



GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOL DIVISIONS IN THE EVENT THAT VICTIMS ARISE FROM AN EMERGENCY CAUSED BY A CRIMINAL ACT

RELEVANT CODE LANGUAGE

[§ 22.1-279.8](#). School safety audits and school crisis, emergency management, and medical emergency response plans required...

“The plan shall include a provision that the Department of Criminal Justice Services and the Virginia Criminal Injuries Compensation Fund shall be contacted immediately to deploy assistance in the event of an emergency as defined in the emergency response plan when there are victims as defined in § 19.2-11.01. The Department of Criminal Justice Services and the Virginia Criminal Injuries Compensation Fund shall be the lead coordinating agencies for those individuals determined to be victims, and the plan shall also contain current contact information for both agencies.”

BACKGROUND

In accordance with the *Code of Virginia* § 9.1-104, § 19.2-11.1, and § 19.2-11.3, the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) supports grant-funded local victim/witness programs and statewide programs designed to provide direct services, information, and assistance required by Virginia’s Crime Victim and Witness Rights Act (the Act; see 1995, c. 687) and other victims’ rights laws.

Victim Assistance Advocates are typically located within Commonwealth’s Attorneys Offices and Police/Sheriff Departments. They help victims of crime navigate the criminal justice system and assist them with resources. DCJS also deploys the Commonwealth’s Victims Crisis Assistance and Response Team (VCART). This team consists of various professionals throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia who have received nationally recognized training from the National Organization of Victim Assistance (NOVA). Team members train together and undergo a rigorous assessment before being deployed. Team members can staff family assistance centers, offer companionship services to victims/survivors, be on death notification teams, and assist victims with accessing resources.

The Virginia Victims Fund (VVF), formerly known as the Virginia Criminal Injuries Compensation Fund (CICF), assists victims of violent crime with expenses arising from the crime. VVF pays for items such as medical expenses, funeral expenses, counseling, moving expenses, and transportation, among others.

The above additions were made to the *Code of Virginia* at the recommendation of the Governor’s Virginia Tech Review Panel. After the tragedy at Virginia Tech, victims and survivors were served by staff and students who were secondary victims. Though professional victim advocates and accompanying services required by the *Code of Virginia* were offered through administrative channels, the services were not accepted, and victims were not afforded their rights under the Act.

PROCESS AND AVAILABLE SERVICES

Incident That Is Not a Declared Emergency

If victims arise from an incident, the *Code of Virginia* (§ 22.1-279.8) requires that DCJS and VVF be contacted to deploy assistance. Contact numbers must be in each emergency plan (*see the end of this document for contact information*).

DCJS and VVF, working together, can help to provide the following services and resources to victims of violent crime:

1. A link to the Victims Information Network (VINE) so they can be aware of the location of the perpetrator.
2. Access to resources even if there was not a declared emergency.
3. Assistance with the return of property taken as evidence.
4. Billing intervention with medical and other service providers.
5. Companionship.
6. Deployment of the Victims Crisis Assistance and Response Team (VCART) to help staff incident response.
7. Ensuring they receive the rights to which they are entitled under the Act.
8. Explanation of the investigative process.
9. Financial Resources.
10. Information about the criminal justice/court process/chief medical examiner process.
11. Information about what to expect in the coming months and ideas about how to prepare for common trauma reactions.
12. Nationally recognized group crisis intervention (GCI) services for victims, witnesses, and survivors.
13. Technical assistance on structuring donated funds so they do not interfere with other resources that may be available to victims.
14. Victim advocacy.

Declared Emergency

If victims as defined in the *Code of Virginia* § 19.2-11.01 arise from a declared emergency, DCJS and VVF will become the primary service providers for those victims. The services listed above may be provided as appropriate. Both entities will endeavor to involve local resources in the provision of services whenever possible.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. **Who will contact DCJS/VVF?**
The school should designate an individual to make the contact. This individual should have some decision-making authority.
2. **How long does the school have to make contact?**
Ideally, the school would make contact within six hours.
3. **How soon will someone respond to the school's report?**
It is likely that DCJS and VVF will be reaching out to the affected organization early on, however, both entities respond to calls within minutes and request a six-hour window to be on the ground.
4. **How long can the individual or school receive these services?**
Services will not be ended until there is mutual agreement between the school and DCJS or VVF.

CONTACTS

Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS)

Julia Fuller-Wilson, *State Crisis Response Coordinator*:
(804) 840-4276

Online Form to report an incident:

www.dcjs.virginia.gov/victims-services/report-campus-local-emergency

1100 Bank Street, Richmond, VA 23219
www.dcjs.virginia.gov

Virginia Victims Fund (VVF)

(formerly Virginia Criminal Injuries Compensation Fund)

Shannon Dion, *Director*: (804) 774-4159

Jessica Buchanan –
office hours: (804) 205-3531
after hours: (804) 659-9857

333 E. Franklin Street, Richmond, VA 23219
virginiavictimsfund.org