



# OFFICE OF THE STATE'S ATTORNEY

ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY, MARYLAND



*Anne Colt Leitess, State's Attorney*

## Anne Arundel Justice

A Monthly News Digest from the Office of the State's Attorney for Anne Arundel County

### A Message from Anne Arundel County State's Attorney Anne Colt Leitess

Welcome to the May 2020 edition of Anne Arundel Justice.

I hope that everyone is staying safe and healthy as we navigate the changes brought to our daily lives by the COVID-19 pandemic. Even though 90 percent of the State's Attorney's Office staff is working remotely, we continue to respond to the public, victims of crime and "appear" in three different courts daily for telephonic court hearings. We answer our phones and emails, conduct lots of video meetings and we even set up an email to answer all court-related questions at [SAOQuestions@aacounty.org](mailto:SAOQuestions@aacounty.org). We understand how upsetting it is for victims and witnesses whose cases have been put on hold. We also know that defendants and their families are faced with challenges in navigating the court system during this public emergency and that we can provide information and be responsive to the public during the court's closure, now in its seventh week!

My office instituted a number of proactive policies to mitigate the disruptions to the criminal justice system as a result of the statewide closure of the courts. Our attorneys appear remotely for all court hearings, including daily bail reviews, guilty pleas, violation of probation hearings, drug court review hearings, juvenile detention hearings and other emergency matters. With concern for COVID-19 infection at the local detention center, our prosecutors collaborated with the Office of the Public Defender in reviewing the records of 213 people being held pre-trial in the Anne Arundel County Detention Center to determine whether any were qualified for release pending trial. We agreed that nearly 40 people being held on minor, nonviolent offenses were candidates for release with close supervision such as electronic monitoring. We also reviewed the records of every juvenile detained pre-trial in an Anne Arundel County case and agreed to the release of half of those respondents with community supervision. We considered the safety of the detained individuals and the safety of our community. Our victim witness advocates continue to work with victims, especially victims of violent crime and domestic violence, by connecting them to resources and providing information on the status of their cases.

The courts are scheduled to reopen on **June 8**, however no jurors will be called in during the first six weeks to allow the court to focus on reducing the backlog of cases. Although final plans have not been announced, during those first six weeks, the Circuit Court will most likely hear a variety of family law cases, guilty pleas, criminal sentencings, initial appearances and other matters, while protective orders, peace orders and preliminary hearings for felony cases will be the priority in District Court. In addition, our Circuit Court has instituted a policy of mandatory temperature checks and face masks for everyone entering the building and gloves when delivering files or paperwork in the courthouse. Those requirements and other safety considerations, such as continued social distancing, and sanitation are expected to be part of the protocols in place when the courts reopen.

If you have a question about a District Court criminal, serious traffic case or bail review, or you need to speak to the duty attorney, call (410) 222-6085, Monday through Friday, from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Circuit Court inquiries regarding criminal cases or bail reviews, or to speak to the duty attorney, will be answered at (410) 222-1740, Monday through Friday, from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at (410) 222-1740.

While the staff in our office is able to do our jobs remotely, others are not as fortunate and are being laid off or their business closed. We decided to take action and I'm proud to say that more than 40 employees in the Office of the State's Attorney donated a total of \$2,270 to the Anne Arundel County Food Bank in early April. The Anne Arundel County Food Bank has experienced a 243 percent increase in demand for food, and has a continuing need for supplies, non-perishable food, volunteers and money. I encourage each of you to consider donating to your local food bank or food pantry. You can donate online at [afoodbank.org](http://afoodbank.org).

Unfortunately, during this difficult time, incidents of **domestic violence** are increasing. If you or someone you know is experiencing abuse, please call 911 or contact the [Anne Arundel County Crisis Warmline](#), a service that provides Anne Arundel County Residents in crisis with supportive assistance and access to resources within the community 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The phone number is 410-768-5522. This, and other [services](#), is available to help you with emergency shelter and other necessary resources.

For up-to-date information, be sure to visit our website and follow us on our social media channels:

**AnneArundelSAO on Instagram and Twitter**

**Anne Arundel County State's Attorney's Office on Facebook**

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**National Crime Victims' Rights Week:  
Seek Justice | Ensure Victims' Rights | Inspire Hope**



*(Office of the State's Attorney for Anne Arundel County Victim/Witness Advocates)*

In recognition of National Crime Victims' Rights Week, I would like to applaud the dedicated work of crime victim/witness advocates, professionals and volunteers who are dedicated to helping victims affected by crime. Unfortunately, due to the court's closure we could not honor them at our annual awards luncheon but we celebrate their service remotely nonetheless.

Established in 1982, NCVRW is a week-long celebration in April which raises awareness about crime victims' issues, their rights and provides information to the community about important resources and services. According to the most recent National Crime Victimization Survey from the Bureau of Justice Statistics, nearly 3.3 million Americans age 12 or older were victims of violent crime in 2018. For some victims, seeking justice in court is one way to make progress toward healing while other victims decide that the path of advocacy is a way forward in the aftermath of crime.

In our Office, we have a dynamic group of victim-witness advocates who are committed to supporting victims of crime after an unforeseen circumstance that has forever altered their lives and the lives of others. We provide each victim and witness with the necessary resources and support such as emotional support, information regarding the criminal justice system and assistance in accessing important resources. During each step of the process, someone who truly cares is there standing alongside them restoring hope as they reclaim their peace! If you would like to learn more about NCVRW, please click [here](#).

Stay safe and thank you for your continuing interest in the Office of the State's Attorney for Anne Arundel County.

[www.aacounty.org/departments/sao](http://www.aacounty.org/departments/sao)

