

Evidence and Property Management Policy – Template

Victim-Centered and Trauma-Informed Practices

Despite progress in establishing federal and state crime victims' rights legislation, only a small percentage of victims obtain the information and services they are entitled to receive. The criminal justice system has historically focused on apprehending, prosecuting, adjudicating, and punishing offenders – often leaving the critical needs of crime victims unmet.¹

Victims may experience trauma from the crime itself, their injuries or losses, their involvement in the criminal justice process, and other forms of pre-existing trauma that may affect their experiences in the criminal justice process. Law enforcement agency personnel should follow a victim-centered, trauma-informed approach to address victims' needs.²

Law enforcement agencies are encouraged to expand victim-centered, trauma-informed practices to all contact points experienced by victims. Victim response should be an agencywide priority and written policies should be developed to guide personnel actions.³

Victim-centered – placing the crime victim's priorities, needs, and interests at the center of the work with the victim; providing nonjudgmental assistance, with an emphasis on self-determination, where appropriate, and assisting victims in making informed choices; ensuring that restoring victims' feelings of safety and security are a priority and safeguarding against policies and practices that may inadvertently re-traumatize victims; ensuring that victims' rights, voices, and perspectives are incorporated when developing and implementing system- and community-based efforts that impact crime victims.

Trauma-informed – approaches delivered with an understanding of the vulnerabilities and experiences of trauma survivors, including the prevalence and physical, social, and emotional impact of trauma. A trauma-informed approach recognizes signs of trauma and responds by integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, practices, and settings.

**Definitions used in OVC Model Standards*

Intention of Policy Template

The intention of this document is to provide law enforcement agencies with sample language and content for use when establishing or revising written policies to guide victim-centered, trauma-informed evidence and property management. Agency personnel should review and revise the *Evidence and Property Management Policy – Template* to ensure consistency with federal and state statutes and agency policies, procedures, and practices.

¹ [IACP ELERV – Introduction to the ELERV Strategy \(theiacp.org\)](#)

² [The Attorney General Guidelines for Victim and Witness Assistance 2022 \(justice.gov\)](#)

³ [KeyConsiderations.pdf \(theiacp.org\)](#)

Contributing Agencies

The *Evidence and Property Management Policy – Template* was adapted through review of the following law enforcement agencies' existing policies:

- Baltimore Police Department – Maryland
 - Bee Cave Police Department – Texas
 - Casper Police Department – Wyoming
 - Gainesville Police Department – Florida
 - Lakeway Police Department – Texas
 - Montgomery County Police Department – Maryland
 - Saginaw Police Department – Michigan
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Additional Resources

The following resources may provide additional, but not exhaustive, information on the topics:

Law Enforcement and Victim Response

- [DOJ | The Attorney General Guidelines for Victim and Witness Assistance 2022](#)
- [OVC | Achieving Excellence: Model Standards for Serving Victims & Survivors of Crime](#)
- [OVC - IACP | Enhancing Law Enforcement Response to Victims \(ELERV\)](#)
- [OVC - IACP | Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services \(LEV\)](#)
- [BJA - RTI | Sexual Assault Kit Initiative \(SAKI\)](#)
- [BJA - RTI | Communicating With Individuals Impacted by Cold Case Violent Crimes](#)

Preservation and Storage Practices

- [Library of Congress | Collections Care](#)
- [Storage Techniques for Art, Science and History](#)

Traditional and Cultural Practices

- [Learn Religions](#)
 - [Smithsonian Institute | Native Knowledge 360°](#)
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Evidence and Property Management Policy – Template

This template provides sample language and content to help law enforcement agencies develop a written policy to guide agency actions related to victim-centered, trauma-informed evidence and property management. Agency personnel, including legal counsel and human resources staff, should review and revise this template to ensure consistency with federal and state statutes and agency's policies, procedures, and practices.

[Agency Letterhead]

Evidence and Property Management

PURPOSE

Proper discovery, collection, preservation, submission, management, and documentation of evidence contribute to criminal investigations and prosecution. The [agency name] is committed to maintaining the integrity of evidence and property in its possession. Victim-centered, trauma-informed practices will be incorporated when managing evidence and property, to include respecting known traditional or cultural practices when possible.

POLICY

It is the policy of [agency name] to secure all items from theft, loss, contamination, deterioration, and damage whenever possible and maintain items for easy retrieval when needed. Items that are no longer needed for investigation and prosecution are the property of the rightful owners and shall be maintained until they can be returned or disposed of according to the rightful owners' expressed desires. Items whose rightful owners cannot be located shall be lawfully disposed of, including donation, transition to [agency name] use, auction, sale, or destruction. Items that are determined to be contraband shall be destroyed.

DEFINITIONS

Chain of custody – a chronological documentation of the handling of evidence. It involves keeping a detailed log showing who collected, handled, transferred, or analyzed evidence during an investigation.⁴

Contraband – items that cannot lawfully be in the possession of a member of the public.

Evidence – items in the possession of [agency name] that may be used to prove or disprove facts related to matters that are being investigated, criminal charges that have been filed, or cases pending prosecution.

Property – items in the possession of [agency name], including those initially submitted as evidence, that are not connected with any matters that are being investigated, criminal charges that have been filed, or cases pending prosecution.

- **Found Property** – items whose rightful owner(s) cannot be determined.
- **Release-Ready Property** – items that are not subject to any legal process or do not require maintenance by [agency name].
- **Safekeeping Property** – items that are temporarily held by [agency name] on behalf of the rightful owners as the result of arrests, psychiatric evaluations, or other events involving safety concerns.

⁴ [Chain of Custody - Definition, Examples, Cases, Processes \(legaldictionary.net\)](#)

- **Seized Property** – items where forfeiture under state or federal legal proceedings [*statutory citation/s*] is being pursued by [*agency name*].
- **Surrendered Property** – items for disposal by [*agency name*] at the rightful owner(s)' request.

Rightful Owner – person determined to have a just or legally established claim to items in the possession of [*agency name*].⁵

Temporary Storage Locations – areas designated by [*agency name*] for the submission of evidence and property items to facilitate personnel efficiency while maintaining chain of custody standards.

Victims' Rights – language included in constitutions, statutes, rules, and policies that vary by federal, state, or tribal jurisdiction and define legal responsibilities related to victims of crime, affording them independent, participatory status in the criminal justice system.⁶

- [*citation(s) to state victims' rights statutes*]
- **Co-victim** – individual who has lost a loved one to homicide, including family members, other relatives, and friends of the decedent.⁷
- **Victim** – individual who is an independent participant in the criminal case under federal or state victims' rights laws or tribal victims' rights codes, denotes a person's legal status (unavailable to the general public), and defines the level and extent of participation that the individual is entitled to in the criminal matter.⁸
- **Witness** – individual who has personal knowledge of information or actions that are relative to the incident being investigated.⁹

Witnesses who do not meet the statutory definition of crime victim do not have enforceable victims' rights. Agency personnel should use available resources, without infringing on defendants' constitutional rights, to assist witnesses during their interactions with the criminal justice system.¹⁰

PERSONNEL AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Evidence and Property personnel shall satisfactorily complete designated evidence and property management training. This includes but is not limited to [*course name/s*].

- **Evidence and Property Manager** [*substitute with agency title*] – personnel responsible for the overall [*agency name*] evidence and property functions, facilities, temporary storage locations, and personnel, including the development, revision, and integration of policies and procedures.
- **Evidence and Property Custodian** [*substitute with agency title*] – personnel assigned to maintain the evidence, property, and designated facilities according to established standards and maintain documentation of [*agency name*] actions associated with evidence and property.
- **Evidence and Property Courier** [*substitute with agency title*] – personnel assigned to transport evidence and property in the possession of [*agency name*] between locations to uphold chain of custody standards.

⁵ [Rightful Definition & Meaning - Merriam-Webster](#)

⁶ Definitions used in Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services publications, produced by the International Association of Chiefs of Police.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ [The Attorney General Guidelines for Victim and Witness Assistance 2022 \(justice.gov\)](#)

Victim Services personnel – personnel (paid or unpaid) designated to provide law enforcement-based program oversight, crisis intervention, criminal justice support, community referrals, and advocacy on behalf of crime victims, witnesses, survivors, and co-victims.¹¹ These personnel, upon request and when available, can:

- Coordinate with Evidence and Property personnel to facilitate the expressed desires of victims, co-victims, and witnesses related to items in possession of [agency name].
- Communicate with appropriate personnel when victims, co-victims, and witnesses are seeking expedited release of property.
- Explain evidence and property policies and practices to victims, co-victims, and witnesses and provide accompaniment during property return processes to provide information and support. This includes explanation of and coordination with probate court processes when applicable.
- Assist victims, co-victims, and witnesses with [state victim compensation applications when applicable] or other resolution options for items that have deteriorated or been damaged while in possession of [agency name].

Victim Services personnel are prohibited from searching for, collecting, storing, or transporting evidence. If evidence is received by Victim Services personnel unsolicited (e.g., text message from victim containing screen shots of suspect communication), they shall immediately notify the assigned investigator of the related case.

Collection, Packaging, and Submission

During field interactions, sworn personnel may release property to the rightful owner(s) at any time prior to submission to Evidence and Property facilities, temporary storage locations, or personnel if

- 1) the items are not connected with any matter that are being investigated, criminal charges that have been filed, or cases pending prosecution,
- 2) the items are alleged to have been unlawfully taken with the intent to deprive the rightful owners of use or enjoyment, or
- 3) photographs in lieu of collection will meet standards for effective investigation and prosecution of criminal allegations.

Sworn personnel will photograph all items and the photographs should include any serial or unique identification markings. Sworn personnel will conduct property releases on video (when feasible), complete Property Release Forms, document property releases in [agency RMS], and attach photographs, videos, and completed forms.

Field Collection

Field collection may be completed by sworn personnel and crime scene evidence technicians. All items collected will be documented in [agency RMS]. Documentation will include

- 1) item descriptions,
- 2) information on the rightful owners, the persons who found the items, or from whom the items were collected,

¹¹ Ibid.

- 3) inquiry results through [*state database*]/NCIC for serialized or identifiable items, and
- 4) the facilities or temporary storage locations where items have been submitted. Assigned personal lockers, filing cabinets, desks, and vehicles are not approved for evidence and property storage.

Personal items belonging to individuals taken into custody will be turned over to [*jail agency*]. Items left in vehicles will be included in impound inventories. When possible, known traditional or cultural practices will be respected during the collections of items (e.g., gender-specific staff to collect religious head covering with biological material from female victim) and the connection of known those practices to items collected from rightful owner(s) will be documented in [*agency RMS*] (e.g., item is a Native American ceremonial pipe).

Packaging

Envelopes, bags, and boxes are the primary methods for packaging items submitted as evidence and property. Tags will be affixed to items that do not fit into envelopes, bags, or boxes and they will be placed in [*temporary storage locations*]. When possible, one designated staff member (e.g., sworn officer, crime scene evidence technician) will package and seal all evidence from each crime scene.

- Evidence – affix completed Chain of Custody Forms and tamper-proof integrity seals to each item submitted. Submitting personnel will include their initials and date over the seals prior to submission.
- Property – affix completed Property Receipt Forms to each item submitted.

Additional procedures for the following item categories include:

- Ammunition – package all ammunition, expended cartridges, and shell casings separate from collected firearms.
- Bicycles – photograph areas in need of further processing for evidence if applicable (e.g., paint transfer, collection of biological material).
- Biological material (e.g., blood, bodily fluids) – use personal protection measures when handling items. Air-dry items and protect from direct sunlight/UV exposure prior to packaging items in paper. Package all items separately to avoid cross contamination and mark with [*agency practice*] prior to submission.
- Controlled substances – all items will be submitted as evidence. Photograph all items, package separately to avoid cross contamination, and mark with [*agency practice*] prior to submission.
- Currency – all currency will be submitted as evidence. Itemize by denomination, verify totals by two sworn personnel. Photograph or photocopy currency (when feasible), describe itemized denominations, and include signatures of both personnel on packaging prior to submission. For suspected counterfeit currency, itemize by denomination and note “no cash value.”
- Firearms – ensure firearms are unloaded, safe, and secure chambers/cylinders with nylon closures prior to placing them in boxes. Only sworn or specially trained forensic unit personnel are permitted to collect firearms. If firearms cannot be unloaded due to malfunction or damage, Evidence and Property personnel will be consulted to identify a viable solution for submission and storage.
- Flammable items – photograph all items and do NOT submit.
 - Chemicals, explosives, compressed gas/air, corrosives, and comparable items – consult with the Evidence and Property personnel to identify a viable solution for items that need to be preserved as evidence.

- Fireworks – soak in water and place in plastic bags prior to disposal.
- Food, liquids, and perishables – photograph all items and do not submit. Return to owners or dispose if owners are unknown. Consult with Evidence and Property personnel to identify a viable solution for items that need to be preserved as evidence.
- Items with connected known traditional or cultural practices – clearly note preferred handling and storage practices on packaging (e.g., avoid touching head of Buddha statue).
- Jewelry (e.g., precious metals) – all jewelry will be submitted as evidence. Photograph all items, describe each item (e.g., “gold in color,” “clear stone”) using terms that do not imply monetary value, and place them in separate envelopes or bags prior to submission.
- Motor vehicles – photograph areas in need of further processing for evidence if applicable (e.g., paint transfer, collection of biological material). Consult with Evidence and Property personnel to identify a viable solution for motor vehicles that need to be preserved as evidence.
- Serialized items – package each item separately.
- Sharp instruments (e.g., broken glass, knives, needles, razor blades, syringes, taser probes) – use sharps containers (if available) and encase items in cardboard wrapping prior to placing them in envelopes, bags, or boxes.
- Tasers – remove cartridges and batteries prior to submission.

Submission

Sworn personnel and crime scene evidence technicians will ensure all collected items are submitted to designated facilities or temporary storage locations prior to the end of their shift. Sworn personnel will notify Evidence and Property personnel when items have been submitted to temporary storage locations.

Evidence and Property personnel have the authority to reject any evidence and property items that are submitted in an unsafe, incomplete, or improper manner. The Evidence and Property Custodian will notify the submitting personnel and their immediate supervisors when items are rejected to identify a viable solution for proper submission.

Facilities and Temporary Storage Access

Access to facilities and temporary storage locations that are designated for evidence and property items shall be restricted to the Evidence and Property Manager, the Evidence and Property Custodian, Evidence and Property Couriers, and personnel authorized by [*agency executive leader*]. All personnel accessing restricted locations shall complete log entries that include their name, agencies identification number, date, time, and reason. Evidence and property items will be appropriately labeled and placed in temporary storage areas or submitted to designated facilities in a timely manner to ensure chain of custody standards.

- Temporary storage areas are located [*agency locations*] and instructions for use are available at each location. Evidence and Property Couriers will collect items from temporary storage areas daily for submission to designated facilities.
- Personnel entering facilities will be escorted by authorized personnel and will be required to sign in and out of facilities via established documentation logs.
- All facility access points will be secured when no authorized personnel are present in the facilities.

- Authorized personnel are prohibited from sharing access information and methods for facilities and temporary storage locations with anyone other than authorized personnel. After personnel changes and incidents of compromised access to facilities and temporary storage locations, the Evidence and Property Manager shall take appropriate actions to secure future access.

Documentation and Storage

Evidence and Property personnel will ensure all incoming evidence and property items are entered in [*agency evidence and property management system*].

The Evidence and Property Custodian will ensure all evidence and property items are stored in appropriate locations, to include climate conditions for items containing biological material. Critical items (e.g., currency, controlled substances, firearms, jewelry) will be stored separately from other evidence and property items and each item category will be secured in separate locked safes.

Additional procedures for the following item categories include:

- Biological material – consult with laboratories and medical facilities for appropriate climate condition storage information.
- Currency – consult with the Evidence and Property Manager for management of currency submissions exceeding \$[*amount*] and submissions related to narcotic cases.
- Digital media – enter digital images and files from all submitted items in [*agency evidence and property management system*].
- Items with connected known traditional or cultural practices – when possible, handle and store items in manners consistent with expressed preferences of rightful owner(s) (e.g., store sacred religious document in non-plastic enclosure).

Retention, Release, and Disposal

Retention, release, and disposal of evidence and property items shall be restricted to Evidence and Property personnel and personnel authorized by [*agency executive leader*]. Evidence and Property Personnel will ensure the release and disposal of all evidence and property items are entered in [*agency evidence and property management system*].

Retention

The Evidence and Property Custodian will ensure that all evidence items are retained until criminal charges have been disposed of by courts having jurisdiction, including all appeals, and according to the [*state*] statute of limitations:

- Felonies – [*state statute/s*]
- Misdemeanors – [*state statute/s*]
- Civil litigation – [*state statutes/s*]

Interim Releases

Sworn personnel who need to temporarily remove evidence items for further investigation or court presentation will complete Property Release Forms that include appropriate supervisory signatures. Evidence and Property personnel will ensure complete entries on Chain of Custody Forms that include dates, times, and

signatures of sworn personnel upon temporary release and resubmission of items. Sworn personnel will appropriately repackage and reseal evidence items as necessary prior to resubmission.

Evidence and Property personnel will arrange for transportation of evidence items to *[laboratory name]* upon request. Evidence and Property Personnel will ensure complete entries to Chain of Custody Forms that include dates, times, and signatures of personnel transporting and resubmitting items.

Permanent Releases

Evidence and Property personnel are prohibited from releasing items, including those initially submitted as evidence, without

- 1) written authorization from sworn personnel assigned as investigators or *[agency executive leader]*,
- 2) written authorization from prosecutors having jurisdiction for criminal charges disposed of through conviction, dismissal, diversion, or decisions to not file charges, or
- 3) court orders.

Upon receipt of release authorization, Evidence and Property personnel will complete

- 1) inquiries through *[state database]*/NCIC for serialized or identifiable items,
- 2) appropriate notifications to rightful owners through direct contact in-person, by phone, through electronic communication, or by written correspondence (see Appendix),
- 3) appropriate documentation of request by and release to other law enforcement agencies, and
- 4) Property Release Forms that include dates, times, and confirmed identifications and signatures of persons receiving the items.

When rightful owner(s) are incarcerated, residing out of local jurisdiction, or deceased at the time release authorization is received, Evidence and Property personnel will consult with *[agency executive staff]* to identify viable solutions for ongoing retention, release to other individual(s), or disposal.

Additional procedures for the following item categories include:

- Controlled substances – release prescription medications in labeled bottles to person(s) to whom medication is prescribed. All other items (e.g., contraband) will be identified for destruction.
- Firearms – conduct criminal history checks of persons receiving firearms and ammunition. Complete and submit a Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) – National Tracing Center Trace Request ([Submitting Firearms Trace Requests](#)). When possible, collect fired shell casings for National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN) entry ([NIBIN](#)). If rightful owners are prohibited from possessing a weapon or ammunition, *[agency executive leader]* will authorize release to an approved third party who has no prohibitions or determine the type of disposal. Firearms not claimed after appropriate notification will be identified for transition to *[agency name]* use, auction, sale, or destruction.
- Found Property – release to rightful owners. Items not claimed after appropriate notification will be identified for disposal (see section below).
- Safekeeping Property – release to rightful owners upon request or by legal mandate. Items not claimed after appropriate notification and *[number]* days will be identified for disposal. Firearms

being held in this category that are not claimed will be identified for transition to [agency name] use, auction, sale, or destruction.

- Victims', co-victims', and witnesses' items – coordinate with Victim Services personnel to offer appointment options, provide accompaniment during release processes, and review options for items that have deteriorated or been damaged while in possession of [agency name]. When possible, remove biological material and place items in neutral packaging (e.g., removal of evidence stickers/tape, case numbers, report titles) prior to release. When possible, offer 'soft rooms' or other comfortable location options for release processes.

Disposal

The Evidence and Property Custodian will process all unclaimed items for disposal, and this may occur through

- 1) donation to community organizations,
- 2) transition to use by [agency name],
- 3) auction or sale coordinated by [agency name], and
- 4) destruction.

Items identified for transition to use by [agency name] and auction or sale coordinated by [agency name] may be subject to multiple levels of review and approval, including agency executive leadership, legal counsel, and court procedures.

Evidence and Property personnel are prohibited from disposing of items, including those initially submitted as evidence, without

- 1) written authorization from sworn personnel assigned as investigators or [agency executive leader],
- 2) written authorization from prosecutors having jurisdiction for criminal charges disposed of through conviction, dismissal, diversion, or decisions to not file charges, or
- 3) court orders.

Upon receipt of disposal authorization, Evidence and Property personnel will complete

- 1) inquiries through [state database]/NCIC for serialized or identifiable items,
- 2) appropriate notification to rightful owners through direct contact in-person, by phone, through electronic communication, or by written correspondence (see Appendix),
- 3) documentation of desired disposal options by rightful owners when available.

Disposal of items will be completed within [number] months of receipt of disposal authorization.

Additional procedures for the following disposal categories include:

- Donation – items of value less than \$[amount] may be donated to community organizations that serve the common good of the community.
- Auctions or sales coordinated by [agency name] – personnel (paid or unpaid) of [agency name] are prohibited from purchasing any item, personally or through a third party.

- Transition to use by [agency name] – the intended use of items must be documented (e.g., investigation, training tool).
- Destruction – all contraband items will be destroyed according to [state] and federal statutes.

Additional procedures for the following item categories include:

- Ammunition – coordinate with [agency range master] to determine viability for transition to [agency name] use during training or range activities. Complete Property Release Forms that include dates, times, and signatures of personnel receiving ammunition. Ammunition shall not be used for duty purposes.
- Controlled substances – obtain necessary permits prior to destruction. The Evidence and Property Custodian and one witness will examine all items identified for destruction. Any noted signs of tampering (other than laboratory analysis) shall be reported to the Evidence and Property Manager and [agency executive leader] prior to destruction for the initiation of internal investigations. The Evidence and Property Custodian and one witness will be accompanied by armed sworn personnel during the destruction of controlled substances and sign statements of observed activities.
- Currency – unclaimed rare coins and currency will be identified for auction or sale. Other unclaimed currency will be identified for transition to [state agency] or [agency name] use according to applicable statutes.
- Documents – shred items that contain sensitive or personally identifiable information.
- Firearms and other weapons (e.g., knives, BB guns, pellet guns, tasers)
 - Firearms will not be disposed of through donation.
 - Coordinate with [agency executive leader] to determine viability for transition to [agency name] use during training or range activities. Complete Property Release Forms that include dates, times, and signatures of personnel receiving firearms. Firearms become the property of [agency name] and will be accounted for in equipment inventories and audits.
 - Identify firearms with values of \$[amount] or more for auction or sale to licensed dealers or private auction companies that conduct background checks per federal law to later buyers.
 - Obtain necessary permits prior to destruction. The Evidence and Property Custodian and one witness will be accompanied by armed sworn personnel to transport firearms to a destruction facility. The Evidence and Property Custodian, witness, and sworn personnel will be present during the destruction of firearms and sign statements of observed activities.
- Flammable items – dispose of items according to [state statutes] and [federal statutes].
- Found Property – advertise items with values of \$[amount] or more in newspapers of general circulation or through appropriate website postings to identify rightful owner(s) prior to disposal.
- Items with connected known traditional or cultural practices – when possible, adhere to appropriate disposal practices (e.g., burn and bury sacred objects, donate unclaimed religious objects to faith organizations).
- Seized Property – upon receipt of court orders, transition items to [agency name] use, identify for auction or sale by [agency name], or identify for destruction.

- Surrendered Property – donate, transition to [agency name] use, identify for auction or sale by [agency name], or destroy according to expressed desires of rightful owner(s).
- Victims', co-victims', and witnesses' items – coordinate with Victim Services personnel to facilitate disposal options according to the expressed desires of victims, co-victims, and witnesses of crime.

Inspections and Inventories

Inspections involve the review of facilities and temporary storage locations, personnel functions, and documentation practices to ensure adherence to [agency name] established procedures.

- The Evidence and Property Manager shall complete inspections at least biannually and forward the reports to [agency executive leader].
- Following personnel changes, the newly assigned Evidence and Property Manager shall complete an inspection within [number] days of assignment and forward the report to [agency executive leader].
- The [agency executive leader] may request the completion of unscheduled, unannounced inspections as deemed appropriate.

Inventories involve the physical inspection and verification of the presence of evidence and property items maintained by [agency name] in alignment with the documentation in [agency evidence and property management system].

- The Evidence and Property Custodian shall complete inventories at least annually of all critical items (currency, controlled substances, firearms, jewelry) and [number]% of all remaining items in the possession of [agency name]. Reports shall be forwarded to the Evidence and Property Manager.
- Following personnel changes, the Evidence and Property Custodian shall complete an inspection within [number] days of assignment and forward the report to the Evidence and Property Manager.
- The [agency executive leader] may request the completion of unscheduled, unannounced inventories as deemed appropriate.
- Reports should include any discrepancies, missing items, and documentation of deterioration or damage to items. Reports will be forwarded to the Evidence and Property Manager for the initiation of appropriate actions.
- Upon the discovery of missing critical items (e.g., currency, controlled substances, firearms, jewelry), the Evidence and Property Custodian shall immediately notify the Evidence and Property Manager for the initiation of an internal investigation. Upon the discovery of deterioration or damage of items belonging to victims, co-victims, and witnesses of crime, Evidence and Property personnel will coordinate with Victim Services personnel for swift notification and options for resolution (e.g., crime victim compensation, [agency name] reimbursement).

Appendix – Enhancing Law Enforcement Response to Victims (ELERV) Strategy: Property Letter

This template is intended to provide sample language and content. This template should be customized to fit the agency's needs and should be carefully reviewed to ensure information is consistent with requirements within the agency and local jurisdiction. Additional letter templates can be found at: [Communication with Victims \(Agencies with Victim Services Personnel\) \(theiacp.org\)](http://theiacp.org)

Agency Letterhead

Date: _____

Case Number: _____

Dear _____,

Through a review of information, you were identified as the person associated with items collected as evidence. Attempts to reach you by phone have been unsuccessful. This letter is being sent to ask about your wishes regarding the return or disposal of these items.

The following personnel have been assigned as part of the review process:

_____, Investigator Phone: _____ Email: _____	_____, Victim Services Phone: _____ Email: _____
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We know that being impacted by crime can cause fear, anger, and confusion about the criminal justice process. Our victim services personnel can assist you in a variety of ways, at no cost. Services include crisis intervention, referrals to community agencies, assistance with exercising your rights as a crime victim, assistance with establishing personal safety, and help completing Crime Victim Compensation applications. In addition, victim services personnel can provide educational and emotional support throughout the criminal justice process.

While we would like to honor your wishes, you are not required to respond to this letter. If we do not hear from you within 30 days, we will assume you would like our office to dispose of the items that were collected.

Please feel free to contact either person listed above for more information.

Sincerely,

Agency Name
Position Title

** When conducting outreach to victims, it is important to conduct this process in a trauma-informed, victim-centered, and safety-conscious way. For some victims, such as victims of intimate partner violence, continued contact with law enforcement can put them in danger. It is important to take safety into consideration before attempting to contact a victim by phone, email, or mail. Agencies are encouraged to consider steps to maximize victim safety, such as requiring officers taking initial reports to ask victims for a safe way to contact them and then documenting this in the case record, and to include these steps in policies and protocols. Finally, victim services personnel (agency employed or community based) should be available after contact to assist the victim if they need support or additional resources.*