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Niagara Regional Police Service 136.

Chief of Police Wendy E. Southall
REPORT OF THE POLICE SERVICE

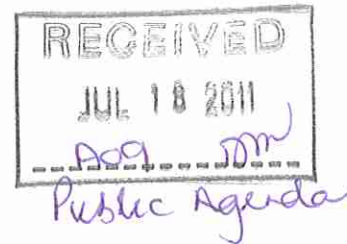
TO

THE REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF NIAGARA POLICE SERVICES BOARD

Board Report Number: 150/2011

Date of Report: 2011.06.29

Date of Board Meeting: 2011.07.28



Acting Chairperson Todd Shoalts
and Members of the
Regional Municipality of Niagara Police Services Board

Reference: Reporting Requirement of Police Services Board
By-Law 238-2000 Victim's Assistance

Recommendation: Receive for Information

Background:

On 2000.11.30 and 2000.12.14, a number of Regional Municipality of Niagara Police Service Board By-Laws were enacted in response to the Provincial Adequacy Standards Regulations. These by-laws contain provisions requiring the Chief of Police to report specific information in order to ensure compliance with the Legislative guidelines.

This report is submitted to provide the Board with the necessary and required information, pursuant to the by-law respecting Victim's Assistance. Subsequent reports will follow annually to continue with this reporting process.



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By-Law No. 238-2000, Victim's Assistance

By-Law #238-2000, a By-law Respecting Victim's Assistance, was enacted as a result of Provincial Adequacy Standards Regulation, VA-001 Victim Assistance. This by-law details specific requirements that are reported as follows:

The Chief of Police shall make a written report to the Board on or before August 30th of each year in respect to victim's assistance. The report shall include:

- (a) a summary of the written procedures concerning victim's assistance; and
- (b) the status of Service compliance with the said procedures.

The following is a detailed response to each of the above noted requirements:

- (a) "a summary of the written procedures concerning victim's assistance, including changes since the date of the last report..."**

General Order – 115.04 Assistance for Victims and Witnesses was extensively revised previously to the present review date to more accurately describe the Police Service's responsibility involving Victim's Assistance. The revisions have been monitored by the Domestic Violence Coordinator, Victim Services Niagara (Executive Director) and the Victim Witness Assistance Program (Manager). The revisions were successful in providing a more collaborative service delivery that includes assistance to victims and comprehensive safety plans where required. The agreed upon revisions were determined as a result of standard procedures adopted by each organization. Currently General Order 115.04 is scheduled for a review, and the involved stakeholders will meet to address current issues and possibly further revisions.

Information set out in the General Order includes the following information:

- ▶ 1.0 - Policy-ensure that all victims and witnesses of crime are informed of and given access to all rights and privileges afforded to them by law including Provincial Adequacy Standard VA-001 and the Victim Bill of Rights
- ▶ 2.0-Definitions
- ▶ 3.0-Procedures
- ▶ Victim Services Niagara (VSN)
- ▶ Domestic Violence Emergency Response system (DVERS)
- ▶ Victim Witness Assistance Program (VWAP)
- ▶ Initial Assistance
- ▶ Accessing N.V.C.S.S. and VWAP
- ▶ Communication Unit
- ▶ Platoon Supervisors
- ▶ Inspector of Investigative Support Services
- ▶ Training Unit
- ▶ Domestic Violence Victim Services Coordinator

Rebranding-Victim Services Niagara

Niagara Victim Crisis Support Services (NVCSS) has been renamed to Victim Services Niagara (VSN), however, they will continue to maintain the former name legally. The name change is consistent with the other community-based Victim Services across Ontario. The new logo reflects the provincial logo and will be used by Victim Services in other sites in the Province of Ontario. The purpose for the change is for easy identification of the program for Emergency Services and for victims.

VSN definition of a victim is anyone, anytime, anywhere,...who is in crisis, whose life has been impacted and/or changed by crime, tragedy, or disaster and who requires immediate emotional support and practical assistance.

The Niagara Regional Police works collaboratively with VSN, a community based service that assists police, Emergency Medical Services (EMS), Fire and hospital's emergency departments in the Region of Niagara. Specially trained volunteer Crisis Responders provide short term emotional support and practical assistance to victims of crime, tragedy, and disasters. In accordance to the Ministry of the Attorney General minimal standards, volunteer Crisis responders are mandated to attend and complete fifty (50) plus hours of training.

Training

Victim Services Niagara, Victim Witness Assistance Program Niagara, and the Niagara Regional Police Service continue to focus on education and training to new recruits. This past year, an invitation was made to further inform and provide updated information to newly promoted Sergeants and Staff Sergeants on the services available to victims of crime. Platoon briefings are done bi-annually and an invitation to attend special meetings are made available to officers.

When police generate referrals to Victim Services Niagara, 4 (four) available options are available to provide assistance to victims:

1)-Victim Crisis Assistance and Referral Services (VCARS)

With consent from the victim (except death notifications), the investigating police officer will call NRPS Communication Unit and/or call the VSN Crisis Line to request a "Team", consisting of two volunteer Crisis Responders to attend on-scene and provide emotional support and practical assistance.

The person(s) assisted may be victim(s) of crime including domestic violence, sexual assault, robbery, break and enter, theft, homicide, tragedy, suicide, sudden death, motor vehicle collision/fatalities, etc. and disasters: fires, pandemics, flooding, snow-storms, etc.

In addition to crisis assistance, volunteer Crisis Responders may provide transportation, help clean up scene, make phone calls/or other arrangements upon the victim's consent. If the victim is identified as having longer term needs, the Crisis Responders will provide information and referral options for further assistance. Client Contact forms are filled out and given to VSN office staff for follow-up report to the investigating officer.

2010	Accredited Volunteer Crisis Responders	84
	Calls for Service	503
	Number of Victims	1,321
	On Scene/Telephone Crisis Assistance to Victims	1,533

2) Victim Quick Response Program (VQRP) offers financial assistance to victims of violent crime in the immediate aftermath of a crime. This program is intended for victims who lack the financial resources to otherwise cover the costs. In Niagara, VQRP is a service that VSN provides.

Summary –VQRP provides financial aid to victims of violent crime for:

- ▶ Emergency home repairs to secure residences
- ▶ Crime Scene clean –up-bodily fluids present
- ▶ Transportation
- ▶ Emergency Child and Dependent Care
- ▶ Meals and Accommodations
- ▶ Funeral Expenses for families of homicide victims
- ▶ Counseling Expenses

In 2010, VQRP assisted 94 clients.

The Ministry of the Attorney General continues to fund the program on a yearly contract.

3) Support Link/safety Planning (S/L)

Support Link provides free cell phones preprogrammed to call 911, creating a direct link to the police. This program is a joint initiative of the Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General and Rogers Wireless Canada. This program is available to clients who are identified as “high risk” and would include victims of sexual assault, domestic violence and stalking.

Active Support Link Clients - 5

4) Domestic Violence Emergency Response System (DVERS) Safety Planning

DVERS is a personal alarm for individuals who are deemed at “high risk” of violence by an intimate partner. The alarm is installed in the home of the

client/victim (free of charge) by ADT Alarm Company with the presence of the police and Client Services Provider.

Active DVERS Clients - 30
DVERS applications received - 39
DVERS-withdrawn - 2
DVERS declined - 7

The Domestic Violence Advisory Committee consisting of community and justice partners meet to review each Support Link and DVERS application which must meet a certain criteria. VSN staff oversees the program and help develop personal safety plans to all clients/victims who apply. They make regular follow-up contact to Support Link and DVERS clients who were approved and provide on-going training and education to clients, community partners and the NRPS.

Support Link/DVERS clients safety plans developed - 214

VSN has currently 6 (six) full time staff members and 11 (eleven) Board of Directors.

Early Victim Contact

The Ministry of the Attorney General announced, "The Early Victim Contact in Domestic Violence Cases Initiative" through the Victim/Witness Assistance Program (VWAP). This means same day help for victims as part of the Ontario's specialized court program for domestic violence cases. Through this program, VWAP staff connects with victims earlier to offer services and, where possible, offer them an opportunity to provide input into bail conditions.

VWAP intake staff are available Monday to Friday and attempt to contact domestic violence victims within one working day following notification of the offence. The VWAP intake staff will:

- Explain the Domestic Court program
- Address victims concern about safety and involvement with the criminal justice system
- Provide referrals and resources
- Provide accurate case related information
- When contact is made prior to Bail Court, seek victim input on Bail conditions
- Provide victim input to the crown prior to the Bail Hearing

To ensure compliance with this initiative, NRPS officers are to adhere to General Order 115.04-*Assistance for Victims and Witnesses*. Officers are to fax or send electronic copies of the arrest report, Domestic Violence Supplementary Report (DVSR) and a copy of the victim's statement, immediately after arrest to the Victim Witness Assistance Program.

The Domestic Violence Investigators in each of the Districts review the domestic reports to ensure that copies are forwarded to VWAP.

(b) "...the status of Service compliance with the said procedures..."

Victim Safety Project Grant

In 2009, with the Support of the Niagara Regional Police Service, Victim Services Niagara received a grant from the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services to work collaboratively with community and justice partners on issues relating to "high risk" offenders.

Targets of the Project were to include:

- Hiring a Victim safety Coordinator
- To identify needs and assist victims of high risk offenders
- To create a High Risk Review Team which is to include community and justice partners
- To Review existing local safety plans and create one safety plan that is user friendly for all community and justice partners.

The project was completed in August 2010. The targets set for the Victim Safety Project were met. This was due to the collaborative and trusting relationships between community and justice partners working together to ensure the on-going safety of victims of high risk offenders.

The Niagara Regional Police Service as required by Provincial Adequacy VA-001, Victim Services, has policy and guidelines that set out the roles and responsibilities of officers for providing victims assistance and reflect the principles of the Victims' Bill of Rights.

The District Domestic Violence Investigators and the Domestic Violence Coordinator meet regularly and are active throughout the Niagara Region addressing victim and witness issues with Crown Attorneys, Probation and Parole, Victim Witness Assistance Program, Family and Children Services, Women's Shelters and local services and community representatives responsible for victim and witness related issues.

Domestic Violence High Risk Review Team-Niagara

Niagara has developed a High Risk Review Team that involves a case management strategy between the justice partner agencies to access and actively manage high-risk cases involving violence. The Team works collectively to maximize the safety of victims and their children and minimize the risk of recidivism.

Stop Family Violence-It's Everybody's Business/Neighbours Friends and Families (NFF)

Stop Family Violence-It's Everybody's Business a family violence prevention initiative is aimed at educating employers and the community to recognize and respond to family violence. Posters and toolkits have been developed to provide awareness and information about the impact of family violence, supportive workplace policies and practices and local information. This service is provided free of charge. The Ontario Trillium Foundation funded the original two (2) year grant for this initiative (\$113,000.00) which ended in 2010. Through the Coalition to End Violence Against Women (CEVAW) Stop Family Violence-Its Everybody's Business and Neighbours Friends and Families have joined partnerships to continue this initiative in Niagara. The Domestic Violence Coordinator is a committee/executive member of all three community partnerships.

The Western Region Domestic Violence Unit expanded with two (2) additional Career Development positions. As a result of the additional staffing, the Western Region Domestic Violence Unit now investigates domestic violence incidents (arrests) in 8 District. Domestic Violence Investigators are also responsible for undertaking, managing and reviewing the investigations of domestic violence occurrences from front line officers.

The Victim/Witness Assistance Program (VWAP) provides services to the entire Niagara Region. Niagara statistics have indicated that where charges are laid by the police, victims who have immediate assistance by NVCSS crisis responders and who are then referred to VWAP have a higher degree of success of proceeding through the court process than those who are not.

St. Catharines - total cases including non domestic referred to VWAP = 790
Of the 790 cases, 586 were partner assault files which represents 74.2% of all cases were domestic violence.
Total -263 including non domestic (100 Early Contact)

Welland – total cases including non domestic referred to VWAP = 263. From that 198 were partner assault files which represented 75.3% of all cases were domestic violence

Strategic Planning (NRPS/VSN)

Victim Services Niagara has started the process of a three year strategic plan. The organization felt it was imperative to have input from Emergency Services as well as from community partners, volunteers, staff and Board of Directors. Participation from the NRPS was crucial in the planning process recognizing present areas of concern, i.e.: referrals from front line officers and future training of officers by staff in regards to VSN and the benefits of using volunteer Crisis Responders on-scene at police incidents.

Conclusion:

In accordance with Legislative/Regulatory requirements the Niagara Regional Police Service has established policy to have procedures providing assistance to victims that:

- Reflect the principles of the Victims Bill of Rights
- Policy that set out the roles and responsibilities of members for providing victim's assistance.

This report is submitted to the Board for review and consideration of information relating to victim assistance in the Regional Municipality of Niagara.

In accordance with the reporting requirements of the Police Services Board By-Law 238-2000 (2008-Victim's Assistance) the Niagara Regional Police is in compliance.

Relevant Policy Considerations:

By-Law No. 238-2000, A By-law Respecting Victim's Assistance

General Order 115, Victim/Witness Assistance

Cost of Recommendations:

There are no costs associated to this report.

Alternative Options:

To not accept this Report.

Reasons for Recommendation:

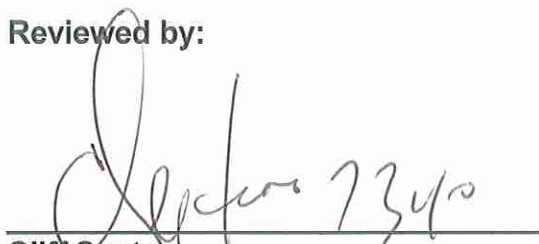
This report is submitted to comply with Services Board By-Laws and to maintain compliance with the *Provincial Adequacy Standards Regulations.*

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