

If you are a victim of crime in Texas, you have rights.

Victims of crime are guaranteed certain rights and participation in the criminal justice system under Texas law. This brochure provides information about your rights as a crime victim.

In order to exercise your rights as a crime victim it is necessary to contact crime victim service providers to discuss and request, if applicable, your rights and available services. Your local district or county attorney's office, law enforcement agency, or supervising agency (probation or prison) have crime victim service providers and staff available to assist you.

If you have any questions regarding these rights and how to exercise them, please contact the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) Victim Services Division at 800-848-4284 or victim.svc@tdcj.texas.gov.

Art. 56.01. DEFINITIONS

(1) "Close relative of a deceased victim" means a person who was the spouse of a deceased victim at the time of the victim's death or who is a parent or adult brother, sister, or child of the deceased victim.

(2) "Guardian of victim" means a person who is the legal guardian of the victim, whether or not the legal relationship between the guardian and victim exists because of the age of the victim or the physical or mental incompetency of the victim.

(2-a) "Sexual assault" means an offense under Section 21.02, 21.11(a)(1), 22.011, or 22.021, Penal Code.

(3) "Victim" means a person who is the victim of the offense of sexual assault, kidnapping, aggravated robbery, trafficking of persons, or injury to a child, elderly individual, or disabled individual or who has suffered personal injury or death as a result of the criminal conduct of another.

Art. 56.02. CRIME VICTIMS' RIGHTS

(a) A victim, guardian of a victim, or close relative of a deceased victim is entitled to the following rights within the criminal justice system:

(1) the right to receive from law enforcement agen-

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cies adequate protection from harm and threats of harm arising from cooperation with prosecution efforts;

(2) the right to have the magistrate take the safety of the victim or his family into consideration as an element in fixing the amount of bail for the accused;

(3) the right, if requested, to be informed:

(A) by the attorney representing the state of relevant court proceedings, including appellate proceedings, and to be informed if those proceedings have been canceled or rescheduled prior to the event; and

(B) by an appellate court of decisions of the court, after the decisions are entered but before the decisions are made public;

(4) the right to be informed, when requested, by a peace officer concerning the defendant's right to bail and the procedures in criminal investigations and by the district attorney's office concerning the general procedures in the criminal justice system, including general procedures in guilty plea negotiations and arrangements, restitution, and the appeals and parole process;

(5) the right to provide pertinent information to a probation department conducting a presentencing investigation concerning the impact of the offense on the victim and his family by testimony, written statement, or any other manner prior to any sentencing of the offender;

(6) the right to receive information regarding compensation to victims of crime as provided by Subchapter B, including information related to the costs that may be compensated under that subchapter and the amount of compensation, eligibility for compensation, and procedures for application for compensation under that subchapter, the payment for a medical examination under Article 56.06 for a victim of a sexual assault, and when requested, to referral to available social service agencies that may offer additional assistance;

(7) the right to be informed, upon request, of parole procedures, to participate in the parole process, to be notified, if requested, of parole proceedings concerning a defendant in the victim's case, to provide to the Board of Pardons and Paroles for inclusion in the defendant's file information to be considered by the board prior to the parole of any defendant convicted of any crime subject to this subchapter, and to be notified, if requested, of the defendant's release;

(8) the right to be provided with a waiting area, separate or secure from other witnesses, including the offender and relatives of the offender, before testifying in any proceeding concerning the offender; if a separate waiting area is not available, other safeguards should be taken to minimize the victim's contact with the offender and the offender's relatives and witnesses, before and during court proceedings;

(9) the right to prompt return of any property of the victim that is held by a law enforcement agency or the attorney for the state as evidence when the property is no longer required for that purpose;

(10) the right to have the attorney for the state notify the employer of the victim, if requested, of the necessity of the victim's cooperation and testimony in a proceeding that may necessitate the absence of the victim from work for good cause;

(11) the right to request victim-offender mediation coordinated by the victim services division of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice;

(12) the right to be informed of the uses of a victim impact statement and the statement's purpose in the criminal justice system, to complete the victim impact statement, and to have the victim impact statement considered:

(A) by the attorney representing the state and the judge before sentencing or before a plea bargain agreement is accepted; and

(B) by the Board of Pardons and Paroles before an inmate is released on parole;

(13) for a victim of an assault or sexual assault who is younger than 17 years of age or whose case involves family violence, as defined by Section 71.004, Family Code, the right to have the court consider the impact on the victim of a continuance requested by the defendant; if requested by the attorney representing the state or by counsel for the defendant, the court shall state on the record the reason for granting or denying the continuance; and

(14) if the offense is a capital felony, the right to:

(A) receive by mail from the court a written explanation of defense-initiated victim outreach if the court has authorized expenditures for a defense-initiated victim outreach specialist;

(B) not be contacted by the victim outreach specialist unless the victim, guardian, or relative has consented to the contact by providing a written notice to the court; and

(C) designate a victim service provider to receive all communications from a victim outreach specialist acting on behalf of any person.

(b) A victim, guardian of a victim, or close relative of a deceased victim is entitled to the right to be present at all public court proceedings related to the offense, subject to the approval of the judge in the case.

(c) The office of the attorney representing the state, and the sheriff, police, and other law enforcement agencies shall ensure to the extent practicable that a victim, guardian of a victim, or close relative of a deceased victim is afforded the rights granted by this article and Article 56.021 and, on request, an explanation of those rights.

(d) A judge, attorney for the state, peace officer, or law enforcement agency is not liable for a failure or inability to provide a right enumerated in this article or Article 56.021. The failure or inability of any person to provide a right or service enumerated in this article or Article 56.021 may not be used by a defendant in a criminal case as a ground for appeal, a ground to set aside the conviction or sentence, or a ground in a habeas corpus petition. A victim, guardian of a victim, or close relative of a deceased victim does not have standing to participate as a party in a criminal proceeding or to contest the disposition of any charge.

Art. 56.021. RIGHTS OF VICTIM OF SEXUAL ASSAULT OR ABUSE, STALKING, OR TRAFFICKING

(a) In addition to the rights enumerated in Article 56.02, if the offense is a sexual assault, the victim, guardian of a victim, or close relative of a deceased victim is entitled to the following rights within the criminal justice system:

(1) if requested, the right to a disclosure of information regarding any evidence that was collected during the investigation of the offense, unless disclosing the information would interfere with the investigation or prosecution of the offense, in which event the victim,

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guardian, or relative shall be informed of the estimated date on which that information is expected to be disclosed;

(2) if requested, the right to a disclosure of information regarding the status of any analysis being performed of any evidence that was collected during the investigation of the offense;

(3) if requested, the right to be notified;

(A) at the time a request is submitted to a crime laboratory to process and analyze any evidence that was collected during the investigation of the offense;

(B) at the time of the submission of a request to compare any biological evidence collected during the investigation of the offense with DNA profiles maintained in a state or federal DNA database; and

(C) of the results of the comparison described by Paragraph (B), unless disclosing the results would interfere with the investigation or prosecution of the offense, in which event the victim, guardian, or relative shall be informed of the estimated date on which those results are expected to be disclosed;

(4) if requested, the right to counseling regarding acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection;

(5) for the victim of the offense, testing for acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS), human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection, antibodies to HIV, or infection with any other probable causative agent of AIDS; and

(6) to the extent provided by Articles 56.06 and 56.065, for the victim of the offense, the right to a forensic medical examination if, within 96 hours of the offense, the offense is reported to a law enforcement agency or a forensic medical examination is otherwise conducted at a health care facility.

(b) A victim, guardian, or relative who requests to be notified under Subsection (a)(3) must provide a current address and phone number to the attorney representing the state and the law enforcement agency that is investigating the offense. The victim, guardian, or relative must inform the attorney representing the state and the law enforcement agency of any change in the address or phone number.

(c) A victim, guardian, or relative may designate a person, including an entity that provides services to victims of sexual assault, to receive any notice requested under Subsection (a)(3).

(d) This subsection applies only to a victim of an offense under Section 20A.02, 20A.03, 21.02, 21.11, 22.011, 22.021, 42.072, or 43.05, Penal Code. In addition to the rights enumerated in Article 56.02 and, if applicable, Subsection (a) of this article, a victim described by this subsection or a parent or guardian of the victim is entitled to the following rights within the criminal justice system:

(1) the right to request that the attorney representing the state, subject to the Texas Disciplinary Rules of Professional Conduct, file an application for a protective order under Article 7A.01 on behalf of the victim;

(2) the right to be informed:

(A) that the victim or the victim's parent or guardian, as applicable, may file an application for a protective order under Article 7A.01;

(B) of the court in which the application for a protective order may be filed; and

(C) that, on request of the victim or the victim's parent or guardian, as applicable, and subject to the Texas Disciplinary Rules of Professional Conduct, the attorney representing the state may file the application for a protective order;

(3) if the victim or the victim's parent or guardian, as applicable, is present when the defendant is convicted or placed on deferred adjudication community supervision, the right to be given by the court the information described by Subdivision (2) and, if the court has jurisdiction over applications for protective orders that are filed under Article 7A.01, the right to file an application for a protective order immediately following the defendant's conviction or placement on deferred adjudication community supervision; and

(4) if the victim or the victim's parent or guardian, as applicable, is not present when the defendant is convicted or placed on deferred adjudication community supervision, the right to be given by the attorney representing the state the information described by Subdivision (2).

Texas Department of Criminal Justice

VICTIM SERVICES DIVISION



TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE

VICTIM SERVICES DIVISION

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512-452-0825

E-mail:
victim.svc@tdcj.texas.gov

Website:
www.tdcj.texas.gov

Integrated Victim Services System
(IVSS) Victim Portal:
www.ivss.tdcj.texas.gov

The mission of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) Victim Services Division is to provide a central mechanism for crime victims to participate in the Criminal Justice System.

For more information regarding crime victims' rights and available services, contact the TDCJ Victim Services Division and visit the TDCJ website.

The crime victims' rights listed in this brochure are current through the Regular Session of the 85th Legislature.

TEXAS CRIME VICTIMS' RIGHTS