

Victim Services Unit Volunteer Program

The Burnet County Sheriff's Office Victim Services Unit is seeking persons of excellent moral standing with the sensitivity and self-awareness necessary to provide effective assistance to those in crisis.

The Application Process:

1. Fill out and submit the application.
2. The Burnet County Sheriff's Office will conduct a background inquiry.
3. If selected, you will interview with the Crime Victim Liaison.
4. Selected candidates from the interview process will complete the required 3-week training.
5. We welcome you to the Victim Services Unit Volunteer Program!

Volunteer Duties: BCSO Victim Services Unit Volunteers assist on the front lines of crisis intervention! Our volunteers provide immediate response to victims of various criminal and crisis circumstances. These circumstances include but are not limited to: family violence, sexual assaults, child/elder abuse, aggravated assaults, robberies/burglaries, suicides, structure fires, death notifications, natural/accidental deaths, and major traffic accidents. Volunteers must complete a comprehensive three-week training program AND must be accompanied on a series of call outs before they can begin taking calls independently. Each month, Volunteers are required to take (4) four-hour shifts. During these shifts, volunteers are "on call" and must be prepared to respond to a request for assistance immediately. We accept volunteers of excellent moral standing who have the sensitivity and self-awareness required to provide effective assistance to those in crisis. Participating in our volunteer program is an excellent opportunity to gain experience in crisis intervention, learn about the criminal justice system/law enforcement response, and enhance knowledge of community resources while performing a needed and rewarding service!

Should you consider volunteering with us?

- Are you 21 or older?
- Does a reliable car get you from point A to point B?
- Do you have the state required insurance for that reliable car?
- How about a working cell phone?
- Does your schedule allow for (4) four-hour shifts of on call a month?
- Could you make a one-year commitment to the program?
- Would you have the availability to complete the specified training: Mondays 6-9p, Thursdays 6-9p, and Saturdays 9a-5p for three weeks?

If you have an interest in victim assistance and answered "yes" to all of these questions, we encourage you to apply to be a volunteer with us! For more information, please contact Debi King (512) 755-1275.



BURNET COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE VICTIM SERVICES

VOLUNTEER REQUIREMENTS

1. Must be twenty-one years of age.
2. Must have reliable transportation.
3. Must be able to make a one-year commitment.
4. Must be able to take call as deemed necessary by the team leader.
5. Must be able to maintain professional demeanor in crisis situations.
6. Must be able to maintain confidences.
7. Must be able to work within the Chain of Command.
8. Must be of good moral character.
9. Must be able to interact with all populations of people and treat all victims/survivors in a courteous professional manner.
10. Must be able to work with minimum supervision.
11. Must be able to complete training program.
12. Must be able to attend monthly meetings.
13. Must submit to background investigation, including a criminal history.

I _____ hereby acknowledge that I have read and understand the Volunteer requirements. I understand that acceptance into this program requires me to meet the requirements. Non-compliance will result in dismissal from the program.

Volunteer

Date



BCSO Victim Services Unit Code of Ethics

The Victim Services profession developed in response to needs of crime victims and persons in crisis. Victim Advocates, including staff, and volunteers, appreciate and encourage the inherent diversity and unique values of all human beings through adherence to an established Code of Ethics. In so doing, Victim Advocates demonstrate competent and responsible practice, aid in protecting the public from exploitation and safeguard the reputation of the profession. Victim Advocates take on many roles including crisis counselor, resource provider, educator, consultant, evaluator, and community liaison. The following standards are written with these multi-faceted roles in mind, and with the knowledge that all victims deserve to be ethically treated with fairness, dignity and respect.

Role of the Victim Advocate

1. Victim Advocates understand their legal responsibilities, limitations, and the implications of their actions within the service delivery setting and perform duties in accordance with laws, regulations, policies, and legislated rights of persons served.
2. Victim Advocates accurately represent their professional title, qualifications, and/or credentials to persons served and the general public.
3. Victim Advocates achieve and maintain a high level of professional competence and conduct.

Direct Services

4. Victim Advocates respect and protect the civil rights of victims to the best of their ability.
5. Victim Advocates identify the nature of the helping relationship from the onset, as well as inform victims of the limitations of services.
6. Victim Advocates respect and protect each victim's right to self-determination. They recognize each victim's right to receive or refuse services.
7. Victim Advocates refrain from behaviors that communicate victim blame, suspicion regarding victim accounts of the crime, condemnation for past behavior, or other judgmental, anti-victim sentiment.
8. Victim Advocates protect each victim's right to privacy and confidentiality except when agency guidelines state otherwise or when compliance with local, state, or federal laws is required. Advocates inform victims of the limits of confidentiality prior to the victim's disclosure.
9. If it is suspected that danger or harm may occur to the victim or to others as a result of a victim's behavior, Victim Advocates act in an appropriate and professional manner to protect the safety of those individuals. This may involve seeking consultation, supervision, and/or breaking the confidentiality of the relationship.
10. Victim Advocates avoid conflicts of interest and disclose any possible conflict to the program, prospective programs and persons served.
11. Victim Advocates DO NOT engage in personal relationships with persons served which exploit professional trust or which could impair the Victim Advocates' objectivity and professional judgment. Victim Advocates NEVER

engage in any kind of social, business, friendship, dating or sexual relationship with persons involved in Victim Services cases, including victims, witnesses, family members, friends, and offenders.

12. Victim Advocates DO NOT accept any type of gratuities or gifts from persons involved in Victim Services cases including victims, witnesses, family members, friends, and offenders.

13. Victim Advocates terminate services and refer victims to appropriate agencies after their needs are met within the Victim Services Unit.

14. Victim Advocates participate in available opportunities and activities that promote self-care and reduce compassion fatigue to aid in the provision of optimal services to victims.

Dignity and Respect of the Individual

15. Victim Advocates respect the integrity and welfare of victims at all times. Each victim is treated with fairness, dignity, respect, and acceptance.

16. Victim Advocates do not discriminate against a victim or another staff member on the basis of race/ethnicity, language, sex/gender, age, sexual orientation, (dis)ability, social class, economic status, education, marital status, religious affiliation, residency, HIV status or medical condition.

17. Victim Advocates acknowledge the cultures and communities within which they are active. They are aware of and respect multiculturalism in society and its impact on the beliefs of individuals and groups within the community. Victim Advocates are aware of their own cultural backgrounds, beliefs, and values, recognizing the potential for impact on their relationships with others.

Community Collaboration

18. Victim Advocates conduct relationships with colleagues and other professionals in such a way as to promote mutual respect and public confidence. Victim Advocates share knowledge and encourage proficiency in victim assistance by contributing to the improvement of systems that impact victims of crime and crisis circumstances.

19. Victim Advocates furnish opportunities for colleague Victim Advocates to seek appropriate services when traumatized by a criminal event or client interaction.

Administration and Evaluation

20. When Victim Advocates experience conflict with or observe unethical behavior by another advocate, human service professional, or criminal justice representative, they first attempt to address the issue with that person. If necessary, Victim Advocates seek the assistance of appropriate Victim Services staff to address the issue. If no resolution is forthcoming, Victim Advocates will report the behavior to supervisory/administrative staff and/or the organization to which the individual belongs.

21. Victim Advocates report to appropriate authorities the conduct of any colleague or other professional (including oneself) that constitutes mistreatment of a person served or that brings the profession into dishonor.

I understand the above Code of Ethics and agree to abide by them during the duration of my tenure with BCSO Victim Services as a Victim Advocate.

X _____

Name

X _____

Signature

Date



Burnet County Sheriff's Office

Victim Services Volunteer Policy

1. Volunteers will respond to calls given to them by Dispatch or the Crime Victim Liaison.
At no time will any volunteer respond to a call without being scheduled or requested.
2. Volunteers will abide by all traffic safety laws responding to a call. Volunteers must have reliable transportation and insurance coverage as mandated by state law.
3. Volunteers must have a working telephone, and be able to respond during their scheduled duty time. Unexcused absences will result in dismissal from the program.
4. Volunteers must notify Dispatch when they respond to a scene, upon arrival and leaving the scene. Dispatch must be notified of any change of location immediately.
5. Only Authorized Volunteers may schedule ride-outs with patrol.
6. As soon as a call is complete, you will be expected to call the office within eight (8) hours and leave the following information on voice mail: Case number and type, length of time on the call, victim's name and number, and your name. A report must be submitted to the victim services office within 24 hours.
7. When on call, if a responder should have a medical or family emergency, they must immediately contact the CVL or BCSO staff so that calls may be covered.
8. Details of all cases are considered confidential. Release of information to anyone other than the law enforcement agency originating the investigation or the prosecuting offices would mean immediate dismissal and the possibility of criminal charges filed against you.
9. Crisis Responders are volunteers of this department, and at no time should identify themselves as employees of the BCSO. Volunteers will NOT receive any financial benefits.

10. Any county issued property must be signed out by the Crime Victim Liaison. Upon resignation from the program all property must be returned. Property will be properly maintained. Volunteers are responsible for any intentional misuse or negligence to county property. In the event of loss or damage, you must first contact the CVL and write a detailed 'damage to county property' report.
11. A professional demeanor must be maintained at all times. If at any time any volunteer is unable to maintain proper demeanor, a supervisor must be notified immediately.
12. The Crime Victim Liaison must be notified immediately of any call involving a BCSO employee.
13. At no time should any volunteer divulge any information to the media.
14. Any conflicts at the scene must be reported immediately. At no time should a volunteer become involved in a verbal or physical altercation while on scene.
15. Proper clothing must be worn. No halter tops, tank tops, mini-skirts, short shorts or flip flops. A professional image must be displayed at all times. Acceptable clothing consists of slacks or jeans in good condition (no tears or holes) comfortable clean shirt, dress shorts and walking shorts are approved for lake calls during summer months, and comfortable, safe footwear is required. Masks required until further notice. ID must be worn at all calls and never displayed unless on duty.
16. Any volunteer responding to a call under the influence of alcohol or drugs (including prescriptions that may impair senses) will be immediately dismissed from the program.
17. Repeated and prolonged absences will result in a volunteer being placed on an inactive status and possible removal from the program.
18. At no time can a victim advocate volunteer carry on their person or in the vehicle a weapon while performing volunteer duties for the BCSO.

I hereby acknowledge that I have read and fully understand the BCSO Volunteer Policy. I agree to abide by the policies and understand that any infraction could result in dismissal from the Program.

Volunteer

Date



Burnet County Sheriff's Office (BCSO) Victim Services Unit (VSU)

PERSONAL INJURY/PROPERTY COVERAGE

Personal Vehicle Use

Burnet County does not cover damage to property of volunteers under any circumstance regardless of who caused the damage.

Burnet County will not be financially responsible for any injury (either volunteer or passenger/s) that was the result of a collision involving personally owned vehicles of volunteers. When volunteers opt to transport victims/witnesses/involved parties in their personal vehicles, Waiver of Liability forms are available for use.

Personal Injury

Burnet County will not take financial responsibility for injuries sustained by volunteers involved in related volunteer activity outside of those that might be covered for any other member of the public (like in a County building).

I understand that as a volunteer in the Victim Services Unit program, I am not required to transport victims/witnesses/involved parties in either my personal vehicle or County vehicle. I understand that if I opt to transport victims/witnesses/involved parties, Waiver of Liability forms are available for use.

I understand that by my signature I acknowledge the parameters regarding personal injury and property damage.

VOLUNTEER SIGNATURE

DATE

SUPERVISOR SIGNATURE

DATE



Burnet County Sheriff's Office – Victim Services Unit

By signing this document, I, _____, do hereby confirm receipt of the following county-issued equipment:

☐ Uniform Shirt/Vest

☐ I.D. Badge

I understand that this equipment is the property of the Burnet County Sheriff's Office, and I agree to return all county-issued equipment, upon resignation or termination from the Victim Services Volunteer Program. I also agree to pay for any or all damaged or lost equipment, if damaged due to negligence. Failure to return property may result in further action, if deemed necessary by the agency.

Signature of Volunteer

Date

Supervisor's Signature



Burnet County Sheriff's Office (BCSO) Victim Services Unit (VSU)

VOLUNTEER WAIVER OF LIABILITY

Name: _____

Date of Birth: _____

I, _____, a person who is 21 years of age or older, understand that the County of Burnet, the Sheriff of Burnet County, the Burnet County Sheriff's Office, its employees, agents, and assignees will assume no liability of any kind at all for any personal injuries, death, property damage, or any other claim that may be sustained by myself or children for whom I am acting in the capacity of guardian while on scene, riding in a Burnet County Sheriff's Office vehicle or accompanying Burnet County Sheriff's Office Victim Services personnel in their personal vehicles.

I understand that by my signature I am waiving and abandoning any and all legal right I may have to sue, on any basis, including but not limited to claims or causes of actions, negligence, fault, or failure to exercise ordinary care on the part of the Burnet County Sheriff's Office Victim Services personnel whom I may accompany. I understand that this waiver binds my heirs and assignees now and in the future.

EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION INFORMATION

Name/Address: _____

Phone: _____ Alternate Phone: _____

Allergies/Medical Conditions: _____

Case Report# (If Applicable): _____

VOLUNTEER SIGNATURE

DATE

SUPERVISOR SIGNATURE

DATE