

## Appeal Process

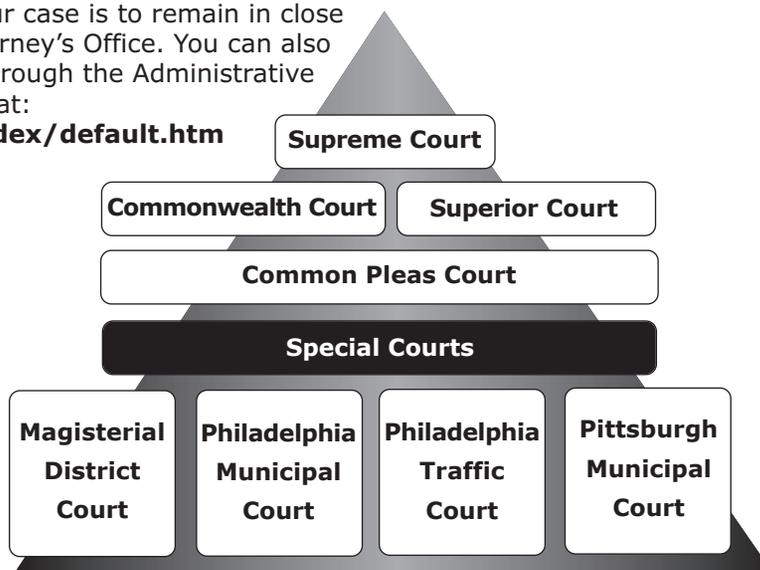
An appeal is a legal review by a higher court of a decision of a lower court. The process of an appeal is long and complex. Below is an overview of how the courts are organized in Pennsylvania. Appeals generally start at the lower level courts and slowly move up to the highest level. Cases can move through the entire appeal process and if the appeal is denied, often times they have the right to appeal a new issue and begin the entire process again.

Each capital case is different and each appeal is unique. When the Governor signs a death warrant, it essentially keeps the appeals process moving. Once an appeal is accepted for consideration, a stay of execution is filed. A stay puts the scheduled execution on hold until the appeal is decided. If the appeal is denied, the Governor signs another warrant and the process continues.

The best way to stay up to date on your case is to remain in close contact with your county's District Attorney's Office. You can also follow the status of an appeal online through the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Court's website at:

<http://www.courts.state.pa.us/index/default.htm>

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### Office of the Victim Advocate

1101 South Front Street | Suite 5200 | Harrisburg, PA 17104  
1.800.563.6399 Nationwide | 1.877.349.1064 TTY (toll free)  
FAX: 717.787.0867

1920 Technology Parkway | Mechanicsburg, PA 17050  
1.800.322.4472 Nationwide | 1.877.349.1064 TTY (toll free)  
FAX: 717.728.0332

[www.ova.state.pa.us](http://www.ova.state.pa.us)

Email: [ra-ovainfo@pa.gov](mailto:ra-ovainfo@pa.gov)

PENNSYLVANIA  
Office of the Victim Advocate

# Victim Information and Services on Capital Cases



*Jennifer R. Storm, Victim Advocate  
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*

# Victim Information and Services on Capital Cases

The Office of the Victim Advocate (OVA) registers surviving family members of a deceased victim in cases where there has been an execution sentence imposed. We recognize that there are various views and opinions surrounding capital punishment, sometimes even within the same family. Our role is to support family members in whatever level of involvement they decide is right for them.

## What is the role of OVA in Capital Cases?

- Keep victims and survivors up to date on warrants and stays.
- Provide referrals to local organizations for services such as counseling, homicide survivor support groups, and appeal information.
- Provide emotional support.
- Provide victims with accurate information regarding the execution process and status of capital case inmates.
- Inform family members about their rights to be considered to witness the execution of the offender in their case.

## Victims as Witnesses to Executions

Under Pennsylvania Law, Act 33 of 2009, the Victim Advocate may choose four survivors to witness an execution. Family members of the deceased victim who request to witness can be selected. Witnesses must be at least 18 years old. Please contact our office for additional information (See reverse side for contact information).

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Where are the Capital Case inmates located?

For security purposes, all execution cases are housed in a special unit called the Restricted Housing Unit (RHU). Male inmates are housed at SCI-Graterford in Montgomery County and SCI-Greene in Greene County. Female inmates are housed at SCI-Muncy in Lycoming County.

Further information on capital case inmates, as well as the location of the inmate, can be located at the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections website at: <http://www.cor.state.pa.us/>

### Do they spend any time out of their cell?

Capital Case inmates live in a unit that is designed especially for inmates serving an execution sentence. Inmates may be out of their cell to work on the unit, access law offices on their unit, and make phone calls. They are also allowed out of their cells to exercise in an enclosed fence type structure which is large enough to hold one to two inmates.

### Are they allowed to have visitors?

Capital Case Inmates are allowed to have one non-contact visit per week. Visits are typically one hour in duration but can be longer if staffing and the institution's operations permit.

### Are they allowed to send mail?

Capital Case Inmates are permitted to send mail. Inmates may send up to 8 one ounce letters per month at no cost; there is no limit if inmate is paying the expenses.

### Do they interact with any of the other inmates?

Capital Case Inmates are housed by themselves in a cell, but they can talk to other inmates on their unit as long as they are not loud. Inmates are allowed to correspond with inmates at other institutions, but only if they are immediate family members and if they have received the written permission of both superintendents.

### What are the inmates allowed to have in their cell?

Capital Case Inmates may have various items in their cell, such as food, beverages, and toiletries, approved over the counter medicine, clothing, towels, art and art supplies, office supplies (pens, pencils, scissors, paper, and envelopes), laundry soap, radio, fans, headphones, cassette players, and typewriters. These items must fit in a cabinet and 1 footlocker or 2 records boxes. They are also permitted to have a television, purchased at their own expense. They may watch it as much as they want, but it must not be heard outside of their cell.

### Do they spend any time out of their cell?

Capital Case inmates live in a unit that is designed especially for inmates serving an execution sentence. Inmates may be out of their cell to work on the unit, access a mini law library on their unit and make phone calls. They are also allowed out of their cells to exercise in an enclosed fence type structure which is large enough to hold one to two inmates.