

Crime Victims Guidebook

For those who have lost their loved ones to violence



Rose Preston

DEDICATED TO:

James V. Saporito
Patrina C. Saporito
and
All victims of violence,
especially in New Orleans

Cover Art: Ilana Yahav
from “You’ve Got A Friend”
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Cover Design: Jim Dultz

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Important Information

DATE: _____

ITEM NO.:

DETECTIVE:

PHONE: _____

VICTIM WITNESS COUNSELOR:

PHONE: _____

NOPD CHAPLAIN:

PHONE: _____

ASSISTANT DISTRICT ATTORNEY:

PHONE: _____

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INTRODUCTION

First of all, my deepest condolences to you, for I know you are in the depths of grief and feel like your world has shattered to bits.

Homicide has also affected my life. On September 3, 2003, my husband and his mother were brutally murdered by a tenant who was about to be evicted for not having paid rent for a year. I was in another country at the time, and a phone call awoke me with this devastating news.

I remember thinking I was in a nightmare where an unreal agony had possessed me. In those first days I felt like an egg that had broken, hopelessly scrambled in every respect. I would go from sobbing uncontrollably to being in a daze of disbelief. The grief was complicated because I was not only mourning the death of my loved ones, but also the traumatic way in which they had died. I have friends who had the pain of not knowing who had killed their loved one, and others where a body was never recovered.

This guidebook is the outcome of my experience. Especially in those initial days and weeks, everything was so overwhelming. There was so much I had to deal with that I couldn't have imagined. I found it hard to remember information. Cloaked in a depression that felt bottomless, I had no energy. At the same time, I was seething with

rage and a desire for justice. Pursuing justice, I was to find out, was a long and drawn-out business.

It took time, but I started to piece together how the police and court system worked. I slowly found out about various resources, including things that helped to relieve some pressure of this heartbreaking pain.

My hope and prayer for you is that you find the strength and courage to be a voice for your loved one, and that you are given the support you need for your adjustment to this new stage, what some call the “new normal.”

I would **appreciate any feedback** that could be of use to others. Please send an email to: crimevictimsguidebook@hotmail.com

Sincerely,
Rose Preston

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This guidebook has **2 sections**:

1. The **first days and weeks**, dealing with police work and legal matters.
2. **Longer-term considerations**, including the court system.

Although this book focuses primarily on victims of homicide, I hope some issues will be relevant to people who have suffered from crimes like:

- **Rape / sexual assault**
- **Theft and burglary**
- **Aggravated assault / hate crimes.**

Legal language can be confusing. Please refer to the **Glossary** at the end of the guidebook as needed.

There is a **Resources** list at the end of the book, with information correct as of **May 2009**. Where possible, we have included websites to check in case phone numbers change. Resources covered are:

- Contacts for the Judicial system
- Legal Aid Clinics
- Anti-Crime Organizations
- Mental Health Services
- Medical Health Clinics
- Grief Groups.

This guidebook focuses on legal proceedings in Greater New Orleans.

SECTION 1

IMMEDIATE CONCERNS

IMMEDIATE MATTERS

Stay Somewhere Safe

Given how devastated and vulnerable you will be feeling, try to **be with people who are caring**. If the crime happened where you live, you will need to stay somewhere else. I was not allowed to stay at my mother-in-law's house, where the crime occurred, and which was still an active crime scene.

If the suspect is still at large, consider staying with people who offer safe shelter.

Police will provide you with **safe transportation** within city limits, and to areas just outside the city. If you need a **safe place to stay**, the police may also help with this.

Get a Support System Going

You are probably not going to feel up to doing much, so let friends help. One of my friends made a **list of people to contact** with the news, and made some of the calls for me. If need be, get a round robin of calls going with a group of people.

Try to speak calmly and slowly, telling the **people who most need to know** the news, and use simple terms. Tell them to sit down. Give as many details as you think are appropriate for each person. Ask if they can get a friend to be there for them too.

If your phone doesn't have an **answering machine**, I strongly recommend getting one, or ordering voicemail service from your phone provider—obviously there will be times you're just not up to talking to anyone.

If you need to **meet with anyone official** (detectives, coroners, etc.), **ask a friend to go along**. Ask them to **take notes** of anything important that is said, and transfer or cut and paste the notes into your notebook.

If you have access to a computer, set up **group emails** so you can send important information to friends and family (or ask someone to help if enough people use email). At times I found it overwhelming to talk to a lot of people, and this was a good solution.

If friends ask what they can do, these are some other areas where they could help:

- Child care
- Meals
- Yard work and cleaning at home
- Referrals for doctors, therapists, funeral homes, etc.
- Driving (You should avoid driving when in traumatic shock.)
- Setting up an appointment for you to see a doctor or grief counselor.

Keep a Notebook

Even though I thought I'd never forget what was discussed in important calls, of course I did.

I suggest you get a notebook and leave some pages blank (maybe at the back of the book) so you can **write the names and numbers** of people you will be in touch with: detectives, insurance claim people, estate lawyers, etc.

After that, **keep chronological notes**. Every time you talk to the police, detectives, District Attorney, or anyone officially connected to the investigation, write the date and the basics of what was said.

I also found **writing out questions** in advance helpful, and then I could say: "Let me check that I've covered all the questions I wrote out for you." At the end of the conversation, **summarize** to the person what was said so you're clear on each point.

After you've finished the call, **flesh out your notes so they're clear**. If there are any later disputes about what was said or agreed to, having these notes will be invaluable.

Know that **if you are a witness** and you refer to your notebook, it can be subpoenaed for trial, so watch what you write!

Also keep a record with **receipts** and bills for any financial expenses. This may be used if the accused

is ordered to pay **restitution**, and also to give to the Crime Victims Reparations Board (see page 34).

Take Time off from Work

I was in the middle of meeting students for exams and had to suddenly stop. A friend called the university and explained what had happened. If you are working, call or have your support person phone your workplace. Most employers are very sympathetic and will give you leave time.

If they need to check the facts, give them the name of your investigating officer. Or you can show them your **item card or brochure** that the police will provide you with. The card notes the incident involved, the date, time, item number, and officer's name. Or you may have a newspaper article or obituary to show them.

Identifying the Body/Autopsy

You need to know that because a crime is involved in the death, the **body cannot be moved** from where it is found without permission from the coroner. Police and coroners will be inspecting the body for clues that might be critical.

An **autopsy** is required by law in cases of violence, and will be conducted to determine what internal and external injuries caused death. Wounds and injuries may be photographed and marked on a diagram. These will be used in a trial. After the case

is closed, you may request a copy of the autopsy, but please do not read this alone. The body will be picked up from the coroner's office by your funeral home.

If you have to identify a body, for heaven's sake **get support to be there** with you. I identified the body of a friend's son, when at the last minute she couldn't bear to see it.

I will never forget how disturbing it was to see my husband's body lying in a coffin. I was grateful to have two close friends with me.

Funeral Arrangements

My husband's family made the funeral arrangements for him and his mother. Even though my husband was not actively religious, I agreed to a joint Catholic funeral and to his being buried at their family plot. The other option was to have him cremated. Given the circumstances, I felt one joint funeral was the best solution. And quite honestly, I wasn't up to sorting out arrangements from another country. Remember to take into account that some people may have to **travel** to attend the funeral.

If you don't know of one, ask one of your friends to help you find a suitable funeral home. I didn't know this, but the **funeral home is required to give you all the costs** involved. The only costs that are not negotiable are their administrative costs. I was shocked to find out how expensive they are. So I

recommend you ask someone responsible to check into what is offered, and then you can decide what you feel is important.

(**Note:** See the Crime Victims Reparations program on page 34 regarding burial expenses.)

I wanted to have my husband buried in a coat he loved, but the crime scene was still secured and this wasn't possible. I had to let it go, but it was disappointing.

I made a **special request** since there was a song my husband had once said he wanted played at his funeral, and this was done at the burial site. I also asked to take a lock of my husband's hair.

I also bought several plain boards and attached **photographs** of my husband and mother-in-law; many people brought their own pictures along, which I appreciated getting.

I never thought of this at the time, but you might want to consider the **donation of your loved one's organs**. If applicable, check his or her driver's license to see if he or she wanted to do this.

If you want monetary donations made to a charity or organization, be sure to state this in the **obituary**. You will also need to provide general information for the obituary and death certificate. One woman asked people to help contribute to restoring a playground her son played in.

It is possible that the violence done to the body will mean it cannot be viewed. So another option is to have the body **cremated**, and the ashes stored at a mausoleum. Or some people like to scatter the ashes at a place where they know their loved one enjoyed spending time.

A **memorial service** may be held if the body is not present, for whatever reason.

Crime Scene Cleanup

I urge you not to let well-intentioned friends or neighbors do any necessary cleanup, due to the risk of contamination and infection. Instead, **get a professional organization** to do this work. My experience was that these were compassionate people (from a company called Clean Scene—look in the Yellow Pages for other companies too) who worked quickly and efficiently, and were not trying to rip us off.

Also be sure to **secure the crime scene**, if necessary. I was sickened to find that after the police left, people broke into the house and stole all kinds of things. It was such a violation after the violence of the deaths. The NOPD can have an officer come to your house to advise you on how to secure it.

Emergency Award

You may be eligible for an emergency award, if qualified (see page 35). There are some guidelines you must first meet. Forms need to be filled in within **6 weeks of the date of the crime** with the Criminal Sheriff's office.

Legal Matters

See the section on legal matters for other things you will need to deal with. (See page 36.)

Relating to the Media

When a story is “hot,” the media can be interfering and pushy as they follow the story. Remember: You are **not required to talk to any of them**. Initially, I did not speak to them despite repeated requests, but a year later, when the killer died, I did make a brief statement. Before doing so, I asked some friends to proofread it, and let the detective and Assistant District Attorney (A.D.A.) know what I was going to say. The detective and/or A.D.A. should be consulted before making any comments to the media, so as not to jeopardize the case. Consult them also if you intend to show a photograph.

Try not to make angry statements to the media—you can curse later! You want the public to see you for the victim and survivor you have had to become, and appeal to their probable outrage. Another way to handle this is to have your support person, or some **chosen person, talk to the media** on your

behalf. Or you can release a **written statement** (if your detective or A.D.A. has seen it). Or, if you've noticed one media reporter whose work you admire, then **you might approach that reporter** to work with them. You can ask to review questions before you speak. Again, it is a good idea to **consult with the detective, A.D.A.**, and some level-headed friends as well.

ROLE OF THE POLICE

Investigation

Police are typically the **first official agency** to respond to the crime scene, if a witness calls or a body is discovered. (In my case, the killer set the house on fire, hoping to destroy all evidence. So it was the fire department who discovered the bodies.)

Police must **deal with any danger** and ensure the injured are attended to. The officer may make an arrest of a suspect on the spot, based on information available at the time.

As soon as police determine what kind of crime is involved, they will call in the relevant units, such as sex crimes, homicide, or burglary and theft. For a homicide, they will also request that the **crime lab and coroner's office be present**, and notify the District Attorney's (D.A.'s) office.

Generally, it is the coroner's office that will make the **official call** to family members once identification is certain. However, the NOPD may also make the identification.

Detective Contact

Where homicide has occurred, usually a **team of detectives** is assigned. The lead detective will handle the scene, while the other detectives conduct interviews and canvass the neighborhood. If the family is at the scene, a detective will be with them,

since the family is the best source of information. (It's a sad fact that most victims are killed by people they know.)

The **lead detective** will try to obtain one person from the victim's side to be a **contact person** (usually a member of the family), rather than having numerous friends and relatives calling in for information. I was the designated contact person. It is important that you (or a designated person) get the item number, name of the officer, and his/her contact information. I set up an email list to send fresh information to people, and called those without email. Your support person could help arrange this for you, if possible, or do a round robin of phone calls.

I know some people have distrust of the police. But in this situation, it makes sense to make the police your partner, and remember: They didn't commit the crime. Let them know you are willing to do anything you can to cooperate.

If for any reason **you feel threatened** or intimidated by others about what to say to detectives, speak to a Victim Witness counselor or other counselor, or a trusted friend or priest. They may be able to help you communicate with the detective. There are no easy answers, but don't deal with this alone.

Remember also that detectives are **working several cases** at once, but this does not mean your case is not receiving any attention.

If you haven't heard from the detective after some time (say 20–30 days), **call for an update**. If you have problems getting any response from the detective, then call the district from which the detective works, and **speak to a supervisor**. Take notes if you are having problems and put your concerns in writing; this makes your request to obtain information more persuasive.

If **anyone attempts to contact you** to discuss the crime, it is your right to request and obtain the identification of the person and his or her employer. Make sure you look at the badge carefully and identify which agency is involved. Defense teams have their own investigators, so always ask for proof of who you are talking to.

Item Card or Brochure

Police will provide the contact person with an item card or brochure; it has a heading stating that it comes from the NOPD.

The **item card or brochure will list**: What type of incident is involved, an item number, the date and time of the incident, and the police officer's name. The brochure will have additional information (victim rights, support services, etc.). This item card or brochure is an official document that can be used as proof for employment leave purposes or to get the police report. (There is also space at the beginning of this guidebook to write down this information.) You may also receive a

card from the D.A. or Department of Justice with vital information.

Gathering Evidence

Police and detectives must work quickly. The **first 48 hours are the most critical**; during this period the detective will be working every lead, and will interview witnesses, neighbors, and family members. You may also see a representative of the D.A.'s office at the scene, who will assist the NOPD with the investigation. Try not to be offended if they ask very personal questions, and tell them what you know is true, and not what you think they want to hear.

As my detective warned me, **things often don't tie up neatly like they do on TV**. On most crime shows, someone confesses or an accomplice informs on someone, or some incriminating evidence is found at the last minute—but this rarely happens in real life. If you want to know about real-life investigations, watch the television station Tru-TV (this used to be Court TV, and for a while I became hooked on their real-life shows) rather than shows like *CSI* or *Law and Order*. But keep in mind that every case has its own circumstances and peculiarities.

Remember that **police may need to withhold information** to ensure confidentiality. For example: A case can be hurt if a suspect knows he or she is being investigated. There is some information only

the perpetrator and police know. Such sensitive information could wind up tipping off the perpetrator if you knew about it and unwittingly mentioned it to others.

Police need to **secure the crime scene and preserve physical evidence**. The crime lab will take photos and sometimes videotape the crime scene. There are strict rules they must follow, and what they do will be examined if there is a trial. Gathering evidence is one of the most important steps they take. This can take some time to do, and may make things a little messy because of their searching.

For physical evidence, you should know that **DNA tests** take anywhere from 6 to 12 months, or even longer. Police need to profile the different DNA belonging to the victim and the perpetrator. Not all perpetrators have DNA in the database. If the killer has already been convicted of a felony, their DNA may be in the database.

The **body must remain where it was found**; moving it can put the investigation in danger by making some information impossible to collect. This can later affect the outcome if the case goes to trial. The detective will want to limit how many people come into the crime scene, since everyone brings something in that can contaminate the scene. (In my case, the fire department moved the bodies thinking they were suffering smoke inhalation—and

thus, with the best of intentions, made the crime scene compromised.)

One of the toughest things for families to deal with at a crime scene is losing the right to hold or even touch the body they have loved, but in the bigger picture this is what needs to happen. You will, of course, be able to be with the body at the funeral home. I know how cold this sounds, but the body is now part of the physical evidence in a crime scene.

Note: The body can only be moved with the authority of the coroner. Technically the coroner is in charge of the investigation, although the detective handles the scene. The coroner will later talk with your funeral home to arrange transporting the body.

Sometimes **you may be able to assist the investigation**, for example if you can provide leads or helpful information. But don't send the police on a wild goose-chase, or you will lose face. You may also find a clue that's been overlooked: When going through the killer's house, we found an item we thought might be the shirt he wore after committing the murders (it wasn't). We contacted the detective and a crime lab came over. It is important not to move the evidence, no matter how tempting.

If any of your loved one's personal effects were taken by the police, you will be able to get them back. They might be kept if the case goes to trial, and then returned afterward.

Arrest Warrant

Detectives determine if they have sufficient evidence to conclude that a certain person has committed the crime. If the **case is circumstantial** (no witnesses or clear physical evidence), a group of detectives will review the information and decide if the case looks strong enough to proceed. The lead detective then gets an okay from his supervisor. In either case, detectives then obtain an arrest warrant for the suspect. The warrant must be signed by a judge.

If the **person to be arrested is out of state**, he or she will be ordered to return to Louisiana by the process of extradition. The suspect may choose either to fight the extradition, or to waive his or her rights and return. If the person fights extradition, a governor's warrant has to be obtained.

Usually you will not be told until the warrant has been issued, since the **element of surprise** is very important in making an arrest. The news media is constantly trying to get such information, and at times victim's families find out about an arrest from TV before they are told of it by the police.

In my case, it took 6 months before an arrest warrant was obtained, and because the killer was living in another state, there was extra time needed for extradition. I nearly lost my mind waiting for the arrest, but there was nothing I could do to make it happen any more quickly. To keep myself sane, I called the detective periodically to check in about

any developments. Again, your case will have its own set of circumstances unlike any other, which will affect how soon an arrest is made.

First Appearance in Court

The alleged perpetrator must be **brought in front of a magistrate** (or judge) **within 24 hours** of arrest in what is known as the First Appearance. The magistrate will tell the suspect **what he or she is charged with** and **set the bond** (for cases the magistrate decides are manslaughter, negligent homicide, or second-degree homicide). For first-degree capital offenses, (such as murder, aggravated kidnapping, killing a police officer, aggravated burglary, killing a young child or elderly person, or killing one or more persons), there is no bond set.

From the time of arrest, the detective has **28 days to get a finalized report to the D.A.'s office**. If accepted, it goes to the grand jury. (See the second section of this guidebook.)

Involvement of the District Attorney (D.A.)

Once a case has been investigated and the police make an arrest, the police submit their report to the screening division of the prosecuting agency: the District Attorney's office. The D.A.'s office holds a **charge conference**, where about 7 to 10 Assistant D.A.s (A.D.A.s), investigators, and members of the NOPD decide if there's enough evidence to charge the suspect.

Sometimes the A.D.A. may send the case back to the police for **additional investigation**. When the A.D.A. is satisfied with the evidence, they will seek an indictment by either filing a Bill of Information or presenting evidence to the grand jury. The case then heads to court and trial.

Police Report

You may request one copy of the initial police report, after 10 days from the date of the crime. Typically police will block out the names and addresses of witnesses. There is a \$25 charge for the police report. (This charge is set by city law.) You can get the report here:
Records Room, First floor, Police Headquarters
715 S. Broad St., New Orleans (near the criminal courts at Tulane Avenue), between 9:00 am and 1:00 pm on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.
(504) 658-5455.

Unsolved Cases

If there is not enough evidence to make an arrest within a **reasonable period of time (1 year)**, the case may be closed. This does not mean the case is not being worked on.

The case gets **assigned to a cold case investigator**, and the advantage is that a fresh set of eyes investigates the case. Obviously, if additional evidence is presented, the case can be reopened.

In our damaged city, police have some **tough challenges**. For example, they investigate homicides where some neighborhoods are almost empty or have few cars driving by, so there may be no witnesses or people to talk to. Or in some cases, such as a drug dealer's death, the victim may have had many enemies, and it's hard to track down all possible suspects.

Keep in mind there is **no statute of limitations** on first- and second-degree homicide cases, so if additional evidence becomes available at any time, a suspect may still be arrested and taken to court.

INITIAL VICTIM SERVICES

There are a number of official organizations that can be of help to you: the NOPD, U.S. Attorney's Office, and District Attorney's office. (See the Criminal Sheriff's role following this section.) They all have specific agencies to deal with victims and witnesses, and are excellent resources. You can find their contact information at the back of this book.

Victim Witness Assistance (NOPD)

This is a section of the NOPD that can answer **questions** you may have and help to prepare you for what's to come.

A representative will try to meet with you when you are seeing the detective. He or she will **provide you with forms** to fill out, such as the Louisiana Victim Notice and Registration Form, which notifies you of any future court dates. This is sent to the D.A.'s office after an arrest is made (to the Victim Witness Assistance program) and to the Clerk of Court. Once a conviction is made it is sent to the Department of Corrections.

The NOPD Victim Witness division will also make referrals for **counseling**, if appropriate. They will inform you of your rights as a victim and inform you of **updates** on an investigation. They also have forms for Crime Victims Reparations. They will help you register with the Louisiana Automated Victim Notification System (LAVNS).

Witness Assistance and Relocations (NOPD)

If the NOPD feels there is a **credible serious threat** to a valuable witness' life, as agreed to by the lead detective and his or her supervisor, they may recommend relocation. The witness has to write or record an official statement and agree to fully cooperate with the NOPD, D.A.'s office, and court.

If the situation is an **emergency**, police will find a safe location for a period of 4 days, which can be extended with approval. During this time the witness(es) will be checked on by staff from the Victim Witness Assistance unit. If more time is needed, relocation will be organized with the D.A.'s office and with the Witness Protection Consortium (a group of all agencies involved).

Victim Witness Assistance

(U.S. Attorney's Office)

This division of the U.S. Attorney's Office, Eastern District of Louisiana (EDLA), provides victim services consistent with the Justice for All Act of 2004 (see page 100). This is done in collaboration with the NOPD and the D.A.'s office.

This additional support for victims helps ensure that victims are notified of their rights and informed about the court process, and provides referrals to other resources needed. They are another useful support system.

Victim Witness Assistance (D.A.)

The program is designed to begin **assisting victims** at any point in the process, from the time of the crime through to the trial. Assistance can begin prior to an arrest being made.

The office has Victim Witness **counselors available 24/7** to assist in homicide and sex-crime cases. Referrals for any type of victimization can come from the individual, or the police, or from an A.D.A., judge, or community member. Each counselor is highly trained, with a masters' level degree in counseling and social work.

Types of assistance provided include:

- Individual and family counseling
- Crisis intervention, depending on the threat level involved
- Case management (While the counselors are not lawyers, they can assist with communication between you and the A.D.A.)
- Preparing victims and witnesses for court proceedings
- Accompanying victims and witnesses to court
- Providing correct and timely information of court hearings, case status, and case outcome (Of course, delays often happen, and they will let you know as soon as they know themselves.)
- Providing referrals to community resources.

This is an extremely **valuable support** system. For example, going to court can seem overwhelming and intimidating, as can trying to understand

various legal processes. The counselors are also there to ensure you are **treated with respect**.

There are **NOPD officers assigned to the D.A.'s** office as investigators. An A.D.A. will get a call about the crime from the investigator, and the A.D.A. will call a counselor if needed. These NOPD officers can also assist individuals who are being intimidated or threatened.

The D.A.'s office is involved in providing safe housing **after the first 96 hours** from the event. (The NOPD provides safe housing for the first 4 days.) The office will also complete a danger assessment, and assist witnesses or victims with safety planning and relocation, if needed.

Chaplains

There are four chaplains at the NOPD, and one at the D.A.'s office. Their services are provided through the McFarland Institute, a division of Baptist Community Ministries. These chaplains provide counseling and support to families and friends of victims. NOPD chaplains are often present at the scene of the crime.

I found the chaplain to be sympathetic and helpful. Ask your lead detective to provide you with the chaplain's contact number, or request a phone call. These chaplains offer another great resource for **caring counsel and assistance**, and especially for any issues that affect your faith.

Louisiana Automated Victim Notification System (LAVNS)

A service provided by Louisiana Commission of Law Enforcement (LCLE), the D.A., and the Criminal Sheriff's office is LAVNS. This is a service you can call 24/7 that will have **information on the accused**, but only after an arrest is made. Anyone can register and be notified by phone or email about changes in the status or location of a jailed individual. When you register, your information is anonymous and strictly confidential.

If for some reason you cannot recall the accused's name properly, you can use the first few letters of the name and the system will suggest similar names to choose from.

LAVNS will tell you of any release, transfer, or escape by the accused. It will inform you of the age, race, criminal charges, and bail amount (if any). It will ask you to set a pin number—don't use something too obvious—as a way to ensure the information is reaching the right person. The number is (866) LAVNS-4-U, and the website is www.lavns.org. You can register by phone or on the website.

LAVNS also provides a service to registered individuals notifying them of upcoming court proceedings or changes to proceedings.

Another helpful method is to go to the Criminal Sheriff's website: www.opcso.org. It will locate the

offender (with a photograph), and state the charges and any bail amount. Click on the LAVNS logo, which will prompt your registration so that you can be notified, either by phone or email, of the offender's release, transfer, or any other changes in the offender's custody status. Again, your registration is anonymous and confidential.

CRIME VICTIMS REPARATIONS PROGRAM

You may be eligible to **receive certain monies** from the LCLE. This money is administered by your parish Criminal Sheriff's Department. Call the number listed in the Resources section of this book to make an appointment with the representative.

To qualify for crime victims reparations, the **following guidelines must be met:**

- The crime involved the use of force, or resulted in personal injury, death, or catastrophic property loss.
 - The crime was reported to police within 72 hours, and a claim filed within a year of the incident.
 - Your losses are not reimbursable from any other source.
 - The victim does not have a criminal history (including a felony conviction in the past 5 years).
 - Your behavior did not contribute to the incident.
- Note: Victim compensation does pay for accidents, such as **DUI, hit and run, or negligent injury.**

You may be eligible for:

- Funeral, burial or cremation expenses
- Costs of hospital treatment, doctor's visits, and medical therapeutic treatment
- Lost wages while under a doctor's care and unable to return to work
- Child care expenses, if relevant
- Evidence gathered by the police
- Property loss, such as from arson.

You may also be eligible for an **emergency award**, if qualified. You must fill out the forms requesting this money **within 6 weeks** of the crime.

It is best to get **application forms** through the Criminal Sheriff's office. Forms are also available through the NOPD and D.A.'s Victim Witness offices. No one will be refused an application. The NOPD must send a **copy of the police report** to the Criminal Sheriff's office. (You should be aware of this since it is part of the application process.) It is also helpful to attach a copy of any newspaper articles covering the crime.

The Criminal Sheriff's office gathers any **further necessary information** from the victim's family, and will inform you of any other monies for which you may be eligible. The Criminal Sheriff's office then **sends the forms to the LCLE** in Baton Rouge.

You will get a letter from the LCLE to confirm that the forms have been received. It will take on average 60–90 days to hear whether your claim is being accepted and funded.

When a child (under age 18) is victimized, a parent or adult guardian has to act as the claimant.

You can get more information on this process at (888) 6-VICTIM, or www.lcle.state.la.us/cvr.

LEGAL MATTERS

Do not sign or agree to anything without first getting legal advice or talking to a trusted friend.

Wills

Louisiana is a **community property state**, so one-half of the assets could be the spouse's property.

If there is **no will**, the Louisiana rule is that the children (including adopted children) inherit the decedent's (deceased person's) property. If there are no children, and there is community property (things owned together), then the spouse is the inheritor. If there is separate property and no children, then the siblings (adult or minor) will inherit. However, the parents will have usufruct, meaning use of any property. For example, if the decedent owned rental property, it would be owned by the siblings, but the parents would get the rent payments (and pay insurance, mortgage, taxes, etc.).

If you are an heir to the decedent's property, you will need a lawyer to prepare the legal papers to transfer ownership of the property to you. Note that this means that you legally inherit whatever assets *and* debts belonged to the deceased.

With the help of an estate lawyer (or general lawyer who also practices estate law), and again when there is no will, you can ask the court to appoint you the representative (or executor) of the decedent's estate (this is called a **succession**), so you can close the

affairs of the decedent and distribute the property to the heirs.

If you **do not own real estate in Louisiana**, and the **decedent's assets are worth less than \$50,000**, you can complete an affidavit to get the assets from a bank checking account. (Go to the website: www.rev.state.la.us and type in “**Affidavit of Small Succession**” to get the form.)

It might be worth your while to speak to a lawyer if there are a **lot of debts** involved, as they might be able to help reduce the amount.

You may have heard the saying “Where there’s a will, there are **relatives**”—and the same goes if there isn’t a will. Relatives can be greedy and mean, and I know how awful it is to experience this. That is why, if there are any disputes, you may have to get a lawyer.

You can get **free legal representation** through the Loyola and Tulane Law Clinics, and through the New Orleans Legal Assistance Corporation (NOLAC). (See information under Resources.)

In Louisiana, you can **handwrite a will**. All you need to make it official is the city, the date, and your signature. This is a legal will and it is free. It’s a simple way to be clear as to whom you want to receive your worldly possessions, and possibly avoid unpleasant fights or conflicts.

Death Certificates

The funeral home will provide you with a death certificate. They coordinate this with the coroner's office. If you think you will need extra certificates, they will charge you a small amount for them. If relevant, you will need them for banks and credit card companies, loans, the IRS, and insurance; some of them may be willing to accept photocopies, or notarized copies.

Loans

My late husband had a number of student loans. Due to his death, these debts were forgiven. I was required to send to the various lenders an original death certificate as well as a copy showing I was the executor of his estate.

Financial Institutions

Contact each financial institution where the deceased had an account. The bank will typically ask for an original death certificate for their records. They will then run a check to see what types of accounts the deceased had. They will be able to tell you what needs to be done; each institution will have its own procedures. Some carry insurance clauses that cancel debt balances upon death.

Safe Deposit Box

If you are the representative of the estate, and can provide proper identification and a death certificate,

you can enter the box to obtain any documents and property contained inside.

Monitoring the Mail

Sometimes statements are sent every 4 months, or once a year. These will alert you to accounts you did not know about.

You may also need to have **mail officially forwarded** to your residence. Go to your local Post Office to get the form.

Beneficiaries

If the deceased was named as a beneficiary on any of your policies or accounts, contact the various institutions to change this information.

IRS

Be sure to notify the IRS, if relevant. They will need an original copy of a death certificate. The spouse or family member has to file the decedent's final state and federal income tax returns. This serves as notice of death to the IRS.

Social Security

The Social Security administration (SSA) should be notified. Most funeral directors will do this for you as part of their service. Call (800) 722-1213 to be sure the change has been processed. You will need

the deceased's full legal name and social security number. The SSA will sometimes provide a one-time benefit of a couple of hundred dollars to the surviving spouse or dependent children.

Credit Card Companies

Credit card companies also need to be notified. They may want a copy of the death certificate. If you have a joint card with the deceased, you will have to close the joint account and open a new one. Ask each company for help finding out if there are outstanding debts or obligations with the card(s).

Life Insurance

Locate the policy and tell the company of the death. Find out what kind of documents they need to issue a check.

Medicare

You do not need to notify them.

Real Estate

Find the deeds to all properties and have the deceased's name removed from the documents.

Homeowners Insurance

If the property will be vacant, consider getting vandalism coverage, and take steps to protect the

property as best you can. (The house where my husband and mother-in-law were murdered was broken into numerous times.) Ask the police to advise you on how to secure the house.

Automobile

You need to find the title and bring it to the DMV with a death certificate. If you can't find it, you can obtain an Application for Duplicate Title from the DMV. If there are still car payments due, you will need to pay off the loan. You can then transfer the title and registration into your name.

Auto Insurance

Let the insurance company know of the death, and if relevant, ask about continuing the insurance in your name.

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

Most likely you will be feeling extreme shock, and be in a state of emotional collapse. I know the last thing you will be thinking of is taking care of yourself, physically and emotionally, but it is important not to make yourself ill.

Physical Symptoms

You may experience physical symptoms, including:

- Anxiety attacks
- Weeping fits
- Fatigue, exhaustion, lack of energy
- Heart palpitations, stomach pains, shortness of breath, and tightness in the throat and chest
- Sleep disturbances and/or nightmares
- Lack of concentration
- Panic attacks, sweating, or chills
- Lack of appetite. (I found having liquid yogurt or health shakes was helpful, since they provided protein and were easy to consume.)

Grief puts great stress on the body, and I recommend that you **see a doctor**. (See the Resource guide for clinics that provide free or affordable help, if you do not have one.)

For you, **medication** may provide some relief, and then again, it may not be something you like or want. But it's an option for you to consider. At various times, I was prescribed anti-depressants as well as anti-anxiety and sleeping pills. There were

times when I did not feel the need for them. It is also easy to get addicted to some medication, and with others, it is important to get off them slowly. In looking back, I realize I really didn't care about myself and my health, and it took a toll later on. Do your best to be good to yourself.

Be careful if you find yourself “**self-medicating**” by using drugs, alcohol, food, sex, work, or gambling to cope with your trauma. While it is understandable that you might want to escape and feel numb, in the long run it will not solve anything, and may create a difficult addiction that will interfere with your life, and suck what little energy you have. I think in some ways this sort of behavior responds to a “**death wish**” in us during a time of darkness, but it can carry you into deeper trouble and will not help in a real way—the hard work of suffering still has to be done. I know this because I was myself plunged into this dark side, and it was hard to get out.

Emotional Symptoms

Your sense of grief and anger will feel overwhelming. Events that are sudden or that involve violence leave us in **shock**; feeling extreme mental pain and **deep depression** after such a loss is normal. Medically this is called post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Grief has no time frame, and no two people grieve the same way or for the same length of time. No one

can tell you how to grieve. It is as if you have a new disability, and you need time to adjust to it.

Elizabeth Kubler-Ross noted that people going through loss experience **five stages of grieving**. You may have noticed yourself going through some of these during and after the catastrophe of Hurricane Katrina. These stages have no particular order, but acceptance usually takes place last:

1) Denial (“This isn’t happening to me!”): You have a feeling of unreality, and are unable to come to terms with what just happened. You may set the table for the person, or look for them in familiar places, or think to call them on the phone.

2) Anger (“Why is this happening to me?”): As a result of the severe pain you are in, you may want to fight back, or be in a state of fury or frustration, or consumed with blaming. Anger is a normal emotional response to an injustice—but it needs an outlet or else it will turn into bitterness and despair.

3) Bargaining (“I promise I’ll be a better person if . . .”): This is a form of wishful thinking, including begging and praying for our loved one to come back. You may feel like you want to change places with your loved one, so that they could live.

4) Depression (“I don’t care anymore.”): Feeling hopeless, frustrated, bitter, and numb may be part of mourning the loss of the person. You may also

isolate from people, abuse substances, and even have suicidal thoughts.

5) Acceptance (“I’m surviving and dealing with whatever comes.”): We begin to realize our loved one didn’t leave us on purpose, and that it’s not their fault. (Even in suicide, the deceased person is not in their right frame of mind.) But we accept that everything has changed, and life as we knew it doesn’t exist anymore; this is what some call the “new normal.” It doesn’t mean you give up on living, it means that it will be a different life.

Other feelings that are commonly felt include: Feelings of **guilt** may involve blaming yourself for not protecting your loved one, often as an outlet for your frustration. It is best to change your words here. Instead of “guilt” (as if you did something bad on purpose) think “regret” (wishing you had been able to do something). Get rid of guilt: It lifts so much off of you to do so.

Exhaustion can make you feel overwhelmed, have a hard time making decisions, or feel jumpy or easily startled.

Suicidal thoughts: When it seems like the only way to stop the pain, you may wish you weren’t alive because the reality is so unbearable.

Many times there is also a desire to **go back in time** and change the outcome, and **obsess** about what

happened and what you could have done to prevent it, which brings out the pain again and again. This happened to me. I had planned to call James at about the time the killer came for their meeting. I became obsessed with thinking I could have prevented the events, and was riddled with guilt that I hadn't called. It was hard for me, but I had to remember that what happened wasn't my fault.

Numbness is a way for the emotions to catch up to what the mind is trying to process. Shock is like an anesthetic, protecting you from what is so hard and painful to believe. I often felt like I was a robot living in a trance. Some people find it hard to cry and feel sadness, but this is often the protective shield of shock. The tears will come in time. **Men and women** can also grieve differently, since men are not encouraged to cry. Yet tears are an important way to express the sorrow physically.

It is natural to have **questions about what your loved one felt** and whether there was any suffering. This is not morbid or crazy. Talk to someone qualified to answer (a doctor or mental health professional), because dwelling on theories is not helpful. I was told that people under attack go into a numb and detached state, which provided strange comfort.

Your **values and beliefs** may be challenged. You might feel cynical or betrayed by your faith. Or you may be fortunate and find that your faith is what gets you through. This can be a cycle of

strengthening and weakening that changes over time. I was very cynical about religious healing, but have come to find a peace with it after a long time.

Sometimes **people will say insensitive things.**

When I first went to the gravesite with two relatives of my husband, I was overcome with emotion and crying, and one of them said to me, “Crying won’t bring him back.” I was taken aback by her insensitivity and left speechless. Luckily the other relative said a helpful thing: “When there has been great love, there will be great mourning,”—a comment I still use when others try to prevent me from grieving. You have the right to grieve—indeed, your healing depends on it—and don’t allow others to push you into doing or feeling things you don’t want to.

I remember the first time I laughed at something—it felt so strange after all my tears. You may find that there can be a sense of **guilt at feeling any joy.** It helped to remind myself that my loved ones would not want me to be defeated and turned into yet another victim of crime.

Moving through grief can involve painful and intense emotions —confusion, fear, guilt, disorientation. At times you may have “**grief attacks,**” powerful surges of emotion from things like hearing a song, having a sudden memory, or for no apparent reason. Such episodes can leave you feeling exhausted, so get rest. Time does help, even if sometimes you think the pain will never end.

Thoughts of revenge are very common. It is human nature to want to hurt the person who has taken your loved one's life. But if you stop to think this out, it is a loop that can only end in further tragedy. The need to make someone answer for the violence is often felt physically. I would sometimes sit in my car and scream, or punch pillows and scream into them. It helps to give yourself some physical release rather than holding it all in.

Some Helpful Tools

I have found that doing a few of the following techniques really helped me:

Say “**STOP**” out loud if you keep repeating negative or obsessive thoughts. Replace the thoughts with a positive memory of your loved one. You may have to do this many times, but eventually you will train yourself to respond more quickly.

Challenge your thoughts: for example, replace “I want to disappear” with “I’m going through a horrible time but I will pull through it, and my life is not over.”

Take a few minutes to **breathe deeply**. Breathe in through your nose and let your stomach expand; tell yourself you are breathing in strength and hope, or whatever you need. Breathe out through your mouth and let your stomach fold in; tell yourself you are breathing out negative things.

Get **20 minutes of sunlight** a day, and 20 minutes of **exercise** a day.

Eat foods that are richly colored to help fight anxiety and depression. Avoid having too many white foods, like bread and pasta.

Eat **6 small meals a day** to keep your blood sugar stable. If you have no appetite, drink liquid yogurt or vegetable juices, and take a daily vitamin.

Keeping a **journal** is a good way to express your feelings. You can also write to your loved one; I don't think this is creepy—it's a way to keep a connection that was suddenly yanked away.

It can be helpful to collect mementos of your loved one, things that were meaningful to them, and make a **scrapbook**. In it you can put photos, letters they wrote, letters written about them, inspirational quotes. I kept a lock of James's hair and his glasses, and treasure various little notes he wrote. This might even be helpful for the detectives and the D.A.'s office.

Having an **area to remember your loved one** is another way to grieve as well as honor the memory of them. You can light a candle as a way to express their presence, put up favorite photos, display items that they loved, or plant flowers. One person painted her house inside and out with inspirational drawings in memory of her loved one.

There is a technique called **EMDR** (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing) that involves using eye movement to stimulate the brain, and is used for dealing with trauma and flashbacks. I used this and found it of some help. You can find professionals who are trained in this technique.

Manage your time. Don't force yourself to move faster than you are able. Be selfish with your time in order to look after yourself. Can you cut back on something? Ask for help? Accepting help is an act of courage, not weakness.

Make a **to-do list**, and focus on what's most important. It helps you actively decide what you need, rather than being helpless and passive. But be fair to yourself and don't set yourself up for failure.

It's OK to **say "no."** You don't have to please others now.

Many people have said **prayer** helped them through. My prayers were often angry rages at God; this was part of my necessary expression.

Watch a **funny movie**—sometimes escaping the darkness helps stop the feelings of guilt or shame or defeat.

Grief Groups and Counseling

One of the most helpful and healing things is to **talk about your feelings**. Grief groups are an invaluable resource; they consist of other people who are struggling to come to terms with their own loss, and who can offer some important insights. The word “compassion” means “to suffer with,” and you realize you are not alone. I found I could let myself grieve more easily there; I felt there was no judgment, and always kindness and sympathy. It was as if there was a “**shorthand**” in **understanding my pain**, which is also called trauma bonding. People knew where I was coming from, and each person helps the other.

I recommend trying one of the grief groups listed in the Resource guide. It’s understandable to feel awkward about going, so maybe you can ask a friend to attend with you the first time if that is helpful. You will probably be asked to introduce yourself, but you’re not required to talk about your experience unless you want to. Before you decide if a group is for you or not, you should **attend at least three or four meetings**. Try different groups too; I attended two different groups regularly.

I also attended **individual counseling** sessions, which was another useful way to find expression for my feelings and experiences. You will find a list of possible places under Resources. I also continue to see a psychiatrist to evaluate my mental health. Remember that **skilled assistance** is often needed to help us progress beyond our grief.

Dealing with Family and Friends

Surround yourself with understanding people (especially ones who have experienced loss). Sometimes having set **phone times to talk** to various friends is a help. For example, I found nighttime to be the most painful, so I had various sympathetic friends who knew I might call, or who would call me.

Sometimes the thing we need most from family and friends is someone who will listen. Invite them to **share their memories** of your loved one. For example, someone gave friends and family each a sheet of paper for them to write down their favorite memories, and put this in a scrapbook. Don't be afraid to let them know this is what you need from them. Treasuring memories of your loved one is important; it is a powerful way to remember them, and remembering is a healing part of your mourning.

Distance yourself from **people who bring you down**. There are some people who seem to get off on finding out the gruesome details. Avoid them—they're not there to help you, they're just emotional vampires.

If friends no longer understand you or try to avoid you, remember they have **their own fears and limitations**. Also, you have new needs now and may need new friends. I found this feeling of abandonment quite painful, but not everyone is as sensitive as you'd like them to be in serious matters.

Often people who haven't suffered significant loss don't understand this level of pain. **Seek out others** who allow you to talk as much as you need to about your grief, and who won't be critical of your feelings, and won't be impatient with you. Again, grief groups can be very helpful.

Hurt people hurt people. Try not to take your anger out on those people close to you. If you do, be sure to talk to them later and explain what was happening. You don't want to push away those who care most about you, or make them nervous about being near you.

A friend would call me and say: "Other than terrible, how are you?" To **respond to people asking me how I was doing**, I adapted that to say: "Other than terrible (or tired, or sad) I'm managing (or breathing, or surviving)." I would always **thank people for asking**, so they didn't feel bad doing so.

Going Back to Work

Your grief will probably affect your productivity at work, since you are not the person you were. You **may need breaks** to get yourself together if you have a grief attack, or if someone says something insensitive. Let your coworkers know that you may show signs of grief up to a year or more. For some people, the **routine** of work is a help to take their mind off their shock and pain.

If your employer asks how to help you, you might discuss these points:

- Grieving can take a long time to work through.
- The effects of grief (anger, withdrawal, sadness) are not related to your attitude to the job.
- Is there a possibility of changing some work assignments temporarily?
- Coworkers should be aware of the situation.

Dealing with Special Events

Anniversaries, like birthdays and holidays, can be **painful reminders**. It really helps to **have a plan** on how to deal with all these “firsts” (without your loved one) that you are going to go through. Some people like to spend the time alone, or go to the loved one’s grave, or be with loving friends and family. I rescued a little dog and decided to make his birthday the same as my late husband; this way I am reminded to celebrate James’s life.

If an event occurs near an **anniversary** like a birthday or holiday, and you do not want to attend, don’t let anyone make you do so. If you do go, ask to be seated somewhere where you can leave without creating a fuss, if it’s just too much. People will understand and are often grateful that you came at all. Avoid old traditions (if they make you too sad) and **make new traditions**.

Signs and Mystical Connections

This can happen often, so don't think you're going crazy. Right after the murders, I kept on seeing a certain neighborhood cat whenever I was dealing with important decisions. I found this reassuring, as if James's spirit was with me through the cat. I was relieved to know many others have similar experiences, whether it is with animals or sensations or in other symbolic ways, including:

- Sensing a presence
- Hearing a voice
- Feeling a touch
- Smell (one family would smell their late son's stinky feet!)
- Visual (like the shape of a body, often at the foot of the bed)
- Electronic equipment turning on or off
- Dreams (some comforting, others puzzling or sad).

Being in a relaxed state tends to help these connections occur.

Avoid Making Major Decisions

Be cautious: Try to avoid taking on decisions you're not ready to deal with, for about the first year or more. Don't let others push you into something that doesn't feel right. Avoid impulsive decisions, such as giving away possessions. However, if it is too painful to see the reminders, ask some friends to help you pack up the items and store them somewhere safe. Decisions that **leave room for a change of heart** are best.

At some point, when you feel ready to share the items, they can be a way to **give others a keepsake** that is meaningful. Or you might want to donate them to a charity. I kept certain books that we had enjoyed reading together. I donated other books to the university where we had met and which suffered flood damage, and gave the remainders to friends who could choose what they liked. It took me years to get to this point.

HELPING CHILDREN COPE

How Children React to Trauma

Fear and anxiety: Children may worry that the trauma will happen again, or that they will be left alone. They may experience nightmares, or fear darkness. This might progress to a point where a child feels suicidal. If so, be sure to get professional help from a group such as Children's Bureau (in the Resources section).

Childish behavior: Children may act younger than their age. They might begin bedwetting or thumb-sucking, and become clingy or afraid. Children don't want to act immature, but their anxiety might disturb their normal behavior. They may also act out as a way of expressing their feelings, especially if they don't know better ways to give voice to them.

Physical reactions: Like adults, they may experience stomachaches, headaches, nausea, and/or eating problems. Certain sounds might trigger a response of fear.

Concentration problems: Many children become easily distracted, and feel confused and inattentive.

Family Routines

Try to keep meals, activities, and bedtimes as close to normal as possible, so children feel more secure and in control. Whenever possible, children

should stay with people with whom they feel both familiar and safe.

Special Needs

A traumatized child may be more dependent on you for some time after a trauma has occurred. This might include not wanting to sleep alone, having the light left on, being hugged or held more than usual, returning to a favorite toy or blanket, or not wanting to be social.

Talking about What Happened

Like adults, children express their feelings in different ways. Some will be numb, withdrawn, and unable to talk about the event. Others will have sudden spurts of anger or sadness about the event, and then act as if nothing has happened. Others might express themselves nonverbally in drawings or through acting out.

Let them know you're also hurting, and let them see your own grief and mourning and feelings of loss. Be sure to express caring feelings and support their feelings and responses.

Don't force them to talk about their feelings, but do listen to them even if they are different to yours. Make sure you aren't impatient with them; we all grieve at our own pace.

Give honest, simple answers to their questions, and make sure they understand your answers.

Avoid words or expressions that might confuse and frighten them. For example, saying someone has “gone to sleep” rather than “died,” might make a child scared to go to bed. If a child feels they are being punished because of the trauma, he or she may feel frightened and threatened.

Speak to schoolteachers about what has happened, as well as parents of your child’s friends.

A SECTION FOR FRIENDS TO READ

Helping Your Friend in Mourning

Your friend or family member who is in mourning will have **different needs** at different stages of mourning. In the beginning the person will need **practical help**, such as answering the phone, doing errands, answering sympathy notes, or contacting agencies.

Your **emotional support** might not reach them initially, but it is helpful to **be there to listen** to them. Try **not to rush them** through their mourning process, or to deny their pain—it sends a signal that you are rejecting their grief, and delays their progress in working through the loss. Fully grieving is necessary and healthy, and sometimes for a mourner’s friends, this means listening to the same thoughts over and over. Ask yourself: “What would I want under the same circumstances?” and try to be sensitive.

Don’t assume your friend is taking it well when he or she seems calm; this may really be the numbness of shock. Also don’t be surprised by the **intensity of his or her feelings**, and how many emotions he or she expresses, such as confusion, disorganization, fear, guilt, anger, depression, and sadness. Mourners may ask **questions like “why”** without expecting you to have a rational answer; what they are really searching for is meaning.

What to Say, What to Avoid Saying

Sometimes the very comment meant to help the bereaved will cause more pain. Here are a few phrases that may offer comfort to someone grieving, and some to avoid:

Say: I'm sorry.

Avoid: I understand how you feel.

Say: I'm sad for you.

Avoid: Death was a blessing.

Say: How are you doing with all this?

Avoid: It was God's will.

Say: I don't know why it happened.

Avoid: It all happened for the best.

Say: I'm here and I want to listen.

Avoid: You have your whole life ahead of you.

Say: Please tell me how you're feeling.

Avoid: You'll feel worse before you feel better.

Say: This must be hard for you.

Avoid: You can have other children.

Say: This must be painful for you.

Avoid: You'll be strengthened by this.

Say: What's the hardest part for you?
Avoid: You can always remarry.

Say: I'll call you tomorrow.
Avoid: Call me when I can help.

Say: You must really be hurting.
Avoid: Something good will come out of this.

Say: Take all the time you need.
Avoid: It's time to put it behind you.

Say: Thank you for sharing your feelings.
Avoid: Be strong for the children/others.

Say: Let your feelings out; I may cry too.
Avoid: Crying won't bring them back.

Say: You will move forward in your own time.
Avoid: It's time for you to move on.

Say: What do you miss the most?
Avoid: They're in a better place.

Say: How are you—in yourself?
Avoid: You seem to be doing well.

FLOWCHART: THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

It can be confusing trying to follow the progress of a case through the criminal justice system. Every case is different, but the chart on the following pages may help you understand how most progress.

The chart assumes that the charge is a felony, and the defendant is an adult.



A crime is committed.

Law enforcement is notified.
NOPD and D.A. go to the crime scene.

An investigation is conducted.
Evidence is gathered; witnesses are interviewed.

Crime victim submits a Victim of
Crime claim (including item number)
with the Criminal Sheriff's office.

Family is notified by the coroner or police.

Witness protection and victim
assistance are provided by
NOPD and D.A.

Victim Services begin
through NOPD, D.A., and
U.S. Attorney's Office.

Initial investigation is completed.
Charge conference is held with NOPD and D.A.

Investigation continues.

or **Suspect is arrested.**

First appearance of the accused in court.
Bond is set.

Case is evaluated by the District
Attorney's office.

Grand Jury closed hearing is held.
Victims and witnesses may need to testify.
If Grand Jury decides there is enough evidence
for a trial, court issues Bill of Indictment.

or D.A.'s office files a Bill
of Information.

Important Information

TRIAL ASSISTANT DISTRICT ATTORNEY:

PHONE: _____

D.A. VICTIM WITNESS COUNSELOR:

PHONE: _____

D.A. CHAPLAIN:

PHONE: _____

SECTION 2

LONGER-TERM CONSIDERATIONS

ROLE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY AND COURTS

District Attorney (D.A.)

It is important to understand how the legal system views a crime like homicide. Basically it is defined as **a crime against the state**, or society at large, and legally the state takes the place of the victim. Thus it is the District Attorney's office, made up of a group of lawyers and investigators, that will handle your case. There is **no charge** for their services, and you do not have to hire a private lawyer.

You will be **assigned to an Assistant D.A. (A.D.A.)**, who will handle your case. Until recently there was a lot of turnover at the D.A.'s office, and I had three different A.D.A.s in as many years. This was problematic because there wasn't the continuity of someone who knew the ins and outs of my case, but it is not typical.

The accused (defendant) must provide his or her own defense. If the defendant does not have the funds to do so, a **Public Defender** will be assigned, and will be paid for by the State.

The District Attorney (D.A.) for the Parish of Orleans will **review your case** to determine whether or not he or she thinks a conviction can be achieved based on the law and the facts. During this process it is the policy of the D.A. to **contact each victim** and all necessary witnesses to discuss the case. Someone

from the D.A.'s office will contact you if an arrest is made.

If the D.A. decides **not to prosecute the case**, it does not mean that a crime did not occur, nor does it mean that the person accused by the police is innocent. It merely means that the D.A. does not reasonably believe that he or she can obtain a conviction of the accused in a court of law under the circumstances.

If the D.A. decides to **go forward with a prosecution** of the accused for the offense, it only means that the D.A. reasonably believes that given the facts and circumstances, he or she can obtain a conviction of the person in a court of law. The decision to prosecute or not is not in any way a reflection on you or the trauma you have suffered. It is the **legal obligation** of the D.A. to prosecute only when he or she reasonably believes that a **conviction can be obtained** against the person the police accuse of committing the offense.

A.D.A.s and Victim Witness Counselors

Currently the D.A. is sending A.D.A.s, D.A.'s investigators (some of whom are from NOPD), and Victim Witness counselors (see page 30) to the **scenes of all homicides**, rapes, and child-abuse events that are reported to the NOPD. At that time, you are free to speak to the A.D.A. or the counselor about what you should expect from the process as a victim or witness.

The D.A. will try to make the process as convenient as possible, but it is **important to cooperate** with the A.D.A. to make sure that he or she has all of the facts necessary to successfully prosecute the case. You can always contact the D.A.'s office to determine the **status** of your matter and speak with a Victim Witness counselor or an A.D.A.

Once the case has been **accepted for prosecution** you will again be contacted by the D.A.'s office to prepare for the trial or the procedural motions. At this stage, you will be assigned a **trial A.D.A.** who works in a particular section of court. (There are 12 sections, A–L, each with its own judge.) The repeated contact you'll have with your trial A.D.A. helps keep you closely in touch with the people responsible for presenting the matter to the court. It will also allow you to address any concerns you may have with the process or with the quality of services being provided to you.

It is the D.A.'s intention to make your participation in the criminal justice process as painless as possible, but there will be times where your continued cooperation is critical even when it appears tedious or repetitive. **Your participation is a critical component**, and the D.A. wants to be sure of your commitment to the process.

ORDER OF COURT PROCEEDINGS

Law Enforcement and Arrest

When the police have completed their investigation and are convinced they have sufficient evidence to justify an arrest, they obtain an **arrest warrant** for a suspect. The warrant is issued by a judge. Sometimes the accused may have gone into hiding or have fled the state, in which case there may also be collaboration with police in another state (see page 24).

The Beginning of Prosecution

Formal prosecution can be put in motion in one of two ways:

- A grand jury indictment, called a Bill of Indictment;
- or**
- A Bill of Information filed by an A.D.A.

Grand Jury

In Louisiana, any felony offense that carries the possibility of a **life sentence** *must* be presented to the grand jury.

A grand jury is a group of **12 individuals** who meet weekly in proceedings that are **closed to the public**. They are not allowed to discuss their cases publicly.

The D.A.'s office and NOPD detectives hold a **charge conference** every week to decide which

cases are ready to present to the grand jury. They discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each case, and come to an agreement on the appropriate charges to present to the grand jury.

The D.A.'s office presents **evidence** to the grand jury. Police officers and witnesses may be asked to testify. The grand jury listens, asks questions, and decides if a defendant should be indicted.

The grand jury makes one of three decisions:

1) They **indict** a defendant, meaning they find probable cause that the defendant committed the crime, and document the charges for which the defendant must stand trial. In these cases, a preliminary hearing may not be required. A “**true bill**” is issued for capital cases and any life-sentence case. This is formally presented as a **Bill of Indictment** to the court.

2) There is a “**pretermitted**,” which means they are not sure what to do in the case. The same case can then be presented to them again later with new evidence.

3) They deliver a “**no true bill**,” which means there is insufficient cause to charge the defendant. It is then up to the D.A. to decide if there is further investigation that can be done on the case.

Bill of Information

This is a court document filed by the D.A.'s office. It is a formal charge that sets forth the crime(s) for which a defendant will be prosecuted. These often include cases such as: attempted murder, aggravated assault, forgery, possession and distribution of drugs, and felons in possession of a firearm.

Arraignment in Criminal District Court

The D.A. files either a Bill of Information or a Bill of Indictment (from the grand jury) with the Clerk of Court, and is assigned to a court. The defendant appears in court for arraignment, which means he or she enters a plea of guilty or not guilty. (Expect a not guilty plea to be entered.)

Felony Definitions

Felony crimes include rape, aggravated assault, and all homicides. The legal system has several categories for homicide, ranging from the unintentional (often resulting from carelessness or an unfortunate accident), to the horrifying premeditated killing that is planned out.

Possible charges include:

- **First-degree homicide:** Offenses like murder of a police officer in the line of duty, an elderly person, a child under age 4, or while committing another felony. This can include the death penalty and is called a capital case, punishable by life or death.

- **Second-degree homicide:** The unintentional killing of someone while committing a felony (such as armed robbery). For example, if someone is robbing a bank and fires a warning shot, and the shot accidentally kills someone, this is second-degree homicide. It calls for a mandatory life sentence in prison.

(All first- and second-class felonies must be sent to the Department of Corrections as opposed to parish prison, and are sentenced to hard labor.)

- **Manslaughter:** Crimes of passion where a person feels provoked to commit crime. Sentencing ranges from 0 to 40 years, and takes into account the defendant's criminal history.

Bail

Criminal defendants have a right to be released on bail except in first-degree murder cases. In other very serious cases the judge may **deny bail** after a hearing, or the judge may set bail at a level that assures the defendant will remain in custody until the case is disposed.

Bail is a promise by a third person, usually a family member, to **guarantee the defendant's appearance in court**. This promise is usually stated in terms of money to guarantee that the accused person will be in court at an appointed time, allowing them to be released from custody. There are also bail-bond companies that will make this promise to the court. Usually the cost to obtain a commercial bail bond is 12% of the amount set by the court, plus fees (after the court has assessed risks). Or the defendant must

put up the full amount, usually including real property in the full amount of the set bail.

The co-defendant in my case was released when a judge from another section reduced her bail. The A.D.A. was not notified of this hearing (by law notification is not required). It's horrible, but these things happen. Refer to the LAVNS notification system to check up on the defendant. You can also refer to Docketmaster at www.opcsso.org.

Preliminary Hearing

Witnesses testify before the judge. Evidence is shown to indicate the defendant committed a crime; however, this is **not as thorough** as the evidence that will be later presented at trial. Police officers can present **hearsay** (what they learned from witnesses or others; hearsay is not permissible in trial). This information also has the function of influencing how much the bond will be.

Preliminary hearings can also be a way to **preserve testimony**, such as if a witness is ill and later unable to testify in court. Defense attorneys can use preliminary hearings as a way to burden a victim or witness, by having them give testimony. Most judges are sympathetic to these tricks.

If there has been a grand jury indictment, a preliminary hearing is not required.

Pretrial Proceedings

These involve decisions about what kind of evidence and testimony is **allowed at the trial** (such as confessions, searches, and identifications). These issues are presented to the judge by lawyers for both sides through legal documents called motions (e.g. Motion to Suppress Evidence). The judge will rule on these issues before trial.

The judge has to decide what evidence can be admitted based on previous cases, rules of evidence, and procedures. The focus is on trying to establish what evidence will be **legally admissible** at a trial.

You should know that often a large **part of the investigation might not make it to trial**; some of it is suppressed (not allowed) during the motion hearings. This might include such factors as the defendant's criminal history or similar M.O. or habit (for instance, tactics used in similar crimes for which the defendant was convicted).

Plea Bargain

The defendant may **plead guilty to a lesser charge** in exchange for the **case not going to trial**. Usually what is being negotiated is the amount of jail time. A plea bargain can be made even during trial.

If the defendant does not stick to the rules of the plea bargain, the D.A. has the right to prosecute again on the original charge.

Sometimes there is a “**deal with the devil**” where the D.A. will make a plea bargain with a defendant so they can get testimony against a different defendant who was more at fault in the crime.

Your A.D.A. should discuss the terms of the plea bargain with you. However, it is up to the A.D.A. to accept the terms of the plea in the interests of society, as opposed to your interests.

Types of Trials

A trial, which serves to decide whether a defendant is guilty or not guilty, can proceed in two ways:

1) **Before a jury** of 12 people and 2 alternates (in case a jury member gets sick or is dismissed, etc.).

Jury trials are the most common;

or

2) **Before a judge**, called a bench trial.

In either case, there are typically **2 attorneys for each side**, with a lead attorney for each side. Your lead attorney (also called a prosecutor) will usually be the A.D.A. with whom you have been working.

Steps in a Jury Trial

1) **A jury is selected.** Both the A.D.A. and defense attorneys ask the jury pool various questions (called *voir dire*), and are allowed to exclude a certain amount of people from serving on the jury.

2) The prosecutor gives an **opening statement** to outline the case and evidence. The defense gives a similar opening statement.

3) The **evidence is presented**, including testimony from witnesses, experts, police, the coroner, or anyone relevant to the case.

If **you are a witness**, you will receive a subpoena to report to the trial. The A.D.A. will meet with you ahead of time to interview you about the facts. You may be excluded from the courtroom while other witnesses testify, to ensure your testimony is not influenced by what others say. (The same goes for everyone who testifies as to the facts of the case.)

At the trial, the A.D.A. will ask you questions. The defense attorney can cross-examine you to test your memory of the facts. Be plain in your answers and answer the question only. If you do not remember something, say so—do not guess.

4) During trial, while one side is asking questions, the other side's lawyer can raise **objections**. If the judge **sustains** the objection, it means he agrees with the objection and the questioning needs to change. If the judge **overrules** the objection, the lawyer can continue with his or her questioning.

5) The **prosecution “rests” its case**.

- 6) The defense then calls its witnesses, which the prosecutor can **cross-examine**. Defendants do not have to take the stand in their own defense.
- 7) The **defense “rests” its case**.
- 8) The prosecutor can present evidence or witnesses to **challenge the evidence** presented by the defense.
- 9) The **prosecution rests**.
- 10) The prosecutor makes a **closing argument** to the jury, followed by the defense’s closing argument. The prosecutor is allowed to make comments on the defense’s closing argument.
- 11) The judge gives the jury **legal instructions**.
- 12) The jury deliberates and returns a **verdict**.

Bench Trial

This is basically the same process as the jury trial, but the **judge decides the verdict**.

Pre-sentence Investigation and Report

The defendant’s **criminal background** is summarized, and, if relevant, the probation department prepares a report. The victim’s family should also be consulted before sentencing.

Sentencing Hearing

(Following a “guilty” verdict)

The judge will decide the timing of the hearing.

The state provides **sentencing ranges**, set by law, as to the length of imprisonment that is allowed.

Some sentencing options include:

- State prison (long-term sentences)
- County or parish jail (short-term sentences)
- Probation
- Fine or restitution
- Community service
- Or a combination of the above.

Victim Impact Statement

At sentencing, you are allowed a chance to **express how the crime has affected your life**. Although it is voluntary, judicial law gives you the **right to make this speech** if you choose to do so. (See page 101.)

Throughout the process leading up to and including the trial, you have been at the mercy of the legal system. This may have meant you could not speak your mind, to avoid endangering the outcome of the trial. Now you have the chance to stand and **put a human face to your tragedy**. It is a way to restore a sense of control and relieve some of the frustration you have felt. It is also a way to say what has been stored in your heart. It can be strangely healing to have this heard publicly. People who have done this say it was the most powerful thing they did, and that

it made all the difference in the world to speak on behalf of their loved one.

The court may limit how many people speak, particularly if the comments are repetitive of what has been said before. If someone gets rude or starts ranting, they may be cut off from speaking further.

In my situation, I never got to make an impact statement, since the killer died in jail. However, I wrote down what I would want to say to him, and that was also helpful. (Also see the following section on Restorative Justice, page 91.)

There is a **website** that has sample impact statements you can look at for inspiration. It is through the U.S. Department of Justice Office for Victims of Crime. (Go to www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc.)

Many victims find it helpful to organize the statement by **emotional, physical, and financial effects**. Do a rough draft before completing the final statement.

For **emotional impact**, consider the following:

- How has the crime affected you and those close to you?
- Have your feelings about yourself or your life changed since the crime?
- Has your ability to relate to others, such as family, friends, and coworkers, changed?
- Have you needed to seek out victim services, such as counseling?

If you or another family member were injured, you can tell the court of your **physical impact**:

- What physical injuries occurred?
- How long are the injuries expected to last?
- What medical treatment has been received or is expected?
- What changes have you made in your life as a result of these injuries?

You may also want to discuss how you have been **financially impacted**:

- How has this affected your ability to earn a living?
- Have you lost time from work? Have you had to take time off to go to the doctor or courthouse?

You can tell the judge anything you want him or her to **know about your loved one** and the kind of person your loved one was. You can include memories, hopes and dreams, or any other information.

Appeals

Appellate court determines if any errors occurred during legal proceedings in the trial. If a conviction is reversed, there may be a new trial.

Other Considerations

If anyone comes by your house and wants to talk to you, **ask them to identify themselves**. Usually the A.D.A. will call in advance. However, defense attorneys sometimes pretend they are from the D.A.'s

office. You should know that you are not required to talk to them. **Notify your detective and A.D.A.** if you are contacted by defense lawyers before you talk to anyone on the defense team.

Docketmaster is a service you can get on the internet through the Criminal Sheriff's website (www.opcso.org). It provides a **summary of all the court proceedings**, which is made by each Clerk of Court. You will need to know the accused's name, race, and sex.

A trial is usually **not held earlier than 75 days** from the preliminary hearing. Given the problems in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina, there have been longer time spans in cases reaching court. It is not unusual for a case to take 2 or 3 years from the time of the crime before it goes to trial. This is why people often comment that the justice system is yet another punishment.

There are **frequent delays** in court and trial dates. Motions take a significant portion of time, or there can be changes in defense attorneys and other personnel. This is sadly quite typical. Defense lawyers will stall the case as much as possible—delays work in their favor when people forget information, or witnesses may die or move or become unwilling to help as time passes.

Some people feel re-traumatized by a trial. In particular, **testimony from the Coroner's office** can be shocking. Some victim families choose to leave the

room at that time. You can request to see the crime photos in advance of the trial, but it is important to have a victim advocate or support person present. I still have not viewed the photos in my case, as I fear being haunted forever.

You may also be surprised and shocked by some **details that emerge** during trial about your loved one. Remember that the defense is not there to show the best side of the victim. Keep your view on what you know to be true about the person you loved.

If you have **problems with your A.D.A.**, as I did, get out that notebook and keep notes. I wrote letters and had several meetings with senior officials (accompanied by a wonderful couple, who had gone through the murder of their son). Again, it's important to assure the A.D.A. and his or her superiors that you want to be an ally, and to get a similar reassurance from them. It's frustrating to know they have an overburdened workload, but this has now been better reorganized. I would recommend you approach the D.A.'s Victim Witness counselors, or the D.A. chaplain.

It is also hard but important to remember that **justice is a process, not an outcome**. We understandably get caught up in what the outcome is: Basically, will the killer be found guilty or not. In so doing, we can forget that the system is also handling the case by the rules as best as possible under the circumstances. Consider that in a typical case there's an investigation, there's an arrest, and even if a jury

found the defendant not guilty, you had a group of people who listened to your case—this is the process in action.

Another thing to bear in mind is that the **investigation is heavily weighted in favor of the prosecution** (your case), but the **procedural rights** (court rules) **are heavily weighted in favor of the defendant.**

Some **disappointments and problems** experienced by those who have gone through a trial include:

- Outrage at the leniency of the murderer’s sentence
- Anger over a plea-bargain arrangement
- The seeming indifference of the community
- Feelings of guilt for not having protected the victim
- Feeling your loved one is not being treated as a real person, or that the defendant gets more rights than the victim
- Sensational and inaccurate media coverage
- Unanswered questions about the crime or the criminal justice system (e.g., why a confession was thrown out)
- Financial burdens of medical and funeral expenses
- Increased strain on marriages and family relationships, sometimes resulting in divorce
- Negative effects on other children in the family, especially bitterness and loss of faith in the criminal justice system.

Court Watch New Orleans is a wonderful group of **court monitors** who attend trials at each courtroom. Volunteers help keep tabs on assigned cases, and observe treatment and handling of these cases in the

courtroom. They document their observations about how each judge handles his or her courtroom, noting things like continuances granted, time between settings, and case management. You can read comments on particular courtrooms at www.courtwatchnola.com, under Court Watch Stories. At some point, you might want to consider being a volunteer.

The **Victim Allies Project** (VAP) is a community-based partnership that provides advocacy and support for survivors of homicide and other violent crimes. **VAP pairs volunteers with family members** who have lost a loved one to violence, helping them to navigate the legal and criminal justice systems. Contact Victim Allies Project (see Resources), for more information, or to request assistance or to serve as a volunteer.

COURTROOM TIPS

It really helps to **have someone with you** in the courtroom. The D.A.'s Victim Witness counselors can be there with you, and/or you can ask supportive friends to come along. According to an NOPD chaplain, many people feel like they are being victimized all over again when going through a trial, and having to relive everything again.

Wear **appropriate clothing**. You don't have to be formal, but don't dress in jeans and T-shirts. You cannot wear clothing with large images of your loved one, or anything that might be seen as offensive or that calls attention to yourself.

Prepare a **courthouse bag**. Include tissues, cough drops, mints, soft snacks (nothing that crackles, including noisy wrappers), water, and change for the vending machine or phone booths. Bring a small notebook for notes. Have a book or magazine handy, since there can be long delays.

Don't bring cell phones, pagers, or cameras—they are not allowed inside the court building.

The **courtroom belongs to the judge**, and it makes sense not to irritate him or her. If you create a disturbance, you can be thrown out. Again, avoid drawing attention to yourself and being noisy.

You are allowed **no contact** with the accused, the judge, or jury members.

Don't be distressed if you see your **A.D.A. and defense attorney** being friendly to one another—they usually have worked on many other cases together.

Ask a support person(s) to **keep others updated** on the trial via internet or phone calls. For your own records, you can cut out newspaper clippings, and ask others to record various channels of news coverage if you want to keep them.

Try to **keep a neutral expression**, even if the defense makes outrageous comments about your loved one—it's their job to attack the victim and take blame off the defendant. Amazing as it seems, if you show a noticeable reaction to something, it could be considered grounds for a retrial; you are not allowed to influence a jury in any way.

Try to **get as many people to attend** the trial as possible. This can send a message of support that the jury and judge will at least notice. However, don't despair if there isn't a big turnout—the facts of the case are what really matter.

It was recommended that I **attend other murder trials**, to help prepare me for what to expect in my own trial. It makes sense if you can attend some conducted by the judge who is handling your case. Of course it is a sad thing to experience—by their nature, these are unhappy events, even if the defendant is convicted, because there still remains the underlying loss of a loved one.

DEFENSE INITIATED VICTIM OUTREACH (DIVO)

There is a new type of outreach for victim/survivors called Defense Initiated Victim Outreach (DIVO). The objective is to have a professional person known as a **Victim Outreach Specialist (VOS)** work with surviving family members on behalf of the defense team. The tricky part about this is that while the VOS is hired by the defense team, he or she is not part of the defense team. In other words, the VOS commitment is to **ease the pain of the victim** by guiding them through the legal entanglements of the judicial process, and not to support the agenda of the defense team.

However, the VOS does open a bridge between the victim and the defense, so if the family has **questions or needs** that the defense might be able to meet, these can be presented. For example, if you want the defense team to know who your loved one was, the VOS makes sure they do. If you want to know why the defense did something in court, the VOS can approach the team for an explanation. Or if you simply want someone to listen as you vent your anger toward the process, this person is there for you. The purpose here is to humanize and ease the experience for you.

You are not obligated to talk to this person (it is voluntary) but you might find it quite helpful, because the VOS is specifically trained to work with victims in

capital cases, and has an understanding of the trauma you are experiencing. Since the defense team pays for the VOS, the service is available at **no cost** to you. I found the idea strange at the beginning, but I wish something like this had existed for me at the time.

If you decide to work with a VOS, notify your detective and A.D.A.

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

In the traditional form of justice, many victims complain of feeling ignored, neglected, or even abused, because the state doesn't care about the crime as personally as the victim does. The state considers the crime to be primarily its concern, and the victim has very limited input. Also, the **courtroom is a warlike setting** where one side "wins" and the other "loses." What's more, the defendant is trying to admit or explain as little as possible, leaving the victim with many unanswered questions. In this type of **traditional justice system**, the person who is harmed has little say in the process.

There is an **alternative** to the traditional system called **Restorative Justice**. The restorative process aims to bring humanity back to the legal process. Currently, a crime is considered to be a law broken, and the offense is against the state. In Restorative Justice, it is relationships that are broken, and the offense is **against another human being**.

The primary focus here is on **what the victim needs** and what the offender can do to repair the harm that has been done, as much as possible. The victim **has a voice** in Restorative Justice.

The needs of the victim are addressed in a series of meetings called "**victim-offender dialogs**," under the guidance and assistance of a **mediator**. In order for the dialog to take place, the wrongdoer must admit responsibility for the offense. Then each party will

talk separately with the mediator. These separate sessions may occur a number of times. Letters between the victim and the offender may be exchanged at some stage. Finally, the process results in a **face-to-face meeting**, in which the victim can express the **impact of the crime** on his or her life; it obliges the offender to understand that the crime has harmed another person, not the state. It also allows the person harmed to learn details of the crime that only the defendant will know.

This meeting can happen at any time. It is not unusual, for example, for meetings to take place **years after the event**, when the perpetrator has been sentenced and is in jail. That person remains the only one who can answer questions about the last moments in a loved one's life or the reasons behind his or her actions.

I found out about Restorative Justice through a grief group meeting and found it an excellent idea. However, this was shortly after the murders and I wanted the killer to fry. The killer died before going to trial, and there was no trial for his wife (who was indicted as an accessory after the fact), after Hurricane Katrina destroyed evidence. I then turned to Restorative Justice using a local group, Turning Point Partners.

It's important to know what your **expectations** are, and to share these with your mediator. Be aware that you might not hear what you want to hear, which might distress you more. For example, an offender

may admit harming someone's loved one, but not express regret. You have to decide if you can deal with that.

Next, my mediator asked me to write out a list of **questions** that she would ask the offender (in my case, the wife) on my behalf. This offers a way to communicate with the offender directly about what happened, rather than get information that would filter out from a trial.

I did wonder **how truthful** the offender would be, but I think the chances are greater to have more honesty, since in my case there was no court punishment to worry about. Also, an experienced mediator is trained to get greater openness from the offender.

It may be possible to get some **financial restitution**, where the offender helps pay back for losses. But beware of making this your only expectation. Sometimes a heartfelt apology can be a way of making amends.

I found this to be tougher and more emotional work than I imagined. However, despite my resistance to it, there was information I'm convinced I would never have received otherwise. I was able to get **more in-depth information** about the killer's mindset and problems, things that I had just been guessing at before going through this process.

Going through the justice system often left me feeling frustrated. Restorative Justice changed this, since I

chose the questions and could respond to the answers. Some of my friends thought I was crazy to talk to this woman, but others understood my interest. But the bottom line is that I did this for myself. In some way it was a movement toward bringing forgiveness into view, though I still have a long way to go.

Restorative Justice is not for everyone, but it can be invaluable in some situations, such as those in which the court system is unable to proceed in your case. You should not feel it reflects badly on you if this is not something that interests you.

FURTHER EMOTIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Adjusting to a “New Normal”

After a violent crime, nothing is the same. As I was told, our “normal” world is gone. We are now in the “**new normal**,” and it will take time to adjust to it. It’s a rollercoaster, and you will have good days and bad. You only need to face one day at a time.

There are four stages you will be trying to achieve in dealing with your grief:

- 1) **Accept the reality of the loss** so you can work through the grief.
- 2) **Experience the pain of grief**, which is reacting to the separation from your loved one.
- 3) **Adjust to the environment** from which your loved one is missing.
- 4) **Reinvest energy** in other possibilities, such as helping others dealing with grief.

You may still feel **isolated from family and friends** and as if no one understands, because while your world feels shattered, they are going about their business. Remind them that you need someone who will listen and care.

Telling your story helps with healing, because you begin to accept the reality and allow your emotions to move through and go deeper. This is why it helps so much to attend grief groups, or to have therapy to process your feelings.

Some people will continue to **say insensitive things**, believing they are being helpful (such as, “Your loved one will want you to move on.”). A good response is, “I have to do this my way.” Try not to take your frustration and anguish out on this person. Depending on how well you know him or her, you can simply thank them and move on. A few times, when people said things like: “Your loved one is in a better place,” I responded with: “I just find that point of view difficult to accept and I don’t have the strength to argue it with you. But I want you to know I appreciate your desire to comfort me.” After that they left me alone.

It’s possible to get addicted to the pain of the loss, and not feel like living your life. You **may find yourself isolating**, almost hiding from life. You can get to a stage where you don’t get out of bed, or miss a lot of work, or never want to leave the house. After a period of time like this, I had to surrender to the fact that I had lost my loved one, and find ways to bring meaning back into my life. This is an ongoing challenge, but time does help us heal.

Remember that **unresolved anger** will dictate the quality of happiness in your life, because **intimacy and anger cannot coexist**. The danger lies in either getting very obsessed, or squashing our feelings. Some people may believe that if the killer is jailed, they will start living again and feel better. However, there can be many delays in a trial, and even after it is over, it may feel like a letdown.

You **can't go around grief**; you have to go through it. Again, grief will wait until you are ready to walk through it in all its forms, with the pain, resentment, or hurt, and with your head as well as your heart. In general, the first year is spent feeling numb, and in the second year, the reality starts to set in.

Sometimes you may **feel you are going crazy**, but chances are you are not. Keep this in mind: You are dealing with an abnormal situation that is crazy-making. It's best to be as gentle with yourself as you can, and please get help if you are worried about your mental health.

Some people talk about "**closure**," but I don't think we can ever close the door on such a loss. Another way to look at it is that you reach **milestones** in recovery that you learn to **adjust** to. For example, getting through the legal process is one such milestone. I think there's also a point at which we move from being a "victim" to being a "**survivor**."

At some point in dealing with your grief, you may reach a point of **acceptance**. This doesn't mean what happened is "acceptable;" it does mean that you recognize it is a reality in your life.

A Few More Helpful Tools

I found it helpful to **read books** on sorrow and mourning. I went to a large bookstore and took time to read over some books, and a few "spoke" to me about my predicament. Friends also sent various

things; some were good, but I just didn't connect with others. There are some grief workbooks that can be of help.

You or a knowledgeable friend can make a **website** dedicated to your loved one.

Other friends made a **memorial garden** in honor of their son—a place to have quiet meditation where they could “talk” to him and remember him.

On special occasions, a family would **write messages on balloons** to their loved one, then release them into the sky.

Another helpful activity is to **volunteer**. Doing something to assist others has helped take my focus off my pain. Do something you enjoy, for example: community gardening, hospital visits, walking dogs at the pound, or being a Court Watch volunteer.

One of the most helpful tools I was given was a writing exercise called a **letter of completion**: a letter from you to your loved one. In it, you can **say all the things you wish you had said** while they were still alive. (Of course you can reflect on these things rather than writing them out, if you prefer.) Here are some ideas to get you started:

Dear _____,

There are some things I need to tell you.

Some memories of our history together are:

The things I admired about you are:

What I want you to know is:

I want you to forgive me for:

I forgive you for:

You enriched my life by:

I love you. I miss you. Good-bye.

RIGHTS OF VICTIMS

The Justice for All Act of 2004 provides crime victims with the following rights in **Federal Courts**:

- The right to be reasonably protected from the accused
- The right to reasonable, accurate, and timely notice of any public court proceeding or any parole proceeding involving the crime, or of any release or escape of the accused
- The right not to be excluded from any such public court proceeding, unless the court, after receiving clear and convincing evidence, determines that testimony by the victim would be materially altered if the victim heard other testimony at that proceeding
- The right to be reasonably heard at any public proceeding in the district court involving release, plea, sentencing, or any parole proceeding
- The reasonable right to confer with the attorney for the government in the case, e.g. the right to know why the case did not proceed
- The right to full and timely restitution as provided in the law
- The right to proceedings free from unreasonable delay
- The right to be treated with fairness and with respect for the victim's dignity and privacy.

LOUISIANA VICTIMS BILL OF RIGHTS

You must file a **Victim Notice and Registration Form** with the NOPD, Clerk of Court, or D.A.'s office to activate the following rights:

- The right to reasonable notice and to be present and heard during all critical stages of pre-conviction and post-conviction proceedings
- The right to be informed upon the release from custody, or the escape of the accused or the offender
- The right to confer with the prosecution prior to the final disposition of the case
- The right to refuse to be interviewed by the accused or a representative of the accused
- The right to review and comment upon the pre-sentence report prior to imposition of sentencing
- The right to make a victim impact statement
- The right to seek restitution
- The right to a reasonably prompt conclusion to the case.

As a **witness**, you have many of the same rights as the victim (e.g., being provided a secure waiting area during court proceedings, which does not require close contact with the defendant and their family or friends).

GLOSSARY OF LEGAL TERMS

Acquittal - A “not guilty” verdict, where a judge or jury decides the prosecution has not proven a criminal defendant’s guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

Aggravating factors - Facts about the defendant or the crime that are used by the court when determining the prison sentence. These facts may contribute to a longer prison sentence. (see Mitigating Factors)

Appeal - The process in which a trial court’s decision or verdict is reviewed by an appellate court.

Arraignment - The initial court proceeding, during which the accused person is formally told of the charges against him or her, and he or she makes a formal plea (guilty or not guilty).

Bail - A money guarantee that the accused will appear in court at an appointed time, allowing them to be released from custody. Usually bail is denied if the case involves a capital crime.

Ballistics - The science of analyzing firearms and ammunition.

Brief - A written legal document used by the defense lawyer or prosecutor to provide essential facts to the court. It may also state questions of law, as a way for the lawyers to ask for the court’s ruling on specific points.

Calendar - A list of cases to be heard by the court on particular days.

Capital crime - A crime where there has been loss of life, which is punishable by death.

Circumstantial evidence - Evidence that is not certain.

Complaint - A written accusation filed by the prosecutor that accuses one or more persons of committing one or more crimes.

Continuance - A delay of a court hearing or trial.

Conviction - A guilty judgment, which will be based on a verdict of a jury or judge. It may also result from a defendant who pleads guilty or *nolo contendere* (no contest).

Coroner - A parish officer who is charged with investigating certain classes of death. The coroner decides whether to do a full or limited investigation. All deaths must be reported to the coroner.

Decedent - The person who has died.

Defendant - The person(s) charged with the crime.

Defense attorney - The attorney representing the defendant. This might be a private attorney, a court-appointed attorney, or a public defender.

Discovery - Before a case goes to trial, this process is an exchange of evidence between the prosecutor and defense attorney. This might include witness statements, police reports, or scientific examinations. Discovery permits attorneys to prepare their cases and helps ensure a fair trial.

Dismissal - A decision by a judge to stop prosecuting a case, without making a decision as to the guilt or innocence of the defendant.

Evidence - Testimony, documents, and material objects that can prove or disprove anything that is related to the case.

Expert witness - A person with training, education, and experience on a particular subject. Such a person can give opinions in court on the areas of their expertise.

Felony - Offenses punishable by death or a state prison sentence, and with fines also possible. (The greater the crime, the greater the punishment.) Probation, with or without jail time, is also possible. This offense will become part of a person's permanent record.

Grand jury - A group of 12 citizens who serve for one year, and meet once a week. They consider whether indictments should be returned in felony cases. Grand jury proceedings are not open to the public. Witnesses who appear before them have to take an oath of secrecy before testifying.

Habeas corpus - A written order that challenges the right of the state to continue the detention or imprisonment of an accused person.

Habeas corpus petition - A convicted defendant can file such a petition to challenge the effectiveness of their attorney.

Hearsay - A statement based on information heard from someone else. Hearsay is usually not admissible at trial.

Hung jury - The result when a jury cannot unanimously agree on a verdict of guilty or not guilty. The case may or may not be retried, at the discretion of the prosecutor.

Indictment - A written accusation returned by a grand jury, which is filed in criminal district court, called a Bill of Indictment.

Investigators - Private investigators working for either the defense or prosecutor (at the D.A.'s office).

Misdemeanor - An offense punishable by imprisonment up to one year, a fine, or both. This offense may or may not show up on a person's record.

Mistrial - A trial that ends without a verdict. This might be because of a legal error in the proceeding, or because the jury cannot agree on a verdict.

Mitigating factors - Information that a judge may consider in reducing the punishment for a crime.

Motion - A formal request by either the prosecution or defense for a judge to hear and decide a dispute over an issue of law.

Nolo contendere - A plea in which the accused does not admit guilt but does not contest the charge. It has the same legal consequences as pleading guilty.

Parole - The release of an inmate from prison, although that person is still considered to be in legal custody of the state.

Parole agreement - The inmate agrees to accept all terms and conditions of parole. An inmate will not be released until signing the agreement.

Parole officer - A person who supervises parolees to see that they fulfill the conditions of parole.

Parole panel - A group authorized to act in parole matters.

Perjury - Lying and so giving false testimony while under oath. This results in punishment under law.

Plaintiff - The person who was the victim of a crime. In capital cases, the state is also represented as a plaintiff, and the D.A. will assign an attorney to represent the state.

Plea bargain - An agreement reached between the plaintiff and defendant and their attorneys. Both parties agree to a specific punishment on condition that the defendant enter a guilty plea. The case will then not go to trial. The judge may reject the agreed-upon punishment.

Preliminary hearing - After the arraignment, the defendant will have a preliminary hearing (or “prelim”). Evidence will be presented to the judge, who decides if there is enough to determine a crime has been committed by the defendant. If there has been a grand jury indictment, a preliminary hearing is not required.

Probable cause - Facts that lead one to reasonably believe that the accused committed the crime.

Probation - The granting of freedom to a defendant who has been convicted in court or has admitted guilt. Such freedom may have certain restrictions set by the court for a particular amount of time.

Prosecutor - A public official from the D.A.’s office, usually an A.D.A. (Assistant District Attorney), who conducts criminal prosecutions in court on behalf of the state (or “the people”). There are no financial costs the plaintiff has to pay for the services of the prosecutor.

Revocation - The canceling of parole or probation.

Subpoena - A legal document that requires someone to provide testimony in court.

Testimony - Spoken evidence presented at trial.

Venue - The parish in which a jury is selected and a case is tried. The term “change of venue” may mean the trial is moved away from the parish where the crime was committed, when it is argued that a jury is likely to be prejudiced.

Verdict - The final decision of the jury or judge.

Voir dire - The process by which people who have been called up for jury duty are examined by the prosecutor and the defendant’s lawyer, in order to see if they are suitable to be on the jury.

RESOURCES

CONTACTS FOR THE JUSTICE SYSTEM:

Central Lockup

(504) 827-6777

www.cityofno.com

Civil District Court

421 Loyola Ave., New Orleans

(504) 592-9100

www.orleanscdc.com

Criminal District Court

2700 Tulane Ave., New Orleans

(504) 658-9100

www.criminalcourt.org

Criminal Sheriff's Office

819 S. Broad St., New Orleans

(504) 822-8000

3630 MacArthur Blvd, Ste E, Westbank

(504) 826-7045

www.opcso.org

Crime Victims Reparations

(Criminal Sheriff's office; LCLE)

(504) 827-6754

www.lcle.la.gov/programs/cvr.asp

Call to set up an appointment.

Crime Victims Reparations

(888) 6-VICTIM

www.cole.state.la.us

District Attorney's Office

1340 Poydras St., Ste 700, New Orleans

(504) 822-2414

www.orleansda.org

LA Department of Corrections

www.doc.louisiana.gov

LAVNS (Victim Notification System)

(866) 528-6748

www.lavns.org

Municipal Court

727 S. Broad St., Ste 105, New Orleans

(504) 658-9700

www.cityofno.com

New Orleans Family Justice Center

830 Julia St., New Orleans

<http://neworleansfamilyjusticecenter.org>

(504) 592-4005 or (888) 411-1333

Crisis Line (24 hours): (504) 866-9554

Domestic Violence

New Orleans Police Department

(504) 821-2222

www.cityofno.com/portal.aspx?portal=50

NOPD Domestic Violence Unit

(504) 658-6780

Victim Witness Assistance (D.A., Jefferson Parish)
(504) 368-1020

Victim Witness Assistance (D.A., Orleans Parish)
2601 Tulane Ave., 3rd floor, New Orleans
(504) 309-8035

Victim Witness Assistance (NOPD)
715 S. Broad St., Ste. 302, New Orleans
(504) 658-6795

**Victim Witness Assistance
(U.S. Attorney's Office)**
500 Poydras St., Ste. 210B, New Orleans
(504) 680-3003 or (504) 680-3111

LEGAL AID CLINICS:

Common Ground Legal Clinic
1800 Deslonde Ave., New Orleans
(504) 717-7324
www.commongroundrelief.org

Family Mediation Council of LA
5421 St. Charles Ave., Ste. 5A, New Orleans
(504) 866-3666
www.familymediationcouncil.com

Loyola Law Clinic
526 Pine St., Ste. 120, New Orleans
(504) 861-5590
<http://law.loyno.edu/clinic>

Metropolitan Crime Commission, Inc.
1615 Poydras St., Ste. 1060, New Orleans
(504) 524-3148
www.metropolitancrimecommission.org

New Orleans Legal Assistance
1010 Common St., New Orleans
(504) 592-1000
www.nolac.org

Pastor Camelia Joseph
Kingdom Work Ministries
The Joseph Group
(626) 354-0436
pastorcamelia@aol.com
Mediator/Arbitrator

Tulane Law School Clinic
6329 Freret St., Ste. 130, New Orleans
(504) 865-5153
www.law.tulane.edu

Turning Point Partners
7715 Birch St., New Orleans
(504) 866-3046
www.turningpointpartners.com
Mediation; Restorative Justice

Victim Allies Project
520 Port St., New Orleans
(504) 390-8245
victimallies@gmail.com
Volunteers help families through legal system

ANTI-CRIME ORGANIZATIONS:

Moment of Silence

(908) 328-7956 - Charles Anderson

Every Tuesday at 6:00 pm at various locations.

Call if you wish to have your loved one eulogized.

www.peaceispossibleneworleans.com

Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD)

(800) 992-6233

www.madd.org

Murder Victims' Families for Reconciliation

(877) 896-4702

www.mvfr.org

NOLA Crime Alerts Network

www.nolacrimealerts.com

Parents Of Murdered Children

(888) 818-7662

www.pomc.com

Silence Is Violence

2700 Chartres St, New Orleans

(504) 948-0917

www.silenceisviolence.org

Tunnel of Hope

(504) 430-3154

dschneider@tofhope.com

Victims and Citizens Against Crime

3814 Veterans Blvd, Ste 206, Metairie

(504) 454-8013 - Beverly Siemssen

www.victims-and-citizens-against-crime.org

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES:

24-Hour Domestic Violence Crisis Line

(504) 866-9554

Baton Rouge Crisis Intervention Center

4837 Revere Ave., Baton Rouge

(225) 924-1431

www.brcic.org

*Deals with suicide survivors and bereavement issues
for children; Free*

Catholic Charities Counseling Solutions

921 Aris Ave., Ste. A, Metairie

(504) 835-5007

www.ccano.org

First visit is \$60; sliding scale, minimum \$20

Celebration Hope Center

2701 Transcontinental Dr, Metairie

(504) 833-4673

www.celebrationhopecenter.org

Sliding scale, minimum \$5

Central City Behavioral Health Clinic

2221 Philip St., New Orleans

(504) 568-6650

Insurance, Medicare, Medicaid, free for low-income

Chartres-Pontchartrain Mental Health Clinic

719 Elysian Fields Blvd, New Orleans

(504) 942-8101

Other branches:

Central City: 2221 Philip St, New Orleans

Plaquemines: 3708 Main St, Belle Chase

www.mhsdla.org

Sliding scale; Medicaid; Medicare

Children's Bureau of Greater New Orleans

1400 Lafayette St., New Orleans

(504) 525-2366

www.childrens-bureau.com

Free

Cope Line

(800) 749-2673 or 211

www.vialink.org

24 hours

Crescent House

(504) 866-9554 (*24 hours*)

Victims of Domestic Violence; Free; 24 hours

Jean Cunningham

(504) 450-9600

Insurance; Sliding scale

East Jefferson General Hospital

Counseling Center

4228 Houma Blvd, Ste. 320, Metairie

(504) 456-5106

www.ejgh.org

Insurance, Medicare

Elderly Protective Services

320 Hammond Way, Ste. 300, Metairie

(504) 832-0684 or (504) 832-1644

www.voagno.org

Free

Family Services of Greater New Orleans

2515 Canal St., Ste. 201, New Orleans

(504) 822-0800

Other branches:

E. Jefferson: (504) 733-4031

St. Bernard: (504) 271-3781

West Bank: (504) 361-0926

www.fsgno.org

Free, individual and group, workshops

Greenpath

3308 Tulane Ave., Ste. 405, New Orleans

(504) 827-2928

www.gpadddiction.org

Sliding scale; Medicaid

Hispanic Services Common Ground

Latino Project

1400 Teche St., Algiers

(504) 377-7281

Free

Holy Cross Counseling

4123 Woodland Dr., Westbank

(504) 398-2168

www.olhcc.edu

Sliding scale, minimum \$15

Jefferson Parish Mobile Crisis Services

(504) 832-5123

24 hours

Jefferson Parish Access Unit

4700 Wichers Dr., Ste. 300, Marrero

(504) 349-8833

www.jphsa.org/news-families.html

Sliding scale

Metropolitan Center for Women and Children

(504) 837-5400

www.metrobatteredwomen.com

24 hours

**National Suicide Prevention Crisis Counseling
Hotline & Spirit of Louisiana**

(800) 273-8255

www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

www.dhh.state.la.us/offices/?ID=231

Free counseling and referral

Open World Family Services

7050 Read Blvd, New Orleans

(504) 274-9780

www.geocities.com/openworldsite

Referrals

Project S.A.V.E.

(504) 827-6777

www.ccano.org/domestic_violence.htm

Trinity Counseling Center

2108 Coliseum Street, New Orleans

(504) 522-7557

www.trinitynola.com/Page.aspx?pid=275

Sliding fee scale, \$0 and up

Veterans Affairs Medical Center

1601 Perdido St., New Orleans

(800) 935-8387 or (504) 568-0811

www.vba.va.gov/ro/new-orleans

Free; for veterans only

West Jefferson Behavioral Medicine Center

229 Bellemeade Blvd, Gretna

(504) 391-2440

www.wjmc.org

Insurance, private pay; grant to help if no insurance

West Jefferson Behavioral Medicine Center

(504) 391-2440 - Doreen Fowler

www.wjmc.org

6-week grief counseling program for individuals and families, and a grief journaling group.

Call for details.

MEDICAL HEALTH CLINICS:

Common Ground Health Clinic

1400 Teche St., Algiers

(504) 361-9800

www.commongroundclinic.org

Free; Walk-in only

Daughters of Charity

111 N. Causeway Blvd, Metairie
(504) 482-0084

Other branches:

4201 N. Rampart St., New Orleans
(504) 941-6041

3201 S. Carrollton St., New Orleans
(504) 207-3060

www.dcsno.org

Sliding scale; \$25 minimum

Lower 9th Ward Health Clinic

5228 St. Claude Ave., New Orleans
(504) 309-0918

www.l9whc.org

Medicare, Medicaid, \$25 co-pay

Odyssey House Health Clinic

1125 N. Tonti St., New Orleans
(504) 821-9211

www.ohlinc.org

Free. Walk-ins ok

Tulane University Adolescent Drop-in Clinic

611 N. Rampart St. (front entrance), New Orleans
(504) 584-1112

www.tulane.edu/~dropin

Up to age 24 only; Sliding scale, but no one turned away; Appointments preferred but walk-ins ok

GRIEF GROUPS:

Bereavement Support Group

2800 Veterans Hwy, Ste. 180, Metairie
(504) 830-7600 - Mona Johnson
First and third Wednesdays, 6:00 pm

Bridge to Naim (loss of spouse/partner)

St. Angela Merici, in Meeting Room
901 Beverly Garden Dr., Metairie
(504) 861-6243
Second Tuesday of each month, 10:30 am–noon

Compassionate Friends (loss of a child)

East Jefferson Hospital
4200 Houma Blvd, Metairie
First floor, Esplanade 2
Parking in Hudson St. garage
(504) 265-0581 - Denise Pezant
denisepezant1@cox.net
Second Monday of month, 7.00–9.00 pm
Group for siblings (13 and older) held at same time

Drum Circle Groups

Various locations
(504) 232-4496
www.stannanola.org
St. Anna's conducts these groups as a way of lessening stress.

Grief Group

St. Clement of Rome

(504) 889-6681 (Call Carol Weaver for address.)

First Tuesday of the month, 6:00–8:00 pm, share experiences. Third Tuesday of month, 7:00–8:30 pm, selected topic.

Grief Group

West Jefferson Behavior Medical Center

229 Bellemeade Blvd, Gretna

(504) 341-9368 - Toni Wattigny

Every Tuesday, 6:00–7:30 pm

Grief Support Group

East Jefferson General Hospital

Yenni Bldg, corner of Ithaca and Hudson, Metairie

Second-floor conference room

(504) 456-5000 to register

(504) 454-4997 for additional info - Brenda

Every Wednesday, 6:30–8:00 pm

Grief Support Group

Ochsner Medical Center and St. Catherine Hospice

Brent Room, Second floor

1514 Jefferson Hwy, Metairie

(504) 842-3286

Third Thursday of the month, 6:00–7:00 pm

Grief Support Group

Ochsner Medical Center, Westbank

River Room

2500 Belle Chase Hwy, Gretna

(504) 391-8819 - Chaplain Les Vincent

Fourth Thursday of the month, 6:00–7:00 pm

Heal Thyself

East Jefferson General Hospital
4228 Houma Blvd, Ste. 320, Metairie
(504) 456-5106 - Brenda
*10-week stress reduction program. \$250.
Call for more information.*

Mothers Hurting Because of Violence

New Hope Baptist Church
1807 La Salle St, New Orleans
(504) 875-7272 - Desiree Watson Jones
*Every Thursday, 6:00–7:00 pm
Individual counseling on Fridays (call first)*

Seasons Grief and Loss (children and adults)

654 Brockenbraugh Court, Metairie
(504) 834-5957
www.seasonsriefcenter.org
*Must attend one counseling session, then be placed in
relevant grief group.*

Victims of Violence Healing Circles

St. Anna's Church
1313 Esplanade Ave., New Orleans
(504) 232-4496
*Every Monday, 4:30–5:30 pm
Call to enroll, and to find out about various other
locations/dates opening.*

INTERNET RESOURCES

The following internet sites are excellent for articles, books, and showing memorials.

Center for Loss and Life Transition
www.centerforloss.com

Counseling for Loss and Life Changes
www.counselingforloss.com

GriefNET
www.griefnet.org

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I deeply appreciate the many people who have read and provided feedback on and resources for this guidebook. Their valuable input, based on their own personal and professional experience, has helped make this guidebook a reality.

A special thank you goes to:

Parents Of Murdered Children, San Diego chapter:
Mike & Penny Moreau

Grief Group at West Jefferson Hospital: Doreen K.
Fowler, LCSW

District Attorney's Office: Leon Cannizzaro,
Graymond Martin, Andree Mattix, and Val Solino

New Orleans Police Department: Lt. Fred Austin,
Chief Ray Burkhart, Chief Marlon Defillo,
Det. Latina Thomas

Criminal Sheriff's Office: Captain Mechelle
Delahoussaye, Sheriff Marlin Gusman

U.S. Attorney's Office: Shane Jones

Trapolin Law Firm: Miles G. Trapolin

Turning Point Partners: Lou Furman, Jean Handley

Silence Is Violence: Baty Landis

Citizens for 1 Greater New Orleans, Criminal Justice
Reform Committee

Editor: Beth Hester

This guidebook was made possible with grants from

**THE JOE W. AND DOROTHY DORSETT
BROWN FOUNDATION**
New Orleans, Louisiana

- and -

This project was supported by Grant No. 2005-VF-GX-K032 awarded by the Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice (Grant). Points of view in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice or the Maryland Crime Victims' Resource Center, Inc.

and sponsored by

VICTIM ALLIES PROJECT
New Orleans, Louisiana

Notes

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