



## **CRIME VICTIMS' RIGHTS**

Pennsylvania law provides rights for crime victims/survivors. The Office of Victim Advocate (OVA) facilitates these rights when an offender is sentenced to a state sentence (ie a maximum sentence of two or more years). In order to receive the range of rights available, victims should register with OVA. Registration is confidential. Primarily, these rights include the option to receive various notifications about the status of the offender and the option to provide input if/when the offender becomes parole eligible or applies for a pardon/clemency.

Additionally, crime victims in PA have numerous restorative justice programs that they may choose to take part in at any time that feels comfortable for them.

### **Notifications**

Victims/survivors who register with OVA can choose to receive notifications about the movement of their offender throughout the criminal justice system. Some of those notifications include when the offender is being considered for a parole or pardon process or when a parole or pardon decision has been made.

Notifications from OVA are different from the automated SAVIN notifications. The SAVIN system will only notify victims when an offender is transferred into/out of incarceration; the system does not notify of parole decisions or pardon events.

### **Call Center**

OVA operates a call center, referred to as the Intake Assessment and Referral Unit, Monday through Friday 8:00am to 4:30pm at 800.563.6399. Calls are answered by professional trauma informed staff members who are available to assist with any questions related to victims' rights and the services available.

### **Address Confidentiality Program**

The ACP provides victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking or stalking with an alternate mailing address to keep their actual home address out of public records where their perpetrator may find their location. The confidential address may be used as a legal address for court and state government records, including driver's license and ID cards, vehicle and voter registrations, school records, and marriage licenses.

### **Testimony**

Should the offender become parole eligible, crime victims/survivors (and family members of homicide victims) have the opportunity to provide input to the PA Parole Board. The choice to testify is incredibly personal; trained OVA staff will walk victims through this process. Victims may choose to appear in person to speak directly to decision makers, submit written testimony, or speak with an OVA staff member on the phone who will transcribe their comments.

These same testimony options are available to registered victims when an offender applies for pardon or clemency consideration with the PA Board of Pardons.

### **Restitution**

OVA collaborates with the state correctional institutes (SCIs) on inmate accounts when restitution has been ordered. Payment deductions begin after an inmate completes initial intake and their accounts are set up. Because court ordered financial obligations are also a general condition of parole, OVA works with the PA Parole Board to advocate on behalf of crime victims that restitution continues to be paid.

# RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

**Restorative justice is a cooperative practice that seeks to repair as much harm as possible to victims and communities harmed by crime.**

*Crime victims/survivors have different needs and can experience long lasting effects of trauma as a result of crime. Some victims wonder if the offender is sorry for what they did or what they've been doing to rehabilitate while incarcerated. All restorative justice programs are voluntary – on both sides – and are facilitated by trained OVA professionals.*

## **Inmate Apology Bank**

The Inmate Apology Bank provides crime victims/survivors with the option to receive an apology letter, if they wish. The program allows state inmates/parolees to write a voluntary apology letter to be stored in a "bank" without violating no contact policies or PFA orders.



## **Victim Offender Dialogue**

This is a victim-initiated program that allows victims and offenders to discuss the harm in a safe and secure way. Trained facilitators prepare both parties for a face to face meeting and provide accompaniment for that discussion in a trauma informed manner.



## **Resilient Voices**

The goal of the Resilient Voices program is to provide a space for survivors to share their personal experience, strength and hope in a setting that matches their individual goals. OVA has a pool of passionate survivors available to speak about sexual assault, domestic violence, childhood sexual abuse, homicide, drug related deaths, the devastation of losing a child, and other topics related to victimization.



## **Training**

Because most citizens come in contact with victims, even if they don't know it, one priority of our training programs is to prepare communities to work and communicate effectively with victims and treat them with dignity and respect. Educational workshops are offered across the state, including inside state prisons, community events, and more.



OVA team members are available to discuss each of these programs with you and your families. Trained staff members are also available to travel across Pennsylvania to your community to discuss victims' rights, services, and restorative justice practices.

**Reach OVA at 800.563.6399 or [RA-OVAinfo@pa.gov](mailto:RA-OVAinfo@pa.gov).**