



Flint Police Department **Crime Victim** **and Family Survivor Guide**

**An informational guide for the surviving
families of homicide victims**



Flint Police Department - Homicide



Dear _____

Understanding that this is a difficult time for your family, the men and women of the Flint Police Homicide unit are here to assist you in any way we can to help bring resolution in the case involving the death of your loved one. We will attempt to ease the pain of your loss by conducting a professional and thorough investigation so we can identify, apprehend, and bring the person(s) responsible to justice.

During the course of our investigation, there are many things that may occur. The Crime Victim and Family Survivor Guide will identify the phases of our investigation so you will have a clear understanding of the process. Included are:

- Contact numbers that you may find useful
- Information that explains how to recover your loved one's property
- How to contact the Officer in Charge (OIC) of the case
- What to expect during a homicide investigation

The Officer in Charge of your case is identified below. If there is anything that you need to know that is not included in this guide, do not hesitate to ask. We are here to help you. Please feel free to call Homicide, at (810) 237-6901, at any time with questions, comments or information.

Officer in Charge of the Case (OIC) _____

Telephone Number _____

E-mail Address _____@cityofflint.com

Homicide File Number _____

Facts About Homicide Investigations | FAQs

Who is responsible for investigating the death of my loved one?



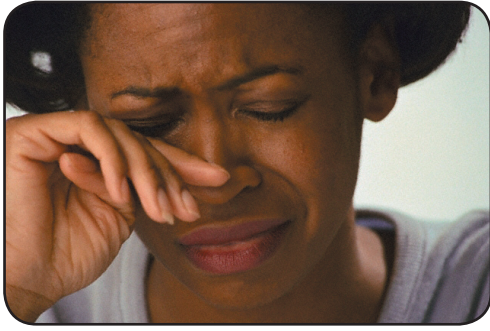
- The Homicide Unit is divided into squads and teams. The Officer in Charge of the case, often referred to as the OIC, is responsible for both ensuring that the investigation is complete and preparing the information to present to the prosecutor for an arrest warrant.
- The OIC is not the only one working the case. He/she works with members in a squad or team, support units within the Flint Police Department, and other law enforcement agencies, if need be.
- Sometimes investigators leave Homicide because of a transfer or retirement. If this occurs, your loved one's case will be assigned to another OIC. The investigation will continue, and you will be notified.

Why doesn't the OIC answer the phone when I call?

- We understand your frustration. There are a number of reasons why an OIC may not answer the phone when you call.
- Members of Homicide work various hours covering all shifts. Additionally, they are required to go to court frequently. They may be out of the office following leads, reviewing the evidence, interviewing witnesses, looking for potential witnesses, and in some cases looking for the person who committed the crime.
- In order to maximize the investigator's time in conducting the investigation, it is suggested that you appoint one family member as the designated contact person. This will assist the OIC in making timely notifications to your family regarding the status of the case. The designated spokesperson should also be the individual to contact the OIC with any questions or concerns in order to prevent duplication.

What can I expect after the case is assigned?

- Once the case is assigned to an OIC, he/she will ensure that certain steps are taken. This includes examining physical evidence, gathering evidence for further processing, and conducting interviews with witnesses and family members.



- You will be contacted and interviewed regarding your loved one. This is both normal and necessary. The investigator needs to learn all that he/she can about the victim, your loved one. This information is extremely important when investigating a homicide.

- At times, the questions asked may be sensitive and make you feel awkward. Please be assured that we are not “digging up dirt” or making moral judgments about

your loved one’s behavior or lifestyle. You may be requested to provide information on your loved one’s habits, friends, hangouts, and/or possessions. This information is very important to the investigation, and it is information that only you can provide.

Why can’t I be told all the facts about the case?

- Depending on the circumstances regarding the death of your loved one, the OIC may not be able to provide full, detailed information concerning the investigation.
- This information may be withheld for a variety of reasons, including the preservation of the integrity of the case. There is a chance that if information received gets into the wrong hands, it will jeopardize our ability to apprehend or get an arrest warrant on a person.

When should I expect an arrest?

- Every case is different. Some cases are closed with an arrest within hours of the incident; others take days, months, and sometimes years. There is no statute of limitations (time limit) on murder. Although we want to close cases as soon as possible, there are many factors involved, including family cooperation.
- The key to solving cases is the cooperation of both witnesses and the family. Witnesses are sometimes reluctant to cooperate with the investigation; however, it does not necessarily mean that the uncooperative witness was a participant in the crime.
- Sometimes witnesses are not cooperative because they are afraid of the perpetrator(s), dislike the police, and/or do not want to get involved. We do everything that we can to make witnesses feel comfortable and less afraid to cooperate; however, we cannot and do not arrest someone just for being an uncooperative witness.



- In some cases, an arrest is made soon after the incident. If this is the case, the OIC will submit an Investigator's Report, sometimes referred to as a Warrant Request, to the Genesee County Prosecutor's Office. The Genesee County Prosecutor's Office will then decide whether to charge the individual under arrest and to determine what the specific charges are.
- **The Police Department does not charge a person with a crime. That is done by the Genesee County Prosecutor's Office.**
- Often, a perpetrator is identified shortly after the incident but has not been arrested yet. In this case, the OIC will prepare and submit a Not-In-Custody Warrant Request to the Genesee County Prosecutor's Office. **It is still the responsibility of the Genesee County Prosecutor's Office to determine what, if any, charges will be brought against the individual named.**
- Once the warrant has been signed by the Judge or Magistrate, the Flint Police Department then has the authority to arrest the individual.
- You will be notified once an arrest has been made.

Be assured that each case is very important to us, and your support is both helpful and genuinely appreciated. You will be notified as soon as progress is made in the case, including any arrests and subsequent court appearances. It is important that you keep in touch with the OIC of the case. Please update your information if you move or change your phone number so that we can continue to update you in a timely manner.

What happens after an arrest?

- After an arrest is made, the judicial (or court) process begins. There are a number of possible resolutions or dispositions of a criminal case.
- To aid you in understanding the criminal court process, a diagram of the different phases of a criminal case is provided.
- All homicide criminal cases are adjudicated at the Genesee County circuit Court Building, located at 900 South Saginaw Street, in downtown Flint.



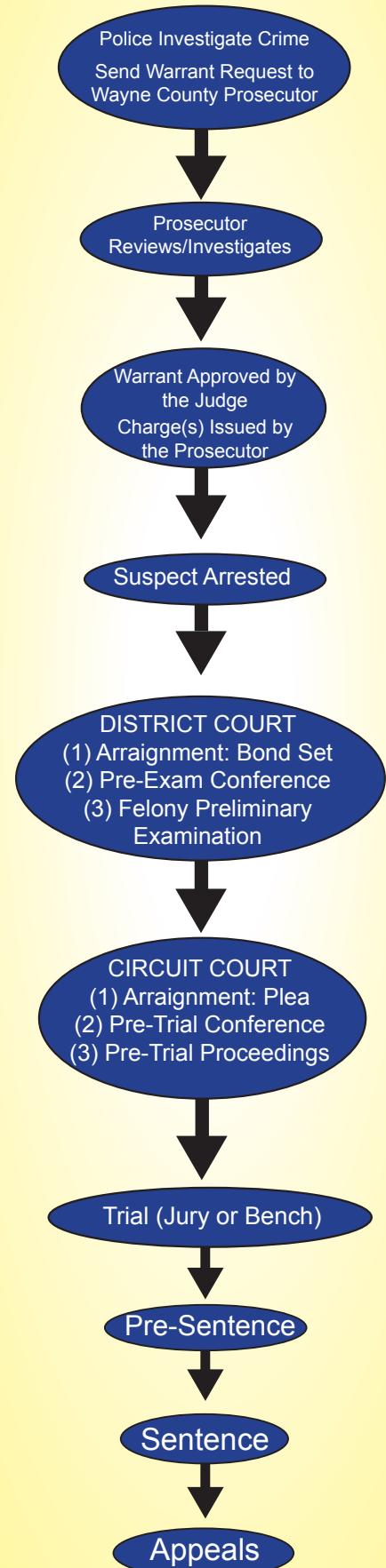
Why is an autopsy necessary?

- State law requires that an autopsy be performed on all homicide victims.
- You will need to contact the Genesee County Medical Examiner's Office to ensure that your loved one has been officially identified and to inform the Medical Examiner's Office of funeral arrangements.
- By law, it is the responsibility of the Medical Examiner to notify the next of kin of a death.

How do I get the property of my loved one?

- Some property can be returned rather quickly. Other property may need to be retained as evidence and cannot be returned. Certain properties, such as clothing, that may have been exposed to biological hazards prevent it from being released to the public and will, ultimately, have to be destroyed.
- The Officer in Charge (OIC) of the case is responsible for both deciding and facilitating the release of the various properties.
- The OIC will need appropriate identification from you to release the property.
- Once the identification is provided, he/she will provide you with a property release receipt and the location to pick up the property.
- If the property you are seeking is money or other valuables (i.e. legal firearms, jewelry, etc.), you must obtain a Letter of Authority from the Probate Court. The offices are located 900 South Saginaw Street, Room 502, Flint, MI 48502. The phone number is 810-257-3528, and the Web site is www.gc4me.com

A Criminal Case Judicial Process (Felony)



Why won't the OIC return government identification to the family?

- Government identifications (i.e. driver's license, state ID, military ID, etc.) are the property of the issuing agency and will not be returned to the family.

What about releasing vehicles?

- Sometimes vehicles are impounded at the scene and placed as evidence. These vehicles are usually held at Complete Towing Service or another City-authorized tow yard and may be released after any necessary processing is complete.
- There will be some fees for the towing and storage associated with the release of a vehicle. Under certain circumstances some fees may be waived. Please ask your Officer in Charge (OIC).
- In order to obtain a vehicle, you will need proper identification and the title or registration, which must be in your name.
- If the vehicle is not in your name, a Letter of Authority from the Probate Court is required.
- The tow company holding the vehicle requires proof of insurance before it will allow someone to drive the vehicle off its lot.



I need help dealing with the aftermath of the murder. Where can I go to find help?

- There are numerous support groups available, in addition to private counseling.
- The Flint Police Department has a network of clergy available to work with you and your family at no cost. Ask your OIC for a referral.
- Please contact the **Genesee County Prosecutor's Office Crime Victim Service Unit** at (810)257-3493, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. - 4 p.m.

I cannot afford a funeral. What kind of assistance is available?

- There are some funds available through the State of Michigan for a victim's family to help deter the financial burden of these tragedies.
- Web site addresses and contact numbers are listed at the end of this guide.

Do I have to pay for witness protection?

- The Flint Police Department does not have a protection program.
- If you are asked by a Flint Police Department member to provide cash or payment for any reason, do not give any money. Ask to speak with a supervisor immediately.

Can I put up a reward?

- The Flint Police Department and members of Homicide may not get involved with posting rewards.
- You can seek advice from the local branch of your bank. The bank can advise you on how to set up an account for such rewards. You can also contact Crime Stoppers at 1-800 -SPEAKUP (1-800-773-2587) and request assistance with reward posters.

Use of the Media

- How does media attention on a particular case affect homicide cases? In what instance will media attention hurt/help an investigation? Can the family help by getting media attention?
- Frequently we utilize the City of Flint Public Information Office to contact the media to help with investigations. Sometimes this will provide new leads or witnesses will contact us with information about the investigation.
- The media can help in some cases and can hurt in others.
- However, sometimes the media will talk to neighbors in the area of a homicide and create false information that will hurt the investigation.
- It is highly recommended that you do not talk to the media because it could hurt the Police Department's ability to solve the crime or bring the person(s) responsible to justice. Instead, work with the OIC, who will in turn work with the Office of Public Information, to coordinate with the media.



FLINT POLICE DEPARTMENT

Letter of Notice to Provide Proper Documentation For Release of Impounded Vehicle

DATE & TIME OF NOTICE: _____

VEHICLE IMPOUND LOT

COMPLETE TOWING
3401 North Dorth Highway
Flint, Michigan 48506
(810)235-1711

The vehicle described below has been impounded by the Flint Police Department in connection with a criminal investigation. This letter explains the process to gain release of this vehicle if you are not the registered owner. You will need to obtain a Letter of Authority from Probate Court. The Probate Court Offices are located at 900 South Saginaw Street, Room 502, Flint, Michigan. The telephone number is 810-257-3528.

The Homicide investigator will identify the next of kin through his/her investigation. The next of kin will need to petition Probate Court for an Appointment of Personal Representative of the estate. The personal representative will have 21 days from the date of this letter to provide the necessary documentation for release of the vehicle to Homicide. If the next of kin does not provide the requested documentation to Homicide within 21 days of the date of this letter, the vehicle will be released to Complete Towing Service. Any storage fees incurred **after the 21 days** shall be the responsibility of the next of kin. The next of kin must contact the City of Flint Police Department and provide the proper documentation for the vehicle.

I _____ understand that I have 21 days from the date of this letter to provide the proper documentation to Homicide for the release of this vehicle. If I fail to do so, I understand that I will be responsible for the storage fees after 21 days and that the vehicle may ultimately be sold.

COLOR: _____ **YEAR:** _____ **MAKE:** _____ **MODEL:** _____

LICENSE PLATE: _____ **VIN: #** _____

EVIDENCE TAG: _____

NAME OF NEXT OF KIN: _____

RELATIONSHIP: _____

ADDRESS & PHONE: _____

INVESTIGATOR'S NAME, SIGNATURE AND DATE: _____

Flint Police Department

Crime Victim and Family Survivor Guide

Flint Police Department

Detective Bureau main Line	(810) 237-6900
Lieutenant Devon Bernritter	(810) 237-6933
Sergeant Cindy Herfert	(810) 237-6910
Sergeant Alfino Donastorg	(810) 237-6919
Sergeant Karl Petrich	(810) 237-6912
Sergeant Jason Cate	(810) 237-6940
Sergeant Ronald Dixon	(810) 237-6905
Sergeant Brett Small	(810) 237-6917

Crime Victim's Service Unit

Genesee County Prosecutor's Office Crisis Line: (810)257-3493
Crime Victim Service Unit
900 South Saginaw Street
Flint, MI 48502

The Crime Victim's Services Division is designed to help crime victims return to their normal way of life, while offering guidance through the criminal justice system.

Genesee County Prosecutor's Office (810) 257-3232

Prosecutor

Genesee County Prosecutor's Office (810) 257-3232
900 South Saginaw Street
Flint, Michigan 48502
www.gc4me.com/departments/prosecutors_office

The County Prosecutor reviews the homicide case information submitted by the Police Department, authorizes the warrant for arrest, and prosecutes such offenses committed inside Genesee County.

Juvenile Division (810) 257-3245

Flint Police Department

Crime Victim and Family Survivor Guide

Medical Examiner

Genesee County Medical Examiner's Office
630 South Saginaw Street
Flint, MI 48502

(810) 762-7777

By statutory authority, the County Medical Examiner conducts investigations as to cause and manner of death in all cases of persons who have come to their death by violence, or without recent medical attendance and other circumstances outlined under the laws of the state of Michigan. In addition, by law, it is the responsibility of the Medical Examiner to notify the next of kin of a death.

Probate

Genesee County Probate Court
900 South Saginaw Street
Room 502
Flint, MI 48502
www.gc4me.com or
www.gc4me.com/departments/probate_court

(810) 257-3528

The Probate Court supervises the processes that transfer legal title of property, subject to the authority of the court, from the estate of the person who has expired to his or her beneficiaries.

Crime Stoppers

Michigan Crime Stoppers Alliance Tip Line

**1-800-SPEAK-UP
(800) 773-2587**

**www.michigan.gov/msp/
or
www.1800speakup.org**

The Crime Stoppers Alliance tip line has operated in Michigan since December 1999. Citizens can anonymously call the Alliance's toll free number, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to report information regarding unsolved crimes. Any person providing a tip resulting in a felony arrest is eligible for a cash reward up to \$1,000.

**Michigan Crime
Victim Services**

**Michigan Crime Victim Services Commission
Crime Victim Compensation Program
320 South Walnut Street
Lansing, MI 48913
www.mivictims.org/services**

(517) 373-7373

The Crime Victim Compensation Program was established to provide limited financial assistance to innocent persons who receive bodily injury from the commission of a crime in Michigan and who incur unreimbursable financial losses as a result of the injury. Victim compensation is only awarded when the losses represent a financial hardship for the victim's costs of medical expenses, counseling, loss of earnings or support, and burial assistance to survivors.

**Parents of Murdered
Children**

**Organization of Parents
of Murdered Children, Inc. (POMC)
Flint Area Chapter
www.pomc.org**

**(810) 691-6440
(810) 397-4681**

POMC provides the ongoing emotional support needed to help parents and other survivors facilitate the reconstruction of a "new life" and to promote a healthy resolution. POMC help survivors deal with their acute grief and the criminal justice system.

Meetings held at Job Core, 2400 N. Saginaw St and are every 3rd Saturday of each month. Please call (810) 691-7356. Their FAX is (810)422-5596.

**Genesee County
PPO Information**

**Genesee County Prosecutor's Office
Personal Protection Order Office**

(810) 257-3610

A personal protection order is a civil protection order against domestic violence that provides a combination of civil and criminal remedies to prevent abuse.

The prosecutor represents the state's interest in prosecuting those persons who violate personal protection orders. You may also want to obtain a Personal Protection Order at the Genesee County Circuit Court, 2nd floor-east located at 900 s. Saginaw St, Flint, MI. The phone number for the Personal Protection Order office is (810) 257-3610.

United Way

**United Way
www.unitedwaygenesee.org**

(810) 232-8121

You can reach the United Way by dialing 800-552-1183. The United Way can help you locate human services in your community for: child and elderly care; after-school programs; emergency shelter; job training; rent assistance; utility assistance; counseling; and substance abuse.

**Michigan Dept.
of Human Services**

**State of Michigan Department of Human Services
P.O. Box 30037
235 S. Grand Ave.
Lansing, MI 48909
www.michigan.gov/dhs**

**(517) 373-2035
(517) 335-6101 [Fax]
(517) 373-8071 [TTY]**

The Department of Human Services directs the operations of public assistance and service programs through Family Independence agencies in every county in Michigan.

**Genesee County Sheriff's Office
Michigan State Police—Flint Post**

**(810) 257-3407
(810) 732-1111**

**Flint Police Department
Office of the Chief of Police**

210 East 5th Street
Flint, MI 48502
Phone 810-237-6866
Fax: 810-237-6960



Created by Lt. John Morell
Co-Authored by Lt. Sherri Meisel and Lt. John Morell

A Message from the Chief



Dear Family Member:

Realizing that the loss of a loved one is a difficult experience for the family, friends, and community, the Flint Police Department has extended its assistance by providing you with its Crime Victim and Family Survivor Guide. This guide is designed to educate the family on the investigative process and identify available resources that may be of some service during this time.

If you should have any questions, concerns or information regarding the death of your loved one, please feel free to contact the Officer in Charge of the case or the Homicide information desk, at (810)237-6901.

Sincerely,

James Tolbert
Chief of Police