

Issues, Rights, and Concerns During COVID-19

National Center for Victims of Crime
Association of Prosecuting Attorneys



Why We are Here Today

- There is an unprecedented crisis for all involved in the criminal justice system due to COVID-19, and agencies are struggling to adapt to this new normal.
- The MacArthur Foundation Safety and Justice Challenge – learn more at safetyandjusticechallenge.org
- We want to take this opportunity to discuss how we preserve the rights of crime victims and highlight SJC site innovations working to keep individuals healthy and safe.



Introductions

- **Guest Speakers:**
 - Hon. Darcel D. Clark, District Attorney, Bronx District Attorney's Office
 - Nicolas Heitman, Domestic Violence Unit Chief, Milwaukee District Attorney's Office
- **Hosts:**
 - David LaBahn, Chief Executive Officer, Association of Prosecuting Attorneys
 - Renee Williams, Executive Director of the National Center for Victims of Crime



National Crime Victims Rights Week

- This week is National Crime Victims Rights Week. It is a moment where we recognize and commemorate victims and those who help them.
- While “normal” procedures maybe difficult to follow at this time, this cannot be an excuse to overlook victims’ rights to be heard, notified in a timely manner, present during court procedures, and treated with fairness and respect for dignity and privacy – conversations about how to use technology for virtual hearings in which victims can cooperate should be had.
- It is also a time to remember that 90% of those in jails have histories of victimization and trauma. These individuals, as well as those reentering their communities, should receive services to help them cope with their trauma.





Bronx District Attorney Darcel D. Clark



Bronx DA's Office



District Attorney Clark and domestic violence survivor Sandra Pagan at the Bronx DA's 5K Run/Walk/Roll event on September 29, 2018

- Compassion for victims and fairness to defendants—our mantra since 2017
- Criminal justice reform was passed in January, and we made sure victims were not left out of the equation



Fairness for defendants, compassion and security for victims:

- Bail reform, Alternatives to Incarceration Bureau, not prosecuting low level offenses, creating community involvement by Neighborhood Justice Circles, robust Re-Entry program
- Unique initiatives in Domestic Violence: dedicated Complaint Unit, Strangulation Initiative to stem this lethality indicator
- Complex Homicide Program for gang and interfamilial killings, Campus Sexual Assault advocate, Child Advocacy Center with NYPD and child abuse experts, Human Trafficking Unit social worker/advocate
- Vibrant, cutting- edge Crime Victims Assistance unit
- Witness/Victim Security Program with dedicated detective investigators to protect, relocate if necessary
- Crime Victims' Rights Week—co-sponsor a vigil each year



Challenges During COVID19

- BXDA Office closed and working remotely
- Calls to reduce population in City Jails by commutation of sentences or releasing inmates at high risk for COVID-19
- Government offices, Schools, CBOs, Courts, Family Justice Centers that provide Victims Services are closed



Increased Victims' Services

- In just the last week, our CVAU staff have conducted 73 therapy sessions remotely and taken on 86 new clients, providing them with referrals to services;
- Followed up with over 400 victims
- We've used social media to post flyers on DV resources and financial scams during the crisis, and to let community know we are here for them





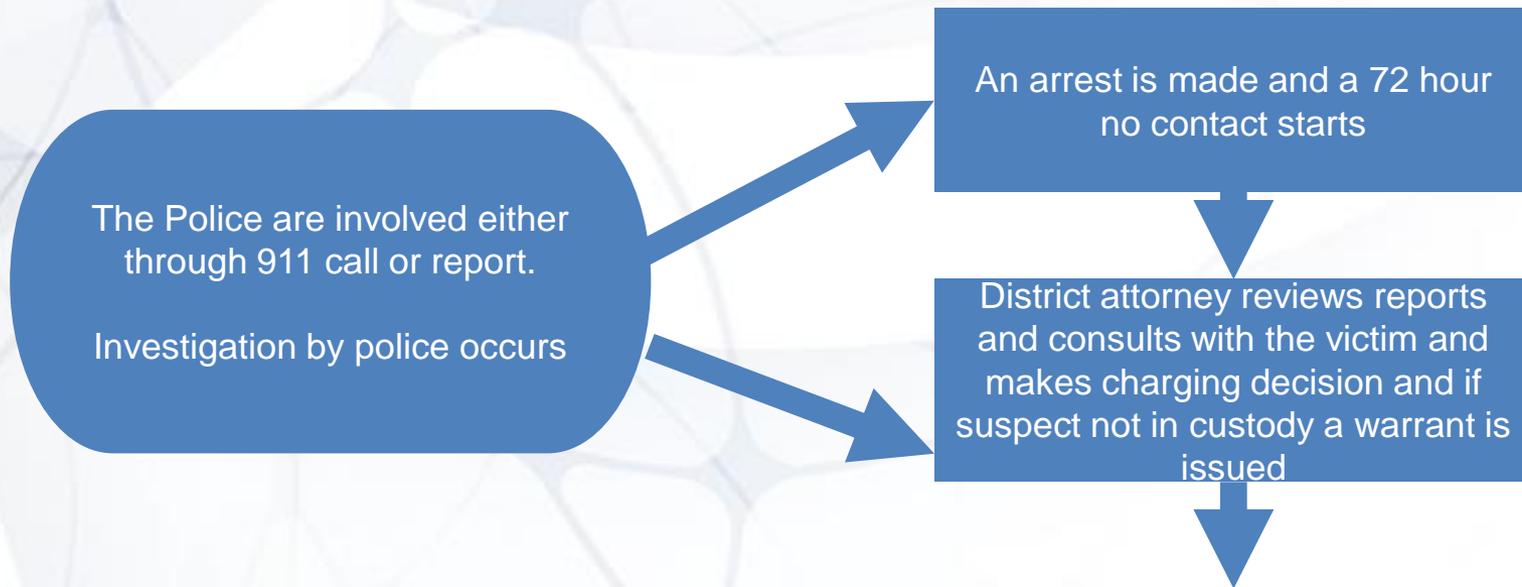
**Nicolas Heitman, Domestic Violence Unit Chief,
Milwaukee County District Attorney's Office**



Milwaukee County Domestic Violence Unit



The Processing of Domestic Violence Reports



Sojourner Family Peace Center



Sojourner Family Peace Center

- Sojourner and Children's Hospital of Wisconsin formed a unique partnership to create one of the first co-located child advocacy and family violence centers in the country. Using a proven, collaborative model, which combines co-located service providers in one easily accessible location, victims of domestic violence and their families have access to more integrated, streamlined and cost efficient services.
- In addition to Sojourner programming (crisis housing, system advocacy and individual support), the Family Peace Center accommodates
 - Children's Hospital of Wisconsin as well as the
 - Milwaukee Police Department Sensitive Crimes Unit,
 - Milwaukee Public Schools, the
 - Milwaukee County District Attorney's Office,
 - Aurora Healthcare Abuse Response Services and other abuse.



Sojourner Family Peace Center

Department of Family Services



Aurora Health Care



App for Service Programs for Milwaukee



GRiD MKE 4+
Aptology
★★★★★ 5.0, 1 Rating
Free

Screenshots iPhone iPad



Milwaukee County

- We have seen a significant increase in referrals to our office peaking the first week of April – 20% and has tapered off to about 8% since then
- Raises interesting questions about reporting
- Is the margin changing



This is how we are meeting with victims now



...or this...



Takeaways

Big Picture:

- Inventory all the available resources that are available to victims
- Find ways to make those resources known
- If innovations are made as a result of this they must be preserved



Questions?

- Submit questions for our speaker using the “question” box on your GoToWebinar tool bar located on the right side of your screen.
- If you need additional assistance, please feel free to contact us directly at webinars@apainc.org



Thank You!

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