



Office of the Victim Advocate
FY 2024-2025 Administrative Digest
A Division of the Office of Governmental Accountability

At-a-Glance

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 th Floor, Hartford, CT 06106
Number of Employees:	4
Recurring Operating expenses:	\$514,094 appropriated for the fiscal year
Organizational Structure:	Independent executive branch state agency

Mission

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

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 the complaints 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. Statues 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

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

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

Client Advocacy: The OVA opened 39 cases, received 53 online complaints, and monitored 42 youthful offender cases and 8 juvenile offender early release cases. The OVA often gets requests for assistance by crime victims in areas that are not under the purview of the agency. These are considered “instant referrals,” and 402 instant referrals were made during the fiscal year.

Clients reported crime victim rights violations that were conducted during criminal cases involving: assault, breach of peace, burglary, carrying a pistol without a permit, conspiracy to commit burglary, conspiracy to commit larceny, conspiracy to commit murder, criminal mischief, custodial interference, disorderly conduct, dissemination of intimate images, driving under the influence, evading arrest, evading arrest with physical injury, harassment, stalking, strangulation, threatening, and violation of protective orders.

The cases were before the following Superior courts: Bridgeport, Danbury, Hartford, Manchester, Meriden, New Britain, New London, Stamford, Torrington, and Waterbury.

The crimes were committed in: Berlin, Bridgeport, East Granby, East Hampton, Glastonbury, Hartford, Lisbon, Manchester, Meriden, Montville, Naugatuck, New Britain, New Canaan, New

Haven, New London, Newington, Norwalk, Redding, Rocky Hill, Stamford, Torrington, Waterbury, West Hartford, and Windsor.

Legislative Advocacy: The OVA monitored 156 legislative proposals and submitted testimony on 14 proposals before the Aging, General Law, Government Oversight, Judiciary, and Public Health Committees.

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, Sexual Assault Criminal Justice Response Enhancement and Model Policy Council, Task Force to Study the Regulation of Professional Bondsmen, Bail Enforcement Agents, and Surety Bail Bond Agents, and the Trafficking in Persons Council.

The OVA collaborated with the Court Support Services Division of the Judicial Branch and the Division of Criminal Justice on policies concerning crime victims' participation at violation of probation hearings. The OVA collaborated with the Chief Court Administrator's Office of the Judicial Branch and the Division of Criminal Justice on policies to ensure restitution is enforced in family violence criminal cases.

Education and Outreach: 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.

The OVA staff conducted trainings/presented for the CT National Guard, and My Heart is Art-The Play at the Oddfellows Playhouse in Middletown, CT. The Victim Advocate collaborated with the Connecticut Judicial Branch's Calendar Call (its Minimum Continuing Legal Education program) to create a podcast about the agency and crime victims' rights in Connecticut.

National Crime Victims' Rights Week was celebrated during the week of April 6-12, 2025. The theme was KINSHIP – a state of being with survivors that drives vital connections to services, rights, and healing. During this week, the OVA celebrated its 25th year of existence by hosting a legislative breakfast at the State Capitol. The event highlighted the early advocates for crimes victims' rights in the state – former State Representative Michael P. Lawlor, the Office of the Chief State's Attorney's Witness Protection Program Coordinator, Tracy Kelly, and OVA's Complaint Officer, Merit Lajoie. It also premiered a 5-minute public awareness video that the OVA commissioned to highlight its mission and services. Governor Ned Lamont joined the celebration by declaring the week as Connecticut Crime Victims' Rights Week.

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