

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES  
AND HOTLINES:

**Safe Berks**

(Formerly Berks Women In Crisis)

(610) 372-9540 (hotline)

(610) 372-7463 (Spanish hotline)

**Protection from Abuse Office**

(610) 478-6208 ext. 5701

**Area Agency on Aging**

(610) 478-6500

**Children's Alliance Center**

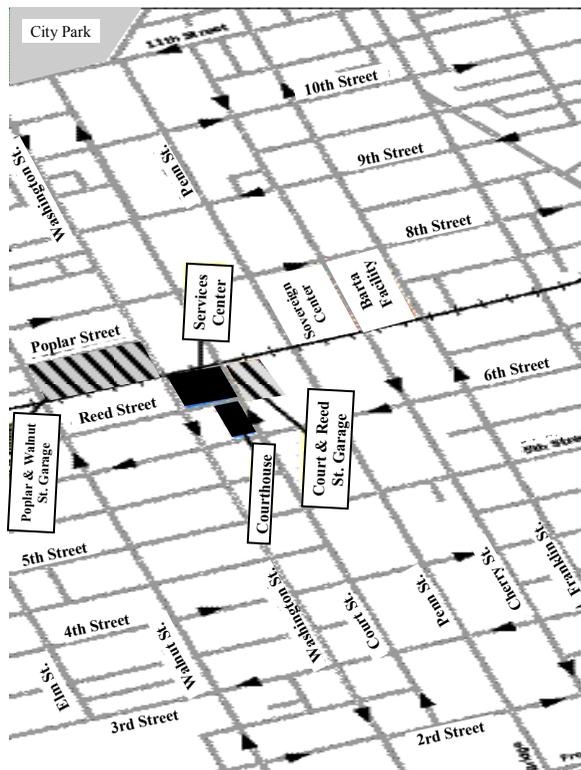
(610) 898-0535

**Service Access Management**

(610) 236-0530

**PA Office of Victim Services**

[www.pcv.pccd.pa.gov](http://www.pcv.pccd.pa.gov)



Berks County  
District Attorney's Office

# Victim/Witness Assistance Unit



**John T. Adams**  
District Attorney

**Berks County Services Center**  
633 Court Street  
Reading, Pennsylvania 19601

Phone: (610) 478-6000

Fax: (610) 478-6002

Email: [VictimWitness@countyofberks.com](mailto:VictimWitness@countyofberks.com)

Website: [www.co.berks.pa.us](http://www.co.berks.pa.us)

Office Hours: 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

## Mission Statement

The Berks County District Attorney's Office Victim/Witness Assistance Unit, through its Victim/Witness Coordinators, Assistant District Attorneys and Office Support Staff shall serve as advocates for the enforcement of fundamental rights of crime victims and promote the belief that all victims and witnesses deserve to be treated with dignity, compassion and respect throughout the judicial process and that all victims will be afforded, consistent with the law, the ability to choose their level of participation.

## Services Provided

- ◆ Explanation of the Judicial System
- ◆ Case information and notification
- ◆ Accompaniment to all Court proceedings
- ◆ Preparation for Court testimony
- ◆ Secure victim/witness waiting room
- ◆ Assistance with written and oral victim impact statements
- ◆ Court tours for children
- ◆ Assistance in filing compensation claims for your losses or damages
- ◆ Assistance with transportation and child care
- ◆ Enrollment in the State and/or County Release Notification Program
- ◆ Referrals to community agencies

*All services are free of charge*

## BASIC BILL OF RIGHTS FOR CRIME VICTIMS

- ◆ Receive basic information of available services
- ◆ Notification of significant actions and proceedings to their case
- ◆ Accompaniment to all public court proceedings
- ◆ Opportunity to offer prior comment on the potential reduction of charges or changing of a plea
- ◆ Opportunity to offer prior comment for sentencing of defendant, which includes written and/or oral victim impact statement
- ◆ Restored, to the extent possible, to the pre-crime economic status through restitution, compensation, property return
- ◆ Opportunity to provide prior comment, receive notification of release decisions and escapes when defendant is sentenced to a state facility
- ◆ Notification of any release decisions and escapes when defendant is sentenced to a local facility
- ◆ To receive notice of the commitment, discharge, transfer, escape of the offender from a mental health facility
- ◆ Assistance is provided in requesting restitution and preparation, submission, and follow-up with a claim for compensation

Additional Bill of Rights are available upon request:

- ◆ Receive notice when defendant is released from incarceration at sentencing
- ◆ Receive notice of the filing, hearing or disposition of appeals

# PA SAVIN

Free and Confidential  
Victim Notification Service  
If the defendant is housed in County Prison or a State Correctional Facility within the Commonwealth and you want a prompt notification of any release, transfer or escape

CALL  
1-866-9PA-SAVIN (toll-free)  
1-866-972-7284  
or  
REGISTER ONLINE  
[www.vineline.com](http://www.vineline.com)

## Tips for Testifying

The following suggestions may help you when you are called to testify:

- ◆ Always tell the truth
- ◆ Dress neatly
- ◆ Review the facts of the case in your own mind
- ◆ Listen carefully to questions
- ◆ Speak loudly and clearly
- ◆ If you hear the word objection, wait for permission to proceed
- ◆ Do not volunteer information
- ◆ If you don't understand the question, ask to have the question repeated
- ◆ Always be courteous and respectful.

## Restitution

As a victim of a crime, you are entitled to some form of compensation for your losses or damages.

You will be provided with a restitution form by the District Attorney's Office. At your request, a Victim/Witness Coordinator will be made available to assist you in completing this form.

Only expenses incurred as a direct result of the crime are considered for restitution.

### Expenses Covered

- ⇒ Medical bills
- ⇒ Counseling fees
- ⇒ Property damage
- ⇒ Fair value of stolen items



### Expenses Not Covered\*

- ⇒ Lost wages
- ⇒ Gas mileage for hearings
- ⇒ Car rentals
- ⇒ Money for "pain and suffering"



\*Expenses not covered could be pursued through civil litigation or see below (Victims Compensation Assistance Program) for other options.

### The process for a restitution claim goes as follows:

1. Return the completed restitution forms to the Victim/Witness Unit.
2. Court decides and orders the restitution at the time of sentencing.
3. Enforcement of restitution payments is handled by the Adult Probation Office.
4. Collection and distribution of monies is handled by the Clerk of Courts Office.
5. To monitor payments, log onto public docket sheet <http://ujportal.pacourts.us>

## Victims Compensation Assistance Program (VCAP)

This program administered by the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency covers any unreimbursed medical expenses, counseling fees, loss of wages, support or loss of ability to earn wages, and/or funeral expenses. Loss of property and pain and suffering are not covered.

To determine whether you meet the eligibility requirements, ask one of our Victim/Witness Coordinators or call the VCAP directly at 800-233-2339.

To file with VCAP, log onto [www.pcv.pccd.pa.gov](http://www.pcv.pccd.pa.gov) and click on "File Claim Online" under "Victim Compensation." You may also call a Victim/Witness Coordinator at (610) 478-6000.

## Confidentiality

All information provided is confidential and will not be shared with anyone other than law enforcement, correctional and prosecution officers without a written consent.

## Victim/Witness Intimidation

If you feel threatened, harassed or in fear of safety, please contact a Victim/Witness Coordinator.

## Grievances

You have the right to file a grievance regarding services provided or any of your rights that have been violated, please call (610) 478-6000 to speak with the Victim/Witness Unit Supervisor.

## Procedures of a Criminal Case

