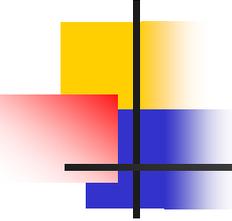


Working With Victims of Crime
An overview of the Ministry of Attorney
General Ontario Victim Services
Secretariat & Victim/Witness Assistance
Program



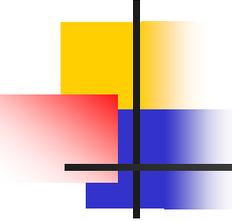
Annual General Meeting of the
Ontario College of Social Workers
and Social Service Workers

June 18, 2008



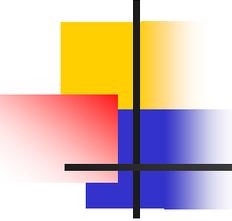
Purpose of Presentation

- To provide an overview of the Ontario Victim Services Secretariat (OVSS) with a specific focus on the Victim/Witness Assistance Program
 - Victim services context in Ontario
 - Relationship with other key ministries and agencies
 - Ongoing programs for victims of crime
 - Time-limited projects for victims of crime
 - Victim/Witness Assistance Program



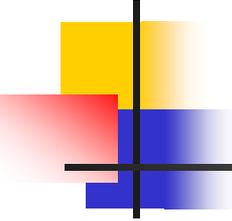
Victim Services Context In Ontario

- In Ontario, the victim services sector historically emerged from grassroots community based groups and women's groups which sought to improve the lives of victims of violence.
- In the past twenty-five years, the government has increased its public policy role and service investment in the victims services field.



Victim Services Context In Ontario

- The Ontario Victim Services Secretariat (OVSS) was established within this public interest context, and is mandated to work with community based stakeholders in the coordinated delivery of victim services.
- The majority of victim services are delivered by community partners and this important and unique relationship provides great opportunities for the future of victim services.

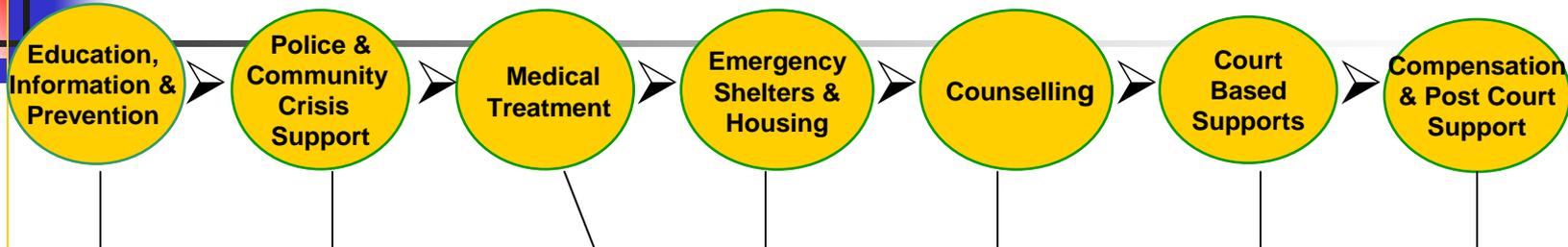


The Ontario Victim Services Secretariat (OVSS)

The OVSS

- Works together with other divisions within MAG, other ministries and with community organizations to ensure that victim services are effective, coordinated and meet the diverse needs of victims;
- Provides direct services to clients within the criminal court process
- Funds ongoing programs that provide direct support, information and referrals to victims of crime and witnesses involved in the criminal justice process;
- Provides grants for time-limited projects to address the diverse needs of victims;
- Provides administrative oversight for the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board and the Office of the Victims of Crime.

Continuum of Victim and Related Services



- OVSS:
 -Office for Victims of Crime
 - **Victim Support Line**
 - **Hate Crimes Grants**
 - **Community Grants**
 e.g. PFLAG Canada

- Citizenship (OWD):
 - Funding for Violence Against Women Training Programs

- MCSS:
 -Assaulted Women's Help Line

- MCSCS:
 - Policing Services
- OVSS:
 - **Victim Crisis Assistance And Referral Services**
 - **SupportLink**
 - **Sexual Assault/ Rape Crisis Centres**
 - **The Men's Project**
 - Victim Quick Response Program
 - **Hate Crimes Grants**
 - **Community Grants**
 e.g. Grand Council Treaty #3

- MOHLTC:
 - Hospitals
 - Sexual Assault Treatment Centres

- MCSS:
 - Women's Shelters
 - Transitional Support Program

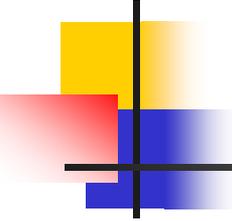
- MMAH:
 - Subsidized Housing

- OVSS:
 - **Sexual Assault/ Rape Crisis Centres**
 - **VQRP**
 - **The Men's Project**
 - **Hate Crimes Grants**
 - **Community Grants**
 e.g. Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization

- MOHLTC:
 - Mental Health Services
 - Aboriginal Healing & Wellness Strategy
 - Private Counselors/ Professionals

- OVSS:
 - **Victim/Witness Assistance Program**
 - **Domestic Violence Court**
 - **Domestic Violence Bail Safety Projects**
 - **Language Interpreter Services**
 - **Child Witness Programs**

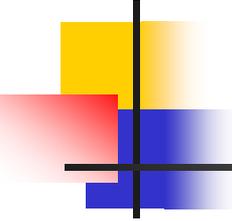
- OVSS:
 - Criminal Injuries Compensation Board
 - Victim Quick Response Program
 - **Victim Support Line (Victim Notification)**
 - **Partner Assault Response Program**



Overview of Programs

Ongoing Programs

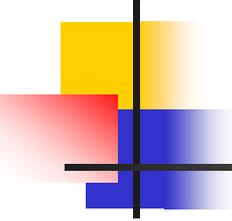
- The Ontario Victim Services Secretariat provides resources and supports to ongoing programs delivered by community based agencies, and it directly operates the court based Victim/Witness Assistance Program to support victims and witnesses of crime involved in the criminal court system.
- Examples of ongoing core programs include the delivery of domestic violence services, victim crisis assistance and referral services, sexual assault centres, child witness programs, partner assault response programs and support link.



Overview of Programs

Time-limited projects

- OVSS provides grants to community agencies to address sexual assault, hate crimes, under served and un-served victims, and child victimization.



Ongoing Programs

Victim Crisis Assistance and Referral Services

- Immediate trauma support and practical, short-term assistance to victims; referrals for longer-term assistance (49 sites)

SupportLink

- For victims at risk of domestic violence and sexual assault, intensive safety planning and a wireless phone unit pre-programmed to 9-1-1 (20 sites)

Sexual Assault Centres

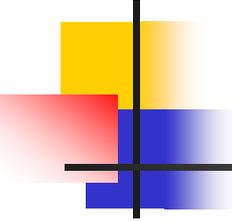
- Counselling information and practical services to adult victims and survivors of sexual violence (39 sites)

Partner Assault Response Programs

- Group education and counselling for individuals who have assaulted their partners (68 sites)

Barbara Schlifer Clinic

- Specialized legal services for assaulted women in Toronto



Ongoing Programs

Victim/Witness Assistance Program

- Information, court preparation support throughout the criminal process. (61 sites)

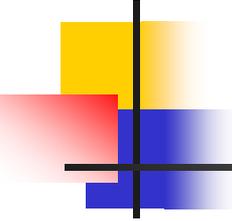
Child Victim/Witness Program

- Specialized court and testimonial aids for child victim/witnesses (5 sites, expanding to 8)

Victim Support Line

Province-wide bilingual, toll-free information line providing a range of services to victims of crime, including four components

- Pre-recorded information on how the criminal justice system works
- Referrals to local community services via link to Community Information Centres Network
- Victim notification of offender release from custody
- Link to OVSS Staff (Victim Liaison Unit) for concerns about the availability or quality of victim services



Time-Limited Projects

Victim Quick Response Pilot Program

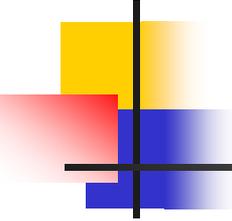
- Funds funeral expenses, emergency needs and short-term counselling through a quick process

Community Grants

- Temporary funding to community non-profit agencies for projects related to victim services enhancement

Community Hate Crimes Response Grants

- Temporary Grants to assist victims and communities affected by hate crimes



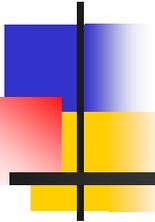
Time-Limited Projects

Child Internet Luring Program

- Emotional support, referral to appropriate community services and practical assistance for child victims and their families

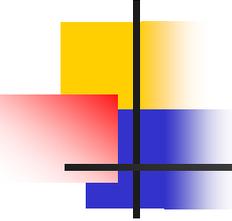
The Men's Project

- Crisis line for the 613 area code and counselling for victims of sexual assault in the Ottawa and Cornwall areas



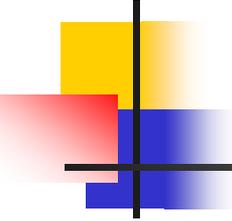
Ministry of the Attorney General

Victim/Witness Assistance Program



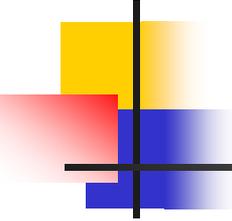
Victims and the Criminal Justice System

- Victims of crime often know very little about the criminal justice system or the courts
- Victims often feel lost, alone and powerless in the criminal justice system
- Victims often feel scared about having to testify for fear of retribution



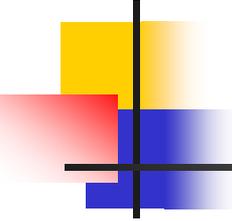
Victims and the Criminal Justice System

- Victims may feel pressure from family, people in their community or others not to testify
- Victims of crime who have a better understanding about the criminal justice process and feel that there are services available to help them are more often able to fully participate in the criminal court process



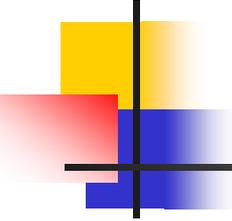
Who is the Victim/Witness Assistance Program?

- The Program started in 1987 with just 10 offices. Just twenty years later, it now operates out of 61 locations around Ontario
- Most Program offices are located in courthouses



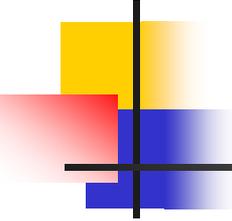
What Does the Victim/Witness Assistance Program Do?

- The purpose of the Program is to improve victims' understanding of, and participation in, the criminal justice system
- The Program attempts to make victims of crime feel supported and comfortable in the criminal court system by providing them with on-going assistance, information and services after the police have laid criminal charges



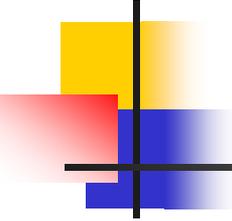
Who Receives the Services of the Victim/Witness Assistance Program?

- Last year the Program worked directly with over 40,000 victims
- The Program has limited resources and cannot serve all victims of crime
- The most vulnerable victims of crimes of violence listed below are offered services on a priority basis in all Program sites:
 - Domestic Violence Victims – DVC process including bail safety pilot
 - Child Abuse victims
 - Sexual Assault Victims
 - Families of homicide victims, and traffic deaths
 - Vulnerable victims with special needs
 - Elderly victims
 - Hate crime victims
 - Guns and Gangs



How Do Victims of Crime Get In Touch with the Victim/Witness Assistance Program?

- The Program works with victims who are referred to it by persons or organizations such as the police, the prosecutor, Children's Aid Societies, women's shelters, and community social agencies
- Victims of Crime can also come to, or call any of the Program's office directly for information and assistance

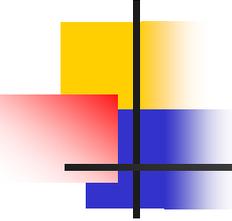


Victim's Bill of Rights

Victims' Bill of Rights:

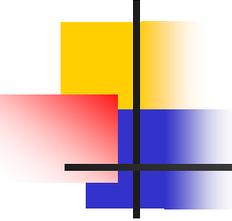
Provincial statute that sets out guiding principles to ensure that victims of crime are:

- Treated fairly
- Treated compassionately
- Treated in a way that does not discourage their participation in the justice process
- Given access to information about the criminal investigation, criminal charges, court process, judicial decisions, release orders, etc.



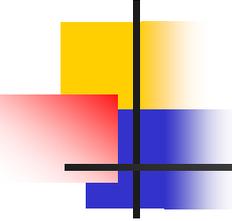
V/WAP Services for Victims of Crime

- Explain the various steps in a criminal trial
- Explain the different people involved in a criminal trial (for example, judge, prosecutor, defence counsel, court reporter and guards)
- Tour the courthouse and the courtroom
- Give case specific information to victims i.e. significant court dates and appearance types
- Prepare the victim for the criminal trial by going over the court process and explaining what will happen the day of court



V/WAP Services for Victims of Crime

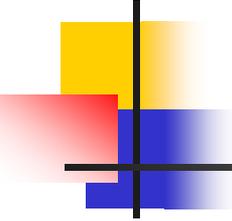
- Review possible testimonial aids
- Be a liaison between the victim, the prosecutor and the police
- Provide the prosecutor with the victim's input regarding bail conditions and sentencing
- In certain cases, accompany the victim to court when she or he testifies
- Provide the victim with copies of court documents
- Discuss VIS and CICB



V/WAP Services for Victims of Crime

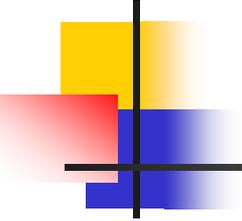
Help victims deal with their immediate physical, emotional, housing and safety needs, including:

- Work with the victim to identify what they need
- Refer the victim to appropriate community agencies that can help victims to deal with specific needs
- Address safety planning with a victim
- Provide emotional support for example: validation of feelings/concerns, support during court appearances and debriefing after disposition.



What the Victim/Witness Assistance Program Does Not Do?

- The Program does not investigate crimes. It is not part of the police service. The Program works co-operatively with the police to ensure a victim's well-being
- The Program does not prosecute cases. It is not part of the prosecutor's office. The Program works co-operatively with the prosecutor to ensure a victim is well-supported for the trial
- The Program does not discuss a victim's evidence with him/her. The Program can arrange for a victim to talk about his/her evidence with the police or the prosecutor. VWAP has an obligation to share any information of evidentiary value with the Crown and police.
- The Program does not provide counselling services to victims. It refers victims to outside counsellors
- program has limited confidentiality in that it has a full sharing policy with the Crown's office and other justice partners.



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www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca