



Office of Victims' Services

Helping Crime Victims Get the Services they Need

Our mission

The Office of Victims Services (OVS) was established by California Attorney General Bill Lockyer.

Working with other agencies, we help victims and their families understand their rights and help them get the support they need to recover from the trauma of crime.

We help guide them through the criminal justice system. We also try to make policy changes in the criminal justice system that will make it more victim-friendly.

Advocacy – Cases on Appeal

The Attorney General handles all appeals in criminal cases. OVS works directly with the victims with cases on appeal to:

- Keep them informed about the status of their case and any oral arguments
- Provide support and information about death penalty cases from the time of conviction until — and even after — the defendant is executed
- Make sure they know they can attend and go with them to clemency hearings and the execution (in death penalty cases)

Education

Understanding the criminal justice system is not easy. OVS helps agencies and law enforcement to guide victims. We:

- Provide easy-to-read materials in print and on the internet to help victims and the agencies that serve them
- Speak to groups that advocate for victims' rights
- Train people who work in the criminal justice system about how we can advocate for victims with cases on appeal

- Host an annual Crime Victims' Conference where people who work in criminal justice and victims can share their experiences and perspectives, and get specialized training

Policy

We work with other government agencies, the Legislature, the Governor's office, and the media to help victims. We:

- Make sure the public hears the victim's point of view
- Propose and improve crime victim laws
- Advise the Attorney General about crime victims issues
- Speak for the Attorney General about victim-related issues

Referrals

We often get calls from victims who need help but who can be served better by other agencies or groups. We connect them with:

- Local Victim/Witness centers
- Sexual assault centers
- Child abuse treatment centers
- Domestic violence centers
- Government agencies, like Corrections, Board of Prison Terms, Youth Authority, or Victim Compensation

- Non-profit victims' groups
- These centers can often provide more specialized care or longer-term support.

Victims without Support

Sometimes victims have nobody to support them. OVS can help victims who:

- Are feeling confused and frustrated
- Need someone to help them speak to the local authorities or other agencies
- Want a person to support them and go with them to procedures such as parole hearings

Advocacy – Conflict Cases

Sometimes the local District Attorney is unable to prosecute a case due to a conflict. In these cases, the Attorney General will prosecute the case. In these conflict cases, OVS works to:

- Make sure victims are safe
- Take care of victims' emergency needs (like food, clothing, and shelter)
- Help victims who are in crisis
- Explain how the criminal justice system works and what rights victims have
- Keep victims informed about their case
- Help victims understand what to expect in court
- Help victims ask for compensation or restitution

Resources

OVS publications for victims and support agencies include:

- Help for Victims of Crime
- Capital Case Guide
- State Agencies that help Victims and Witnesses
- Execution and Clemency

These materials and more information about OVS are available in print and on-line at:
www.ag.ca.gov/victimservices

Need more help?

Call us, or write us at:

Office of the Attorney General
Office of Victims' Services
1300 I Street
P.O. Box 944255
Sacramento, CA 95814

Tel: (877) 433-9069 Toll free!

e-mail: victimservices@doj.ca.gov