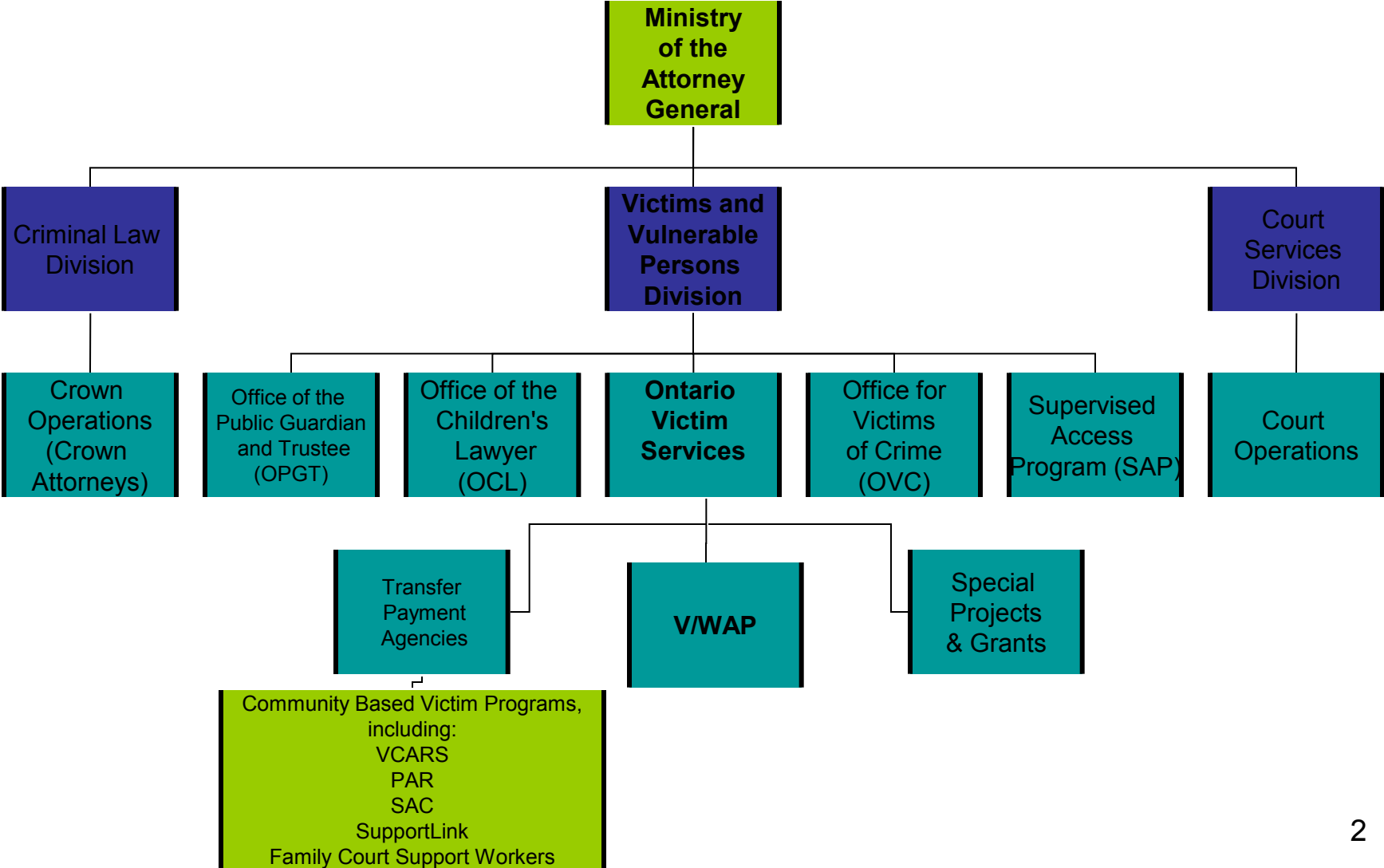


Victims and Vulnerable Persons Division  
Ministry of the Attorney General

**Victim/Witness Assistance Program**  
**[Muskoka VWAP**  
**10 – 29 Manitoba St.**  
**Bracebridge, ON**  
**705-645-3516**  
**January 2012]**

# Organizational Chart: V/WAP's Location



## Historical Overview

- 1986 – V/WAP received cabinet approval for implementation of Program sites in Crown Attorney’s offices.
- 1987 – V/WAP offices established as a pilot project in eight court jurisdictions across Ontario – funded by Ontario Women’s Directorate
- On June 11, 1996, Ontario proclaimed the *Victims’ Bill of Rights*.
- Expansion during the late 1990’s –fully funded through Victims Justice Fund
- Program has expanded to 62 sites across the province and is available in every court jurisdiction.
- *Local site(s) information*

## V/WAP Mandate & Goals

### Mandate:

Provide **information, assistance** and **support** to victims and witnesses of crime throughout the criminal court process in order **to improve** their **understanding** of and **participation** in the criminal court process.

The primary goals of the V/WAP program are to:

- Enhance victim/witness understanding of and participation in the criminal justice system.
- Assist the victim/witness to regain a sense of well-being.
- Ensure coordination of community support structures to assist victims of crime.

# A Victim is....

*...a person to whom harm was done or who suffered physical or emotional loss as a result of the commission of the offence.*

Section 722(4) Criminal Code of Canada

## **Primary Victim:**

- Actual Victim – the survivor or deceased

## **Secondary Victims:**

- Family members
  - Spouse/partner
  - Parents
  - Children
- Friends, Colleagues, Neighbour and/or Community

## Core Client Cases

The program helps the most vulnerable victims and witnesses of crime, including:

- Child Abuse
- Sexual Assault – including historical sexual assault and human trafficking
- Intimate partner abuse/domestic violence
- Families of Homicide victims
- Families of motor vehicle fatalities
- Victims with disabilities
- Elderly victims
- Victims of Hate Crimes

# When Does V/WAP Get Involved

- After a criminal charge is laid
- Services continue until case disposition
- Referrals to the program can be made at any stage of the Criminal Court Process
- VWAP services are offered and accepted on a voluntary basis

# Impacts/Stressors for Clients

- Crisis
- Lack of control
- Lack of consent or informed consent
- Giving a statement
- Child and Family Services involvement
- Financial pressures
- Family pressures
- Mistrust of the system and/or justice stakeholders
- Anxiety related to the criminal justice process
- Fear of repercussions
- Safety concerns
- Barriers – language and/or cultural



# Core Services

V/WAP offers the following core client services to victims and witnesses:

- Information about the criminal justice process
- Case specific information
- Emotional support, including crisis intervention, advocacy & debriefing
- Needs assessment and appropriate referrals to community services
- Discussions of safety issues and referrals for comprehensive safety planning
- Communication with Crown Attorneys and Police regarding the victim's needs and input
- Court preparation and orientation
- Safe waiting area prior to testifying
- Information about Victim Impact Statements, Criminal Injuries Compensation Board and other support services available to victims of crime (e.g. Victim Support Line, Parole Board of Canada)
- Court accompaniment for vulnerable clients where no other suitable support person or service is available
- Coordination of community services

## Important Things To Note

In addition to the core services provided, V/WAP participates in the community through:

- Public education and training
- Community coordination
- Liaison and communication with justice and community stakeholders

V/WAP staff cannot:

- Discuss evidence with clients
- Provide childcare services
- Provide or pay for transportation
- Provide legal advice to clients

## Benefits of V/WAP Services

V/WAP services benefit clients by:

- Addressing client fears
- Reducing anxiety
- Facilitating trust
- Reducing long-term effects of trauma
- Addressing safety issues early
- Identifying the need and advocating for testimonial aids
- Providing timely access to case specific information and community referrals
- Enhancing victims and witnesses understanding of and participation in the criminal court process
- Ensuring that clients receive coordinated services

## Referrals to V/WAP

Victims and witnesses are referred to V/WAP through various sources, including:

- Crown attorney's office
- Police
- Victim Services/Victim Crisis Assistance and Referral Services
- Shelters
- Sexual Assault Centers
- Child Protection Services (i.e. Children's Aid)
- Health professionals
- Private therapists
- Other community agencies
- Self-referral

# Questions

