

Office of the Victim Advocate State Documents

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Finding aid written in English

Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of the State Library

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607 South Drive
Harrisburg, PA, 17120

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Summary Information

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Scope and Contents

The Office of Victim Advocate has the duty to represent the interests of crime victims within the juvenile and criminal justice systems, to represent registered crime victims before the Parole Board and the Department of Corrections, to supervise victim notification duties, to assist in and coordinate the preparation of testimony by the crime victims prior to a release decision, and to address the interests of all victims before the Parole Board and Department of Corrections. Further, upon the request of a registered victim, the Office of Victim Advocate will either petition the Parole Board to impose a special condition of parole on the offender or deny parole to the offender. The Victim Advocate advocates for victims in policy advice to the legislature and the Governor's administration concerning victim issues. The Office of Victim Advocate provides services to victims of crime in cases where the court has rendered jurisdiction of the offender to the Department of Corrections and/or the Parole Board: notification of the potential for inmate release and opportunity to provide testimony; notification of the inmate's movement within the correctional system, including inmate's death, if applicable; assistance with collection of restitution; referrals for crime victims to local programs; basic crisis intervention and support; general information on the status and location of the inmate, as allowed by law; and notification of the expiration of an inmate's maximum sentence or date of execution, if applicable. The Victim Advocate is authorized by law to choose up to four victims/family members of homicide victims to witness an execution in capital cases. A range of notification and support services are provided to registered victims in capital cases, including preparation and accompaniment of those victims who choose to witness the execution. The dialogue program for victims of violent crime provides a survivor with the opportunity to meet with their offender, and gives the offender a chance to accept responsibility for the crime. The Impact of Crime Class, offered throughout the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections (DOC), is a voluntary, interactive, and educational program designed to raise inmates' awareness about the impact of crime on victims and increase inmates' level of accountability and empathy for those they harmed, while providing a healing platform for victims of crime to tell their stories. Victim Awareness class (Pa. Act 143) is a legislatively-mandated education course developed to teach inmates convicted of a violent crime about the physical, financial, and emotional impact of their crime on victims and the community. The Victim Advocate represents victim issues through Pennsylvania's Commission on Crime and Delinquency Victim Services and Advisory Committees, Interstate Adult and Juvenile Committees, and the Senior Citizen Advisory Committee.

The publications of the Office of Victim Advocate contain educational guides. Selected topics from these publications include speaking to the media.

Biographical / Historical

The Office of Victim Advocate (OVA) was created and housed in the Parole Board by the Victim Advocate Law, Pa. Act 8 of the 1995 Special Legislative Session on Crime. It was reestablished under the Crime Victims Act, Pa. Act 111 of 1998, the Act of November 24, 1998, P.L. 882. Pa. Act 188 of 2004, the Domestic and Sexual Violence Victim Address Confidentiality Act establishes the Address Confidentiality Program within the Office of Victim Advocate. Pa. Act 188 of 2004 authorizes the Office of Victim Advocate to create a legal confidential substitute address for domestic violence, sexual abuse, or stalking survivors.

Biographical / Historical

Pennsylvania Parole Board (parent agency)

Administrative Information

Publication Statement

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