

Vera Institute of Justice

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.vera.org/publications/the-effects-of-witness-information-provided-by-the-victim-witness-assistance-project>

Policy Issue Resources

Publication

This report reviews the results of three studies which examined the impact of several types of witness information provided by the Victim/Witness Assistance Project to the King's County District Attorney's Office and Brooklyn Criminal Court. Each type of information is intended to aid court officials in making decisions in individual cases. One form of information provided to courtroom prosecutors is an assessment of the cooperativeness of civilian witnesses. It was anticipated that this assessment would enable prosecutors to make more informed decisions about which cases to continue and which to dispose, in instances when witnesses were absent from court. A second form of information discussed is the project's Recommended Immediate Action List, forwarded to the Criminal Court Bureau Chief of the King's County District Attorney's Office. Its purpose is to seek an early termination of cases in which an essential witness has been chronically absent from court and/or has stated that he refuses to appear. A third type of information discussed in this report is data on future availability of police witnesses, which V/WAP provides to the prosecutor and the court for use in setting adjournment dates. The studies found that each of these forms of information do influence decisions made by court officials and have acted to promote more efficient case management.

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