Interviewing the Victim

- Detectives shall prioritize the needs and comfort of the victim.
- Patient, skillful, and tactful questioning is critical for the victim’s long-term health and well-being. Investigators must refrain from lines of questioning and language that may cause victims to feel responsible for their victimization.
- Investigative notes and reports must be written in first-person, using the victim’s language and terminology and including direct quotes from the victim (i.e., avoid sanitizing the language).
- Detectives will avoid asking questions or making statements the victim and his/her family may interpret as blaming the victim. Examples include:
  - “Why didn’t you run?”
  - “Why didn’t you scream?”
  - “Why didn’t you fight back?” and,
  - “That doesn’t make sense.”
- The skillful detective/interviewer will tactfully explain why sensitive questions are necessary to further the investigation. For example, an investigator could say: “I need to ask these questions because I have to write a report on this, and I want to get every detail correct.”
- Detectives will not use quotations around the incident under investigation (e.g., “rape”) and shall refrain from using language that implies victim deception. Simply document the facts as they are understood at the time they are reported.
- Victims will not, under any circumstances, be interviewed in a suspect interrogation room/holding cell.
- Detectives will run wanted checks on all suspects, witnesses, and victims, consistent with departmental policy (see PCM 02-02). However, detectives will consult with the Office of the State’s Attorney when victims are found to have open warrants for misdemeanor offenses or felony offenses that are five years or older, as these charges may be quashed or converted to a criminal summons.