

Conflict-of-Interest Policy for Chesapeake Victim Witness Assistance Program

Effective Date: July 15, 2023

Introduction

This Conflict-of-Interest Policy outlines the standards and guidelines from the Office for Victims of Crime Model Standards for the victim witness assistance program to ensure that victim assistance providers act with integrity, avoid conflicts of interest, and maintain professionalism in their relationships with persons served. The policy aims to uphold the best interests of victims/survivors and promote ethical conduct within the program.

Avoidance of Conflicts of Interest

2.1. Victim assistance providers are required to act in the best interest of the person served and make efforts to avoid compromising influences and loyalties.

2.2. Personal or professional interests of the victim assistance provider shall not compromise their professional judgment and loyalty to the person being served.

2.3. Conflicts of interest arising from previous assignments, employers/programs, or persons served must be avoided.

2.4. Victim assistance providers should make reasonable efforts to avoid conflicts of interest arising from family relationships, personal interests, or business interests.

Disclosure of Conflicts

3.1. Victim assistance providers shall promptly disclose any possible conflict of interest to the program or person served.

3.2. Prospective programs or persons to be served shall be informed of any potential conflicts of interest that may impact the provision of services.

Identification of Conflicts

4.1. Victim assistance providers may share non-confidential information about persons being served with other program staff or ethics counsel to reasonably identify actual or potential conflicts of interest.

Termination of Professional Relationship

5.1. Victim assistance providers shall terminate a professional relationship with a victim/survivor when it is determined that the person is not likely to benefit from continued services.

5.2. Advanced notice of termination shall be provided to the victim/survivor in compliance with applicable legal and ethical requirements.

5.3. Referrals to appropriate services should be offered as needed or upon the victim's request.

5.4. Victim assistance providers are strongly discouraged from terminating professional relationships in order to initiate personal or business relationships with victims/survivors who have received services.

Personal Relationships with Persons Served

6.1. Victim assistance providers shall refrain from engaging in personal relationships with persons served that exploit professional trust or impair objectivity and professional judgment.

6.2. If a personal relationship with a victim/survivor cannot be avoided, the provider shall take precautions to ensure that their objectivity and professional judgment are not impaired.

6.3. Precautions include obtaining the victim's informed consent and consulting with a supervisor.

6.4. Victim assistance providers are strongly discouraged from engaging in social or business relationships with current or former clients.

6.5. Professional relationships with individuals with whom the provider had previous personal or business relationships are allowed only if a reasonable person would conclude that objectivity and professional judgment would not be impaired.

Prohibited Actions

7.1. Victim assistance providers are strictly prohibited from engaging in or requesting sexual contact with victims/survivors under any circumstances.

7.2. Verbal or physical behaviors that are sexually seductive, demeaning, or harassing are strictly prohibited.

7.3. Offering or accepting medication, controlled substances, or alcoholic beverages from persons served is prohibited.

Non-Discrimination

8.1. Victim assistance providers must not discriminate against victims/survivors based on protected characteristics such as age, race, gender, disability, etc.

8.2. Lack of cultural competency is not a valid reason to turn victims/survivors away from the program.

8.3. Referrals should not be made solely based on personal biases or protected characteristics; referrals should be based on staff capacity or conflicts of interest.

8.4. Cultural competence should be developed to provide services for marginalized populations.

Services for Colleagues

9.1. Victim assistance providers should ensure that opportunities are provided for colleagues to access services if they become victims of crime or trauma.

9.2. While seeing a colleague as a client may present a conflict of interest, efforts should be made to minimize conflicts and locate service providers in other jurisdictions if necessary.

Compliance and Review

10.1. All victim assistance providers are required to comply with this policy and uphold the highest ethical standards in their professional conduct.

10.2. This policy shall be reviewed periodically to ensure its continued effectiveness and relevance.

