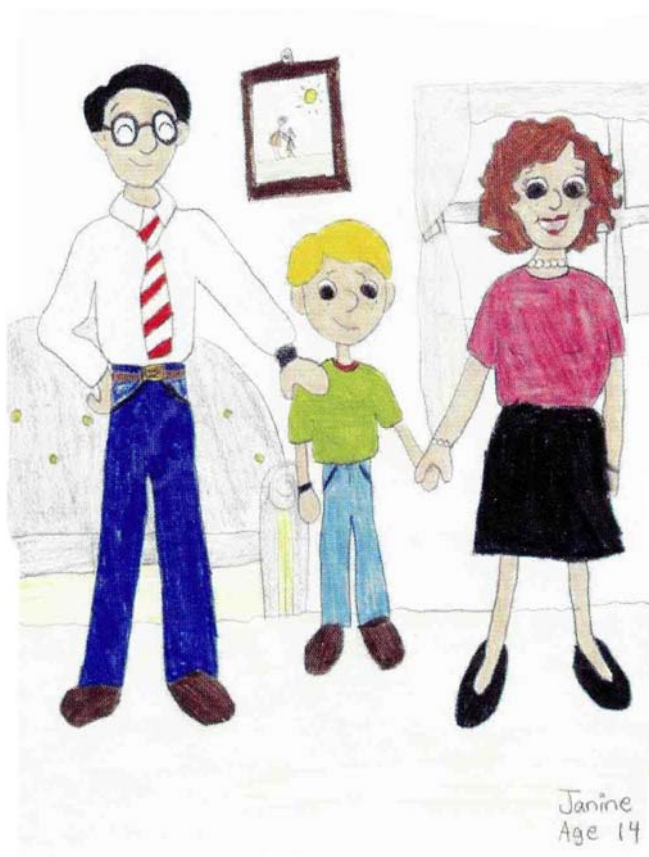


## Working Together to Prepare Child Witnesses To Testify in Court



**A pamphlet for Parents/Caregivers**

If your child has been a victim of crime and/or witnessed a crime-taking place, and a charge has been laid by the police, she/he is eligible for services through Victim Services. Anyone can make a referral to Victim Services. You can call or a police officer, a counselor, social worker, teacher, etc. can make a referral to Victim Services on behalf of any child who may be required to testify in a criminal court matter.

### **When should I contact Victim Services?**

Victim Services may be contacted as soon as it is suspected that a child may be required to testify. It is best to have time to prepare children rather than to be limited to one or two meetings. We offer a court preparation plan that begins prior to the time of testifying. Each session of court preparation helps reduce the fears children have about the process, by giving them information on what to expect from everyone involved in the court process and how court works.

### **What services do Victim Services provide for children?**

- Written and verbal information on the court process for you and your child to review together.
- Court preparation to assist your child to testify.
- Updates on the status of the case as it proceeds through court.
- Expense coverage for one trip, as may be necessary, for private vehicle or taxi fare, to enable your child to visit the courtroom in advance of testifying.
- On-site support for your child and family during the trial process.
- Assistance with arranging and/or covering counseling fees if required.
- Arrange meeting(s) with the Crown Attorney for your child.

### **What are some things I, as parent/caregiver, can do to support my child/a child in my care?**

- Tell your child you **believe** them – do not assume they know.
- **Listen** to your child but do not judge what your child tells you.
- Let your child know you are **available** to talk if they want to talk.
- Keep your child's routine as **normal** as possible.
- **Ask** your child if they want you in the courtroom when they testify – let them know you will wait outside if that would be easier for them.
- **Respect** your child's wishes.
- Be a **support**, while respecting your child's personal privacy needs.

## What are some things that may be harmful to my child/a child in my care?

- **Pressuring** children to talk about the offense and/or what they witnessed.
- **Discussing specific evidence** with a child witness may have an unwanted influence on the court case.
- **Blaming** a child for what happened will enhance any feelings of guilt they may have – children are not responsible for violent behavior directed towards them.
- **Judging** a child will create and/or build on feelings they may have of self-blame.
- **Allowing** a child to engage in **negative behavior, without an appropriate consequence**, will only lead to increased negative behavior. Keep expected behavior at a normal level – do not excuse inappropriate behavior because they are going through a difficult time.
  
- **Discussing your feelings about the case or the accused, where your child can overhear you**, can place stress on a child and a sense of responsibility for your feelings and keeping you safe. These are clearly not the child's to own.

## We encourage you.....

To speak with the Crown Counsel/ Attorney regarding your child's (child in your care) specific needs within the courtroom. While the Criminal Code of Canada does allow for children to have a support person sit by them, to give testimony behind screens or closed circuit television, closed courtrooms, etc., these are not automatic. It is best to discuss your concerns with the Crown and together you can identify the protections needed. The Crown may request them or you may request them at the time of court. It will always be the Judge's decision as to what requests are granted.

For information on any services or programs of Victim Services, contact the Regional Office nearest you or:

Provincial Headquarters  
Victim Services Program  
Department of Justice  
4<sup>th</sup> Floor East Block  
Confederation Building  
P.O. Box 8700  
St. John's, NL  
A1B 4J6  
Tel: (709) 729-7970

[www.justice.gov.nl.ca](http://www.justice.gov.nl.ca)

## VICTIM SERVICES LOCATIONS

Location	Address	Phone	Fax
St. John's	P.O. Box 8700 3 <sup>rd</sup> Floor, Atlantic Place St. John's, NL A1B 4J6	(709) 729-0900	(709) 729-0053
Clarenville	97 Manitoba Drive Suite 101 Clarenville, NL A5A 1K3	(709) 466-5808	(709) 466-4031
Grand Falls/ Windsor	4 <sup>th</sup> Floor, Provincial Bldg. Grand Falls-Windsor, NL A2A 1W9	(709) 292-4291	(709) 292-4565
Stephenville	35 Alabama Drive Stephenville, NL A2N 3K9	(709) 643-6618	(709) 643-9231
Happy Valley/ Goose Bay	P.O. Box 3014, Stn. "B" 215 Hamilton River Road Happy Valley-Goose Bay NL A0P 1A5	(709) 896-0446	(709) 896-2230
Carbonear	Carlyle Bldg., Unit 3 80 Powell Drive Carbonear, NL A1Y 1A5	(709) 945-3020	(709) 945-3018
Gander	P.O. Box 2222 2 <sup>nd</sup> Floor, McCurdy Building Gander, NL A1V 2N9	(709) 256-1021	(709) 256-1024
Corner Brook	P.O. Box 2006 9 <sup>th</sup> Floor Sir Richard Squires Bldg. Corner Brook, NL A2H 6J8	(709) 637-2614	(709) 637-2530
Port Saunders	P.O. Box 149 Dobbin Building Port Saunders, NL A0K 4H0	(709) 861-2147	(709) 861-3302
Nain	General Delivery Nain, Labrador A0P 1L0	(709) 922-2360	(709) 922-2238
Marystown	P.O. Box 1182 Marystown, NL A0E 2M0	(709) 279-3216	(709) 279-4256



*Children who have used Victim Services created the artwork contained in this pamphlet. Thank you to all the children and families who allow us to share in their lives in support of their healing journey.*

  
**Newfoundland  
Labrador**

Government of Newfoundland and Labrador  
Department of Justice  
Victim Services