

FALL 2021

THE VICTIMS' VOICE

CONNECTICUT OFFICE OF THE VICTIM ADVOCATE

Advocate's Corner

NATASHA M. PIERRE, JD, MSW

As CT courthouses have reopened and more cases are being heard in person, the Office of The Victim Advocate has seen a significant increase in requests for assistance. My staff are answering questions, making referrals, and opening cases due to violations of crime victims' rights. The Covid-19 epidemic put a hold on court matters, delaying the process and causing frustration for victims. It is my duty to ensure rights of victims are upheld in our state, and after countless attempts at the Capitol during legislative sessions to implement enforcement mechanisms, the OVA has had to be creative in addressing issues crime victims face to ensure proper recourse. With this said, I am happy to share that the OVA and the Court Administrator are working together to address the problems crime victims are facing to ensure a fair and smooth process for the victim community.



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2021 Crime Victims' Rights Legislation

The Office of The Victim Advocate actively monitors and comments on proposed legislation that will directly affect victims of crime.

During this year's legislative session, there were significant changes in state law regarding court systems and law enforcement. Updates to laws regarding online harassment, human trafficking, crimes involving juvenile offenders, and sexual assault on college campuses were made by the Legislature.

These changes are summarized in the next pages to help promote awareness of the impact of certain legislation on victims of crime.

The Office of the Victim Advocate (OVA) was statutorily established in 1998 as an independent state agency charged with the promotion and protection of the constitutional and statutory rights of crime victims in Connecticut.



STATE OF CONNECTICUT 2021
Office of The Victim Advocate
SUMMARY OF PUBLIC ACTS

CRIME VICTIMS' RIGHTS LEGISLATION

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Crime Victims' Rights Legislation

House Joint Resolution No. 49, Resolution Proposing An Amendment to the State Constitution Concerning Crime Victims' Rights

House Joint Resolution No. 366, Resolution Proposing A Constitutional Amendment To Remove A Prohibition Against Construing The Constitution Or Statute To Create A Basis For A Criminal Conviction To Be Vacated Or Appealed If A Victim Is Not Afforded His Or Her Rights In Court

These resolutions would have corrected a flaw in the Crime Victims' Rights Amendment to the State Constitution, which currently prohibits crime victims from seeking enforcement of their rights when they are violated. The Judiciary Committee failed to act on the resolutions before the deadline.

To see the related testimony submitted by the Office of The Victim Advocate (OVA) visit the OVA website at www.ct.gov/ova.

The Office of the Victim Advocate (OVA) was statutorily established in 1998 as an independent state agency charged with the promotion and protection of the constitutional and statutory rights of crime victims in Connecticut. Among its many responsibilities, the OVA provides oversight of state and private agencies, and advocacy to crime victims when a violation of their rights is at issue.

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Visit the OVA website to see the full summary of changes implemented. Visit www.ct.gov/ova.



PREVENT BECOMING A VICTIM OF PHONE HACKING

The threat of having your phone hacked is real and more common than most realize.

Check out some of the ways you could fall victim:

- Hacking Software
- Phishing
- SIM Card Hacking
- Bluetooth Hacking



State of Connecticut
Office of The Victim Advocate

Protect your devices

"The best prevention is education, be aware of the potential risks, share with others and take steps to protect yourself"

NATASHA PIERRE,
JD, MSW

STATE VICTIM ADVOCATE, STATE OF CONNECTICUT

WWW.CT.GOV/OVA - 860.550.6632 - OVA.INFO@CT.GOV

www.ct.gov/ova

Hacking Software

Hacking software is a method used by hackers to get information from a phone. Hackers can buy hacking software anywhere, which must be installed on the target phone. A phone does not need to be in a hackers possession to install hacking software.



Phishing

Phishing is a method used by hackers where they impersonate a company or trusted individual in order to gain confidential data. This method uses email and text message by sending official-looking codes, images, and messages. When this malicious content is clicked on, the URLs can hack your phone because the link has been infected with a hacking virus or software that can take your personal information.



SIM Card Hacking

SIM card swapping is performed when the hacker contacts your phone provider, pretends to be you, and then asks for a replacement SIM card. Once the provider sends the new SIM to the hacker, the old SIM card will be deactivated, and your phone number will be stolen. This means the hacker has taken over your phone calls, messages, etc. This method of hacking is relatively easy if the hacker can convince the provider that they are you. Keeping personal details to yourself is an important part of ensuring that hackers cannot pretend to be you.



Bluetooth Hacking

Professional hackers can use special software products to search for vulnerable mobile devices with an operating Bluetooth connection. These types of hacks are done when a hacker is in range of your phone, usually in a populated area. When hackers are connected to your Bluetooth, they have access to all of the information available and the internet connection to access the web, but the data must be downloaded while the phone is within range.



Source: McAfee.com

THE OVA WORKED WITH THE JUDICIAL BRANCH AND SEVERAL LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES TO ADDRESS RECURRING ISSUES, SUCH AS RESTITUTION, INFORMATION REQUESTS, AND ACCESS TO COURT PROCEEDINGS.

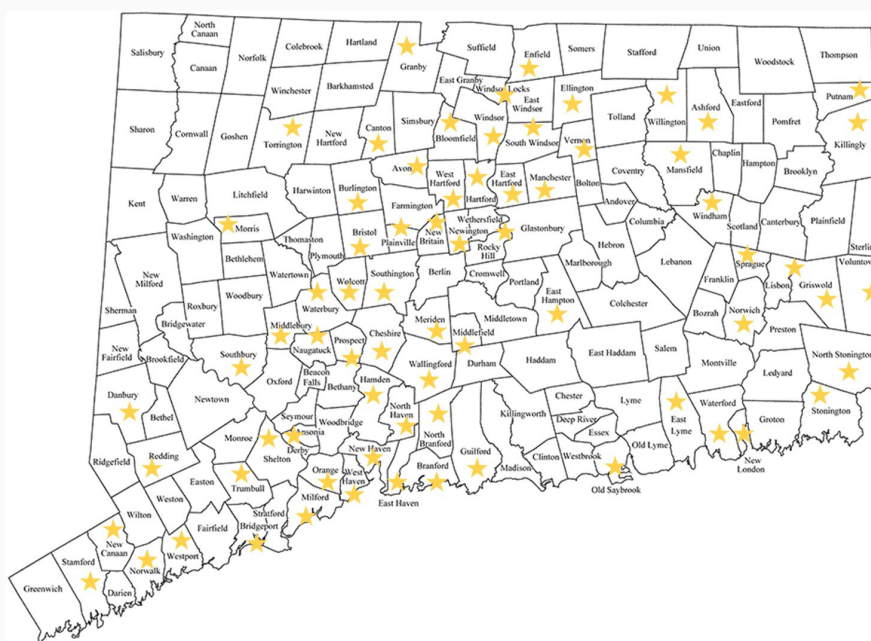
THE OVA ALSO WORKED WITH THE JUDICIAL BRANCH AND THE STATE'S ATTORNEY TO DEVELOP ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES TO ADDRESS CRIME VICTIMS' RIGHTS VIOLATIONS BY THE COURT SYSTEM.



OVA 2020-2021 Annual Report

The OVA's statutory mandates include receiving complaints or requests for information and assistance from crime victims, agencies and entities on behalf of crime victims. The OVA received 966 requests for assistance and had an open caseload of 199 clients. In addition to providing assistance, the OVA referred clients to 123 state, federal, private or community agencies to assist the clients in other areas related to the crime. The map below reflects the areas of the state where crimes were committed for cases opened and referrals made by the OVA.

To access the full report please visit www.ct.gov/ova



Crimes were committed in: Ashford, Avon, Baltic, Bloomfield, Branford, Bridgeport, Bristol, Burlington, Canton, Cheshire, Danbury, Danielson, Dayville, Derby, East Hampton, East Hartford, East Haven, East Lyme, Ellington, Enfield, Granby, Griswold, Guilford, Hamden, Hartford, Jewett City, Lisbon, Manchester, Mansfield Center, Meriden, Middlebury, Middlefield, Milford, Morris, Mystic, Naugatuck, New Britain, New Canaan, New Haven, New London, Newington, Niantic, North Branford, North Haven, North Stonington, Norwalk, Norwich, Old Saybrook, Orange, Pawcatuck, Plainville, Prospect, Putnam, Redding, Rocky Hill, Shelton, South Windsor, Southbury, Southington, Stamford, Stonington, Torrington, Trumbull, Vernon/Rockville, Wallingford, Waterbury, Waterford, West Hartford, West Haven, Westport, Willimantic, Willington, Windsor, Windsor Locks, and Wolcott.

OVA Online Complaint Form



The Office of The Victim Advocate has an online complaint form available 24/7.

If you feel your rights were violated and want to submit a complaint, submit an online complaint anytime. Staff from the OVA will respond within 24 hours or the next business day.

Education & Training



The OVA offers a series of training sessions geared toward raising awareness about the operations of our office and the specific rights and services available to victims of crime in the state.

If your group or organization is interested in learning more about the trainings available, please contact the Office of The Victim Advocate by phone at 860-550-6632 or via email to ova.info@ct.gov.

Trainings are free and can be customized to specific issues you are seeing in your community.

Some topic areas include:

- Office of The Victim Advocate Overview
- Crime Victims' Rights
- CT Community Resources for Victims of Crime
- Domestic Violence
- Identity Theft
- Senior Citizen Awareness



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