



AUDIT HIGHLIGHTS

Victim Services

September 6, 2023

Audit No. 2305

WHY WE DID THIS AUDIT

An audit of *Victim Services* was included on the City Council-approved fiscal year (FY) 2022/23 Audit Plan. The audit's objective was to evaluate Victim Services' operations, such as resources, notifications, referrals and advocacy assistance provided to victims. During audit planning, the audit scope was refined to review victim notification processes specifically. Because state law protects communications between the advocate and victim, we did not evaluate other services that were primarily documented in advocacy logs.

BACKGROUND

Victim Services, a department within the City Attorney's division, provides legally mandated notification services and advocacy to misdemeanor crime victims in Scottsdale. The department works in collaboration with the Police Department, Prosecution and City Court to identify crime victims and provide advocacy services

Once victims of a crime are identified they are assigned to a Victim Advocate who ensures case status and court dates are communicated to the victim and also provides them with additional services, such as help with protective orders, or referrals for community assistance.

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WHAT WE FOUND

Improvements can be made to ensure victims are timely informed of their rights and notified of court proceedings.

The audit found that, generally, advocates contacted victims to inform them of their legal rights and notified them of court proceedings when requested. Some exceptions were noted where missing information may delay these notifications.

- Of the 24 cases reviewed (14 selected judgmentally and 10 randomly), 8 had delays in the initial notifications and files did not contain pre-conviction rights forms from Police.
- Requiring victim signatures on these Police forms could also delay the invocation of rights.
- Incorrect or outdated victim contact information impacted about 20% of cases.
- In 1 case, several notifications for court proceedings were not sent after the victim invoked. Improvements to data captured by the information system could allow for quality review and reporting.

Additional system controls and automation could improve data reliability and privacy, and opportunities exist to streamline the notification process.

- Additional data validation controls and further automation of the notification process could help improve data quality and increase efficiency.
- Technology staff's access to privileged victim communications needs to be evaluated.

WHAT WE RECOMMEND

We recommend the department:

- Work with the Police Department to ensure pre-conviction rights forms are included in reports, and also accept unsigned requests to invoke victim rights.
- Offer web-based options for victims to provide or update contact information and complete other Victim Services forms.
- Work with IT staff to implement system changes that would allow management to routinely verify completion of required services, implement additional data validation controls, and further automate the notification process.
- Evaluate Technology staff's access to privileged victim information.

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

The department agreed with the recommendations and plans to implement changes by May 2024.