



Nicole Carroll manages the Victim Services Unit of the Louisville Metro Police Department. Carroll has provided support and advocacy services to victims of crime for the past 8 years. She was tasked with creating, implementing and directing the Victim Services Unit of the Louisville Metro Police Department in 2016, worked as a Victim Services Specialist for the Victim Services Section of the Fairfax County Police Department and created, implemented and directed the Office of Victim Intervention and Education for Vanderbilt University. She is a past recipient of Fairfax County Police Department Departmental Honors Meritorious Award, Fairfax County Police Department Departmental Honors Team Excellence Award, Vanderbilt Police Department Civilian of the Year Award and Vanderbilt Police Department Letter of Commendation. She serves as a committee member for the Louisville Fatality Review Committee and the Louisville Domestic Violence Interagency Committee, served as a statewide crisis responder in Virginia and was the Victim Services Liaison for Vanderbilt University's Naval ROTC Unit's Sexual Assault Victim Intervention. Carroll received her Master of Science in Criminal Justice degree from Tiffin University.

Lessons from Backlog Notifications

By: Nicole Carroll, Supervisor of LMPD's Victim Services Unit

The support and advocacy that victim advocates provide to victims associated with the backlog is as imperative to the case as the investigation and prosecution of the case. Notifications tend to take on a life of their own and you need to be prepared to follow the lead of your victim. Each notification is different and when you call an individual, you must be prepared to meet them immediately following your conversation. Be flexible; some victims want to receive the case update over the phone while others want to hear the information in person. Lesson number one involves setting time aside in your busy schedule to make notifications.

No two victims are the same, but the fairness and respect with which you treat each victim is paramount to building a rapport with them in order to keep them involved in the process. Process is an interesting term and it can mean something different for each victim. For some, the process entails an investigation and prosecution of their case. For others, the process involves receiving the information and processing it in a way that does not include the criminal justice system. Victim advocates are responsible for respecting and supporting the process that the victim chooses. Lesson number two involves the idea that closure looks different for each victim.

People change. The life that someone led at the time of their victimization may be a very distant past so it is imperative to remember that not every victim is in the same place both physically and mentally. Not all victims are easy to locate and once they have been found, they may or may not be prepared for the conversation you are going to have with them. Lesson number three is two-fold. First, be committed to finding a victim and be prepared to call them and/or safely go to their last known residence. Second, respect your victims' privacy; they may live a different life from when the crime was committed against them and they may not be prepared to talk to you.

It is an honor to be a part of the rape kit backlog victim notification process. Every time we contact a victim we have the potential to open a closed door and to reopen an old wound. Remember that each case involves the victimization of a human being and handle the delivery of the notification with care, concern and respect. Victim advocates are an integral part of the delivery of the notification and the manner in which we treat victims has the power to shape the way they process the information and proceed to a point of closure.

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