

A Safer Naper --- Crime Victims' Rights and Resources

When you or someone you love is the victim of a crime, you may experience a wide array of intense and ever-changing emotions. You may be shocked, in disbelief or angry with the perpetrator. You may be terrified; terrified of sharing this information with other people and terrified that something like this could happen again. You may not feel safe. You may feel as if the challenges of navigating life after victimization are insurmountable and you will never heal. You may feel completely numb and devoid of emotions. If the perpetrator was someone you knew, you may be confused as to how you can have such anger or confusion towards this person's actions but still also have feelings of love and support for this person.

It is important to keep in mind that;

1. Your feelings are normal. There is no "right" or "wrong" way to respond to a traumatic event. Each person will process these events in their own way, at their own pace. Your feelings are valid and they deserve to be respected.
2. Healing is not always linear and there is no "playbook" showing what actions you should or shouldn't take as you move toward healing and empowerment following a victimization.
3. There are resources available and people that can and want to help. There are numerous local, county, state and federal programs and supports for crime victims. Processing a trauma is challenging and doing so alone can make it even more difficult and overwhelming.
4. You have rights as a victim of crime. These rights may change depending on a myriad of factors, such as what type of victimization you experienced or when you were victimized, but it's important to know that you have rights.

[INSERT: Dear Survivor Video]

This month, we will focus on resources available to assist specific victim types – victims of elder abuse, victims of domestic violence, and victims who are hesitant to report a crime because of a perpetrator's mental health or substance use issues.

Help for Victims of Elder Abuse

Did you know that approximately 1 in 10 senior citizens over the age of 60 have experienced some form of elder abuse? This abuse can include physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, financial exploitation, neglect or confinement.

It can be difficult to identify this abuse due to variety of reasons; oftentimes, the perpetrator is somebody that the older adult is related to or reliant on for care, which can make them reluctant to come forward. Older adults may be isolated or struggle with a mental impairment such as Alzheimer's or Dementia, which may make it even more difficult for them to disclose and be believed.

Elders may also struggle to care for themselves but may be hesitant to reveal the challenges they are experiencing out of fear of losing their independence. Self-neglect can include poor personal hygiene, not taking medications as prescribed, lack of adequate nutrition resulting in dehydration and malnutrition, unkept living quarters that may be unsafe for human occupancy and poor money management results in unpaid bills, utility shut-offs, etc.

With our elderly population growing, it's important to be aware of resources that exist to keep our elders safe.

Adult Protective Services (APS) is a valuable community resource that investigates claims of abuse or self-neglect for individuals over the age of 60 OR for adults aged 18-59 who have a disability. Anyone can make a report to APS if they have concerns regarding the welfare or safety of an eligible person although basic information such as the individual's name and address is required to complete a report. APS acknowledges that you may be hesitant to call and share your concerns and to alleviate these apprehensions, there is an option to make a report without the APS worker sharing your information with the older person. All Adult Protective Services caseworkers are trained and certified by the Department. The APS caseworker will make contact with the senior, conduct an investigation, and assess the situation to offer supportive services. Other agencies such as police may become involved as necessary.

To report suspected abuse, exploitation or neglect of an older person or a person with a disability, call the statewide, 24-hour Adult Protective Services Hotline: 1-866-800-1409, 1-888-206-1327 (TTY).

Help for Victims of Domestic Violence

Violence at home touches everyone within the home, regardless of age, and can be expressed in a variety of ways and may look and feel differently at different points. Domestic violence is not always physical, but it is always about power and control. Examples of how a person gains power and control are represented below.



Domestic violence is rarely present at the initial stages of a relationship but rather develops over time. This is generally one of the reasons leaving a violent relationship can be so difficult; memories of happier times and faith and hope that the abuser can change are common. Similarly, a perpetrator’s tendencies toward abusive behavior emerge slowly and may not initially be perceived as abusive. For example, beginning stages may be characterized by attempts to control and isolate the victim’s social life but it’s done in such a way that the victim may feel flattered (“Why don’t you just cancel those plans with your friends tonight and hang out with me instead? I just love spending time with you, you make me so happy and I hate being without you”). Over time, compliments and flattery may fade and the abuser may make seemingly minor comments that hurt a victim’s self-esteem (You really should do your hair once in a while, you look like a mess with it tied up like that). This abuse escalates over time may or may not turn physical.

The Naperville Police Department provides a wide variety of resources for victims of domestic violence, including help obtaining protective orders, instructions for safety planning and tips on how to help a friend or family member who is being abused.

[Go to our Domestic Violence Resources webpage](#)

Help for Victims of Perpetrators with Mental Health or Substance Use Issues

Often times, NPD’s Social Services Unit connects with victims that express their hesitations to request any police assistance because the perpetrator may have mental health issues or substance use concerns.

They are reluctant to call 911 because they don't believe their loved one belongs in jail or do not want any criminal charges against them.

We are a community fortunate to have the option to refer offenders into wellness court programs such as MICAP court, Veteran Court, and Drug Court for both DuPage and Will County residents.

Veterans Court and MICAP Court is intended for adult offenders whose treatment needs contributed to the commission of a crime. The concept is to provide voluntary treatment in lieu of punishment. Duration of the program is 12-24 months, and is determined by the nature of the offense, treatment needs and compliance. After successful completion of the program, the criminal charges may be reduced or dismissed.

For both Veteran and MICAP Court, participants must comply with the individualized treatment plan which is developed based upon clinical symptoms, criminal risk factors, as well as the strengths and goals of the participant. Participants may be asked to meet with a psychiatrist and be medication compliant, attend regular meetings with a mental health clinician and probation officer, be present for court appearances. If needed, this treatment plan may include interventions for co-occurring substance use disorders or other disorder specific treatment, anger management, employee assistance coaching, and assistance with benefits application.

Drug court is intended to assist adult offenders by implementing a structured, individualized treatment plan to work towards a drug free lifestyle. Drug court provides a structured program with various levels of substance use treatment as deemed appropriate, psychiatric support, counseling, judicial monitoring, submission to ongoing urine screenings, and participants must be present for court appearances. Drug Courts have proven to reduce the rate of recidivism by retaining offenders in treatment longer than most other correctional programs.

If you, or someone you know would like to learn more about entering any of these programs, please visit your corresponding county courthouse website.