

## **An arrest was made in my case. What happens next?**

When an arrest is made in your case, the investigating officer or detective will usually contact you. From that point, the officer or detective will take whatever steps are necessary to complete the case file for prosecution. This completed file is then turned over to the District Attorney's Office (DA). When your case is turned over to the DA, it's journey through the criminal justice system is just beginning. This can frequently be a lengthy process and one that we at the police department do not have any control over.

Once the DA receives the file, the case will be assigned to a prosecutor. At this point you might be contacted by the DA's Office or Victim / Witness Assistance Program (VWAP), which is a program within their office. They might want to meet with you or witnesses in the case and may have additional questions concerning your expectations, restitution, etc. If you do receive a call from the DA or VWAP and details of the case are to be discussed, be sure that you know whom you are actually speaking with. Although rare, there is a potential for someone associated with the defendant to contact a victim or witness by phone and attempt to try and gather or trick them into providing information that could be damaging to a case. If you have any doubt about who you are speaking with, ask the party to hang up and allow you to place a call back to their office number. Local numbers for the DA & VWAP are:

District Attorney's Office - 706.635.5381    VWAP-706.635.5122

In felony cases, the case must be prepared and presented before a Grand Jury for indictment. This can take anywhere from one to several months, depending upon a variety of factors (crime lab results, additional interviews, etc.). In some rare cases, you as a victim might be requested to testify, but most of the time, the investigating officer presents the case to the Grand Jury and you will not be required to appear.

After indictment the case is usually then placed (along with numerous others) on the court calendar for arraignment. This is the point where the defendant is required to appear and enter a plea before the court. Again, in most cases it is not necessary for victims to appear at the

arraignment. If you should be needed, the investigating officer or someone from the DA's Office will contact you.

If a defendant enters a "not guilty" plea, the case will then be put on the trial calendar. Again, this process can be time consuming and in the interim, there may be pre-trial hearings and any number of offers and counter-offers exchanged between the District Attorney's Office and Defense Counsel, in an effort to reach a plea agreement. As the victim, you may have questions during the process and you should feel free to direct these questions to the investigating officer or District Attorney's Office. We will make every attempt to assist you and help you through the process, to the best of our ability.