

April 18-24 is Crime Victim's Awareness week, and the theme for 2021 is "**Support Victims, Build Trust and Engage Communities.**" Your local TRIAD includes a representative from the Stafford Victim/Witness Assistance Program. Most counties and jurisdictions in the state of Virginia have an advocate to assist crime victims. Some victim/witness programs are in the sheriff's office; others are within the Commonwealth Attorney's Office. Virginia Code (19.2-11.01) details the rights of victims to include: protection, financial assistance, notices, victim input and courtroom assistance. Types of charges that might occur to a senior include: elder abuse or neglect, larceny, assault, or destruction of private property.

Seniors may have questions about what to expect after they have had contact with law enforcement when a crime has occurred to them. Once an arrest has been made in the case, charges are presented to the state prosecutor. As a victim, you may direct your inquiries to your local victim/witness program. Advocates can clarify your role in the court case, explain court procedures, accompany you to court, provide case status updates, and make referrals to community agencies when appropriate. Victim/Witness programs are here to support victims, build trust, and engage our communities.