

VICTIM-WITNESS ADVOCATE

DEFINITION:

Under general supervision, provides a variety of services to victims and witnesses participating in the Probation Department's Victim-Witness Assistance Program; and performs related work as required.

DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS:

The Victim-Witness Advocate classification is used in the Fresno County Probation Department. The Probation Department is a State-mandated rehabilitative agency responsible for the supervision of adult and juvenile offenders. Organizationally, the Department is composed of four major divisions: Adult Probation Services, Juvenile Probation Services, Special Probation Services, and Juvenile Institutions. The Victim-Witness Advocate classification is utilized in the Special Probation Services division.

Within this framework, the Victim-Witness Advocate, reporting to a Probation Services Manager, is primarily responsible for assisting victims of crimes by providing the mandated services of the Victim-Witness Assistance Program. These services, which are also provided to victim family members and witnesses of crimes, include advising participants of program services and outreach activities; referring program participants to professional care providers; explaining the process of the criminal justice system; accompanying victims, family members, and witnesses to court and related hearings; and assisting participants with claim applications.

Incumbents must possess the following: strong organizational, problem solving and interpersonal skills; ability to identify and be responsive to needs of victims of crimes and relate well to them; ability to understand, interpret, and apply laws, rules, and regulations related to a victim-witness program; ability to demonstrate sensitivity to and establish rapport with the cultural/ethnic diversity of the service population which includes persons of differing racial, social, and economic backgrounds; ability to demonstrate sensitivity to the needs of special service populations, e.g. the differently-abled, young children, elderly, etc.; and ability to exhibit emotional stability under conditions of high stress, limited supervision, and rapidly changing situations and circumstances. In addition, incumbents should be able to effectively interview program participants to obtain and record factual information, communicate effectively both orally and in writing, coordinate the work of program volunteers, and maintain confidentiality.

SAMPLES OF DUTIES:

The information listed below is meant to serve as samples of the job duties and responsibilities for positions in this classification. This list is neither inclusive nor exclusive, but indicative of several types of duties performed. Consequently, this information does not reflect Essential Functions for any given position in this classification.

1. Interviews victims and witnesses of all types of crimes to obtain factual information needed to determine eligibility for participation in the Victim-Witness Assistance Program.
2. Advises program participants of available services and assists them in obtaining appropriate services.

VICTIM-WITNESS ADVOCATE (Cont'd)

SAMPLES OF DUTIES: (Cont'd)

3. Refers participants to professional psychological, health, medical, and social services care providers.
4. Interprets and explains program laws, rules, and regulations and orients participants to the criminal justice system.
5. May accompany victims and witnesses to court and related hearings.
6. Assists participants with claim applications.
7. Transports or arranges transportation for victims and witnesses.
8. Conducts program educational presentations to law enforcement, schools, community agencies, and other criminal justice system agencies.
9. Translates as required to meet program participant needs. Translating may be in oral or written form.
10. Compiles statistical data for use in preparing reports and surveys.
11. May act as liaison between Department and law enforcement, courts and community agencies.
12. Prepares correspondence, memoranda, and reports.

MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS:

Education: Sixty (60) semester units of academic work from an accredited college or university which is acceptable within the United States' accredited college or university system which included fifteen (15) semester units from one or more of the following disciplines: Psychology, Sociology, Social Welfare, Criminology, or a closely related field.

OR

Experience: Full-time, paid work experience in criminal justice, victim services, peer counseling, or other services which is comparable to experience gained as a Victim-Witness Advocate with Fresno County may be substituted for the above course work on a year-for-year basis.

License: Possession of a valid Class "C" California Driver's License may be required.

Other: Incumbents of positions in this classification must complete the required minimum hours of entry level training provided by the Department within the first twelve (12) months of appointment.