

Office of the Victim Advocate (OVA)



Established 1998



OVA Accomplishments

Victim Rights

- The OVA has conducted several investigations involving: (1) violations of victims' rights; (2) services provided to crime victims; and (3) identified systemic failures.
- The OVA has received numerous complaints from crime victims and intervened in many criminal proceedings to advocate for victims' rights.
- The Victim Advocate was successful in advocating for the issuance of reward money in the case of a young man who has been missing since 2004.
- The OVA has developed strong working relationships with criminal justice agencies and other entities providing services to crime victims.
- The OVA authored an amicus brief on a domestic violence case involving the question of whether an evidentiary hearing should be conducted prior to the attainment of a protective order.



OVA Accomplishments

State Policies & Legislative Advocacy

- Successful legislation that expands victims' participation in juvenile and youthful offender proceedings.
- Successful legislation that requires superior court judges to advise crime victims of their rights at the opening of arraignment court each day.
- Successful legislation that establishes a victim services unit within the Department of Correction.
- Successful legislation that expands the issuance of protective orders to victims of sexual assault crimes.
- Successful adoption of policy between the Department of Correction and the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services to provide notification to crime victims when an inmate is transferred to a psychiatric facility.
- The OVA organized and facilitated the Habeas Corpus Restructuring Focus Group and the Privacy Exception Focus Group.
- Successful legislation to establish a civil judgment to supplement restitution orders in court, valid for up to ten years.



OVA Accomplishments

Public Outreach & Education

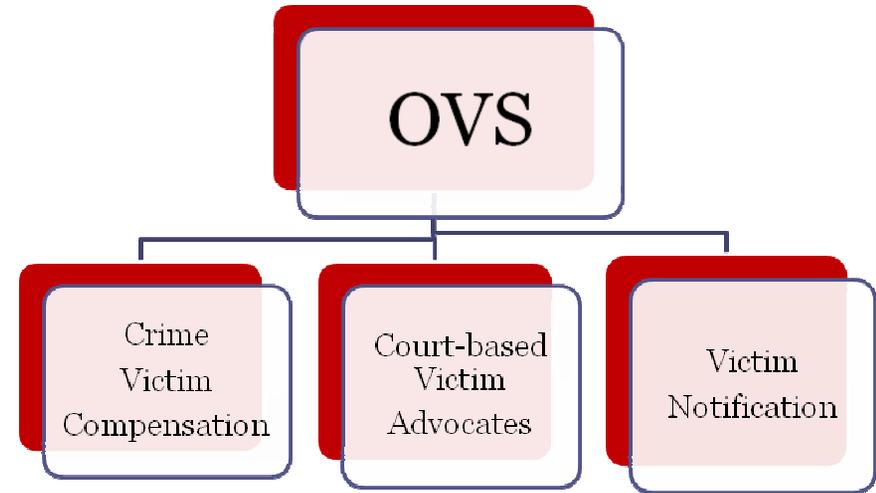
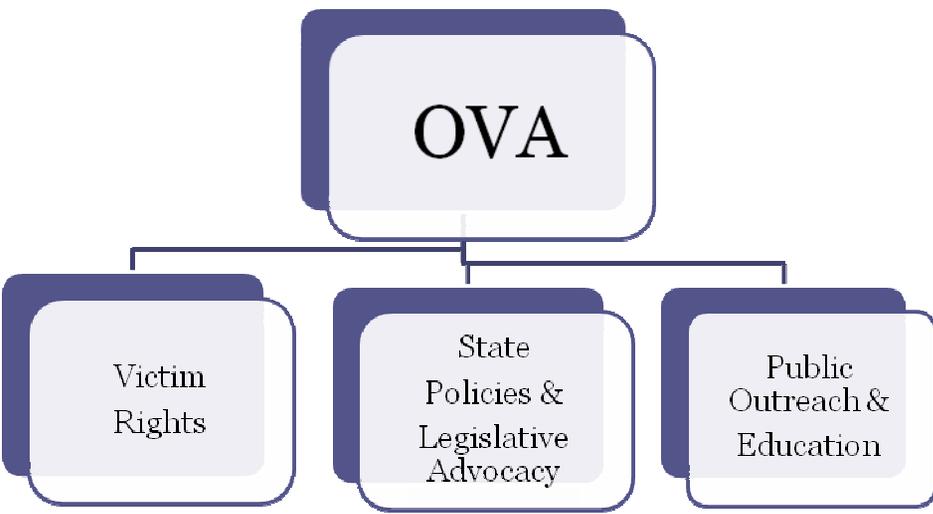
- The OVA has conducted numerous public education sessions and forums for a variety of criminal justice professionals, students, victim service providers and community organizations.
- The OVA developed and published, “Identity Theft- A Guide for Connecticut Citizens” which was adopted by the Governor’s Identity Theft Advisory Board.
- The OVA has created a number of brochures to educate and inform victims and the public about the availability of services in the state.
- The OVA continues to co-sponsor the annual Melanie Ilene Rieger Memorial Conference Against Violence.
- The OVA has published and distributed a quarterly newsletter, “Victims’ Voice.” The newsletter contains submissions from crime victims, the legal community, victim service providers, legislative members and others.

How does the OVA compare
with OVS?

OVA vs. OVS

An Independent State Agency

A Division of the Judicial Branch



Responsibilities of the OVA

The Victim Advocate may, within available appropriation:

- Evaluate the delivery of services to victims by state agencies and those entities that provide services to victims, including delivery of services to families by the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner;
- Coordinate and cooperate with other private and public agencies concerned with the implementation, monitoring and enforcement of the constitutional rights of victims and enter into cooperative agreements with public or private agencies for the furtherance of the constitutional rights of victims;
- Review the procedures established by any state agency or other entity providing services to victims with respect to the constitutional rights of victims;

Responsibilities of the OVA cont...

- Receive and review complaints of persons concerning the actions of any state or other entity providing services to victims and investigate those where it appears that a victim or family of a victim may be in need of assistance from the Victim Advocate;
- File a limited special appearance in any court proceeding for the purpose of advocating for any right guaranteed to a crime victim by the Constitution of the state or any right provided to a crime victim by any provision of the general statutes;
- Ensure a centralized location for victim service information;
- Recommend changes in state policies concerning victims including changes in the system of providing victim services;

Responsibilities of the OVA cont...

- Conduct programs of public education, undertake legislative advocacy, and make proposals for systemic reform;
- Monitor the provision of protective services to witnesses by the Chief State's Attorney pursuant to section 54-82t of the Connecticut General Statutes; and
- Take appropriate steps to advise the public of the services and of the Office of the Victim Advocate, the purpose of the office and procedures to contact the office.

Services provided by OVS

- **Crime Victim Compensation:** OVS manages the Criminal Injuries Compensation Fund to assist crime victims in recovering from the financial and emotional impact of the crime. This Fund supports the OVS Compensation Program that provides reimbursement and financial assistance for expenses related to crime, such as medical, dental, counseling, and lost wages.
- * *This program does not provide financial assistance for any non-economical loss, including property loss, property damages, and pain and suffering.*

Services provided by OVS cont...

- **Court-based Victim Advocates:** OVS court-based victim service advocates help victims of violent crime by notifying them of their rights and providing information and assistance. OVS victim advocates are available in many of the courthouses throughout the state.
 - Notify victims of their rights
 - Provide information to the victim about the criminal case and criminal justice system
 - Act as a liaison between victims and their family members to court proceedings
 - Escort victims and their family members to court proceedings
 - Advocate for victims during court proceedings
 - Assist victims with the return of property
 - Provide victims with social service referrals
 - Assist victims in submitting request for restitution
 - Assist victims and their family members in preparing and delivering a victim impact statement
 - Coordinate victim compensation application to OVS

Services provided by OVS cont...

- **In-State Toll-free Hotline:** OVS operates a toll-free helpline to assist callers in obtaining information on OVS programs and services as well as referrals to various agencies that assist victims of crime and their families.

The OVS victim services advocate assigned to the helpline assists victims whose cases are heard in a court that does not have an OVS court-based victim services advocate. Assistance may include informing victims of their rights and of upcoming court dates as well as helping victims understand the criminal justice system, and referrals to appropriate community agencies.

Services provided by OVS cont...

- **Victim Notification:** OVS operates a notification program that offers these services:
 - 1.) The State of Connecticut's Protection Order Registry Notification Program: features automated notification to protected parties when protective orders terminate or five weeks prior to the expiration of restraining orders. An OVS victim services advocate is available to answer questions and provide referrals that may arise from the notification of the order termination.

Services provided by OVS cont...

Victim Notification Continued

2.) Post Conviction Notification :

offers information about changes in the status of convicted inmates. This may include the dates and locations of:

- Parole Hearings*
- Sentence Review*
- Sentence Modification
- Discharge from a correctional institution
- Parole release
- Halfway house release
- Transitional supervision release
- Pardons hearings

- * By statute, victims have the right to make a statement at hearings before the Board of Pardons and Paroles and Sentence Review Division. In lieu of attending a hearing, or in addition to, a victim may submit a written statement.

The Post-Conviction Notification Program does not provide information regarding furloughs, non-convicted persons sent to state hospitals for mental illness.

Please see the different types of notification you can expect as a victim registered for notification.

**DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS: PRE-CONVICTION & POST CONVICTION
OFFICE OF VICTIM SERVICES: POST-CONVICTION ONLY**

- ❖ Applies for a pardon, parole, release from prison other than a furlough (discharge, halfway house, etc.) or change in sentence.
- ❖ Is scheduled to be released from a correctional facility other than on a furlough, except a reentry furlough.
- ❖ Applies for an exemption from the registration requirements of the Sex Offender Registry.
- ❖ Applies for a restriction of the disclosure requirements of the Sex Offender Registry.
- ❖ Dies while in custody.
- ❖ Transfers to a community release program **(DOC ONLY)**.
- ❖ Escapes/returns from escape **(DOC ONLY)**.

In order to obtain notification a person must be incarcerated and you must register with either one or both of the agencies listed above. To register use the Confidential Request For Notification Of Status Of Inmate Form (JD-VS-5), which can be found on the Judicial website (www.jud.ct.gov) and Department of Corrections website (www.ct.gov/doc). It is never too late to register.

Services provided by OVS cont...

- **Services for Families of Homicide Victims:** OVS offers support to families of homicide victims through referrals to counseling, educational groups, and self-help groups.
 - Family members of homicide victims may receive a limited number of grief counseling sessions at no cost. OVS contracts with agencies that provide counseling services.
 - OVS may refer families and friends of homicide victims to a topic-specific educational support program, which supplements counseling.
 - OVS may provide referrals to self-help groups. These groups are organized and are conducted by group-members themselves. They offer support and understanding to friends and families coping with the loss of a loved one.

Services provided by OVS cont...

- **Funding to Community-based Non-profit Agencies:** OVS contracts with non-profit and public organizations to provide services to crime victims, such as Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD); Survivors of Homicide (SOH), Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CCADV); and Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services (CONNSACS). These services include but are not limited to, information and referral, criminal justice support/advocacy, therapy, safety planning, group treatment/support, personal advocacy and assistance in filing applications for victim compensation.

Funding is provided by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime, Victims of Crime Act Victim Assistance Program, the Connecticut General Fund, and the Criminal Injuries Compensation Fund.

Services provided by OVS cont...

- **Community Education and Training on Victims' Rights and Services:** OVS serves and supports crime victims by educating the community about and promoting awareness of the rights and concerns of Connecticut's crime victims and of OVS services. OVS staff provides trainings and presentations to criminal justice professionals and the victim assistance community.

The OVS also maintains a Victim Assistance Center, which is a central repository of crime victim rights and resource information.

Who do I call???

Office of the Victim Advocate (OVA)

If you feel that
your rights as a crime
victim have been
violated or
are being violated

Office of Victim Services (OVS)

For services such as:
court advocacy,
counseling,
notification, and
victim compensation

How do I contact???

OVA

Office of the Victim Advocate
505 Hudson Street, 5th Floor
Hartford, CT 06106

(860) 550-6632
(888) 771-3126 (CT Only)

Website: www.ova.state.ct.us

OVS

Office of Victim Services
225 Spring Street, 4th Floor
Wethersfield, CT 06109

(860) 263-2760
(800) 822-8428 (CT Only)

For more information, please go to
Victim Services on the Judicial
Website: www.jud.ct.gov/crimevictim

2008

Information was obtained from the Connecticut Judicial website and Connecticut Department of Corrections website.

www.ct.gov/doc

www.jud.ct.gov