



# Criminal justice system

## Victims' rights



The court process can be confusing and frightening for crime victims. This *Get the Facts* provides an overview of the rights of crime victims and addresses common questions victims have as they attempt to navigate the court system and rebuild their lives.

### What are my rights as a victim of crime in Illinois?

The Illinois Bill of Rights for Victims and Witnesses of Violent Crime implements, preserves, and protects the following rights for victims of crime as guaranteed by the Illinois constitution:

- (1) The right to be treated with fairness and respect for their dignity and privacy throughout the criminal justice process.
- (2) The right to notification of court proceedings.
- (3) The right to communicate with the prosecution.
- (4) The right to make a statement to the court at sentencing.
- (5) The right to information about the conviction, sentence, imprisonment and release of the accused.
- (6) The right to the timely disposition of the case following the arrest of the accused.
- (7) The right to be reasonably protected from the accused through the criminal justice process.
- (8) The right to be present at the trial and all other court proceedings on the same basis as the accused, unless the victim is to testify and the court determines that the victim's testimony would be materially affected if the victim hears other testimony at the trial.
- (9) The right to have present at all court proceedings, subject to the rules of evidence, an advocate or other support person of the victim's choice.
- (10) The right to restitution.

These rights are listed in the Illinois Rights of Crime Victims and Witnesses Act [725 ILCS 120].



## Where can I get help?

Services are provided to crime victims and witnesses who are involved in cases that are being prosecuted by the Illinois Attorney General's Office and state's attorney's offices in counties across Illinois. Victims may receive referrals for service, information on crime victim compensation claims, and assistance in completion of compensation applications.

***If you are in immediate danger, call 911.***

## How can I find the status of an offender, including release from jail or prison?

The Illinois Attorney General's Office operates the Illinois Automated Victim Notification System. This statewide notification system offers victims and concerned citizens a toll-free number to get up-to-date information on the custody and case status of an offender. Callers can register for automatic notification. Once they are registered, they will receive notification of changes in an inmate's status by phone. The system also allows the public to search for offender custody and case status by name. To register for the service or to search for offender information online, go to [www.vinelink.com](http://www.vinelink.com).

## Are victims eligible for compensation?

The Illinois Crime Victim's Compensation Act [740 ILCS 45/17] created the Illinois Crime Victim Compensation Program administered by the Illinois Attorney General's Office. The program provides financial compensation to victims of violent crime and their families. Eligible victims or family members who apply can receive compensation for some out-of-pocket expenses, medical expenses, or loss of earnings. Compensation is not provided for property loss or pain and suffering.

Applicants must first exhaust all other financial resources available, including, but not limited to any governmental, medical, or health insurance programs. Claims must be filed within one year of the date the crime occurred, or within one year of the criminal indictment.

## How can I get more information about the rights of crime victims?

Call the Crime Victims Assistance Line at 1-800-228-3368. Supported by the Illinois Attorney General's Office, this hotline is dedicated to helping answer questions from victims of crime. The hotline provides victims with referrals for service, information on crime victim compensation claims, and assistance in completing applications for compensation. You may also visit the Illinois Attorney General's Office website at [www.illinoisattorneygeneral.gov](http://www.illinoisattorneygeneral.gov).

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## About *Get the Facts: Criminal Justice System*



The *Get the Facts: Criminal Justice System* series was created to answer common questions about the criminal justice system. Other topics in this series include arrests, the pretrial process, the courts, corrections, and criminal records.

