



District Attorney's Office – Cobb Judicial Circuit
Victim Witness Unit
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The duties of the District Attorney are established by the Constitution of Georgia and outlined in the Official Code of Georgia. A District Attorney is elected to represent each judicial circuit throughout the State of Georgia. It is the duty of the District Attorney to represent the state in all criminal cases in the superior court of each circuit and in all cases appealed from the superior court and the juvenile courts of that circuit to the Supreme Court and the Court of Appeals. Put simply, the primary responsibility of the District Attorney's Office in Cobb Judicial Circuit is to prosecute felony crimes that occur in Cobb County. The ultimate goal of prosecution is to seek justice. By prosecuting serious, violent, & property crimes, we work to protect victims, hold offenders accountable for their criminal acts, and provide safety to the community at large.

Within the District Attorney's Office there are several distinct units designed to provide the best services possible for the community. These units consist of Crimes Against Women and Children; the Drug Prosecution Unit; the White Collar Unit; Major Crimes; the Juvenile Unit; an investigative unit; a child support unit; and the Victim Witness Unit (VW Unit).

The purpose of the Victim Witness Unit is to provide direct support and notification services to victims of crime. The Unit is mandated by Georgia law under the Georgia Crime Victims Bill of Rights in what services are provided to victims of crime. Such mandates include, but are not limited to, notification to all crime victims of court hearings and education about the stages involved in the criminal justice system. Staff advocates also strive to improve the treatment of victims and witnesses by providing them with assistance and services necessary to speed their recovery from a criminal act and to support and aid them as they move through an unfamiliar, complicated, and time consuming criminal justice system. The most essential services provided include keeping the victim notified of the status of their case and providing opportunities for them to participate in the process, educating victims about the criminal justice system, and ensuring each person is aware of any additional service programs in the community that might also be able to assist them.

Specifically, advocates provide the following services to victims of crime: explaining the steps of the court process and providing the victim with notice of hearings and status reports of the case; assisting in preparing victims for court appearances and providing orientation and companionship to court hearings; making referrals for services and support from other community resources; assisting in completing necessary paperwork including victim compensation forms, victim impact statements, and restitution forms; assisting in the return of the victim’s property from evidence; interceding with employers, creditors, and schools to help explain absences when necessary; providing a safe, secure place for victims to wait before testifying; coordinating an on-call system for court appearances to aid victims in avoiding lengthy absences from work; providing assistance and support when the victim feels intimidated, harassed, or afraid; and advising victims of any other rights afforded to them under the Georgia Law.

Victims are hurt emotionally, financially, and physically by criminal acts that are committed against them. When such acts result in formal criminal charges, victims are forced to participate in a system that traditionally has focused only on the rights of the accused. Historically, victims were a necessary component of the criminal case, but little effort was placed on advocacy services. Victims are often confused by the terminology, procedures, mandates, and limitations of the court. They are usually unaware that they, too, have rights. Without advocacy programs in prosecution offices, victims rarely have representation of their needs or wants in the criminal justice system.

Victim Advocates in the VW Unit work with victims to not only ensure that their needs are met, but also to keep them updated at all times on the status of their case. Advocates are trained in communication skills, courtroom procedures, crisis intervention, and many other areas specific to victim advocacy. While the Victim Witness Unit is supported by the Cobb County Board of Commissioners, the Unit is funded through fines imposed on convicted criminal defendants, and grant funds including a Victims of Crime Act grant and a JAG Grant. Unit staff is available for community awareness programs, teaching opportunities, and/or public speaking engagements. Staff of the Victim Witness Unit provides support and notification services in the Superior Court of Cobb County (ten Judges), the Magistrate Court of Cobb County (two Judges) and the Juvenile Court of Cobb County (four judges), and partners with Cobb County Police’s DV/Stalking Unit for advocacy services.

Current staff includes:

Program Director	3 (three) part- time Victim Advocates (Domestic Violence and Pre-Indictment)
8 (eight) full time Victim Advocates	2 (two) full time Support Staff / notification Clerks