



The Victim-Witness Assistance Program (VWAP), a division of the Chatham County District Attorney's Office, offers support to victims and witnesses of crime in Chatham County. This program provides individuals and their family members vital services such as court-orientation and preparation, case information, referrals to community agencies and assistance with applying for financial compensation. All of these services are free-of-charge.

The Victim-Witness Assistance Program plays a crucial role in the District Attorney's ability to prosecute crime, achieve justice for victims and advocate for victim and witnesses rights. The VWAP Team is comprised of professionals and advocates who realize the important role victims and witnesses play in the judicial process. They are dedicated to providing the support and understanding victims and witnesses of crimes may need while navigating them through the complex legal procedures and court processes.

Programs and support are readily available. Our VWAP team has been recognized and awarded nationally and locally by advocacy groups for their compassion and attentiveness to the needs of those impacted by crime in Chatham County. Should you be a victim or a witness to a crime, please do not hesitate to contact our Victim Witness-Assistance Program to discuss your needs and concerns.

As District Attorney, I am committed to serving the citizens of Chatham County and seeking justice for the victims of crime.

**Meg Heap, District Attorney**  
**Eastern Judicial Circuit of Georgia/Chatham County**

## Victim's Bill of Rights

### Victims and witnesses have a right to be:

- Treated with dignity and compassion
- Protected from intimidation and harm
- Informed about the Criminal Justice process
- Informed of agencies that can assist them
- Notified of parole decisions upon request
- Informed of financial compensation

## If You Are A Victim

It is natural to experience a range of emotions after being victimized by a crime. You may feel shocked, embarrassed, helpless, or even angry. The Victim-Witness Assistance Program is a division of the District Attorney's Office and is available to offer you support during the aftermath of a crime and to guide you through the maze of the criminal justice system. The District Attorney's Office is required by law to provide Defense Attorneys (who represent the person accused) with names, addresses and phone numbers of witnesses. The Defense Attorney may contact you to discuss what you know about the case. You may choose whether or not to speak with the Defense Attorney. If you choose to speak with the Defense Attorney, you have the right to have someone from the District Attorney's Office, or your personal Attorney, present during the interview.

## If You Are A Witness

If you receive a subpoena to appear as a witness in court, you are required by law to attend. Remember, in order for the person accused of a crime to be prosecuted, your cooperation is very important. If you receive a subpoena for Superior Court, please call the Witness Information Line at 912-652-7330, the evening prior to your scheduled court appearance. For State Court subpoenas, call 912-652-7327. The recording will inform you of any changes to the hearing schedule for the next day and could help you to avoid making an unnecessary trip to the Courthouse. If there are special reasons that you are unable to appear in Court on the date and time you have been subpoenaed, please call the Victim-Witness Assistance Program Office immediately.

## If You Need Protection

If you are being threatened or intimidated by the offender, please contact the police officer or Detective assigned to your case immediately, or call the Victim-Witness Assistance Program at 652-6735. Additional important numbers are listed below.

|   |                              |
|---|------------------------------|
| Police – Emergencies                      | Dial 911                     |
| Savannah-Chatham County Police Department |                              |
| Non-Emergency                             | 912-652-6500                 |
| Victim-Witness (Adult Offenders)          | 912-652-7329                 |
| Juvenile Court Victim-Witness             |                              |
| (Juvenile Offenders)                      | 912-652-6735 or 912-652-6702 |
| District Attorney's Office                | 912-652-7308                 |

If your address or phone number change, please notify the Victim-Witness Assistance Program to ensure that you may be contacted regarding the status of a case.

## Financial Compensation

Victims of violent (non-property) crimes may be eligible for victim compensation for out-of-pocket expenses such as medical, counseling, lost wages and funeral costs. You must apply within one year after the crime occurs. Call the Victim-Witness Assistance Program for details. If the accused is convicted of, or pleads guilty to a violent or property crime, the Judge may order financial restitution. You may also consider filing a civil lawsuit.

## Parking At Juvenile Court

Free parking is available at Juvenile Court. Parking spaces for those with physical limitations are also readily available.

## Services

The following free services are available to crime victims and witnesses:

**INFORMATION** about the status of your court case through letters and phone calls

**NOTICE** of court proceedings, including schedule changes

**INFORMATION AND EXPLANATION** about juvenile justice proceedings

**ORIENTATION** to the Courtroom setting

**COMPANION** to attend Court with you and provide emotional support

**FINANCIAL COMPENSATION ASSISTANCE** for victims of violent crimes

**EMPLOYER INVETVENTION** to explain time missed from work due to required court appearances

**PRIVATE WAITING AREA** provided prior to your court appearance

**PROPERTY RECOVERY** of stolen items being held as evidence

**ASSISTANCE** if you are intimidated, harassed, or afraid

**ADVOCACY AND SUPPORT** with any problems that you may be experiencing as a result of the crime or court appearances

**REFERRAL** to social service agencies, counselors and others who can assist you with personal problems.

**Office hours are 8am to 5pm, Monday through Friday, or by appointment. The Victim-Witness Assistance Program is funded primarily by the Chatham County Commission.**

## Types of Juvenile Court Hearings:

### DETENTION HEARING:

A probable cause hearing to determine whether the juvenile should be detained or released from detention pending their final hearing or trial. A hearing must be held within 72 hours of a juvenile being detained. Victims are sometimes required to attend hearings.

### ARRAIGNMENT HEARING:

The juvenile and parents/guardians are formally presented with the petitions, or charging documents. Their rights are explained in Juvenile Court and they are asked to admit or deny the charges based on the evidence presented by the State. Victims are not required to attend this hearing. Petitions must be filed within 72 hours of a detention hearing if the juvenile is detained.

### ADJUDICATION HEARING:

The adjudication hearing is the actual trial of the case. Witnesses are called to testify before a Juvenile Court Judge. There are no Juries in the juvenile system. The Judge may adjudicate the juvenile delinquent, or may dismiss the charges based on the evidence presented. Victims are required to attend and should bring all medical or property damage documentation with them to court. If the juvenile is being detained, the trial must be scheduled within 14 days from the probable cause hearing.

### DISPOSITION HEARING:

This is the sentencing phase of a case. The juvenile can be placed on probation, or committed to the Department of Juvenile Justice. Victims are sometimes required to attend these hearings. Cases can also be handled by means of an informal adjustment. This is an out-of-court admission to the charges. A supervision fee, or fine is assessed and other conditions may also be required to be met during a three-month informal supervision period.

### RESTITUTION:

The Judge may order juvenile offenders to pay financial restitution. Victims are required to submit written documentation on medical and/or property losses. By law, the juvenile is responsible for any payment of restitution ordered by the Judge.

**VWAP does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability or age for any of our program participants.**



## Juvenile Court Division

**A Valuable and Free Resource for  
Crime Victims and Witnesses**



**Victim-Witness Assistance Program  
Office of the District Attorney, Meg Heap**

**Juvenile Court Division  
197 Carl Griffin Drive  
Savannah, GA 31405**

**Phone: 912-652-6702 or 912-652-6735  
<http://vwap.chathamcounty.org>**