



GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOL SYSTEMS IN THE EVENT THAT VICTIMS ARISE FROM AN EMERGENCY

Relevant Code Language

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

.. Ensuring that the Department of Criminal Justice Services and the Virginia Criminal Injuries Compensation Fund shall be contacted immediately to deploy assistance in the event there are victims as defined in [§ 19.2-11.01](#), and that the Department of Criminal Justice Services and the Virginia Criminal Injuries Compensation Fund become the lead coordinating agencies for those individuals determined to be victims; and

19. Maintaining current contact information for both the Department of Criminal Justice Services and the Virginia Criminal Injuries Compensation Fund.

Background

In accordance with §§9.1-104, 19.2-11.1, and 19.2-11.3 of the *Code of Virginia*, 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 Advocates are typically located within Commonwealth's Attorneys Offices and Police Departments. On a daily basis, they assist victims of crime in navigating the criminal justice system and assisting them with resources. DCJS also deploys the Commonwealth's Crisis Response Team (CRT). This team consists of a variety of professionals throughout the Commonwealth that have received nationally recognized training from the National Organization of Victim Assistance (NOVA). Members of the team exercise together and undergo 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 Criminal Injuries Compensation Fund (CICF) assists victims of violent crime with expenses arising from the crime. The Fund pays for items like medical expenses, funeral expenses, counseling, moving expenses, and transportation, among others. The Criminal Injuries Compensation Fund maintains funding specifically budgeted for the training of the CRT as well as travel and lodging expenses related to deployment of the team.

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 Code 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 CICF be contacted to deploy assistance. Contact numbers must be in each emergency plan (*see end of document for contact information*).

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

- 1) Victim advocacy
- 2) Companionship
- 3) Deployment of the Crisis Response Team to help staff incident response
- 4) Nationally recognized group crisis intervention (GCI) services for victims, witnesses and survivors
- 5) Financial Resources
- 6) Technical assistance on structuring donated funds so they don't interfere with other resources that may be available to victims
- 7) Information about the criminal justice/court process/chief medical examiner process
- 8) Billing intervention with medical and other service providers
- 9) Linking victims to VINE so they can be aware of the location of the perpetrator
- 10) Explaining to victims the investigative process
- 11) Assisting with the return of property taken as evidence
- 12) Ensuring victims receive the rights to which they are entitled under the Act
- 13) Information for the institutional victim about what to expect in the coming months and ideas about how to prepare for common trauma reactions
- 14) CICF and DCJS serve on the Virginia Emergency Response Team and may be able to access resources even though there was not a declared emergency

Declared Emergency

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

Frequently Asked Questions

1. **Who will make contact with DCJS/CICF?**
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 CICF and DCJS will be reaching out to the affected organization early on, however, both entities respond to calls within minutes and ask for 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 CICF.

CONTACTS

Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services

Online Form to report an incident: www.dcjs.virginia.gov/research/reportemergency

Melissa Roberson: during office hours: (804) 225-3456, after hours: (804) 840-4276

Kassandra Bullock: during office hours: (804) 786-3973, after hours: (804) 921-6933

Virginia Criminal Injuries Compensation Fund

Jack Ritchie, Director: during office hours: 1-800-552-4007, after hours (804) 205-3804

Leigh Snellings: during office hours: 1-800-552-4007, after hours: (804) 367-1010