

8. Assistance for Crime Victims

Overview

A. Promotion of Victim Assistance by the Police

In Japan, the Crime Victims Benefit Payment Law took effect in January of 1981. Four months later, the Crime Victims Relief Foundation was established with donations from police officials and the general public across Japan. The Foundation is a nonprofit organization that provides various types of support to crime victims and their families, such as scholarships to bereaved children.

The Japanese police were in charge of victim assistance; however, further improvements did not take place until the early 1990's.

In the early 1990's, the NPA took a renewed interest in crime victims. In 1991, experts and scholars at a symposium for establishing a victim assistance program, recognized the necessity for researching the problems of crime victims. Subsequently, a survey concerning the condition of crime victims in Japan was initiated. In 1994, the NPA established a working group to research how to improve police activities for the benefit of crime victims.

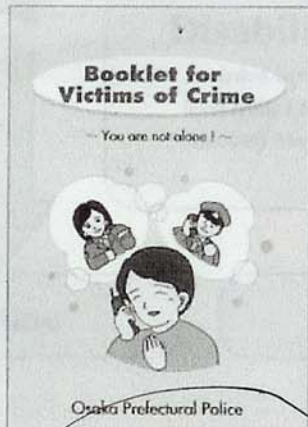
In February 1996, as a result of this research, the NPA adopted the "Guidelines on Relief Measures for Crime Victims." Under these guidelines, prefectural police have embraced this cause by implementing relief measures for crime victims in each prefecture. In June 1999, the NPA amended its "Rule of Criminal Investigation" to include principles to prevent damaging crime victims during an investigation. Newly prescribed were articles concerning consideration for, dissemination of information to and protection of victims and their families.

In April 2001, the Crime Victims Benefit Payment Law was amended to include provisions which expand benefits for crime victims and promote support measures taken by the police and private organizations.

B. Assistance for Crime Victims

The police are expected to deal with crime victims without causing "secondary victimization" in the course of the investigation. A crime victim may not only suffer physical injury at the hands of an offender but may also be seriously affected both mentally and financially. This requires police take the initiative in strongly promoting the victim assistance program.

Victim relief measures require that the police:



<http://www.npa.go.jp/higaisya/En/main.html>

(When a crime occurs)

- Provide crime victims with the "Brochure for Crime Victims";
- Assign specially trained crisis intervention officers and counselors with in-depth knowledge and skill in addressing all aspects of victim assistance, in order to help victims of felonious crimes;

- Promote police counseling services to crime victims; (When interviewing victims)

- Remodel interview rooms to help victims relax, and deploy vehicles for victims of felonious crimes;

- Improve the investigation of sex crimes by assigning female officers and installing a telephone hot lines for counseling;

(When the investigation has been completed)

- Establish a special support system for possible cases of repeated victimization;

- Establish a "victim liaison" system to ensure timely dissemination of important case information;

(Other measures)

- Establish a section in charge of planning, research and coordination of victim support measures at each PPH;

- Develop networks with administrative authorities, medical institutions and private victim support organizations;

- Assist in the establishment of private victim support organizations;

- Promote particular relief measures for victims of sexual assault, juvenile crimes, fraud and other business related crime, organized crime, traffic accidents, child abuse, domestic violence, stalking and other felony crimes;