



Fact Sheet

Witness Security

2017

- ▶ The U.S. Marshals Service operates the federal Witness Security Program, sometimes referred to as the “Witness Protection Program.”
- ▶ The Witness Security Program enables the government to pursue and prosecute criminals ranging from a single actor to organized crime, gangs or terrorist groups.
- ▶ The Witness Security Program provides for the security, safety and health of government witnesses and their authorized family members, whose lives are in danger as a result of their cooperation with the U.S. government.
- ▶ The U.S. Marshals Service provides 24-hour protection to all witnesses while they are in a high-threat environment, including pretrial conferences, trial testimonials and other court appearances.
- ▶ Witnesses and their families typically get new identities with documentation.
- ▶ Witnesses initially receive financial assistance for housing, subsistence for basic living expenses and medical care. Job training and employment assistance may also be provided.
- ▶ The Witness Security Program has successfully protected approximately 18,750 participants – including innocent victim-witnesses and cooperating defendants and their dependent family members – from intimidation and retribution since the program began in 1971.
- ▶ Prior to being admitted into the program, all potential witnesses undergo intensive vetting by the sponsoring law enforcement agency; the U.S. Attorney sponsoring the potential witnesses; the U.S. Marshals Service, which conducts a preliminary interview; and the Department of Justice’s Office of Enforcement Operations, which authorizes the witnesses.
- ▶ No Witness Security Program participant following program guidelines has been harmed or killed while under the active protection of the U.S. Marshals Service.
- ▶ The program is a vital and effective tool in the U.S. government’s battles against organized crime, drug trafficking, terrorism and other major criminal enterprises.
- ▶ U.S. Marshals Service Witness Security personnel are the leading authorities and foremost experts on witness security matters, providing guidance and training to many government officials throughout the world.
- ▶ The Witness Security Program was authorized by the Organized Crime Control Act of 1970 and amended by the Comprehensive Crime Control Act of 1984.