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NEWS RELEASE

**RESTITUTION FOR CRIME VICTIMS TO BE SOUGHT
MORE QUICKLY WITH REVAMPED SYSTEM**

RIVERSIDE – Victims of crime in Riverside County should receive restitution from those who victimized them more quickly due to a revamped system which begins today, Feb. 1, 2010.

Previously, the determination of restitution owed in criminal cases was done by the courts and, for several reasons, it was not unusual for victims to have to wait a year or more before beginning to see any restitution.

About a year ago the Riverside County District Attorney's Office took the lead in setting up meetings comprised of representatives of the DA's Office, Riverside County Probation Department, and the courts to improve the way restitution was determined and obtained.

"It is a mission of this office to see that victims receive justice and that often comes in the form of financial restitution," said District Attorney Rod Pacheco. "This collaborative effort will help ensure that the needs of crime victims are neither delayed nor ignored."

Beginning today, the determination of victim restitution will be done by the Probation Department.

"The Probation Department strives to provide victims of crime with the assistance they need to recover from their losses and we are pleased to be a part of this collaborative effort with the courts and the District Attorney's Office," said Chief Deputy Probation Officer Mark Hake. "We expect the Probation Department's involvement in determining the amount of restitution owed to victims will result in improved services to victims and greater efficiencies within the county's criminal justice system."

The courts will still order restitution and also continue to be tasked with collecting monies owed to victims of crime.

"We should make strong efforts to determine restitution at the time of sentencing," said the Honorable Thomas Cahraman, presiding judge of the Riverside County Superior Court. "When we can not do so, it is important that all those concerned work closely with the Probation Department so that victims can receive recompense as soon as possible."

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In November 2008, the voters of California passed Proposition 9 – Marsy’s Law – which amended the state Constitution to guarantee certain rights for victims including full restitution. The California Penal Code details how victim restitution should be ordered.

Crime victims are entitled by law to be reimbursed for a variety of costs including funeral and burial expenses, counseling costs, and losses in crimes such as robbery or burglary.

At the time of sentencing in a criminal case, restitution can be ordered by a judge to a specific victim in a specific dollar amount after which the court’s Enhanced Collections Division (ECD) begins the process of collecting and distributing that amount.

If at the time of sentencing the judge orders restitution and refers the calculation and distribution to the Probation Department, the following steps take place: the Probation Department contacts each victim in the case and obtains information about the loss and a letter is sent to the defendant advising the restitution amount. If the defendant does not dispute the amount, the ECD begins collecting what is owed. If the defendant then disputes the amount, he or she is entitled to a court hearing at which the District Attorney’s Office and the Probation Department present supporting documents. The judge then makes a final restitution order and the ECD collects and distributes the monies.

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