

Victim/Witness  
Court Preparation

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**WHY?**

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**ADDITIONAL  
PERSPECTIVES**

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**THE INCIDENT,  
INVESTIGATION  
& SCREENING**

· CONSIDERATIONS FOR...

- law enforcement
- victim services
- prosecutors

· COMMON QUESTIONS FROM VICTIMS

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THE INCIDENT, INVESTIGATION...

CONSIDERATIONS FOR... Law Enforcement

**Law Enforcement is Often a  
Victim's First Contact!**

- Keep in mind the questions the victim may have racing through her head.
  - Reassure her that our main concern is her safety.
  - Start building trust between the victim and the entire law enforcement community
    - let her know that we are all working to help her
  - Put her in touch with advocates, health professionals, etc. who may be able to help her down the line.

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THE INCIDENT, INVESTIGATION...

CONSIDERATIONS FOR... Advocates/Victim Services

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**THE INCIDENT, INVESTIGATION...  
CONSIDERATIONS FOR...Prosecutors**

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**CHARGES FILED**

- CONSIDERATIONS FOR...
  - law enforcement
  - victim services
  - prosecutors
- COMMON QUESTIONS FROM VICTIMS

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**PROSECUTION PHASE**

- CONSIDERATIONS FOR...
  - law enforcement
  - victim services
  - prosecutors
- COMMON QUESTIONS FROM VICTIMS
  - How strong do you think my case is?
  - What's going to happen to the defendant?
  - What comes next? What are the court dates going to be about?
  - Do I have to testify?

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**PROSECUTION PHASE**

**CONSIDERATIONS FOR...Law Enforcement**

- Law Enforcement
  - Is there any follow-up investigation needed?
  - Continued contact with the victim.
    - We know this is not always possible, but follow-up phone calls or emails, even a text just checking in to see if the victim is in need of any services go a long way to build the trust between a victim and law enforcement.
- Keep in contact with prosecution and advocates regarding any follow-up needed with the victim
  - Each victim is different – some will require nothing after your initial contact, but some will need continued help.

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**PROSECUTION PHASE**

**CONSIDERATIONS FOR...Advocates/Victim Services**

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**PROSECUTION PHASE**

**CONSIDERATIONS FOR...Prosecutors**

- The earlier the initial contact between the prosecutor and the victim, the better!
- Ideally, the prosecutor will handle the victim's case through its final resolution, so the relationship needs to be started and built early on, especially with child victims.
- Important for victims to become used to the prosecutor and the types of questions/manner of questioning in which the prosecutor engages.
- Include the prosecutor in the initial intake with your office advocates.
- At this stage, our focus is on the victim – not our case. We need to build trust and rapport with our victim before we start addressing procedure, potential cross, etc.

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**PROSECUTION PHASE**  
**CONSIDERATIONS FOR...Prosecutors**

- Keep the victim informed!
  - It's easy for us to depend on advocates or automated systems to let the victim know of continued court dates, but it's better for us to make personal contact.
- Bond hearings are important!!!
  - We don't like to alter/amend/reduce bond, especially when it involves contact with the victim. It's important to explain to the victim why we object to such changes, and to let her know that it isn't because we don't trust her, but because we need to preserve our case/protect her/protect the kids.
- Talk to the victim about any proposed offer!
  - The victim needs to be kept informed as to what the offer is, why it is being made, and be allowed to express any concerns or to have any questions answered BEFORE the offer is made.

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**Prosecution:**  
**Preliminary Hearing stage**

**· CONSIDERATIONS FOR...Law Enforcement**

- Be present!
  - The State will need you for testimony at the hearing, and for prep beforehand
  - The victim will appreciate your presence as a show of support, and as an indicator that you believe her and will show up on her behalf.

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**Prosecution:**  
**Preliminary Hearing stage**

**· CONSIDERATIONS FOR...Prosecutors**

- Preliminary hearing preparation is essential – even more so than for trial.
  - For a lot of victims, this will be their first experience testifying, and it can be traumatic. If she needs more than one meeting, give her more than one meeting!
- Work with your advocates to make sure the victim is present, as comfortable as possible, and has someone to talk to if the prosecutor is unavailable.

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### Prosecution: Other Court Hearings

#### · CONSIDERATIONS FOR...Everyone

- Be available for any questions that may arise on the part of the victim
- Answer your phone, and return messages!
- Maintain communication with advocates and with the victim regarding any changes in circumstance (offers, changes in custody status, etc.)

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### Prosecution: Trial Stage

#### · CONSIDERATIONS FOR...Law Enforcement

- Be available for any questions that may arise on the part of the victim
- Answer your phone, and return messages!
- Maintain communication with advocates and with the victim regarding any changes in circumstance (offers, changes in custody status, etc.)

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### Prosecution: Trial Stage

#### · CONSIDERATIONS FOR...Prosecutors

- Trial prep!!
- Inform victim of the trial procedure and what is likely to unfold.
- Discuss potential outcomes, and be honest!

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**Prosecution:  
Trial Stage**

**Victim Concerns**

- Who's going to be there?
- Can I testify in another room?
- Can I do it in writing?
- Why do I have to do it again? I already gave a statement.
- Will the defendant ask me questions?
- Who can be inside the courtroom?
- How do I dress?
- Can someone testify on my behalf?

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**Prosecution:  
Sentencing**

**· CONSIDERATIONS FOR...Law Enforcement**

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**Prosecution:  
Sentencing**

**· CONSIDERATIONS FOR...Prosecutors**

- Victim Impact Statements – get them whenever possible.
- This is the time for the victim to express her feelings, not just spit out testimony
- Address victim's concerns throughout sentencing proceedings if needed.

**Victim Concerns**

- What's going to happen?
- Can I talk to the judge?

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# Ever After

## Law Enforcement

## Prosecution

- Answer the phone!
- Our case isn't done when the defendant is sentenced.
  - A prosecutor's job is to do justice, not merely to convict.
  - This means it carries on after trial -- we don't abandon our victims after they help us convict the defendant.

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