personal appearance and apparel should be appropriate to the situation. The volunteer should be dressed in a manner that would ensure confidence on the part of the victim.
5. Requests for VCR service should take priority over personal issues, and calls should be responded to promptly and professionally. Volunteers should not consume alcohol in the 12 hours prior to their assigned shift. If the volunteer is taking prescription medication, the volunteer should communicate with the VCR coordinator about side effects that could effect their performance.
6. If a VCR volunteer discovers that a personal relationship exists with a person in need of VCR services, he or she shall immediately defer to their team partner. If possible, they should make contact with another volunteer, or the VCR coordinator, to replace them.
7. If a volunteer, or someone in his or her immediate family, is arrested for an offense or has a case pending in a criminal court, the volunteer must notify the VCR coordinator.

K. VCR Volunteer Selection

1. Candidates for the VCR program will be interviewed by a panel comprised of the VCR coordinator, a police department representative and other members as deemed appropriate.
2. Volunteers will be selected utilizing various criteria, to include:
 - a. Interpersonal skills;
 - b. Problem solving skills;
 - c. Ability to handle stressful situations.
3. Background checks, criminal history and other necessary screening will be conducted by an Appleton police officer.
4. New volunteers will have a six-month probationary period. During this time, they will be observed in their interactions with crime victims, incident reports will be reviewed, follow-up calls may be monitored and

service quality reports will be gathered. An evaluation will be completed before they will be given full volunteer status.

L. Training/Education

1. All VCR volunteers must meet basic qualifications set by the Victim Crisis Response coordinator.
2. Volunteers must complete the initial Victim Crisis Response training provided by the Appleton Police Department. Volunteers must attend at least 9 of 10 sessions and receive a completion certificate.
3. The VCR coordinator will organize any subsequent training. Volunteers will be expected to attend approximately 90% of the announced training sessions.
4. Volunteers are expected to attend at least 8 or 10 scheduled monthly meetings. If the volunteer is unable to attend a scheduled meeting the VCR coordinator should be contacted. The volunteer is responsible for completing or following up on information missed.

11-29-2000

Richard Myers
Chief of Police

Date