

# What to Expect when Reporting a Crime to the Tallahassee Police Department.

If the Incident being reported is an emergency, please call 911 immediately.

If the incident is not an emergency, please call the Consolidated Dispatch agency

at 850-606-5800

## Patrol Officer Response

- The Dispatcher will ask questions to get basic information from the reporting person (Victim, Witness, other)-
  - o The dispatcher will ask for your name, phone number, location, timeframe of incident, injuries, weapons, suspect clothing description and any other relevant information which may be needed at the time.
  - o Officer(s) may be dispatched to your location or the location where the incident occurred, depending on the situation.
- The Dispatcher may ask you to confirm the information provided.
- Upon arrival, officers will take the following actions as needed; the order may vary based on the situation:
  - o Officers typically use body-worn cameras to record encounters, but during a sexual assault investigation, you have the option to request the recording be paused to protect your privacy.
  - o Officer(s) will ensure the incident scene is safe by separating involved parties and ensuring there is no ongoing danger.
  - o Officer(s) will check to see if anyone has injuries or needs medical treatment.
  - o Officer(s) will want to identify everyone involved and will ask for identification (Driver's License, ID Card, etc.) This is needed to verify who was on the scene, who was involved in the incident and is critical for follow-up investigations. Verification of identities is critical to a criminal case.
  - o Officer(s) will ask specific questions relating to the incident and take notes-
    - May include: Who was involved (description of suspect(s), number of suspect(s), direction of travel), what happened, when the incident occurred, location where the incident occurred, etc.
  - o Officer(s) will attempt to find and collect evidence (if applicable)-
    - May include: Photographs, fingerprints, locate any video footage of incident and collect written statements from the involved parties (victim, suspect, witnesses).
  - o If a suspect is located, the victim or witnesses may be asked to identify them-
    - The victim or witness would be asked to identify the suspect in a discreet manner, so the suspect cannot see the person identifying them.
    - The victim or witness may be asked to pick out a suspect from a picture line up later, but this would normally be done by the Investigations Division.
  - o Victims and witnesses will be offered additional resources-
    - Medical Treatment
    - Victim Advocate
    - Victims' Rights Brochure
- The Officer(s) working on the case will write a report containing all the information gathered during their investigation.
- You will be provided with a case number and a copy of the Victims Rights Brochure.

- Copies of the report will not be available on scene. One can be requested from our Records Division in person, via phone, or online. For further assistance with obtaining a police report contact Records at (850)891-4221.
- A written statement may be requested, except cases involving sexual assault victims.
- You will also be asked if you want to prosecute (press charges). Declining prosecution may affect the outcome of the investigation.
- If an arrest is not made or the incident does not require further investigation, the Police Department's investigation process will end at this point.
- If an arrest is made, the case will be forwarded to the State Attorney's Office for prosecution.

### **Detective Follow-Up**

- If the case requires additional investigation, it gets assigned to a Detective for follow-up.
- The Detective reviews the report and any evidence associated with the incident.
- The Detective develops an investigative strategy for the case.
- The Detective will reach out to the victim and inform them of the process and answer questions.
- The Detective may ask the involved parties clarifying questions concerning the investigation. Involved parties may be called back several times during an investigation for additional questioning.
- The Detective will follow up and collect any additional evidence needed to prove the case.
- The Detective will not update witnesses or outside parties with the progress or outcome of the case.
- The Detective will stay in touch with the Victim throughout the investigative process and will keep them updated on how the case is progressing and the results of the investigation. The Detective will only be contacting the Victim with major updates. They will not be contacting them every day.
- On large cases, the investigative process can take weeks or months to complete. This is often due to the number of subjects involved, the evidence involved and requesting other evidence from subpoenas or other resources.
- If there is not enough probable cause to substantiate a crime being committed, the case will be closed, and the involved parties will be notified.
- If the Detective finds enough evidence to support a crime was committed, they will prepare an arrest warrant to submit to the State Attorney's Office.
- Once an arrest warrant is approved by the State Attorney's Office, it is submitted to a judge for approval.
- When the judge approves the arrest warrant, it is submitted to the Leon County Clerk of Court to make the warrant active.
- Once an arrest warrant is active, an arrest can be made.
- Once the arrest is made, the case will be transferred to the State Attorney's Office for prosecution.
- This process can take months and even years, depending on the type of case.

### **STATE ATTORNEY PROCESS**

- Once the arrest is made and the case has been transferred to the State Attorney's Office, the defendant will have the opportunity to post bond if provided on the warrant or they will have a First Appearance before a judge to determine bond, pre-trial release and any special conditions.
- Most offenses are listed on a bond schedule, and judges tend to follow this. Typically, the judge will also order the defendant to have no contact with the victim or witnesses in the crime.
- If you are the victim of a crime, you will be contacted by a Victim Advocate from the State Attorney's Office to discuss any concerns you have. You will also receive a letter and a Victim Loss Form requesting

information about any medical or other crime-related expenses you incurred; information about how the crime has impacted you and information requesting notification and other protections under Marsy's law.

- The State Attorney's Office also has investigators that may contact you for further information about what happened, to request a signed medical release so they can obtain documentation of your injuries; and/or to discuss a subpoena for court proceedings.
- Once the case is assigned to an Assistant State Attorney, they will contact you before any plea offers are extended to the defendant to obtain your views and answer any questions you have.
- There are several possible resolutions to cases including a plea, a Diversion or Deferred Prosecution agreement or a trial; all of which will be relayed to you throughout the process. The State Attorney's office will frequently mail or e-mail letters, keeping you informed of the status of the case.
- Victim Advocates from The State Attorney's office are available to assist you throughout this process.

### **Victim Advocate**

In the immediate aftermath of a crime, victims may feel confused, shocked and may not know what to do. The Tallahassee Police Department Victim Advocate Unit is committed to providing comprehensive services and support that address the physical and emotional needs that result from victimization. An advocate has the unique ability of being able to devote attention to the various needs of the victim while at the same time acting as a liaison with officers to keep the victim and their family informed on how the criminal case is progressing. The unit is staffed with three advocates who provide 24-hour assistance.

- Victim Advocates are civilian employees of the Tallahassee Police Department. Victim Advocates cannot take police reports, nor do they investigate the crime.
- Victim Advocates serve as liaisons between victims and the Detectives throughout the course of the investigation to explain the criminal justice system, investigative process and can provide appropriate referrals to community-based resources.
- Other services provided by a Victim Advocate include but are not limited to:
  - o Providing on-scene crisis intervention and bereavement support to crime victims
  - o Assistance for applications for Victim Compensation and injunctions (no contact orders)

The Victim Advocate Unit of the Tallahassee Police Department is the first source of help and information for victims of crime. Navigating the criminal justice system is not an easy task. It is our goal to ensure that the best possible service is provided during this difficult time. It is also our goal to ensure that victims of crime understand that they have rights too.

It is not necessary to file a police report to speak with a victim advocate. If you have any questions about the Victim Advocate Unit or would like to speak with an advocate, please call (850)891-4237.