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**A Handbook
for
Victims of Crime
in
Alaska**

alaska judicial council

(Update to Directory of Services beginning on page 16)

Dillingham		
Safe and Fear-Free Environment	842-2316	
	1-800-478-2316	
Emmonak		
Emmonak Women's Shelter	949-1434	
	1-800-478-1434	
Kenai Peninsula		
South Peninsula Women's Services	235-7712	
Ketchikan		
Women in Safe Homes	225-9474	
	1-800-478-9474	
Kodiak		
Kodiak Women's Resource and Crisis Center	486-3625	
Nome		
Bering Sea Women's Group	443-5444	
	1-800-570-5444	
Seward		
Seward Life Action Council	224-3027	
Sitka		
Sitkans Against Family Violence	747-6511	
	1-800-478-6511	
Valdez		
Advocates for Victims of Violence	835-2999	

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**U.S. Department of Justice
National Institute of Justice**

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A Handbook for Victims of Crime in Alaska

This pamphlet is a joint project of Victims for Justice and the Alaska Judicial Council. It was written in January 1995 by Marcia Vandercook. It is based in large part on a pamphlet published by Parents of Murdered Children. We thank them for allowing us to use their material.

- ◇ Victims for Justice is an Alaska organization helping victims of violent crime and families and friends of murder victims. It provides advocacy, grief support, court accompaniment, and memorials to help victims and survivors. Victims for Justice is located at 619 East Fifth Avenue, Anchorage, AK 99501, (907) 278-0977.
 - ◇ The Alaska Judicial Council nominates applicants for judgeships and evaluates judges standing for retention. It makes recommendations to the legislature and supreme court to improve the administration of justice. It is located at 1029 West Third Avenue, Suite 201, Anchorage, AK 99501, (907) 279-2526 (E-mail: Compuserve 72302,1261).
 - ◇ Parents of Murdered Children is a national support group helping survivors of homicide victims. It is located at 100 East Eighth Street, B-41, Cincinnati, OH 45202, (512) 721-5683.
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Introduction

Being a victim of a crime can be a very difficult experience. Each person copes with the aftermath of victimization in a unique way. Whether you or a family member has been victimized, you may feel anger, guilt, shame, insecurity, fear, powerlessness, and depression. You do not have to go through all of these emotions alone. Many people can help you understand this experience and support you as you work through it.

This handbook has been written specifically for crime victims. The more you know about the criminal justice system, the more comfortable you will feel as various events occur, and the more you can influence those events. We know that this information will not solve all your problems or answer all your questions, but we hope it will serve as a useful guide to explain how and where to find help. To help us increase the usefulness and accuracy of this guide, please call or write the Alaska Judicial Council with your comments and suggestions.

Pretrial Process

The United States has an adversary system of justice in which we consider a person innocent until proven guilty. We demand a fair process for all people charged with crimes, to reduce the possibility of an error that would convict an innocent person. We wish to ensure that government does not mistakenly use its immense power to decide guilt and punishment.

Following an arrest and before trial, the court may hold several hearings. The purpose of some of the hearings may be to review the facts of the offense and test the reliability of the evidence, while protecting the legal rights of those charged with crimes. These hearings include:

First Appearance. After a warrant is issued and a suspect is arrested or otherwise charged, the case officially enters the criminal justice system. Ordinarily, the first appearance a defendant makes before the court after an arrest is at arraignment. The court advises the defendant of the nature of the charges, assures legal representation for him or her, and sets bail.

Bail. Some people who are thought to have committed a crime are arrested to ensure that they will appear at trial. The Alaska constitution guarantees a defendant the right to bail if the court concludes the defendant will appear for trial and will not endanger the public. However, the constitution also gives victims the right to be protected from further harm by the defendant, through the use of bail conditions that protect the victim and the victim's family. The court may order a defendant to move out of the family

home, to stay away from the victim, to attend counseling, or to refrain from drinking. The court also may be able to issue a domestic violence restraining order with these conditions. If the defendant or anyone else is intimidating or threatening you, call both the police and the prosecutor immediately. If a defendant posts bail and then fails to appear for any scheduled hearing, the cash or property may be forfeited to the state or federal government and an arrest warrant issued.

Grand Jury. A grand jury may consider the case. The grand jury is a panel of citizens who hear and review the State's evidence against the accused person in a closed hearing. This process may occur either before or after an arrest is made and bail is set. If the grand jury finds sufficient evidence to take a case to trial, it will issue an indictment. Police officers, victims and witnesses appear by subpoena (court order). They give testimony that usually does not become part of the public record, although there are exceptions. As a victim, you do not have the right to attend grand jury proceedings, although if you receive a subpoena to testify, you must go.

Pretrial Motion Hearings. The judge often holds several court hearings before the actual trial. One of these may be a suppression hearing in which the defense challenges part or all of the State's evidence. The purpose is to ensure that all evidence was gathered properly and within legal limits.

Guilty Plea. Following all the pretrial hearings, the case is ready for trial. However, a defendant may choose to enter a plea of guilty to a charge, which means there is no trial and no presentation of evidence or testimony of witnesses. The prosecutor reads a brief statement of facts into the court record, and a summary of any agreements about the plea. A defendant can plead guilty or no contest. A no contest plea means the defendant does not contest the charges.

Timing. Although Alaska has rules about the time within which the State must bring a defendant to trial, understand that the pretrial process may take six to nine months, or more to complete. The prosecutor and the court cannot control all of the delays in the process. Continuances are inevitable and may cause you great stress. Victims should remember that court dates can change. Talk to the prosecutor about the length of time your case may take.

The police officer, medical examiner, prosecutor, defense attorney, judge, and jury play the most important roles in moving a case through the court process. The following pages explain the responsibilities of each person.

Police

When a crime occurs, usually the first person to respond is a law enforcement officer who investigates the offense. The officer in charge may gather physical evidence, question witnesses, photograph or video the scene, and collect as much information as possible. If police find enough evidence to show that a specific person committed the offense, they may file criminal charges against that person. They may or may not arrest a defendant when they file charges.

Once you report a crime to the police, you should understand that the case can go forward even without your consent or cooperation. In cases of domestic violence and child abuse in particular, victims or parents of victims sometimes change their minds about wanting to see the offender prosecuted. However, these are serious offenses, and the prosecutor may take the case to trial anyway. A victim advocate can help you sort through your feelings about this issue.

If the police question you, you should talk as honestly and openly about your relationship with the defendant as possible. If you are a survivor of a homicide victim, you also must give open and honest answers about the victim. Withholding background information can hinder the investigation. You may add information to your statement as you remember things more clearly.

The police officers must remain objective in their investigation and look at all possibilities. Often the police cannot give the victim much information until after they question or arrest a suspect. The police may keep certain information about the crime private, in order to confront a suspect who knows details of the crime only the perpetrator could know.

You may want more information from the police and the prosecutor than they can give. The investigative phase of a crime can be very hard on victims and survivors. This is a good time to call a victim support group for assistance. The back of this pamphlet lists most of these groups. They can help you work effectively with the police and the prosecutor until you have the information you need for closure.

In some cases, police identify a suspect but do not have enough evidence to file criminal charges. In other cases a suspect is not immediately identified. Police keep the case files for serious crimes open for a long time. Crimes sometimes are solved long after they occur. The police probably will not stay in constant contact with you, but you may contact them regularly.

Medical Examiner

Homicides must be reported to the medical examiner or coroner of the jurisdiction where the victim is pronounced dead or where the body is found. Often it is the medical examiner who decides that the person did not die from natural causes, and orders an autopsy to be performed. The purpose of the autopsy is to determine the cause of death and to independently document any trauma suffered by the victim. The medical examiner may order an autopsy without getting a signed consent by the next of kin. The medical examiner will keep control over the body of the victim until it is released to the funeral home of your choice.

Victims of sexual assault almost always are asked to submit to a medical exam at a nearby hospital. If the sex offense has just occurred, an immediate medical exam may provide evidence crucial to conviction of the offender, and your cooperation is of tremendous importance. These exams may be traumatic both for adults and children; however, most larger communities have victims' organizations that will send a trained advocate to the hospital with you. If no such advocate can come, you can bring a close friend or family member with you to the hospital.

Victims of domestic violence, physical child abuse, assault, and drunk driving may also be asked to submit to a medical exam. The sooner these exams take place after the offense, the more evidence can be preserved. Although these exams generally are less traumatic than exams for sex offenses, you still may want to bring an advocate or a friend with you for support.

The investigating agency may have to hold your personal possessions as evidence. The police agency or prosecutor handling the case will decide what can be released to you.

Prosecutor

The prosecutor is an attorney who is the legal representative of the government. The prosecutor represents the interests of the people of a community against an individual who has been charged with a crime. One or more prosecutors take charge of the case through all pretrial hearings, the trial, and any appeals.

If the case goes to trial, the prosecutor must prove "beyond a reasonable doubt" that the defendant committed the offense. Prosecutors generally do this by having witnesses testify and by presenting physical evidence. Many cases do not go to trial because the accused pleads guilty or no contest. Sometimes the defendant agrees to plead guilty or no contest

in exchange for the prosecutor's promise to dismiss or reduce some charges, or to make favorable recommendations at sentencing. This arrangement is called a plea bargain or plea agreement. In deciding whether or not to offer a plea bargain, a prosecutor looks at the strength of the evidence, the credibility of the witnesses, and the likely sentence. Although victims have the right to confer with the prosecutor, the ultimate decision to offer a plea bargain rests with the prosecutor. The prosecutor considers society's best interests, not just the individual interests of the victim or the victim's survivors.

Defense Attorney

The constitution guarantees a person charged in any state or federal court the assistance of counsel before he or she can be validly convicted and punished. A person accused of a crime who cannot afford a lawyer is entitled under the constitution to have counsel provided at trial and for appeal. The lawyer must zealously advocate whatever is in the best interests of the client, not the interests of the prosecutor, judge, society, or victims.

State and federal courts have established rules of evidence, rules of procedure, and principles of constitutional law. The defense attorney's main duty is to make sure that the prosecution and court follow the rules. The defense attorney need not prove the suspect "not guilty;" rather the defense attorney ensures that the defendant's legal rights are not violated.

You may feel shock and anger at the strategies the defense attorney uses. You may hear unpleasant or untrue things about you or about people close to you. Cross-examination by a defense attorney can be unnerving and upsetting. Try to stay calm and answer questions as simply and honestly as you can. The assistance of a victim support group can be very helpful at trial.

It may sometimes seem that the defendant has more rights than the victim or than society. As a victim, it benefits you to have a competent and thorough defense attorney representing the defendant. A competent defense attorney decreases the chance of judicial or trial error and therefore decreases the chance that the courts will overturn the conviction on appeal.

A defense attorney or a defense investigator may want to speak with you before the trial. It is advisable to speak with the prosecutor before providing any information to the defense attorney or defense investigator.

Judge

The judge has many functions in the criminal justice system. First, he or she must make impartial decisions. A judge cannot take sides in a criminal case, but must treat both the defendant and the government fairly and impartially. The judge cannot have any personal contact with the victim or members of the victim's family while the case is pending and no ex parte (one-sided) contact with any of the attorneys, witnesses, jurors or other people involved in the case.

A judge decides what evidence can be admitted in the case, using case law, rules of evidence and rules of procedure. Judges also must manage the flow of the case by setting deadlines and forcing the prosecution and defense to meet these deadlines. Victims and their families want the case resolved as soon as possible so that they can go on with their lives. However, they must remember that many things can slow down the case.

A judge or jury may try a case and decide guilt. At a trial, the prosecution first presents evidence and testimony. The defense then may, if it chooses, present testimony and evidence on behalf of the defendant. The defendant is never required to testify, but may do so if he or she chooses.

After hearing all the evidence, the judge or jury deliberates and reaches a decision. A jury's decision must be unanimous. If a jury cannot reach a decision, the judge may say it is "hung," and set a new trial before a different jury. After the trial the judge usually schedules a later time for sentencing. In misdemeanor cases, the judge may sentence the defendant immediately.

Jury

A jury is a panel of citizens randomly selected from the community. Before seating jurors in a criminal case, the judge or attorneys question potential jurors in a procedure called "voir dire" (pronounced "vwar deer"). The questioning helps choose fair and impartial jury members. For example, a jury member should not have special knowledge of the offense or be related to any party in the case.

As the "trier of fact," the jury decides guilt. Jurors can hear only the facts of the offense before them, and usually do not hear any other information about the character of the defendant or the victim.

If you decide to watch a trial, you need to understand that you cannot attempt to influence the jury in any way. Some of the evidence presented

and testimony given may be very painful to hear, but reacting in any way could be considered grounds for a mistrial. Jury members may feel sympathy for victims, and an outward display of emotion could affect their ability to remain fair and impartial. Also be careful about conversations in hallways, elevators, restrooms, or even restaurants near the courthouse. Jurors could be present and overhear these comments.

Juvenile Offenders

If the defendant is a juvenile (under 18), the law requires different procedures. In most juvenile cases the Division of Family and Youth Services, which is part of the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, handles the case. In less serious cases, a juvenile probation intake officer will decide an appropriate outcome (for example, require the juvenile to do community work service, write an essay, write a letter to the victim or refer the case to voluntary victim offender mediation). If the seriousness of the offense needs formal court action, the intake officer refers the case to a judge.

In juvenile proceedings, the law emphasizes rehabilitating the offender, to help troubled teenagers grow into law-abiding adults. The system diverts juveniles whenever possible into appropriate alternative programs. Judges can use locked detention facilities only when clearly necessary for public protection.

If a juvenile commits a particularly serious crime, the case may be transferred (waived) into adult court. Waiver is automatic for 16- and 17-year olds who commit murder, kidnaping, armed robbery, first degree assault, and some sexual assault offenses. A prosecutor also may ask for a transfer if a juvenile, even one younger than 16, has committed a particularly serious crime, has committed a number of crimes, or is unlikely to be rehabilitated before age 20.

Because the juvenile system emphasizes rehabilitation, the court keeps juvenile proceedings confidential and closed to the public. However, victims of juvenile crime may attend all proceedings where the juvenile has a right to be present, and may obtain information about the case. You have the right to make a statement before sentencing or adjudication. You also have the right to be notified when the juvenile is released from custody or if he or she escapes.

Your Role as a Witness

If you have witnessed an offense or have knowledge that is relevant to the prosecution or defense, you may have to testify at the trial. Your role as a witness may be crucial in assuring prosecution. If you receive a subpoena you should go to the designated place at the proper time. In major cases the prosecutor may talk with you before trial to hear the facts as you know them.

Often, witnesses cannot stay in the courtroom during the trial. If you are not allowed in the courtroom, you can ask the court for tapes of the trial, after it finishes. You may have to pay for the tapes. The knowledge a victim gains through the trial can help in healing and closure.

In unusual cases, the court may set special protections for child victims and witnesses under age 13. After a hearing to decide if special conditions would be legal, the court may order the use of one-way mirrors or closed circuit television to prevent emotional harm and stress to the child.

If you are a victim of sexual assault, your previous sexual conduct is not admissible in evidence unless the defendant applies for a special court order. The judge will conduct a private hearing to decide if the value of the evidence outweighs the prejudice to the prosecution and your right to privacy.

If you testify, try to remember the following tips for effective testimony:

1. Always tell the truth. Do not guess at answers or offer your opinion unless the judge asks you to do so. If you don't know the answer to a question, simply say that you do not know.
2. Think before you speak. Make sure you understand the question. Answer only the question asked and then stop. Don't memorize your answers.
3. Speak up loudly enough for everyone in the courtroom to hear you. Answer questions out loud so that the tape recorder picks them up instead of nodding your head.
4. Try to stay calm. Do not become angry or argue, even if one of the attorneys is hostile or implies something that you think is untrue.
5. Stop talking if an attorney objects or if the judge interrupts. Begin again when the judge tells you to continue. If you have forgotten the question, ask for it again.

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6. If you are asked whether you have discussed the case with anyone, answer truthfully. It is perfectly permissible to have talked with the police, prosecutor, defense investigator or attorney, family and friends.

Presentence Investigation/Victim Impact Statement

If the defendant is convicted (either by trial or by guilty plea), the judge will sentence him or her. In most felony cases, the judge sets the sentencing date a few weeks after the conviction so probation officers can prepare a presentence report.

A presentence investigation or report is a study of the offender that includes prior criminal history, education, jobs, drug/alcohol involvement, and mental health treatment. The report also states the facts of the case briefly, and describes the effect of the crime on the victims.

Victims may make a victim impact statement. This lets you tell the judge directly about the physical, mental, and emotional injury you have suffered. You may ask for restitution and make other recommendations about sentencing. You may give an oral statement to the presentence investigator, or send a written statement to the judge, the prosecutor, and the defense attorney. The presentence investigation will include your statements. You have the right to speak at a felony sentencing in addition to making these other statements.

Sentencing/Restitution

Sentencing is usually the last action of the trial court. After conviction of an offender, the judge imposes some sanction or punishment. Alaska and the federal court system have statutes governing sentencing. A judge will have some discretion, but the criminal code sets out minimum and maximum length of sentence.

The sentencing hearing usually is fairly short. Evidence may or may not be presented during the hearing. The defense will make a statement on behalf of the offender, noting factors that the judge could use to lower the penalty, sometimes called "mitigators." The prosecutor will give the government's position, which may include reasons sometimes called aggravators why a judge should lengthen the sentence. The offender may speak in his or her own behalf. In Alaska, the victim may speak at a felony sentencing hearing, in addition to giving other written or oral statements.

Sentences may range from no time in jail to more than 99 years. They often use fines and other sanctions that may help the victim, community, and defendant more than costly jail time. At the time of sentencing, offenders receive credit for any jail time served prior to jail. The judge may suspend a jail sentence and place the offender on probation. The offender stays on probation for a specific time, with restrictions on activities. Probation conditions may require an offender to keep a job or stay in school, support a family, or get counseling or substance abuse treatment. Probation conditions also may require the offender to stay away from you or to pay you restitution. If the offender does not meet these conditions, the judge may put the offender in jail, or impose other restrictions.

If you have suffered out-of-pocket expenses as the result of property damages, lost wages or medical expenses, the judge may order the offender to pay restitution to you. It is important to specify losses when requesting restitution. The judge may hold a hearing to prove the amount of restitution. Try to keep receipts for your expenses. The probation department usually collects restitution from felony offenders. Restitution payments also can be collected while an inmate is in prison. Offenders often make payments weekly or monthly, over the period of probation. The payments are then forwarded to the victim. A victim can get a civil judgment to enforce the order of restitution.

In Anchorage, juvenile intake officers can refer certain juvenile offenders to the victim-offender mediation project. If the victim agrees, trained volunteer mediators facilitate a face-to-face meeting between the victim and the offender. At this meeting, the victim may ask questions of the offender, tell the offender how the crime made the victim feel, and work out a restitution agreement with the offender.

Legal Rights of Victims and Survivors

It may appear that the court system favors the accused. However, victims and survivors do have rights. Alaska and the federal court system have passed laws that address the rights of victims, and Alaska now has a constitutional amendment to complement and strengthen the statutory law.

- ◆ You have the right to immediate medical assistance.
- ◆ You have the right to be protected from further harm by the defendant.
- ◆ You have the right to be treated with dignity, respect, and fairness.
- ◆ You have the right to confer with the prosecutor and to expect timely disposition of your case.

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- ◆ You have the right to attend any hearings where the defendant has the right to be present.
 - ◆ You have the right to be heard at sentencing and at any proceeding where the offender's release from custody is considered.
 - ◆ You have the right, after conviction, to know the offender's complete criminal record.
 - ◆ You have the right to restitution from the offender.
 - ◆ You have the right to be notified when the offender is released from custody or if the offender escapes.

Media

Crime victims and survivors may find dealing with newspaper and television reporters very difficult. Graphic photographs or TV footage, release of your name and address, and aggressive attempts to interview you may distress you. If the report leaves out information or is inaccurate, you may feel more traumatized. As a victim, you have a right to say no to any or all contact with the media.

You should talk to the prosecutor before talking with reporters. The defendant may be able to use your statements to request a change of trial location if there has been too much pretrial publicity, or you may be cross-examined on your statements at trial. You may wish to release only a written statement through a spokesperson, after consulting with the prosecutor.

If you agree to an interview, you may set conditions for it, such as the time and location, the presence of a friend or advocate, request for a certain reporter, review of direct quotations from you before they are printed, and the type of photographs to be used. You have the right to shield your children or other vulnerable family members from interviews. Try to do what is best for your own peace of mind.

Appeal and Post Conviction Process

Offenders convicted at trial have the right to request an appeal. This means the entire case, from investigation through sentencing, can be reviewed by a higher (appellate) court. The defense submits a written brief noting the areas where errors may have occurred. Then the prosecution has an opportunity to respond. These documents, along with a transcript or tape of the trial, go to the appellate court for review. The attorneys also

may present oral argument before the court. No one can give new evidence or testimony.

The appellate court may either affirm the conviction or overturn the trial court decision. If the court overturns the conviction, the prosecutor sometimes retries the case. Occasionally, the state supreme court or even the U.S. Supreme Court reviews the case. A convicted offender also can sometimes ask for post conviction relief or a habeas corpus petition. The appellate process takes a long time and may add to your frustration with delay.

If you have questions about appellate procedure or want to hear an oral argument, ask the prosecutor's office or the local victim assistance program for more information.

Parole

Parole lets an offender serve the last part of a sentence in the community supervised by a parole officer. Rather than releasing inmates without controls, parole provides for the gradual reintegration of the offender in the community, subject to conditions set by the parole board. There are two types of parole: discretionary parole and mandatory parole.

About one-third of imprisoned offenders are eligible to apply for discretionary parole. The parole board is an independent part of the Department of Corrections. Laws decide eligibility for parole, but the five citizens on the parole board decide who to actually release. The scheduling of a parole hearing does not necessarily lead to the release of an offender. The parole board considers the seriousness of the offense for which the individual was convicted, the offender's past criminal record, adjustment while in the institution, and plans for the future. The parole board also considers the victim impact statement.

Upon request, the parole board will notify victims and survivors of all scheduled hearings. It is your responsibility to tell the parole board you want information about the offender. Shortly after sentencing, send a short written note to the parole board telling them you want to be notified of hearings. If you change addresses, send your new address. After receiving notification of a hearing, you may write to the board about your feelings, appear in person before the board, or take no action.

Mandatory parole means that offenders earn early release from prison or jail by accumulating good time, days credited for good behavior while in prison. The law requires DOC to deduct good time from the sentence imposed, one day for every two days served. If offenders do not lose their

good time through misbehavior, the department releases them after they serve two-thirds of their sentences. Good time helps the department manage prisons because it gives offenders a reason to cooperate with institutional rules. Although the parole board cannot refuse to release offenders who have earned good time, it can impose release conditions. The parole board holds revocation hearings if the offender does not comply with the conditions.

Civil Aspects

In some criminal cases, victims or their survivors may sue under civil law to recover their losses. Sometimes a victim or survivor sues not only the offender but someone who should have prevented the offender's misconduct, such as an employer, a parent, or a property owner. Compensatory damages include financial losses such as medical bills, burial expenses, property damage, and lost time at work. Damages also may include intangible things like mental anguish, pain, grief, and loss of companionship. In addition to compensatory damages, victims can recover punitive damages under limited circumstances. The financial condition of the criminal or wrongdoer is directly relevant to the amount of punitive damages that may be awarded.

Alaska and the federal government have time limits for filing a lawsuit for personal injuries or death. If you do not file a lawsuit in the appropriate court within the required time, the claim will be forever barred regardless of the merits of the case. Although a civil case is normally decided after the criminal action, you should have an experienced, competent attorney review the facts of your case as soon as possible.

Crime Victims Compensation

The Alaska Violent Crimes Compensation Board gives limited financial assistance to the innocent victims of violent crimes. You may apply if you were the victim of a violent crime, the dependent of a deceased victim, or were responsible for the support of a deceased victim. The board can pay for expenses such as medical and counseling bills, lost wages or loss of support, funeral expenses, and other reasonable losses. The board does not make payments for property losses. The maximum award is \$25,000 per victim, or \$40,000 for multiple dependents.

You must apply for compensation within two years of the crime. If the crime has put you in extreme financial need, you may apply to the board for up to \$1,500 in emergency aid. The board will consider your claim and

decide. If you disagree with the decision, you have 30 days to ask the board to schedule a hearing on your claim where you can explain why you think you should get compensation. You can get application forms from the Alaska State Troopers, local police departments, district attorney offices, and hospitals. You also may also contact the Violent Crimes Compensation Board at the address and phone number in the back of this pamphlet.

Victim Assistance Programs

Many crime victims find it difficult to understand court procedures and their role in them. Many others are overwhelmed by the emotions that often accompany victimization. Luckily, programs in Alaska serve crime victims and their families in many ways. They exist to help you and support you, and you should not hesitate to call them. The pages at the end of this booklet list many organizations throughout the state.

Most larger towns in Alaska have services for people who are victims of sexual assault, child abuse, elder abuse and domestic violence. These centers often have crisis lines, emotional support, temporary shelter, and emergency assistance. Counselors there may go with you to medical exams and court proceedings, act as your advocate in difficult situations, help you find out court dates and case information, and refer you to counseling and social services. These organizations often encourage changes in laws and court procedures to better protect the interests of crime victims. Some have rural outreach programs to work with victims in outlying areas.

Most of the larger towns have district attorney and probation offices. The prosecutor or a victim-witness coordinator can give you case information and advice on dealing with defense attorneys and reporters, help prepare you for trial and sentencing, and give you information on applying for crime victim compensation. Probation officers can help you write a victim impact statement and request restitution.

The Department of Corrections has a statewide Office of Crime Victims Advocacy, located in Anchorage. It can give you information on sentencing, parole hearings, release from custody, and restitution. It also can refer you to victim service organizations and social services.

Victims for Justice, located in Anchorage, is a statewide nonprofit service agency for victims of violent crime. It provides court accompaniment, advocacy in difficult situations, grief support, and referrals to appropriate agencies. It participates in experimental programs to promote restitution and reconciliation between the victim and the defendant. It also advocates changes in laws and court procedures to better protect the interests of crime victims.

Another statewide nonprofit agency in Anchorage, Mothers Against Drunk Drivers, focuses on drunk driving crimes. It provides court support for victims, and victim impact panels to help educate drunk drivers about the seriousness of the crime. It also offers community education programs and advocates changes in laws and court procedures.

Many other social services programs meet specific needs. Ask your victim advocate for a referral if you think you may need alcohol or drug treatment, legal advice, mental health counseling, job counseling, suicide prevention, help with your children, housing, or other problems. Many of these services are free or available on a sliding scale geared to your family's income.

Grieving and Healing

Victims of crimes may experience a great deal of anger, hatred, guilt and confusion. Your sense of trust and order may be shattered. You may experience a wide range of feelings and behaviors and have little ability to control your emotions at any given time.

These emotions are very personal and may continue for months or years. Victims may experience nightmares, insomnia, periods of uncontrolled sobbing, occasional hysterical laughter, nausea, headaches, fatigue or a general feeling of going crazy. Family relationships may change as individuals react differently to the trauma. Victimization may lead to financial stress, family discord, divorce, alcoholism, and a variety of other problems. Everyone has a different method for dealing with it and a different timetable for healing. It is important to grieve and acknowledge the impact of your experience.

In time, you will heal. Begin by treating yourself with kindness and recognizing that healing happens slowly. Do not set unrealistic expectations and do not let others set timetables or pressure you into "getting on with your life." Try not to make any major changes in your lifestyle for at least one year, such as moving, quitting your job, becoming pregnant, or divorcing; these changes will add even more stress. Do things when you are ready, not because others are telling you to do them. It is alright to be angry, to feel sad, or to cry. Take time to lament and feel sorry for yourself.

Healing can be facilitated by telling one's story again and again. Begin to build a network of support for yourself and other family members to help you get through these difficult times, and realize you are not alone. Many others have experienced the same problems and can help you work through your experience. You can benefit greatly from calling one of the victim assistance organizations listed in the back of this pamphlet.

Directory of Services

Anchorage

- Abused Women's Aid in Crisis** 272-0100
100 West 13th Avenue
Anchorage, AK 99501
domestic violence: shelter, counseling, advocacy, crisis line, children's services, batterers' counseling
- Alaska Women's Resource Center** 276-0528
111 West 9th Avenue
Anchorage, AK 99501
domestic violence: crisis intervention, counseling, advocacy
- Mothers Against Drunk Drivers** 522-6233
615 East 82nd Avenue, Suite B-1
Anchorage, AK 99518
drunk driving: advocacy, court support, court monitoring, public education
- Office of Crime Victims Advocacy** 269-7393
4500 Diplomacy Drive
Anchorage, AK 99508
information on release from custody, restitution
- Standing Together Against Rape** 276-7273 (Crisis)
1057 West Fireweed Lane, Suite 230 276-7279 (Business)
Anchorage, AK 99503 1-800-478-8999
sexual assault/child sexual abuse: counseling, advocacy, crisis line
- Victims for Justice** 278-0977
619 East 5th Avenue
Anchorage, AK 99501
violent crime: advocacy, support, crisis intervention

Barrow

- Arctic Women in Crisis** 852-0261
P.O. Box 69 1-800-478-0267
Barrow, AK 99723
domestic violence/sexual assault: shelter, counseling, advocacy, crisis line, rural outreach, children's services

Bethel

- Tundra Women's Coalition** 543-3456
P.O. Box 1537 1-800-478-7799
Bethel, AK 99559
domestic violence/sexual assault: shelter, counseling, advocacy, crisis line, rural outreach, children's services

Cordova

Cordova Family Resource Center 424-5674
P.O. Box 863
Cordova, AK 99574
domestic violence/sexual assault: shelters, crisis line, advocacy, library, public education

Dillingham

Safe and Fear-Free Environment 842-2320
P.O. Box 94 1-800-478-2316
Dillingham, AK 99576
domestic violence/sexual assault: shelter, counseling, crisis line, rural outreach, children's services

Emmonak

Emmonak Women's Shelter 949-1434
P.O. Box 207 1-800-948-1434
Emmonak, AK 99581
domestic violence: shelter, crisis intervention

Fairbanks

**Women in Crisis-
Counseling and Assistance** 452-2293
717 9th Avenue 1-800-478-7273
Fairbanks, AK 99701
domestic violence/sexual assault: shelter, advocacy, counseling, crisis line, elder abuse, children's services, rural outreach

Juneau

**Aiding Women from Abuse
and Rape Emergencies** 586-1090
P.O. Box 020809 1-800-478-1090
Juneau, AK 99801
domestic violence/sexual assault: shelter, counseling, advocacy, crisis line, elder abuse, children's services, rural outreach

Alaska Council on Domestic Violence 465-4356
Department of Public Safety
Box 111200
Juneau, AK 99811-1200
coordination of statewide services, education, grants to organizations

**Alaska Network on Domestic Violence
and Sexual Assault** 586-3650
130 Seward, #501
Juneau, AK 99801
domestic violence/sexual assault, advocacy for victims, public education, training, technical assistance

Tongass Community Counseling Center 586-3585
222 Seward Street, Suite 202
Juneau, AK 99801
domestic violence: batterers' counseling, children's services

Violent Crimes Compensation Board 465-3040
P.O. Box 111200 1-800-764-3040
Juneau, AK 99811
financial compensation for victims of violent crime

Kenai Peninsula

Kenai/Soldotna Women's Resource and Crisis Center 283-7257
325 Spruce Street
Kenai, AK 99611
domestic violence/sexual assault: shelter, counseling, advocacy, crisis line, elder abuse, children's services

Southern Peninsula Women's Services 235-8101
3776 Lake Street, Suite 100
Homer, AK 99603
domestic violence/sexual assault: safe homes, counseling, advocacy, crisis line, rural outreach, children's services

Ketchikan

Women in Safe Homes 225-0202
P.O. Box 6552 1-800-478-9474
Ketchikan, AK 99901
domestic violence/sexual assault: shelter, counseling, advocacy, crisis line, rural outreach, children's services

Kodiak

Kodiak Women's Resource and Crisis Center 486-6171
P.O. Box 2122
Kodiak, AK 99615
domestic violence/sexual assault: shelter, counseling, advocacy, crisis line, rural outreach, children's services

Kotzebue

Maniilaq Women's Shelter 442-3969
P.O. Box 38 1-800-478-3312
Kotzebue, AK 99752
domestic violence/sexual assault: shelter, counseling, advocacy, crisis line, children's services

Mat-Su Valley

Valley Women's Resource Center 746-4080
403 South Alaska Street 1-800-478-4090
Palmer, AK 99645
domestic violence/sexual assault: shelter, counseling, advocacy, crisis line, children's services

Nome

Bering Sea Women's Group

P.O. Box 1596

Nome, AK 99726

*domestic violence/sexual assault: shelter, counseling, advocacy, crisis line,
rural outreach, children's services*

443-5491

1-800-570-5444

Seward

Seward Life Action Council

P.O. Box 1045

Seward, AK 99664

domestic violence /sexual assault: safe homes, counseling, advocacy, crisis line

224-5257

Sitka

Sitkans Against Family Violence

P.O. Box 6136

Sitka, AK 99835

*domestic violence/sexual assault: shelter, counseling, advocacy, crisis line,
rural outreach, children's services*

747-3370

1-800-478-6511

Unalaska

Unalaskans Against Sexual Assault and Family Violence

P.O. Box 36

Unalaska, AK 99685

domestic violence/sexual assault: safe homes, counseling, advocacy, crisis line

1-800-478-7238

581-1500

Valdez

Advocates for Victims of Violence

P.O. Box 524

Valdez, AK 99686

*domestic violence/sexual assault: shelter, counseling, advocacy, crisis line,
rural outreach, children's services*

835-2980

District Attorney Offices

Anchorage

Barrow

Bethel

Dillingham

Fairbanks

Juneau

Kenai

Ketchikan

Kodiak

Kotzebue

Nome

Palmer

Sitka

269-6300

852-5297

543-2055

842-2482

452-1565

465-3428

283-3131

225-6128

486-5195

442-3396

443-2296

745-5027

747-5851

Alaska Constitution Article I. Section 24

Rights of Crime Victims

Crime victims, as defined by law, shall have the following rights as provided by law: the right to be reasonably protected from the accused through the imposition of appropriate bail or conditions of release by the court; the right to confer with the prosecution; the right to be treated with dignity, respect, and fairness during all phases of the criminal and juvenile justice process; the right to timely disposition of the case following the arrest of the accused; the right to obtain information about and be allowed to be present at all criminal or juvenile proceedings where the accused has the right to be present; the right to be allowed to be heard, upon request, at sentencing, before or after conviction or juvenile adjudication, and at any proceeding where the accused's release from custody is considered; the right to restitution from the accused; and the right to be informed, upon request of the accused's escape or release from custody before or after conviction or juvenile adjudication.