



Kern County Sheriff's Office

Policies and Procedures

TITLE: SECRET WITNESS/KERN'S MOST WANTED		NO: J-620	
APPROVED: Donny Youngblood, Sheriff-Coroner			
EFFECTIVE: April 12, 2000	REVIEWED: 06/01/2018	REVISED: 06/26/2000	UPDATED: 06/01/2018

POLICY

The Secret Witness Program was formed as a public benefit, non-profit corporation in 1982. It has since absorbed the Kern's Most Wanted Program. It is a collaborative effort between law enforcement and the community to involve the public in the criminal justice system by removing the fear of reprisal for assisting law enforcement through a guarantee that those providing information will never be identified by the Secret Witness Program. Rewards are available for those who provide information and are administered by the Secret Witness Board of Directors. All funding to the Secret Witness Program comes from community donations. The Sheriff's Office will support the Secret Witness Program and utilize it as a valuable tool to solve crimes and apprehend wanted persons.

DEFINITIONS

Secret Witness: This program exists to assist law enforcement in solving crimes when all investigative leads have been exhausted or the crime is serious and a quick resolution is necessary to protect public safety. It maintains a 24-hour hotline for the receipt of information provided by members of the public. The information may be in response to a law enforcement agency's request for assistance on unsolved crimes, or it may be unsolicited information about a crime or a wanted person. The caller is given a code name and number. The hotline documents the information and faxes it to the appropriate law enforcement agency. When the information is successful in solving a crime, or locates a wanted person, the Secret Witness Board of Directors will determine the significance of the information. The Board of Directors has sole discretion to authorize a reward and set the value of the reward. The caller is then asked to contact the hotline to arrange for the collection of the reward.

Kern's Most Wanted: This program is utilized to seek the public's assistance in locating known wanted persons by publicizing the information in the local media outlets.

DIRECTIVE 1

Administrative responsibility for the program will rotate between the Sheriff's Office and the Bakersfield Police Department. Each agency will retain such responsibility for two years. Administrative responsibility includes providing a location for meetings of the Board of Directors; one of the department's representatives will be the President of the Board of Directors; oversight of the program's telephone system and dissemination of information; providing a

department member to act as the program's bookkeeper.

DIRECTIVE 2

The by-laws of the Secret Witness Program restrict the Sheriff's Office to two members on the Board of Directors. The Sheriff's Office's representatives will be the Communications Division Commander and the Detective Division Commander. The agency will also provide a member of the Financial Services Division to attend meetings and act as the program's bookkeeper when the agency has administrative responsibility for the program. This person will not sit on the Board of Directors.

PROCEDURE A: Submitting Information to the Secret Witness Program

DIRECTIVE A-1

Unit supervisors (including substations) must approve the information submitted to the Secret Witness Program to ensure that individuals are not endangered and/or the investigation is not compromised.

Officers submitting an investigation or suspect to Secret Witness will:

- Prepare a memo or bulletin containing the information to be released.
 - Include photos if available and/or appropriate.
- Submit the document to the unit supervisor.

The Unit Supervisor will:

- Approve or deny the Secret Witness Program request;
- Submit the approved documents to the Detective Division Commander;
 - In his absence, submit the request to the Communications Division Commander.

The Detective Division Commander or the Communications Center Commander will:

- Approve or deny the program request. If the designated commander denies the request, he/she will inform the unit supervisor the reasons for the denial.

J-620-2

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If approved, the Commander will:

- Fax the document to:

Bakersfield Californian 395-7519

KGET Channel 17 283-1855

KERO Channel 23 323-5538

KBAK Channel 29 861-9810

- If the document contains photographs that cannot be faxed, arrange delivery of the document to the above listed outlets.

PROCEDURE B: Receipt of Information

DIRECTIVE B-1

Information received by the Secret Witness hotline is faxed to the appropriate law enforcement agency. If the information should be acted on immediately, it is sent to that agency's Communications Center to initiate action on the information. In these circumstances, the Communications Center for the Sheriff's Office will also fax the information to the Detective Division Commander. Non-urgent information for the Sheriff's Office is faxed to the Detective Division Commander by the Secret Witness hotline. He/she will route the information to the appropriate person/work unit for action.

DIRECTIVE B-2

The Detective Division Commander will maintain a log of all information sent to the Sheriff's Office from the Secret Witness hotline. At a minimum the log will contain the Secret Witness log number; date received by the Sheriff's Office; type of crime or incident alleged; unit the information was assigned to for action, and the disposition of that information. A copy of the information received will be attached to the log sheet. He/she is also responsible for reporting successful dispositions to the Secret Witness Board of Directors.

J-620-3

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