**Hints for Helping Victims**

* Ask the victims to **describe the event**
* Ask the victims to **describe where they were, who they were with, and what they saw,** **heard, touched or did at the time of the crime.**
* Ask the victims what **they remember** thinking at the time, as they became aware of what was happening.
* Ask the victims to **describe their reactions and responses.** As the victims begin the description, remember to validate their reactions and responses. If they say, “I remember turning stone cold when I felt his hand on my back and a tug at my purse,” say, “Some people have called that the ‘frozen fright’ reaction.”
* Ask the victims to **describe what has happened since the crime**, including contact with family members, friends, the criminal justice system, and so on.
* Ask the victims to **describe other reactions** they have experienced up to now, again validating those reactions.
* **If some time has passed**, ask if the victims are experiencing any difficulty with eating,sleeping, irritability, concentration, intense emotions, or numbness, etc. Try to determine at what level the victims have been able to function in the aftermath. You may want to take note of these symptoms. Determine if their reactions are or are not improving over time. If they are not improving refer the victims for additional help.
* **Review the Things to Say and Things Not to Say to a Victim handout**
* To improve communication with the victims, avoid words like
* “**Feelings**” – it’s better to stick with words like **“reactions”**
* “**Share**” or “**Sharing**” – instead ask them to tell you about their experiences. Do not ask them to share or thank them for sharing their experience; no one can truly share a person’s experience, even if they have been through a similar event.
* “**Client**,” “**victim**,” or “**survivor**” – use the person’s preferred name instead
* Avoid “**alleged**” when referring to victims. Let the lawyers speak of the “alleged” victims or suspects. Victim advocates should assume that the people who describe themselves as a victim are what they say they are, victims of crime.