



# AG WORKS WITH COUNTIES ACROSS TEXAS TO HELP CRIME VICTIMS

by Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott

LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS are responsible for bringing criminals to justice. It's our job. Yet, our duty "to serve and protect" also compels us to reach out to victims who are left battered and broken — physically, emotionally and often financially — in the wake of the violent crimes committed against them.

One of my great privileges as Attorney General is to partner with crime victim advocates across Texas who walk through the recovery process with crime victims in their communities. Many advocates are victim assistance coordinators (VACs) or crime victim liaisons (CVLs) who work for local law enforcement agencies and prosecutors. These caring people help crime victims in their areas find counseling, emergency shelter, or funds to cover expenses they have incurred as a result of the crimes committed against them.

This year, my office awarded \$29 million to 326 nonprofit and community groups across Texas that aid victims of crime. Of that amount, \$2.3 million went to 64 district and county attorneys, sheriff's offices and police departments to fund VAC and CVL positions. Last year's funding enabled law enforcement and prosecutors to assist roughly 24,000

victims of crime and we hope to help even more this year.

Take the example of a 15-year-old girl in Lamb County who was sexually assaulted by a high school coach. During the trial preparation, the victim assistance coordinator in the Lamb County District Attorney's office realized the girl was not ready to testify.

The VAC worked closely with the victim to make her feel more comfortable, taking her to see her counselor, visiting her at home, and accompanying her to the courthouse. The defendant pled guilty before the trial was to begin, but the sentencing phase may still require the victim's testimony. If the girl is called to testify, she will be ready, thanks to the help and support of the Lamb County District Attorney's VAC.

Crime victim grants are critical to help children who have been assaulted, women who have been abused, and other victims of violent crime get the medical attention, grief counseling, legal services and other assistance they need to put their lives back together.

Coordinators and liaisons also help victims by orienting them to the criminal justice system; accompanying them to appointments; notifying them

of changes in offender status, investigative status or court events; assisting with crisis intervention; helping with restitution requests; and intervening with an employer on behalf of the victim.

VACs and CVLs also provide training about victim rights to law enforcement and others in the community, and promote victim rights through the dissemination of public information.

The grants mentioned were made through my Crime Victim Services Division following a formal application and review process. The funding was approved by the 2005 Legislature and is provided through the state Crime Victims' Compensation Fund, which my office administers.

In addition to these crime victim grants, last year our Crime Victim Services Division provided more than \$85 million from the Fund to directly help victims pay for medical and emergency out-of-pocket expenses and other costs associated with the crimes committed against them.

There is nothing we can do to fully erase the pain which violent crime inflicts. But I am pleased my office is able to work with crime victim advocates across the Lone Star State to help victims rebuild their lives.

## POINTS TO REMEMBER



### CRIME VICTIM SERVICES

The Office of Attorney General provides crime victim assistance via grants and contracts to local and statewide victim assistance programs. This year, the Crime Victim Services Division administered \$29 million in funding for local and statewide victim assistance programs, such as prosecutors' offices, child advocacy centers, rape crisis centers and family violence shelters. Of that amount, \$2.3 million was awarded to 64 district and county attorneys, sheriff's offices and police departments across Texas to fund victim assistance coordinator and crime victim liaison positions. These people provide services to victims such as:

- REFERRALS TO RESOURCES;
- ASSISTANCE WITH COMPENSATION;
- ORIENTATION TO THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM;
- ACCOMPANIMENT TO APPOINTMENTS;
- NOTIFICATION OF CHANGES IN OFFENDER STATUS, INVESTIGATIVE STATUS OR COURT EVENTS;
- CRISIS INTERVENTIONS
- ASSISTANCE WITH RESTITUTION REQUESTS; AND
- OTHER ADVOCACY SUCH AS INTERVENING WITH AN EMPLOYER ON BEHALF OF THE VICTIM OR ASSISTANCE WITH FILING PROTECTIVE ORDERS.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT CRIME VICTIM SERVICES

E-mail: [crimevictims@oag.state.tx.us](mailto:crimevictims@oag.state.tx.us) or call: (800) 983-9933. Information on this and other topics is available on the OAG website at: [www.oag.state.tx.us](http://www.oag.state.tx.us)



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