



**Office of the Victim Advocate**  
**FY 2023-2024 Administrative Digest**  
*A Division of the Office of Governmental Accountability*

## **At-a-Glance**

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Agency:	Office of the Victim Advocate
Commissioner:	Natasha M. Pierre, Victim Advocate
Established:	June 8, 1998
Operational:	September 1999
Statutory Authority:	Conn. Gen. Statutes Sec. 46a-13b et seq.
Central Office:	505 Hudson Street, 5 <sup>th</sup> Floor, Hartford, CT 06106
Number of Employees:	4
Recurring Operating expenses:	\$491,095 appropriated for FY 2024
Organizational Structure:	Independent executive branch state agency

## **Mission**

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The Office of the Victim Advocate (OVA) seeks to ensure that victims of crime become an integral part of the criminal justice system. Through public education of the rights and services available to crime victims, collaboration with law enforcement and services providers, as well as court and legislative advocacy, the OVA believes the voice of crime victims is a necessary component of the criminal justice process.

## **Statutory Authority**

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The OVA was statutorily established in 1998, and became operational in 1999, 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.

To fulfill the mandates of the OVA, the State Victim Advocate may:

- Evaluate the delivery of services by state agencies and entities that provide services to victims.
- Coordinate and cooperate with other private and public agencies concerned with the implementation, monitoring and enforcement of the constitutional rights of victims.
- Review procedures established by any state agency or other entity providing services to victims with respect to the constitutional rights of victims.

- Receive and review complaints of persons concerning the actions of any state agency or other entity providing services to crime victims; initiate formal investigations into the circumstances of a complaint so as to remedy the concern in a systemic manner.
- File a limited special appearance in any court proceeding to advocate for any right guaranteed to a crime victim by the State Constitution or any other right provided to a crime victim by general statutes.
- Recommend systemic changes in state policies to ensure the proper treatment and protection of crime victims.
- Conduct programs of public education, undertake legislative advocacy, and make proposals for systemic reform.
- Monitor the provision of protective services to witnesses by the Chief State’s Attorney.
- Ensure a centralized location for victim services information.

The OVA currently operates under the following statute when determining who is a “victim of crime” or “crime victim;”

**Conn. Gen. Statutes Sec. 1-1k:** Except as otherwise provided in the general statutes, “victim of crime” or “crime victim” means an individual who suffers direct or threatened physical, emotional or financial harm as a result of a crime and includes immediate family members of a minor, incompetent individual or homicide victim and a person designated by a homicide victim in accordance with section 1-56r.

### **Public Service**

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The State Victim Advocate and her staff endlessly endeavor to appropriately address the concerns brought forth by crime victims or those on behalf of crime victims. As part of this effort, the agency frequently engages with crime victims and state and nonprofit service providers on matters that may require action by the OVA.

### **Improvements/Achievements**

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The OVA operated as a functional state agency committed to effectively and efficiently carrying out its statutory mandates.

**Client Advocacy:** The OVA had 24 open cases, received 51 online complaints, provided 297 instant referrals, and monitored 167 juvenile offender early release cases.

Clients reported crime victim violations during criminal cases involving assault, breach of peace, cruelty to animals, dissemination of intimate images, harassment, illegal possession of weapons, illegal trespass, larceny, property damage, risk of injury to a minor, strangulation, and violation of protective orders.

*Crime Locations:* Bridgeport, Danbury, Falls Village, Greenwich, Groton, Hamden, Hartford, Meriden, Middletown, Norwich, Oakville, Ridgefield, South Windsor, Stafford, Stamford, Stratford, Wallingford, Waterbury, West Haven, and Wethersfield.

Court Where Cases Heard: Bridgeport Superior, Danbury GA, Danbury Superior, Derby Superior, Manchester Superior, Meriden Superior, New Britain Superior, New London Superior, Rockville Superior, Stamford Superior, Torrington Superior, and Waterbury Superior.

**Legislative Advocacy:** The OVA monitored 44 proposals and submitted testimony on 16 proposals before the Judiciary, Public Safety & Security, and Transportation Committees, and the Committee on Children.

**Systemic Advocacy:** The State Victim Advocate is appointed to address the needs and concerns of crime victims on the following boards and commissions - Connecticut Information Sharing System, Criminal Justice Information System Governing Committee, Connecticut Sentencing Commission, Criminal Justice Policy Advisory Commission, Domestic Violence Criminal Justice Response and Enhancement Advisory Council, Eye Witness Identification Task Force, Governor's Task Force on Justice for Abused Children, Juvenile Justice Policy & Oversight Commission, Racial and Ethnic Disparity Council, SAFE Advisory Committee, Task Force to Study the Regulation of Professional Bondsmen, Bail Enforcement Agents, and Surety Bail Bond Agents, and the Trafficking in Persons Council.

**Education and Outreach:** The OVA staff presented and/or conducted trainings for the Office of Victim Services, New Britain YWCA, and the Bloomfield Community Expo.

In April 2024 during National Crime Victims' Rights Week (NCVRW), The Office of The Victim Advocate collaborated with Central Connecticut State University (CCSU) Women's Center to host *Together We Rise: A Closer Look at Careers in Victim Services*. The event showcased the state organizations that aid crime victims, demonstrated how these organizations collaborate to support victims, and provided information on how CCSU students can engage in these careers via a panel discussion, one-on-one networking, and table presentations. Fifty-six (56) of the 59 registered students attended the event.

The OVA maintains print and electronic materials, including a website, Facebook, and brochures for distribution to the public, the judicial branch and law enforcement agencies.

**INFORMATION REPORTED AS REQUIRED BY STATE STATUTE. THE OVA HAS COMPLIED WITH ALL FEDERAL AND STATE REQUIREMENTS REGARDING AFFIRMATIVE ACTION AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY.**