

Survivor Resource Packet



IDEA

Palm Beach County

Impaired Driving Death

Enhanced Assistance Taskforce

A message from the Palm Beach County Victim Services Director, Nicole Bishop....

If you are in receipt of this packet, it most likely means that you have recently lost a loved one or family member to a driving related death.

Palm Beach County Division of Victim Services (PBCVS) developed this resource guide in partnership with Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office and members of the IDEA (Impaired Driving Death Enhancement Assistance) Taskforce as a part of the *FY 2016 Vision 21: Multidisciplinary Responses to Families and Communities in Complex Homicide* grant program. Victim Service providers know that driving related deaths can take an emotional, physical and financial toll on family members. This guide is one tool available to you, but you will also be assigned a victim advocate to provide direct services such as crisis counseling, emergency monetary aid, information/referrals to victim compensation, intercession with employers and landlords, transportation services, translator services, supportive counseling and attendance at court hearings. Therapists are also available free of charge to help you process trauma and grief.

I wish to express sincere condolences and hope that Palm Beach County Victim Services can be of assistance to you in the upcoming days, weeks and months.

May memories comfort you in your time of sorrow.

Sincerely,

Nicole Bishop, M.S.W., Director

Palm Beach County Victim Services



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Important Contact Information:

Law Enforcement Agency: _____

Officer's name, ID #: _____

Officer's phone number: _____

Law Enforcement case number: _____

Responding Victim Advocate's name: _____

Responding Victim Advocate's phone number: _____

Assigned Victim Advocate's name: _____

Assigned Victim Advocate's phone number: _____

PBC Medical Examiner's Office Investigator: _____

Investigator's phone number: _____

What to expect over the next 24-48 hours:

- ❖ A Victim Advocate will be contacting you to offer information, provide emotional support, and assistance as needed. The Advocate can assist you in applying for Crime Victim's Compensation, which may be able to assist with reimbursement of burial expenses, loss of support, medical expenses, and therapy.
- ❖ Contact the funeral home of your choosing to discuss burial. Advise the funeral home that you will be applying for Crime Victim's Compensation. The Investigator from the Medical Examiner's Office will also be communicating with you and with the funeral home.
- ❖ Be sure to keep all documents and bills from the funeral home as these will be needed to assist in filing for Crime Victim's Compensation.
- ❖ As difficult as this may be, please note that the Palm Beach County Medical Examiner's Office does not permit family members to view their loved one at the facility. However, an Investigator from the Medical Examiner's Office will contact you for information. The viewing will occur at the funeral home.
- ❖ The law enforcement officer assigned will continue to work the investigation, gathering evidence. The officer will follow up with you once they have additional information to provide. You may contact the officer directly or through your Victim Advocate.
- ❖ Belongings collected by law enforcement will be returned to you as long as the items are not needed for evidence. Should the items be needed, they will be released once the case is closed. As difficult as this will be, please be aware that personal belongings will be returned to you in the condition they were retrieved. It may be helpful to have a friend or family member receive the items prior to you viewing them.

Autopsy:

- ❖ An autopsy may be completed if there is suspicion of a crime.
- ❖ If there is suspicion of a crime, the autopsy will be completed within 24-48 hours of the death at the Palm Beach County Medical Examiner's Office.
- ❖ Death certificates are available from the Palm Beach Health Department Office of Vital Statistics or the funeral home chosen by you.
- ❖ The Medical Examiner's Office will complete the medical portion of the death certificate. The funeral home is responsible for filing the death certificate with the state of Florida once completed.
- ❖ You may get a copy of the death certificate from the funeral home or one can be ordered through the Office of Vital Statistics either in person or through the website: VitalChek Network Inc. at www.vitalchek.com

Making decisions after a death

Funeral preparation checklist:

- Organ donation
- Select funeral home
- Plan the service
- Prepare an obituary
- Select a friend or family member to coordinate sympathy calls and messages and who will speak to family, friends, and/ or media

Legal documents:

- Marriage/ divorce certificates
- Social security card
- Last Will and Testament
- Passport
- Birth certificate
- Insurance (life, health, home, vehicle)
- Checking/ saving accounts

Notifications:

- Funeral director (Director will work with the medical examiner to obtain the death certificate)
- Insurance companies
- Bank
- Landlord/ mortgage company
- Employer
- Social Security Office
- School officials/ teachers
- Place of worship
- Postal service
- Newspaper carrier
- Utilities
- Telephone/ cellphone
- Credit card companies

If an arrest is made:

- ❖ If an arrest is made, the assigned officer will contact you and advise you of the initial court hearing information.
- ❖ Your Victim Advocate will explain the initial court hearing and discuss what to expect. The Victim Advocate will accompany you to the hearing upon your request. Should you not wish to attend, advise your Victim Advocate and request an update of the outcome of the hearing.
- ❖ Your Victim Advocate or an Assistant State Attorney Victim Witness Coordinator will contact you to advise you of all court dates and hearings.
- ❖ Your Victim Advocate will accompany you to any hearing upon your request. Please keep in mind that it can often take years for a case to progress through the criminal justice system.
- ❖ If an arrest is made, you may register through the VINE system (Victim Information Notification Everyday) to be able to track the offender throughout the jail system. This system will notify you when the offender is released from jail or moves between facilities. You may register by calling 1-877-VINE-4-FL or online at www.vinelink.com. You will be prompted to create a pin.

Case information for purposes of the VINE System:

Assigned Assistant State Attorney: _____

Assistant State Attorney's phone number: _____

Assistant State Attorney's case number: _____

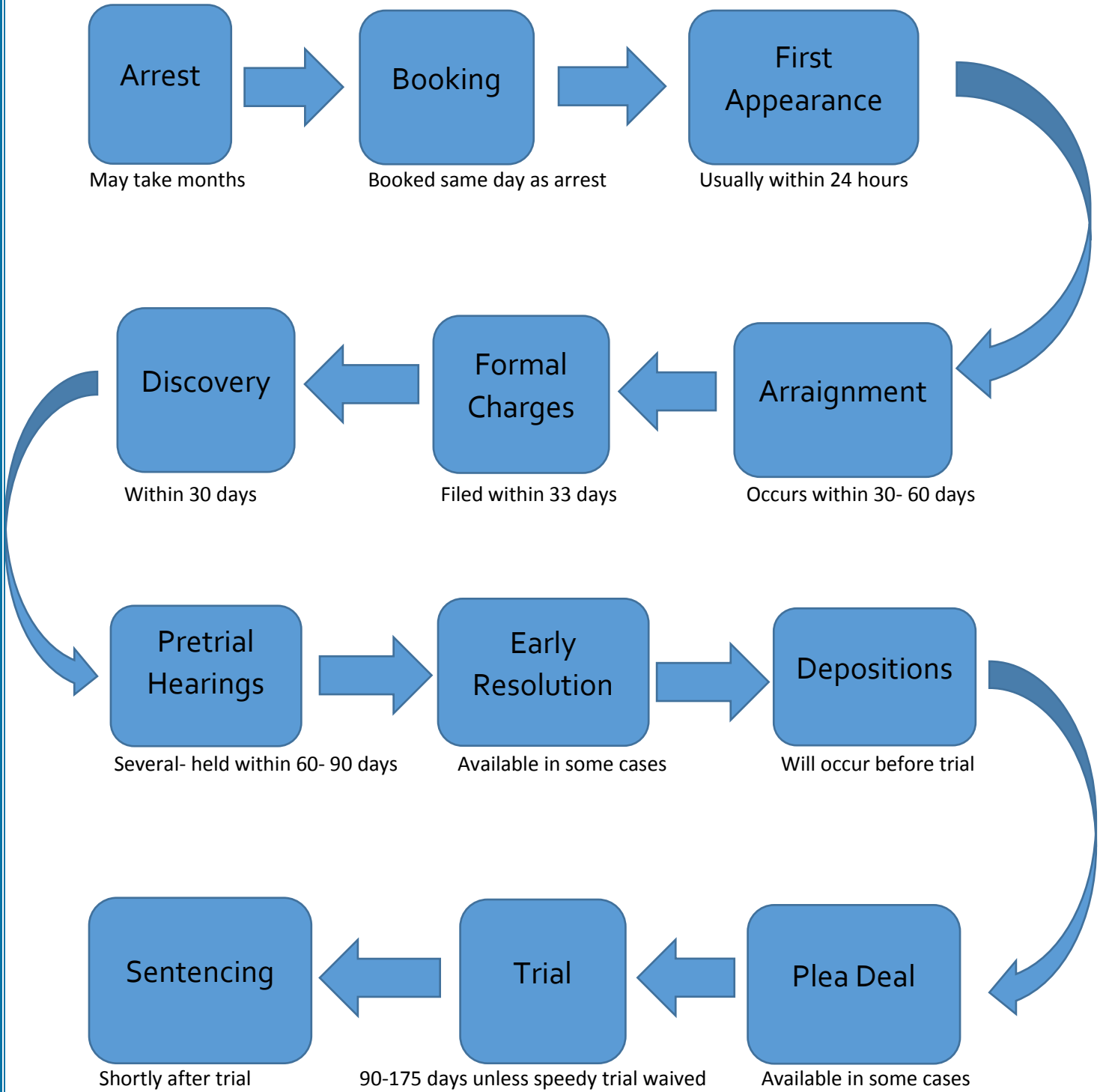
Offender's name: _____

Offender's booking number: _____

VINE pin number: _____

See page 8 for more information about the criminal justice process.

An Overview of the Criminal Justice System



Victims' Rights

What are your rights as a victim of a crime?

1. To be informed of the availability of the Crimes Compensation Fund. A fund for victims of violent crimes in which physical injury has resulted in a serious financial hardship to the victim or in which a death has resulted in a serious financial hardship to the victim's family.
2. To be informed regarding crisis intervention services, counseling, therapy, and community based victim treatment programs.
3. To be informed on the role of a victim/witness in the criminal justice system and information on crucial stages of criminal proceedings.
4. To be informed of the crucial stages of the judicial system and the manner in which information about these stages can be obtained.
5. To be informed, present, and heard at all crucial stages of the proceedings to the extent that this right does not interfere with the constitutional rights of the accused.
6. To be informed that if incarcerated, victims have the right to submit written statements at all crucial stages of the criminal proceedings and parole proceedings.
7. To a prompt and timely disposition of the case, to the extent that this right does not interfere with the constitutional rights of the accused.
8. To be free of intimidation and harassment, to be informed of steps available to law enforcement and prosecutors to protect against intimidation and harassment, and to be informed about the address confidentiality program in domestic violence cases.
9. To advance notice of the arrest of the accused, if possible or prudent in light of an ongoing investigation.
10. To advance notice of the release of the accused.
11. To advance notice of scheduling changes, if the agency has the current address of the victim.
12. To advance notice of judicial proceedings such as arrest, release, proceedings in prosecution or petition for dependency.
13. To consultation with the prosecutor's office, if the victim of a felony, regarding release of accused, plea agreements, pretrial diversion programs, and the sentencing of the accused (and to receive a copy of the non-confidential portions of the pre-sentence investigation report if prepared prior to sentencing).
14. To have property that was seized as evidence returned, unless there is a

compelling evidentiary reason to keep it.

15. To request and receive restitution and information about enforcing restitution judgments.

16. To assistance in notifying the victim's employer and creditors of the victimization.

17. To submit an oral or written impact statement prior to sentencing.

18. To general assistance such as transportation, separate waiting rooms, and translators, if available.

19. To be notified of escape of accused.

20. To have victim advocate attend deposition with the victim.

21. To receive HIV test results of accused if criminal offense involved the transmission of bodily fluids.

22. When the victim is a minor, these rights may be asserted by their parent or legal guardian.

23. When a victim is deceased in a homicide case, these rights may be asserted by their next of kin.

24. To grant the prosecutor standing to assert these rights on behalf of the victim.

For more information on your rights as a crime victim, speak with your victim advocate or visit the website www.myfloridalegal.com.

About Grief:

Experiencing a sudden traumatic death can be an extraordinary experience of overwhelming terror. The death of a loved one can cause many feelings and behavioral reactions. These may come and go throughout the grieving process. Many are natural, normal and even necessary. Everyone grieves in his or her own unique way; there is no “right way” to grieve. Grieving is not a sign of weakness or failure. It is not something to ignore or “get over.”

Common reactions of grief:

- ❖ Shock
- ❖ Denial
- ❖ Difficulty concentrating
- ❖ Confused
- ❖ Worry
- ❖ Helplessness
- ❖ Sleeplessness
- ❖ Difficulty eating, headaches, stomachaches
- ❖ Anger
- ❖ Guilt
- ❖ Difficulty talking about the person or the crash

Homicide and Grief:

When a loved one is murdered, family and friends often experience symptoms of trauma along with the grieving process. Homicide is so sudden, unanticipated and violent that it often shakes the survivor’s sense of safety, control and trust in the world around them. Below you will find a collection of normal, common experiences, and emotional reactions for survivors of homicide, as well as some coping strategies you may find helpful on your path to healing.

You may feel:

- ❖ Unable to understand or believe what happened to your loved one
- ❖ Intense rage toward the perpetrator(s)
- ❖ As if you somehow could have - or should have - protected your loved one from harm
- ❖ Preoccupied with your own personal safety
- ❖ Highly protective of other loved ones
- ❖ Distrustful of others and of the world around you

- ❖ Like the world is a cruel, unfair, and unsafe place
- ❖ Helpless and powerless over your surroundings
- ❖ A desire to avoid people and places that remind you of your loved one or of the homicide
- ❖ Anger and blame in many different directions - toward yourself, other family members, witnesses of the homicide, law enforcement, spiritual leaders, and even God

What you can do:

- ❖ Control the amount of media and social media that you are exposed to
- ❖ Address your trauma-related reactions (nightmares, flashbacks, fear, avoiding people and places, among others) and slowly begin to rebuild a sense of safety, most likely with the help of a mental health professional
- ❖ Stay connected with friends and family
- ❖ Allow those who are also grieving to support you, just as you support them
- ❖ Create a ritual, religious or non-religious, in which you can safely say goodbye to your loved one
- ❖ Regain a sense of control over your life by maintaining basic structure and routine
- ❖ Try to get enough rest, eat proper meals and exercise regularly
- ❖ Write down your thoughts and feelings
- ❖ Find a safe way to release your anger, perhaps in grief counseling or with understanding friends and family
- ❖ Seek out others who can relate to how you are feeling, through a support group, therapy group or online community, aimed specifically for those coming with the homicide death of a loved one
- ❖ Grieve in your own way, at your own pace
- ❖ Not all those affected by homicide are the same or react in the same way.

Tips for coping:

- ❖ Write it down, journal
- ❖ Join a support group
- ❖ Talk with a close friend who listens
- ❖ Do something to honor him/her (i.e. look at photos, make a memorial)
- ❖ Be open to the support offered
- ❖ Speak with a therapist to express your feelings

Trauma Support Groups in Palm Beach County:

We encourage you to speak to your Victim Advocate about local support groups in your area. Listed below are some of the groups offered in Palm Beach County.

- ❖ **Parents of Murdered Children (POMC):** POMC meets at the Delray Beach Police Department. Contact Dawn Terrizzi at dawnt607@yahoo.com for more information. POMC also meets at the Hollywood Police Department. For this location, contact Barbara Koeppel at koeppelbb@comcast.net.
- ❖ **Compassionate Friends:** This survivor support group is for parents who are grieving the death of a child from any cause. There are locations in Royal Palm, Palm Beach Gardens, Boca Raton, Broward County, and Stuart. Contact Darlene 561-346-2274 or 561-640-9056.
- ❖ **Palm Beach County Victim Services Homicide Support Group:** contact 561-996-4871 or 561-355-2383.

Resources for Adult Survivors:

- ❖ National Organization for Victim Assistance (NOVA): www.trynova.org
- ❖ National Center for Victims of Crime: Telephone-based helpline: 855-4-VICTIM (855-484-2846) or online chat: Chat.VictimConnect.org
- ❖ Office for Victims of Crime: www.ovc.gov, Nationwide database for services related to all types of crime
- ❖ Bureau of Victim Compensation: www.myfloridalegal.com, 1-800-226-6667
- ❖ Wendt Center for Loss and Healing: www.wendtcenter.org
- ❖ Parents of Murdered Children: www.pomc.com, 1-888-818-7662
- ❖ Compassionate Friends: www.compassionatefriends.org
- ❖ Mothers Against Drunk Driving: www.madd.org, 1-800-438-6233
- ❖ Evermore: www.live-evermore.org, This online website is for parents who are grieving the death of a child from any cause
- ❖ National Child Traumatic Stress Network: www.nctsn.org/trauma-types/traumatic-grief
- ❖ Option B: www.optionb.org, This website is a resource on facing adversity, building resilience, and finding joy

Grief in Children:

Explaining Death to a Child:

- ❖ Explain death in basic terms. Be honest. If you are feeling unable to talk with your child about death, find someone you trust to do so.
- ❖ Your child may have questions for you about what happened, what it means and what will happen to them. Try to reassure and answer each question as it is asked.
- ❖ Play is the language of children. Remember a child's attention span is short. He or she may be crying one moment and then running outside to play the next. It is very normal for children to play even when they have difficult emotions.
- ❖ Like adults, children grieve differently. They often do not have the words to explain their feelings. Your child's response to this death may depend upon their age. What small children need may be different from what an adolescent needs. However, all children need to be included, as much as they desire, in the family's activities during the memorial or funeral services. Prep the child for what he/she will see (i.e. discuss what the church will look like, discuss the casket, discuss how mommy or daddy may be crying). Assign a trusted adult to stay with the child during the viewing or service, allowing the child to safely come and go and take breaks as needed.
- ❖ When talking to a young child we encourage you to explain death as honestly as possible to avoid future confusion and pain. Here are some ideas:
 - Died means the person is not alive anymore. Their body has stopped working.
 - Died means they cannot talk, breathe, walk, move, eat or do any of the things that they could when they were alive.
 - Discuss your own beliefs and spirituality with the child. You can also share your beliefs in an afterlife – if you believe in one.
 - Remembering is important for children. It may be helpful to share memories and talk about the person who died.

Resources for Child Survivors:

Books and websites:

❖ Ages 4 years old- 8 years old:

- *My Many Colored Days*, by Dr. Seuss
- *When Bad Things Happen: A Guide to Help Kids Cope*, by Ted O'Neal and R. W. Alley
- *I Miss You: A First Look at Death*, by Pat Thomas
- *When Dinosaurs Die: A Guide to Understanding Death*. By Brown, M. & Krasny, L
- *When Someone Very Special Dies: Children Can Learn to Cope with Grief*. Heegaard, M. Minneapolis, MN: Woodland Press, 1988.

❖ Ages 12 years old- 18 years old:

- *Straight Talk About Death for Teenagers: How to Cope With Losing Someone You Love*. Grollman, E.

❖ All ages:

- *The Next Place*. Hanson, W.
- *Wherever You Are: My Love Will Find You*, by Nancy Tillman
- *What's Heaven?*, by Maria Shriver and Sandra Speidel
- *A Terrible Thing Happened - A Story for Children Who Have Witnessed Violence or Trauma*, by Margaret M. Holmes

