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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

It's A Rule, Not an Exception

May 01, 2013-Hagatna, Guam- Contact with victims and notification is the rule in my office, not the exception. We have a team of dedicated victim witness advocates who, from the moment we receive the police reports are contacting victims, getting contact information and informing them about what happens next.

The law requires notification after the victim has given a written request to us. We take that step out and contact them as soon as we get the case. We do not need a written request.

Crown bakery is currently under litigation while the separate Tedtaotao case is currently under investigation, so we cannot discuss them. Note that Tedtaotao's credit card and related charges case was dismissed without prejudice.

We have standard operating procedures regarding victim contact and notice. For the most part, they are followed. As I stated earlier, notice and contact is the rule, but that doesn't mean the rules weren't followed in some cases.

We only hear about the ones that fall through the cracks. But I want to hear that. Our system works. It's not perfect, but it works. Can it be tweaked to work better? Of course, it can. No system is perfect.

There is where we as an institution attempt to correct the situation. We are instituting regular training on the Crime Victims Rights Act. We are finding that regular training may be necessary for our prosecution staff and VWAS. As we hire new prosecutors, we want to make certain they know the rules.

The courts are requiring advocates be available not only for the adult cases, but also for the family division cases. We have also assigned an advocate to the Family Justice Center in Dededo.

We recently met with the victim in the Crown Bakery case and assured her that the most culpable actor in her case has not been released and we will not agree to any release.

We also had a good, long, wide-ranging discussion not only about her case, but about improving the current system. We discussed current legislation and working with the legislature on passing this like mandatory minimum sentencing on certain classes of crimes.

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We even discussed a “three strikes” rule similar to California and twenty-one other states. I support that rule.

After our meeting with the victim in the Crown Bakery case, she has expressed a desire to work with us along with Random Women’s Rally (RAWR) to make our good system even better. We intend to reach out to RAWR in the next week.

It is important that we hear from the ultimate consumers of the law, the victims and their families themselves. It is they whom we serve. It is they who will tell us it's not working the way it should. And we do hear from them. Theirs are the voices we should not ignore.

Again, victim contact is the rule and not the exception. We are like any number of AG’s offices, District Attorneys Offices, and Prosecuting Attorneys Offices around the nation: high numbers of cases; low numbers of prosecutors and advocates. Those numbers are not excuses, but explain some of the practical reasons why in some cases, they fall through the cracks.

It is open discussions with legislature and victims that help up to fully implement the Crime Victims Rights Act and to assist my hard-working staff to do their job to serve the public.

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