

SERVICE STANDARDS POLICY

Preamble

This policy seeks to define and explain how the Victim Support Service (VSS) will meet its obligations to victims of crime and how it interacts with other service providers. It acknowledges that constraints relating to geography and the availability of resources impact on the nature and level of services provided by all organizations, including VSS.

Definition

“Victims” include the primary or direct victim, secondary victims (family, friends, colleagues, partners) and tertiary victims (e.g. organisations, neighbourhoods) affected by a crime. VSS provides services to people who have suffered as a result of a criminal offence that is reportable, irrespective of whether they choose to report the crime.

The definition is broad and necessitates further qualification, especially in determining those most in need and how we prioritise service provision given resource limitations and high levels of demand for services.

Principles of Service Provision

- VSS supports client self determination and as such encourages self referral by a crime victim. We will accept referrals from other agencies where permission has been gained from the potential client or where other arrangements have been made.
- As the lead agency for victims of crime in South Australia, VSS provides access to networks of supportive professional and community based organisations as well as providing a wide range of direct services.
- VSS works with other organisations to ensure that a wide range of services are developed and made available in order to meet the diverse needs of individual victims. We foster a collaborative approach grounded on shared responsibility. We have a formal Memorandum of Understanding with key justice agencies and formal service agreements with other agencies in some regional centres where they provide services to victims on behalf of VSS.
- All VSS staff are required to abide by the Code of Ethics Policy adopted by VSS
- We assess the respective needs of the crime victims that contact us to ensure a responsive service and to determine whether another agency is more appropriate as the provider of service.
- We respond as soon as possible after the request for service has been made.
- Services to individual victims are provided free of charge, but fees may be applied to government and “for-profit” organisations.
- We endeavour to provide and develop services that are culturally appropriate. We are committed to the elimination of racial discrimination and harassment in all areas.

- We provide services that are accessible to crime victims with physical disabilities and special needs.
- The interests of victims are expressly supported: that is, the preservation of privacy and freedom from fear, intimidation, harassment and further degradation.
- Services and the method in which they are delivered, will not endanger the wellbeing of personnel or clients.
- Any potential or actual conflict of interest by a VSS worker or the Organisation will be avoided.
- We endeavour to prevent and avoid situations where victims may be exposed to further trauma or inappropriate contact with offenders while on our premises.
- Where there are benefits to the victim, the service will cooperate with restorative justice initiatives. These can include, but are not limited to: victim-offender mediation, youth court-family conferencing and pre-sentence restorative justice conferencing.
- In delivering an effective and accountable service to crime victims we do so in the context of abiding by both Federal and State legislation and regulations.

Services Provided

A range of services are offered to different client groups from individuals and families to other agencies and the community:

- Information
- Court Companion Service and court support.
- Counselling
- Community education
- Support and Therapy Groups
- Practical assistance including court preparation and help with Victim Impact Statements
- Advocacy
- Liaison, advocacy and “consultancy” to other service providers
- Restorative Justice interventions
- Preventing crime and improving community safety
- Training
- Resource Centre

Priorities for Service Provision

VSS provides an information, assessment, counselling and (where appropriate) a referral-on service to adults (including adolescents and young adults approaching 18 years of age) enquiring about our services. More intensive services are offered depending upon need and our ability to respond at a given time to:

- Victims whose presenting problem is the trauma/distress resulting from a crime
- Victims of a recent crime rather than one which happened some time ago
- Victims of crime for whom there is no alternative and appropriate service

Some Limitations to Service Provision

- Where there is a specialist service or other appropriate form of assistance then a crime victim may be asked to seek assistance from that agency.
- Victims for whom other issues are the primary problem (e.g. drug or alcohol dependence, mental illness) will be best served by being referred to specialist agencies.
- Alleged perpetrators/offenders who have recently been charged or convicted of a criminal offence, will be assessed with a view to identifying appropriate services. This applies also to members of their families who are supporting the offender. Such factors as the nature and time of the offence will be taken into account, as will the potential likelihood for services to be requested by victims affected by the offence. Persons previously convicted of criminal conduct may, subject to assessment, be eligible to receive services. VSS would usually refer offenders to appropriate alternative services.
- Participants in disputes in which they claim to be a victim, but are also subject to investigation as an accused (e.g. neighbourhood disputes) are generally not eligible to receive services.
- Sometimes matters are presented to VSS where it is unclear if a crime has been committed. These matters will be assessed for service provision according to their individual circumstances.
- Requests for emergency/crisis services will normally be directed to statutory or other community based organisations.
- Victims who require home visits or after hours appointments, may meet our criteria for service provision, but our services may be restricted or delayed because of resource limitations.
- Victims with particular disabilities will be assessed regarding the nature of the crime and may require a multi-agency response.
- Victims who have had or are currently receiving assistance or therapy elsewhere are more likely to be assisted most effectively by retaining one therapist at a time and would be encouraged to maintain that contact.
- People who have no presenting issue which is the result of a crime would normally attend a generic counselling service.

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