



City of Grand Island

Tuesday, October 21, 2003

Special Mtg/Study Session

Item -1

Presentation of Victim Assistance Unit by the Police Department

The recent dissolution of the Family Violence Coalition left a void in services to victims of crime in Grand Island – Hall County. The Grand Island Police Department, the Hall County Sheriff's Office and the Hall County Attorney's office collaborated with the Nebraska Crime Commission to seek funding to develop a victim assistance program. Nebraska state statute 81-1848 outlines the following rights of victims and witnesses of crimes:

- (1) To be informed by local law enforcement agencies and the county attorney of the final disposition of the cases. If the crime charged is a felony, the victim shall be notified whenever the defendant or perpetrator is released from custody.*
- (2) To be notified that a court proceeding to which they have been subpoenaed will not go on as scheduled, in order to save the person an unnecessary trip to court.*
- (3) To receive protection from harm and threats of harm arising out of their cooperation with law enforcement and prosecution efforts, and to be provided with information as to the level of protection available.*
- (4) To be informed of financial assistance and other social services available as a result of being a witness or a victim of a crime, including information on how to apply for the assistance and services.*
- (5) To be informed of the procedure to be followed in order to apply for and receive any witness fee to which they are entitled.*
- (6) To be provided, whenever possible, a secure waiting area during court proceedings that does not require them to be in close proximity to defendants and families and friends of defendants.*
- (7) To have any stolen or other personal property expeditiously returned by law enforcement agencies when no longer needed as evidence. If feasible, all such property, except weapons, currency, contraband, property subject to evidentiary analysis, and property the ownership of which is disputed, shall be returned to the person within ten days of being taken.*
- (8) To be provided with appropriate employer intercession services to insure that employers of victims and witnesses will cooperate with criminal justice process in order to minimize an employee's loss of pay and other benefits resulting from court appearances.*
- (9) To be entitled to a speedy disposition of the case in which they are involved as a victim or witness in order to minimize the length of time they must endure the stress of their responsibilities in connection with the matter; and*
- (10) To have the family members of all homicide victims afforded all of the rights under subsections (1) to (4) and (6) to (9) and services analogous to those provided under section 81-18-47.*

The Grand Island Police Department, the Hall County Sheriff's Office and the Hall County

Attorney's Office have collaborated with the Nebraska Crime Commission to fund a victim assistance unit. A grant for \$37,500 has been approved to develop this needed resource in our community. This grant requires a 20% match, which can be in-kind services, equipment and dollars. The grant proposal would require the City of Grand Island to hire a Victim Assistance director.

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