



**PRESS RELEASE**

**KENT COUNTY PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE TO START ON-SITE VICTIM ASSISTANCE  
AT THE HISPANIC CENTER OF WESTERN MICHIGAN**

In an effort to increase access to the court system, and help individuals who may be reluctant to go to a courthouse, the Hispanic Center of Western Michigan in conjunction with the Kent County Prosecutor's Office will have open office hours one Friday a month at the Hispanic Center offices located at 1204 Grandville Ave SW in the City of Grand Rapids. Kent County Victim Advocates, Briana Krepps and Noemy Aguilar will be available for the first time this Friday, August 18 from 1-5PM to provide information regarding victims' rights, court procedures, and guidance throughout the criminal justice system.

"I'm very concerned about anyone being afraid of going to the courthouse to assert their rights as a victim, and unfortunately I'm am hearing stories that this is in fact happening right here in Kent County" said Kent County Prosecutor Chris Becker. "We are trying to provide access in a different way to start off, in the hopes we can build relationships where people then will feel comfortable to walk into any courthouse in the county to participate in the criminal justice system." Roberto Torres, Executive Director of the Hispanic Center came up with this idea after seeing a similar program in the City of Toledo, and brought up the topic to the Prosecutor's Office in one of their first meetings earlier this year. "The Hispanic Center has been a welcoming resource to many families in Kent County for more than 39 years. We have an established relationship of trust and confidence with our clients. However, recent events in our community have discouraged many families from reporting incidents of crime out of fear of law and judicial enforcement processes. This collaboration will provide a safe place and trusting environment where families can report incidents of crime."

Depending on the need, there is the potential to expand the program to more days and times. It will all depend on the need and if the program is being utilized on a regular basis. It could be a simple question regarding a person's rights as a victim, it may be providing assistance to someone who has received a subpoena and needs help getting to and from court, or is afraid of going due to fears of what may happen there. The advocates will be present to answer any questions someone may have, and provide assistance in navigating the court system which can be confusing for anyone who has never been through the process before.

Mr. Becker, Mr. Torres along with Ms. Krepps and Aguilar will be available to take questions regarding this program later on today at 3:30 PM at the Hispanic Center.