



LAW ENFORCEMENT-BASED VICTIM SERVICES IN MICHIGAN: PRIVACY, PRIVILEGE AND CONFIDENTIALITY

INTRODUCTION

Best practice in victim services is about facilitating victims' ability to exercise meaningful choices. This requires understanding and supporting the exercise of victims' rights, which are found in state constitutions, statutes, rules and policies. For victims' rights to be meaningful, both compliance with and enforcement of these rights is necessary. Compliance is the fulfillment of legal responsibilities to victims and making efforts to reduce willful, negligent or inadvertent failures to fulfill those legal responsibilities; enforcement is the pursuit, by a victim or someone on behalf of a victim, of a judicial or administrative order that either mandates compliance with victims' rights or provides remedies for violations of victims' rights laws.

In addition to understanding victims' rights, best practices in victim services require understanding one's legal and ethical obligations as an advocate with regard to victim privacy, confidentiality and privilege, and the scope of one's services. Informing victims—at the first or earliest possible contact with them—of their rights and the advocate's role, including limitations on that role, is critical to victims' ability to make informed decisions about whether and how to exercise their rights, as well as whether, what and how much to share with any particular service provider. In addition, advocates need to build and maintain relationships throughout the community in order to provide meaningful referrals to victim service providers with complementary roles when a victim needs the referral.

USING THIS RESOURCE

This resource is designed to enhance victim services personnel's knowledge and understanding of the law governing crime victims' rights to privacy, confidentiality and privilege in Michigan. It provides an overview of key concepts and excerpts of key legal citations that can help facilitate victims' meaningful choices regarding these rights. To keep this *Guide* as user-friendly as possible in light of the breadth, complexity and evolving nature of law, the *Guide* does not include all laws. It does not constitute legal advice, nor does it substitute for legal advice. This resource is best used together with its companion resource: *Select Victims' Rights - Michigan*.

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OVERVIEW

What are the key similarities and differences between system-based and community-based advocates?

Key Takeaways

- System-based advocates are typically employed by a law enforcement agency, prosecutor's office, corrections, or another governmental agency.
- Community-based advocates are typically employed by a nonprofit/non-governmental agency.
- The United States Supreme Court and state laws impose on the prosecutor's office—and by extension on other governmental agencies such as law enforcement—legal obligations to disclose information to the accused and their lawyer. These obligations are sometimes called *Brady* Obligations or Discovery Obligations.
- *Brady*/Discovery Obligations generally attach to system-based advocates, and these obligations can override an advocate's ability to keep something confidential. That means anything shared with a system-based advocate may have to be disclosed to law enforcement, prosecutors, and eventually the accused and their lawyer.
- Community-based advocates are generally not directly linked to a government actor, and therefore not subject to *Brady*/Discovery Obligations; this means that they can hold more things confidential, and depending on local law, may also be bound by privilege (which is an even stronger privacy protection than confidentiality).

Discussion

It is imperative that an advocate understands and communicates clearly—at the first encounter or earliest possible contact—whether one is a community-based or system-based advocate, the advocate's legal and ethical obligations with regard to privacy, confidentiality and privilege and the scope of the services that the advocate offers.¹ This information will assist the victim in understanding the role of the advocate and any limitations of that role regarding: (1) the services that the advocate can provide and (2) the privacy protections that exist regarding information shared with the advocate. Further, providing a clear explanation of the advocate's role to the victim will help the victim make informed decisions, build rapport and avoid misunderstandings.

While both system-based and community-based advocates serve victims and operate under a general ethical rule of confidentiality, there are significant differences between them. System-based advocates are typically employed by a law enforcement agency, office of the prosecuting attorney, corrections or another entity within the city, county, state or federal government. Titles for system-based advocates vary; for example, they can be called victim advocates, victim-witness coordinators or victim assistance personnel.² Because system-based advocates are typically a component of a government agency or program, a primary focus of their work is assisting victims in their interactions with the system, and they will

typically be able to provide services to the victims during the pendency of the investigation, prosecution and post-conviction legal aspects of a case. In addition, this placement as part of a government agency or program generally means that system-based advocates are subject to the *Brady* disclosure obligations (*see Brady v. Maryland* Section below for additional information) and generally, their communications with victims are not protected by privilege.

By contrast, community-based advocates are generally not directly linked to any government actor or agency. As such, they are not subject to *Brady*; generally, can assist victims even if a crime has not been reported; can assist before, during and after a criminal case; can provide holistic services aimed at victims' broad needs; and, depending on the jurisdiction's laws and funding source, can maintain privileged communications with victims.³

Because each type of advocate has different duties and protections that they can offer victims, knowledge of and partnerships between them is an integral part of facilitating meaningful victim choice and helping victims access holistic services.

What are privacy, confidentiality and privilege? Why do the differences matter?

Key Takeaways

- Privacy is the broad right that allows one to control the sharing of personal information.
- Many jurisdictions have state constitutional and statutory protections for affording victims the right to privacy, including explicit rights to privacy and the broader stated rights to be treated with fairness, dignity and respect. A federal Constitutional right to privacy also exists.
- Confidentiality is a form of privacy protection; it is the legal and ethical duty to keep private the victim-client's information that was learned in confidence. The duty of confidentiality is found in laws and regulations that govern particular professions (e.g., community-based advocates and licensed mental health professionals) as well as certain types of information (e.g., health and educational records). In addition, certain funding sources (such as VOCA and VAWA) contain confidentiality requirements that govern anyone receiving the funds.
- Courts have the authority to require disclosure of a victim's confidential information when certain conditions are met. Circumstances that may compel disclosure of victims' otherwise confidential information include if the information is shared with a mandatory reporter and in the case of system-based advocates, if the information falls within the state's required disclosures to defendant pursuant to *Brady/Discovery Obligations*.
- Privilege is another privacy protection and is stronger than confidentiality. Privileges are defined by statute and rule and protect communications between victims and certain people, such as doctors, psychotherapists/counselors, attorneys

and in some jurisdictions, victim advocates. Key terms in the law may be defined in a way to limit the privilege. For example, among those jurisdictions that recognize an advocate-victim privilege, the term “advocate” is often narrow (e.g., only sexual assault advocates). Disclosure of privileged communications is prohibited unless the victim consents.

- Because privacy is so critical to victims it is important to understand what level of privacy protection can be afforded to a victim with whom one works and to communicate that BEFORE the victim shares any information.

Discussion

Privacy

“Privacy” is a fundamental right, essential to victim agency, autonomy and dignity, which—among other things—permits boundaries that limit who has access to our communications and information.

Privacy can be understood as the ability to control the sharing of personal information. See *Commonwealth ex rel. Platt v. Platt*, 404 A.2d 410, 429 (Pa. Super. Ct. 1979) (“The essence of privacy is no more, and certainly no less, than the freedom of the individual to pick and choose for [themselves] the time and circumstances under which, and most importantly, the extent to which, his attitudes, beliefs, and behavior and opinions are to be shared with or withheld from others.”). For many crime victims, maintaining privacy in their personal information and communications is vitally important. In fact, maintaining privacy is so important that some victims refrain from accessing critical legal, medical or counseling services without an assurance that treatment professionals will protect their personal information from disclosure. Understanding this and wishing as a matter of public policy to encourage access to services when needed, federal and state legislatures and professional licensing bodies have created frameworks of laws and regulations that help protect the information victims share with professionals from further dissemination. To this end, every jurisdiction has adopted statutory or constitutional victims’ rights; some jurisdictions explicitly protect victims’ rights to privacy, or to be treated with dignity, respect or fairness.⁴ Victims also have a federal Constitutional right to privacy.⁵

In addition to the broad rights to privacy that exist, privacy protections generally come in two forms: “confidentiality” and “privilege.” Professionals who work with victims should understand each concept.

Confidentiality

“Confidentiality” is a legal and ethical duty not to disclose the victim-client’s information learned in confidence.

As part of accessing services, victims frequently share highly sensitive personal information with professionals. A victim’s willingness to share this information may be premised on

the professionals' promise to not disclose it. The promise to hold in confidence the victim's information is governed by the professional's ethical duties, regulatory framework and/or by other various laws. Breaking the promise may carry sanctions. The promise not to disclose information that is shared in confidence—as well as the legal framework that recognizes this promise—are what qualifies this information as “confidential.”

Key aspects of confidential communications are that: (1) they are made with the expectation of privacy; (2) they are not accessible to the general public; (3) there may or may not be legal requirements that the recipient keep the information private; and (4) there may be a professional/ethical obligation to keep the information private.

Professional confidentiality obligations may be imposed by one's profession, e.g., advocate ethics; social worker ethics; attorney ethics; medical provider ethics; and mental health counselor ethics. In addition, certain laws may have confidentiality provisions that are tied to funding. If an entity receives such funds, then it is bound by confidentiality or risks losing funding. Examples of laws that impose confidentiality requirements include the: (1) Victims of Crime Act (VOCA), 28 C.F.R. § 94.115; (2) Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), 34 U.S.C. § 12291(b)(2)(A)–(B); and (3) Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA), 42 U.S.C. § 10406 (c)(5)(B). For example, VAWA (Section 3), VOCA and FVPSA regulations prohibit sharing personally identifying information about victims without informed, written and reasonably time-limited consent. VAWA and VOCA also prohibit disclosure of individual information without written consent. In addition, depending on the types of victim information at issue, other statutes may impose additional restrictions, including the Federal Educational Rights & Privacy Act (FERPA), 20 U.S.C. § 1232g (protections governing the handling of education records); the Health Insurance Portability & Accountability Act (HIPAA), 42 U.S.C. § 1320d et seq. (protections governing the handling of health records); and the Stored Communications Act (SCA), 18 U.S.C. § 2701 et seq. (protections governing electronic communications and transactions records).

When providing services, professionals should discuss with victims the consequences of sharing information before information is shared. These consequences may include the: (1) inability to “take back” a disclosure; (2) lack of control over the information once released; and (3) risk of the accused accessing the information. In addition, even when laws appear to prohibit disclosure, there are often exceptions that require disclosure, for instance in response to court orders or valid subpoenas. These limits should be explained to a victim. For example, a court may make a determination that an accused's interests outweigh the confidentiality protection afforded by a law and order the professional to disclose the victim's private information. Although a victim can be assured that a professional may not ethically disclose her confidential information unless legally required to do so, it is important that a victim understand that courts have the authority to require a professional to break the promise of confidentiality when certain conditions are met. Other circumstances that may compel disclosure of victims' otherwise confidential information include if the information is shared with a mandatory reporter of elder or child abuse and if the information falls within the state's required disclosures to defendant pursuant to the United

States Supreme Court case *Brady v. Maryland*.

Thus, although the basic rule of confidentiality is that a victim's information is not shared outside an agency unless the victim gives permission to do so, it is important to inform victims before they share information whether, when and under what circumstances information may be further disclosed.

Privilege

"Privilege" is a legal right of the victim not to disclose—or to prevent the disclosure of—certain information in connection with court and other proceedings.

Legislatures throughout the country have recognized that the effective practice of some professions requires even stronger legal protection of confidential communications between the professional and client. This recognition has resulted in the passage of laws that prevent courts from forcing these professionals to break the promise of confidentiality no matter how relevant the information is to the issues in the legal proceeding. This additional protection is a "privilege"—a legal right not to disclose certain information, even in the face of a valid subpoena.⁶ Key aspects of privileged communications are that: (1) they are specially protected, often by statute; (2) disclosure without permission of the privilege holder (*i.e.*, the victim) is prohibited; (3) they are protected from disclosure in court or other proceedings; (4) the protections may be waived only by the holder of the privilege (*i.e.*, the victim); and (5) some exceptions may apply. Examples of communications that may be protected by privilege depending on jurisdiction include: (1) spousal; (2) attorney-client; (3) clergy-penitent; (4) psychotherapist/counselor-patient; (5) doctor-patient; and (6) advocate-victim. Jurisdictions that recognize a given privilege may narrowly define terms, thereby limiting its applications. For example, among the jurisdictions that recognize an advocate-victim privilege, many define the term "advocate" to exclude those who are system-based (*i.e.*, affiliated with a law-enforcement agency or a prosecutor's office).⁷

Understanding the Differences

Because maintaining a victim's control over whether and how to disclose personal information is so important and because community-based and system-based advocates can offer different levels of protection regarding communications, every professional must know whether their communications with a victim are confidential or privileged, as well as how courts have interpreted the scope of each protection. This information should be shared with victims in advance of information disclosure. To do otherwise may provide victim-clients with a false sense of security regarding their privacy and inflict further harm if their personal information is unexpectedly disclosed.

What are HIPAA, FERPA, VOCA, VAWA and FOIA, and why are these relevant to my work as an advocate?⁸**Key Takeaways**

- Federal and many state laws protect certain types of information from disclosure. These laws generally cover medical, therapy and other behavioral health records, educational records and certain advocacy records.
- HIPAA—the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act—requires the protection and confidential handling of protected health information (PHI). This is important because although it permits release of PHI in response to a valid court order, no such release may be made in response to a subpoena or other request except under very specific circumstances.
- FERPA—the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act—protects the privacy of student education records, as well as any personally identifiable information in those records. Although the Department of Education provides that law enforcement records are not education records, personally identifiable information collected from education records and shared with law enforcement remain protected from disclosure.
- Victim assistance programs that receive funding under either VOCA (the Victims of Crime Act of 1984) or VAWA (the Violence Against Women Act) are mandated to protect crime victims' confidentiality and privacy subject to limited exceptions, such as mandatory reporting or statutory or court mandates. Even if disclosure of individual client information is required by statute or court order, recipients of VOCA or VAWA funding must provide notice to victims affected by any required disclosure of their information, and take steps to protect the privacy and safety of the victims.
- Open records' laws—also commonly referred to as public records' laws or sunshine laws—permit any person to request government documents and, if the government refuses to turn them over, to file a lawsuit to compel disclosure. Every state and the federal government have such laws (the federal law is known as FOIA, the Freedom of Information Act), which carry a presumption of disclosure. That means that all government records are presumed open for public inspection unless an exemption applies. Many exemptions from disclosure exist, including for some types of law enforcement records. All advocates should understand their jurisdiction's open records' laws, especially as they relate to exemptions that may apply to law enforcement and other victim-related records.

Discussion

HIPAA: Federal law—as well as state law in many jurisdictions—provides crime victims with different forms of protections from disclosure of their personal and confidential information. This includes protections against the disclosure of medical and/or therapy and other behavioral health records without the victim's consent. HIPAA—codified at 42

U.S.C. § 1320d et seq. and 45 C.F.R. § 164.500 et seq.—is the acronym for the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, a federal law passed in 1996. HIPAA does a variety of things, but most relevantly, it requires the protection and confidential handling of protected health information (PHI). This is important because although it permits release of PHI in response to a valid court order, no such release may be made in response to a subpoena or other request unless one of the following circumstances is met:

1. The entity must receive “satisfactory assurance” from “the party seeking the information that reasonable efforts have been made by such party to ensure that the individual who is the subject of the protected health information that has been requested has been given notice of the request[.]” 45 C.F.R. § 164.512(e)(1)(ii)(A).
-or-
2. The entity must receive “satisfactory assurance” from the “party seeking the information that reasonable efforts have been made by such party to secure a qualified protective order” that meets certain requirements, detailed in subsection (iv), 45 C.F.R. § 164.512(e)(1)(ii)(B).

Advocates may wish to inform victims that they may proactively contact their medical providers, informing them that the victims are asserting privilege and other legal protections in their records, and requesting that these providers: (1) give them prompt notice of any request for the victims’ medical records; (2) refuse to disclose the records pursuant to any such request without first receiving a valid court order; and (3) ensure that no medical records are released without first permitting the victims to file a challenge to their release. Advocates who work for or with community-based organizations—including organizations that provide general mental health services as well as those that serve domestic violence or sexual assault victims—should advise victims about the possibility of asserting HIPAA protections if facing a request for their records.

FERPA: The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)—codified at 20 U.S.C. § 1232g—“is a federal law that protects the privacy of student education records, and the [personally identifiable information] contained therein, maintained by educational agencies or institutions or by a party acting for the agencies or institutions.”⁹ FERPA applies to those agencies and institutions that receive funding under any U.S. Department of Education program.¹⁰ “Private schools at the elementary and secondary levels generally do not receive funds from the Department [of Education] and are, therefore, not subject to FERPA, but may be subject to other data privacy laws such as HIPAA.”¹¹

Protections afforded by FERPA include the right of parents or eligible students to provide a signed and dated, written consent that clearly identifies which education records or personally identifiable information may be disclosed by the educational agency or institution; the person who may receive such records or information; and the purpose for the disclosure prior to disclosure of an education record or personally identifiable information, except in limited circumstances such as health or safety emergencies.¹²

Notably, while the Department of Education provides that law enforcement records are not

education records, “personally identifiable information [collected] from education records, which the school shares with the law enforcement unit, do not lose their protected status as education records just because they are shared with the law enforcement unit.”¹³ Thus, law enforcement has a duty to understand and comply with FERPA when drafting police reports, supplemental reports and, generally, sharing or relaying information.

It is important that advocates have an understanding of FERPA as well as other federal laws, state laws and local policies that address student privacy in education records as eligible students or parents may be afforded privacy protections in addition to FERPA. For example, “the education records of students who are children with disabilities are not only protected by FERPA but also by the confidentiality of information provisions in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).”¹⁴

VOCA and VAWA: The Victims of Crime Act of 1984 (VOCA)—codified at 34 U.S.C. §§ 20101 to 20111—established the Crime Victims Fund (the Fund), which is managed by the Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. The Fund is financed by, *inter alia*, fines and penalties from persons convicted of crimes against the United States as opposed to by tax dollars.¹⁵ The Fund supports victim assistance programs that offer direct victim services and crime victim compensation.¹⁶ Examples of direct services are crisis intervention, emergency shelters or transportation, counseling and criminal justice advocacy; and crime victim compensation programs that cover expenses incurred as a result of the crime.¹⁷

The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)—enacted in 1994 and reauthorized in 2000, 2005 and 2013—created an array of federal protections for victims of crimes, including domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking. Additionally, VAWA provided funding for services and programs to combat violent crimes against women. VAWA funds are administered by the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW), U.S. Department of Justice.

Agencies that receive VOCA or VAWA funding are mandated to protect crime victims’ confidentiality and privacy subject to limited exceptions, such as mandatory reporting or statutory or court mandates. Specifically, state administering agencies and subrecipients of VOCA funding, are mandated “to the extent permitted by law, [to] reasonably protect the confidentiality and privacy of [victims] receiving services . . . and shall not disclose, reveal, or release, except . . . [in limited circumstances:] (1) [a]ny personally identifying information or individual information collected in connection with VOCA-funded services requested, utilized, or denied, regardless of whether such information has been encoded, encrypted, hashed, or otherwise protected; or (2) [i]ndividual client information, without the informed, written, reasonably time-limited consent of the person about whom information is sought” 28 C.F.R. § 94.115(a)(1)–(2). Agencies that receive VAWA funding are subject to nearly identical duties to protect crime victims’ confidentiality and privacy subject to limited exceptions. *See* 34 U.S.C. § 12291(b)(2).

Even if disclosure of individual client information is required by statute or court order, state administering agencies and sub-recipients' privacy and confidentiality obligations owed to crime victims do not disappear. State administering agencies and subrecipients of VOCA funds "shall make reasonable attempts to provide notice to victims affected by the disclosure of the information, and take reasonable steps necessary to protect the privacy and safety of the persons affected by the release of the information." 28 C.F.R. § 94.115(b). VAWA imposes similar requirements on recipients of funding. See 34 U.S.C. § 12291(b)(2)(C) ("If release of information . . . is compelled by statutory or court mandate[,] . . . grantees and subgrantees shall make reasonable attempts to provide notice to victims affected by the disclosure of information[] and . . . shall take steps necessary to protect the privacy and safety of the persons affected by the release of the information."). VOCA also mandates that none of the protections afforded to victims be circumvented. For example, a crime victim may neither be required to release personally identifying information in exchange for services nor be required to provide personally identifying information for recording or reporting purposes. 28 C.F.R. § 94.115(d).

It is important that advocates are aware if their positions and/or offices are subject to VOCA's and VAWA's mandates regarding victims' confidentiality and privacy protections and if so, understand how these mandates interact with disclosure obligations.

FOIA: Open records' laws—also commonly referred to as public records' laws or sunshine laws—permit any person to request government documents and, if the government refuses to turn them over, to file a lawsuit to compel disclosure. Every state and the federal government have such laws, which carry a presumption of disclosure, meaning that all government records are presumed open for public inspection unless an exemption applies.

The federal open records' law, known as the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA or the "Act"), 5 U.S.C. §552, was enacted in 1966. Similar to its state counterparts, FOIA provides for the legally enforceable right of any person to obtain access to federal agency records subject to the Act, except to the extent that any portions of such records are protected from public disclosure by one of the nine exemptions. Three such exemptions, Exemptions 6, 7(C) and 7(F) protect different types of personal information in federal records from disclosure. Exemption 6 "protects information about individuals in 'personnel and medical files and similar files' when the disclosure of such information 'would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy.'"¹⁸ Exemption 7(C) "is limited to information compiled for law enforcement purposes, and protects personal information when disclosure 'could reasonably be expected to constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy.'" Under both exemptions, "the concept of privacy not only encompasses that which is inherently private, but also includes an 'individual's control of information concerning [his/her/their] person.'"¹⁹ Exemption 7(F), which also applies to law enforcement records, exempts records that contain information that "could reasonably be expected to endanger the life or physical safety of any individual."

Similar to FOIA, state open records' laws contain numerous exemptions, including for some types of law enforcement records (for example, prohibitions on disclosing identifying

information of victims’ and witnesses’ generally or of child-victims and/or victims of certain crimes). Advocates should have an understanding of their jurisdiction’s open records’ laws, especially as they relate to exemptions from disclosure that may be afforded to law enforcement and other victim-related records within their office’s possession. Jurisdiction-specific victims’ rights laws—including rights to privacy and protection—also provide grounds for challenging public records’ requests for victims’ private information.

Are there ethical standards relevant to my work as an advocate?

Key Takeaways

- Advocates should know what ethical standards apply to their work with victims.
- Law enforcement agencies should develop a code of ethics specific to victim services personnel or, at a minimum, expand the scope of existing codes of ethics to include them.

Discussion

Yes, there are ethical standards—or “principles of conduct”—that guides victim advocates in their work.²⁰ Although there is no formal regulatory board that oversees victim assistance programs, the *Model Standards for Serving Victims & Survivors of Crime (Model Standards)* was created by the National Victim Assistance Standards Consortium with guidance from experts across the nation “to promote the competency and ethical integrity of victim service providers, in order to enhance their capacity to provide high-quality, consistent responses to crime victims and to meet the demands facing the field today.”²¹

The *Model Standards* cover three areas: (1) Program Standards for Serving Victims & Survivors of Crime; (2) Competency Standards for Serving Victims & Survivors of Crime; and (3) Ethical Standards for Serving Victims & Survivors of Crime.

The third area—Ethical Standards for Serving Victims & Survivors of Crime—contains “ethical expectations” of victim service providers that are “based on core values” in the field and are intended to serve as guidelines for providers in the course of their work. The Ethical Standards are comprised of five sections:

- (1) Scope of Services;
- (2) Coordinating within the Community;
- (3) Direct Services;
- (4) Privacy, Confidentiality, Data Security and Assistive Technology; and
- (5) Administration and Evaluation.²²

Notably, “[p]rofessionals who are trained in another field (*e.g.*, psychology, social work) but are engaging in victim services will [also] abide by their own professional codes of ethics. If th[ose] ethical standards establish a higher standard of conduct than is required by law or another professional ethic, victim assistance providers should meet the higher ethical standard. If ethical standards appear to conflict with the requirements of law or

another professional ethic, providers should take steps to resolve the conflict in a responsible manner.”²³

Many law enforcement agencies have established their own code of ethics. Often, these codes of ethics are developed to guide the behavior of sworn personnel and may not encompass the role of victim services. Agencies are encouraged to develop a code of ethics specific to victim services personnel or, at a minimum, expand the scope of existing codes of ethics to include them.²⁴

What is the difference between discovery and production and how does this relate to the Supreme Court’s decision in *Brady v. Maryland*?

Key Takeaways

- In a criminal case, the term “discovery” refers to the exchange of information between parties to the case—the prosecutor and defendant. The term “production” refers to the defendant’s more limited right to obtain information from nonparties, such as victims. Sometimes the term “discovery” is used to describe the parties’ requests for information and records from nonparties, but this is an imprecise use of the word as it confuses the two ideas.
- In *Brady v. Maryland* the United States Supreme Court announced a rule, and state laws have adopted it also, that impose on the prosecutor’s office—and by extension on other governmental agencies such as law enforcement—legal obligations to disclose information to the accused and their lawyer even if they do not ask for it. These obligations are sometimes called *Brady* Obligations or Discovery Obligations.
- Pursuant to these obligations, the prosecutor is only constitutionally required to disclose information that is exculpatory and material to the issue of guilt, and which is within the custody or control of the prosecutor.
- Beyond that material to which a defendant is constitutionally entitled under *Brady*, state statute or procedural rule may entitle a criminal defendant to additional discovery materials.
- If records are not properly in the possession or control of the prosecutor, a defendant can only try to obtain them through their more limited right of production by seeking a subpoena pursuant to the jurisdiction’s statutes and rules governing production of documents from a nonparty.
- Federal and state courts have found that prosecution-based victim advocates are part of the “prosecution team” for *Brady* purposes. Therefore, *Brady*/Discovery Obligations generally attach to system-based advocates, and these obligations can override an advocate’s ability to keep something confidential. That means anything shared with a system-based advocate may have to be disclosed to the accused and their lawyer.
- Victims should be informed at the outset that disclosure requirements—imposed by *Brady* as well as a jurisdiction’s statutes and rules governing discovery—may

impact victim privacy.

Discussion

The Supreme Court case Brady v. Maryland, as well as jurisdiction-specific statutes and court rules, impose discovery and disclosure obligations on the prosecution and defendant—not on the victim.

In criminal cases, victim privacy is routinely at risk by parties seeking personal records, such as counseling, mental health, medical, employment, educational and child protective services records. The law governing when these records must be disclosed to a defendant is complex, touching on a number of factors, including whether the records are within the government’s control; whether they are protected by a privilege; whether any applicable privilege is absolute or qualified; whether a victim has waived any privilege in full or in part; the scope of the jurisdiction’s constitutional or statutory rights and/or protections for victims; and the jurisdiction’s statutes and rules governing discovery and production. If the records sought are properly in the possession or control of the prosecutor, a defendant may be entitled to them, pursuant to constitutional, statutory or rule-based rights to discovery. If, however, the records are not in the possession (or properly in the possession) of the prosecutor, a defendant must subpoena those records pursuant to the jurisdiction’s statutes and rules governing production of documents from a nonparty. Although courts and practitioners sometimes refer to defendant’s receipt of materials from both the prosecutor and nonparties as “discovery,” this imprecise use of the term confuses a defendant’s right to discovery from the prosecutor with a defendant’s right to production from a nonparty.

In a criminal prosecution, the term “discovery” refers to the exchange of information between parties to the case—the prosecutor and defendant. *See, e.g., Fed R. Crim. P. 16* (entitled “Discovery and Inspection,” the rule explicitly and exclusively governs discovery between the government and defendant). It does not govern defendant’s ability to obtain information directly from a crime victim or other nonparty. With regard to discovery from the prosecutor, a criminal defendant has no general federal constitutional right to discovery.²⁵ The prosecutor, instead, is only constitutionally required to disclose information that is exculpatory and material to the issue of guilt, *see Brady v. Maryland*, 373 U.S. 83, 87–88 (1963), and which is within the custody or control of the prosecutor.²⁶ The *Brady* rule imposes an affirmative “duty to disclose such evidence . . . even [when] there has been no request [for the evidence] by the accused, . . . and . . . the duty encompasses impeachment evidence as well as exculpatory evidence.”²⁷ The prosecutor’s *Brady* obligation extends to all exculpatory material and impeachment evidence and to “others acting on the government’s behalf in th[e] case.”²⁸

Federal and state courts have found that prosecution-based victim advocates are considered part of the “prosecution team” for *Brady* purposes.²⁹ Beyond that material to which a defendant is constitutionally entitled, a prosecutor’s obligation to disclose information is governed by statute or procedural rule. A criminal defendant is often entitled to additional discovery materials from the prosecutor pursuant to statutes or rules, though discovery

statutes and rules vary widely between jurisdictions.

Victims should be informed that disclosure requirements—imposed by Brady as well as a jurisdiction’s statutes and rules governing discovery—may impact victim privacy.

Prosecutors are required by law to disclose exculpatory statements to the defense. Because system-based advocates are generally considered agents of the prosecutors, and prosecutors are deemed to know what advocates know, such advocates are generally required to disclose to the prosecutors the exculpatory statements made by victims to advocates.³⁰ Examples of exculpatory statements might include:

- “I lied to the police.”
- “I hit him first and he was defending himself.”
- “The crime didn’t happen.”
- “The defendant is not really the person who assaulted me.”
- *Any other statement from a victim that directly implicates a victim’s truthfulness regarding the crime.*
- *Any other statement from the victim that provides information that could be helpful to a defendant’s case.*

Important steps that victim advocates may take to help ensure that their office has appropriate policies and procedures in place to protect victims in light of required disclosures to prosecutors’ offices include:

- Ensure that every person clearly understands the prosecutor’s interpretation and expectations regarding discovery and exculpatory evidence with regard to victim advocates.
- Work with the prosecutors’ offices to create a policy/practice that addresses the limits of system-based advocate confidentiality.
- Inform victims prior to sharing of information if the victim advocate is bound by the rules that govern prosecutors.
- Develop a short, simple explanation to use with victims to communicate your responsibilities (*e.g.*, don’t use the word “exculpatory”).
- Consider including a simple statement in the initial contact letter or notice explaining limitations.
- Determine how and when advocates will remind victims of the limits of confidentiality throughout the process.
- Identify what documentation an advocate might come into contact with and whether the prosecutors’ office considers it discoverable. For example: (1) victim compensation forms; (2) victim impact statements; (3) restitution documentation; and (4) U-Visa application documentation.
- Create policies regarding the types of documentation that an advocate may not need from the victim in order to provide effective victim advocacy (*e.g.*, victim statements, treatment plans, safety plans, opinions, conclusions, criticisms). Determine a process for clearly marking documents that are not discoverable to ensure they are not inadvertently disclosed. For example, use a red stamp that says, “Not Discoverable.”

- Inform the victim at the time they make a disclosure that constitutes exculpatory evidence—or soon as a statement is deemed exculpatory—that it is going to be disclosed.
- When possible, avoid receiving a victim impact statement in writing prior to sentencing.
- Develop relationships with complementary victim advocates and communicate about your obligations and boundaries regarding exculpatory evidence. This will allow everyone to help set realistic expectations with victims regarding privacy.
- Establish how exculpatory information will be communicated to the prosecutor’s office.

What is *Giglio*, and why is it relevant to my work as an advocate?

Key Takeaways

- The United States Supreme Court (in *Giglio v. United States*) clarified the affirmative responsibility of the prosecutor’s office to disclose to the defendant any information in its possession that is material to their guilt or innocence. This means that the prosecution does not wait for a defendant to ask for material but must disclose it even without them asking.

Discussion

Giglio v. United States, 405 U.S. 150 (1972), is a case that was heard before the United States Supreme Court.³¹ The impact of the Court’s decision in *Giglio* intersects with advocates’ work as it makes it imperative that advocates understand: (1) what “material evidence” is (see *Brady v. Maryland* section for additional information); (2) how the advocate’s role is or is not related to the prosecutor’s office along with any corresponding professional, ethical obligations; (3) ways to avoid re-victimization by preventing violations that would cause a victim to undergo a second trial for the same crime; (4) the types of procedures and regulations that need to be implemented for advocates to ensure—in the face of prosecutor or advocate turnover—that all relevant and appropriate information is provided to the prosecutor handling the case; and (5) whether state or other local laws impose additional obligations that build on those prescribed by *Giglio*.

What are key considerations for system-based advocates who receive a subpoena?³²

Key Takeaways

- Advocates may receive subpoenas to appear before the court or elsewhere to provide a sworn statement and/or to appear with specified documents.
- Victims should be informed immediately if advocates receive a subpoena for the information or documents related to a victim’s case.

- There may be grounds to challenge a subpoena issued to a system-based or community-based advocate. These challenges can be made by the prosecutor, the community agency and/or the victims (either with or without the help of an attorney).

Discussion

In addition to providing prompt notice of receipt of a subpoena to the victim—whose rights and interests are implicated—a key consideration for system-based advocates, their superiors and the attorneys with whom they work is determining the type of subpoena received.³³ Subpoenas that system-based advocates often encounter are subpoenas demanding either: (a) a person’s presence before a court or to a location other than a court for a sworn statement; or (b) a person’s presence along with specified documentation, records or other tangible items.³⁴

When system-based advocates receive the latter (which is called a subpoena duces tecum) there are a number of factors that should be considered, such as whether the documentation, record or item sought (a) is discoverable; or (b) constitutes *Brady* material, as defined by federal, state and local law. If an item, for example, is neither discoverable nor *Brady* material, an advocate, by law, may not be required to disclose the item. The same may be true if the item falls within an exception to discovery and does not constitute *Brady* material.³⁵ For additional information on *Brady* material, see the *Brady v. Maryland* section pertaining to disclosure obligations. Notably, this analysis is relevant to other types of subpoenas as well. For example, if a person is subpoenaed to testify and it is anticipated that defense counsel will attempt to elicit testimony that he/she/they are not legally entitled to, a prosecutor may file a motion in advance—such as a motion in limine or a motion for a protective order—requesting that the scope of the testimony be narrowly tailored or otherwise limited in accordance with the jurisdiction’s laws. For advocates employed by prosecutor’s offices, this analysis must be completed in cooperation with the prosecuting attorney.

Other key considerations for system-based advocates, their superiors and the attorneys they work with include determining: whether the requester has a right to issue a subpoena, and, more specifically, a right to issue a subpoena for the person’s attendance and/or items sought; whether the subpoena is unspecified, vague or overbroad to warrant an objection that the subpoena is facially invalid or procedurally flawed; whether court mechanisms are available to oppose the subpoena; whether such mechanisms are time sensitive and require immediate action; whether the victim received ample notice and adequate information; what the victim’s position is; and whether the law affords the victim privacy, confidentiality or privilege rights or protections that must be protected and enforced.

SELECT LAWS

SELECT PRIVACY LAWS

What are key privacy rights and/or protections in Michigan?

Michigan expressly guarantees crime victims a constitutional right to privacy. *See* Mich. Const. art. 1, § 24 (guaranteeing victims “[t]he right to be treated with fairness and respect for their dignity and privacy throughout the criminal justice process”).

The state also protects victims’ privacy interests through constitutional and statutory safety-related rights. *See, e.g.*, Mich. Const. art. 1, § 24 (guaranteeing victims “[t]he right to be reasonably protected from the accused throughout the criminal justice process”); Mich. Comp. Laws Ann. § 780.756(1)(e) (requiring the prosecuting attorney to provide the victim with information regarding “[s]uggested procedures if the victim is subjected to threats or intimidation”); *id.* at § 780.757 (requiring courts to provide separate waiting areas for victims of felony crimes and to provide other safeguards to minimize victims’ contact with defendants, their relatives and witnesses); *id.* § 780.817 (requiring courts to provide separate waiting areas for victims of serious misdemeanors and to provide other safeguards to minimize victims’ contact with defendants, their relatives and witnesses).

More narrowly, Michigan protects victims’ privacy interests through statutory provisions that support the nondisclosure of victims’ contact information. For instance, when a victim has a “reasonable apprehension of acts or threats of physical violence or intimidation by the defendant or at defendant’s direction against the victim or the victim’s immediate family, the prosecuting attorney may move that the victim or any other witness not be compelled to testify at pretrial proceedings or at trial for purposes of identifying the victim as to the victim’s address, place of employment, or other personal identification without the victim’s consent.” Mich. Comp. Laws Ann. § 780.758(1). The hearing on such a motion is *in camera*. *Id.* Similarly, a victim’s work and home address “shall not be in the court file or ordinary court documents unless contained in a transcript of the trial or it is used to identify the place of the crime. The work telephone number and telephone number of the victim shall not be in the court file or ordinary court documents except as contained in a transcript of the trial.” *Id.* at § 780.758(2).

Michigan also protects the privacy of victims’ personal information when a law enforcement officer investigates a serious misdemeanor involving a victim. In such an instance, the officer must “include with the complaint, appearance ticket, or traffic citation filed with the court a separate written statement including the name, address, and phone number of each victim. This separate statement shall not be a matter of public record.” Mich. Comp. Laws Ann. § 780.812. Additionally, in the context of serious misdemeanors, when a court accepts a plea of guilty or nolo contendere at the time of the arraignment or does not accept such a plea and further proceedings are scheduled, the court must notify the prosecuting attorney within 48 hours of the arraignment, and the notice “shall be on a

separate form and shall include the name, address, and telephone number of the victim. The notice shall not be a matter of public record.” *Id.* at § 780.816(1).

Relying on victims’ constitutional right to privacy, Michigan also expressly exempts certain victim information from disclosure under the freedom of information act. *See* Mich. Comp. Laws Ann. § 780.758(3) (“Under section 24 of article I of the state constitution of 1963, guaranteeing to crime victims the right to be treated with respect for their dignity and privacy, all of the following information and visual representations of a victim are exempt from disclosure under the freedom of information act, 1976 PA 442, MCL 15.231 to 15.246: [listing victim information exempt from disclosure].”). The section “Select Confidentiality Laws” addresses these and other relevant exemptions in more detail below.

Michigan extends heightened privacy protections to certain categories of victims. For instance, the state protects victim privacy through its rape shield law, under which a sex crime victim’s sexual history cannot be admitted into evidence, except under limited circumstances. Mich. Comp. Laws Ann. § 750.520j. Additionally, examining magistrates may close the courtroom during preliminary examinations in certain sexual offense cases, if doing so is, *inter alia*, necessary to protect the victim. *Id.* at § 766.9(1)(a).

Lastly, Michigan protects victims’ privacy interests through its criminal discovery rule, Mich. Ct. R. 6.201, which applies to felony proceedings in district and circuit court. For instance, although the rule requires, upon request, disclosure of the names and addresses of all lay witnesses, it allows a party to, in the alternative, “provide the name of the witness and make the witness available to the other party for interview.” Mich. Ct. R. 6.201(A)(1). Rule 6.201(C) governs the procedure for a defendant’s discovery of privileged victim records. This subsection of the rule is discussed below in the section “Select Privilege Laws.” Other portions of the rule may also protect victims’ privacy rights and interests. *See, e.g., id.* at R. 6.201(D) (excision of portions of otherwise discoverable material or information); *id.* at R. 6.201(E) (protective orders to guard against misuse of discovery material).

SELECT CONFIDENTIALITY LAWS

What are key confidentiality rights and/or protections in Michigan?

Michigan offers a number of confidentiality rights and protections to crime victims. For instance, as noted above in the section “Select Privacy Laws,” the state’s victims’ rights statute limits access to a victim’s address and phone number from court files, Mich. Comp. Laws Ann. § 780.758(2), and authorizes the prosecutor to ask the court to not compel a victim to testify about the victim’s identifying information, *id.* at § 780.758(1). In the context of serious misdemeanors, the victims’ rights statute also provides that a victim’s identifying information will not be part of the public record. *Id.* at § 780.812; *id.* at § 780.816(1).

Michigan further protects victim confidentiality when a victim seeks a name change to protect themselves from danger. In such an instance, the court may order, upon a showing of good cause, that no publication of the proceeding take place and that the record of the proceeding is confidential. Mich. Comp. Laws Ann. § 711.3(1). For the purposes of this confidentiality protection, “good cause” includes “evidence that publication or availability of a record of the proceeding could place the petitioner or another individual in physical danger, such as evidence that the petitioner or another individual has been the victim of stalking or an assaultive crime.” *Id.* Such evidence “of the possibility of physical danger must include the petitioner’s or the endangered individual’s sworn statement stating the reason for the fear of physical danger if the record is published or otherwise available. If evidence is offered of stalking or an assaultive crime, the court shall not require proof of an arrest or prosecution for that crime to reach a finding of good cause.” *Id.* at § 711.3(2). The confidential record that is created with respect to such a name change procedure is exempt from disclosure under the freedom of information act. *Id.* at § 711.3(4).

Michigan also protects victim confidentiality in the context of public records requests. In general, court records in Michigan “are public except as otherwise indicated in court rule or statute.” Mich. Ct. R. 6.007. As noted above in the section “Select Privacy Laws”, based on victims’ constitutional right to privacy, the state has expressly exempted certain victim information from disclosure under the freedom of information act. Mich. Comp. Laws Ann. § 780.758(3). Specifically,

all of the following information and visual representations of a victim are exempt from disclosure under the freedom of information act, 1976 PA 442, MCL 15.231 to 15.246:

- (a) The home address, home telephone number, work address, and work telephone number of the victim unless the address is used to identify the place of the crime.
- (b) A picture, photograph, drawing, or other visual representation, including any film, videotape, or digitally stored image of the victim.
- (c) The following information concerning a victim of child abuse, criminal sexual conduct, assault with intent to commit criminal sexual conduct, or a similar crime who was less than 18 years of age when the crime was committed:
 - (i) The victim’s name and address.
 - (ii) The name and address of an immediate family member or relative of the victim, who has the same surname as the victim, other than the name and address of the accused.

(iii) Any other information that would tend to reveal the identity of the victim, including a reference to the victim's familial or other relationship to the accused.

Id.; see also *id.* at § 780.818(2) (exempting certain victim information from disclosure in serious misdemeanor cases). These disclosure exemptions do not “preclude the release of information to a victim advocacy organization or agency for the purpose of providing victim services.” *Id.* at § 780.758(4). A victim's address and telephone number as maintained by a sheriff or the department of corrections for the purposes of victim notification are also exempt from disclosure under the freedom of information act. *Id.* at § 780.769(2). Additionally, Michigan's victims' rights statute expressly exempts from disclosure a victim's address and telephone number, as maintained by a hospital or facility in which a defendant has been hospitalized or admitted by court order upon a finding of not guilty by reason of insanity. *Id.* at § 780.769a(3). As noted above, records related to a victim's name change procedure are also exempt from disclosure where the victim has demonstrated good cause that the name change is necessary to protect the victim from danger. *Id.* at § 711.3(4). Additionally, a sexual assault victim's identifying information collected by the Crime Victim Services Commission is expressly exempt from disclosure. *Id.* at § 18.355a(9).

As detailed in the following section, “Select Privilege Laws,” Michigan law protects the confidentiality of communications between victims and certain providers of counseling and other support services, as well as the confidentiality of records related to the provision of these services. See, e.g., Mich. Comp. Laws Ann. § 600.2157a (sexual assault and domestic violence counselor-victim privilege); *id.* at § 333.18513 (social worker-client privilege); *id.* at § 330.1750 (psychiatrist and psychologist-patient privilege); *id.* at § 333.18237 (psychologist-patient privilege); *id.* at § 600.2157 (physician-patient privilege).

SELECT PRIVILEGE LAWS

What are key privileges in Michigan?

Victims in Michigan have a number of privileges that they can assert to prevent disclosure of their private communications with certain professionals, including sexual assault and domestic violence counselors, social workers, mental health professionals and physicians. See, e.g., Mich. Comp. Laws Ann. § 600.2157a (sexual assault and domestic violence counselor-victim privilege); *id.* at § 333.18513 (social worker-client privilege); *id.* at § 330.1750 (psychiatrist and psychologist-patient privilege); *id.* at § 333.18237 (psychologist-patient privilege); *id.* at § 600.2157 (physician-patient privilege).

Michigan Court Rule 6.201(C) governs discovery of a victim’s privileged records. Under the Rule, discovery of such materials is prohibited, except under limited circumstances. Mich. Ct. R. 6.201(C)(1). Where a defendant can “demonstrate[] a good-faith belief, grounded in articulable fact, that there is a reasonable probability that records protected by privilege are likely to contain material information necessary to the defense, the trial court shall conduct an in camera inspection of the records.” *Id.* at R. 6.201(C)(2). Once a defendant meets this burden,

(a) If the privilege is absolute, and the privilege holder refuses to waive the privilege to permit an in camera inspection, the trial court shall suppress or strike the privilege holder’s testimony.

(b) If the court is satisfied, following an in camera inspection, that the records reveal evidence necessary to the defense, the court shall direct that such evidence as is necessary to the defense be made available to defense counsel. If the privilege is absolute and the privilege holder refuses to waive the privilege to permit disclosure, the trial court shall suppress or strike the privilege holder’s testimony.

(c) Regardless of whether the court determines that the records should be made available to the defense the court shall make findings sufficient to facilitate meaningful appellate review.

(d) The court shall seal and preserve the records for review in the event of an appeal

(i) by the defendant, on an interlocutory basis or following conviction, if the court determines that the records should not be made available to the defense, or

(ii) by the prosecution, on an interlocutory basis, if the court determines that the records should be made available to the defense.

(e) Records disclosed under this rule shall remain in the exclusive custody of counsel for the parties, shall be used only for the limited purpose approved by the court, and shall be subject to such other terms and conditions as the court may provide.

Id.

For reference, the full text of the privileges noted in this section appears below.

<p>Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Counselor-Victim Privilege</p>	<p>Mich. Comp. Laws Ann. § 600.2157a(2).</p> <p>Except as provided by section 11 of the child protection law, Act No. 238 of the Public Acts of 1975, being section 722.631 of the Michigan Compiled Laws, a confidential communication, or any report, working paper, or statement contained in a report or working paper, given or made in connection with a consultation between a victim and a sexual assault or domestic violence counselor, shall not be admissible as evidence in any civil or criminal proceeding without the prior written consent of the victim.</p>
<p>Social Worker-Client Privilege</p>	<p>Mich. Comp. Laws Ann. § 333.18513.</p> <p>(1) An individual registered or licensed under this part or an employee or officer of an organization that employs the registrant or licensee is not required to disclose a communication or a portion of a communication made by a client to the individual or advice given in the course of professional employment.</p> <p>(2) Except as otherwise provided in this section, a communication between a registrant or licensee or an organization with which the registrant or licensee has an agency relationship and a client is a confidential communication. A confidential communication shall not be disclosed, except under either or both of the following circumstances:</p> <p>(a) The disclosure is part of a required supervisory process within the organization that employs or otherwise has an agency relationship with the registrant or licensee.</p> <p>(b) The privilege is waived by the client or a person authorized to act in the client's behalf.</p> <p>(3) If requested by the court for a court action, a registrant or licensee shall submit to an appropriate court a written evaluation of the prospect or prognosis of a particular client without disclosing a privileged fact or a privileged communication. An attorney representing a client who is the subject of an evaluation described in this subsection has the right to receive a copy of the evaluation. If required for the exercise of a public purpose by a legislative committee, a registrant or licensee or agency representative may make available statistical and program information without violating the privilege established under subsection (2).</p>

	<p>(4) A registrant or licensee may disclose a communication or a portion of a communication made by a client pursuant to section 946 of the mental health code, 1974 PA 258, MCL 330.1946, in order to comply with the duty set forth in that section.</p>
<p>Psychiatrist and Psychologist-Patient Privilege</p>	<p>Mich. Comp. Laws Ann. § 33.1750.</p> <p>(1) Privileged communications shall not be disclosed in civil, criminal, legislative, or administrative cases or proceedings, or in proceedings preliminary to such cases or proceedings, unless the patient has waived the privilege, except in the circumstances set forth in this section.</p> <p>(2) Privileged communications shall be disclosed upon request under 1 or more of the following circumstances:</p> <p>(a) If the privileged communication is relevant to a physical or mental condition of the patient that the patient has introduced as an element of the patient’s claim or defense in a civil or administrative case or proceeding or that, after the death of the patient, has been introduced as an element of the patient’s claim or defense by a party to a civil or administrative case or proceeding.</p> <p>(b) If the privileged communication is relevant to a matter under consideration in a proceeding governed by this act, but only if the patient was informed that any communications could be used in the proceeding.</p> <p>(c) If the privileged communication is relevant to a matter under consideration in a proceeding to determine the legal competence of the patient or the patient’s need for a guardian but only if the patient was informed that any communications made could be used in such a proceeding.</p> <p>(d) In a civil action by or on behalf of the patient or a criminal action arising from the treatment of the patient against the mental health professional for malpractice.</p> <p>(e) If the privileged communication was made during an examination ordered by a court, prior to which the patient was informed that a communication made would not be privileged, but only with respect to the particular purpose for which the examination was ordered.</p> <p>(f) If the privileged communication was made during treatment that the patient was ordered to undergo to render the patient competent to stand trial on a criminal charge, but only with respect to issues to be determined in proceedings concerned with the competence of the patient to stand trial.</p>

	<p>(3) In a proceeding in which subsections (1) and (2) prohibit disclosure of a communication made to a psychiatrist or psychologist in connection with the examination, diagnosis, or treatment of a patient, the fact that the patient has been examined or treated or undergone a diagnosis also shall not be disclosed unless that fact is relevant to a determination by a health care insurer, health care corporation, nonprofit dental care corporation, or health maintenance organization of its rights and liabilities under a policy, contract, or certificate of insurance or health care benefits.</p> <p>(4) Privileged communications may be disclosed under section 9461 to comply with the duty set forth in that section.</p>
<p>Psychologist-Patient Privilege</p>	<p>Mich. Comp. Laws Ann. § 333.18237.</p> <p>A psychologist licensed or allowed to use that title under this part or an individual under his or her supervision cannot be compelled to disclose confidential information acquired from an individual consulting the psychologist in his or her professional capacity if the information is necessary to enable the psychologist to render services. Information may be disclosed with the consent of the individual consulting the psychologist, or if the individual consulting the psychologist is a minor, with the consent of the minor’s guardian, pursuant to section 16222¹ if the psychologist reasonably believes it is necessary to disclose the information to comply with section 16222, or under section 16281.² In a contest on the admission of a deceased individual’s will to probate, an heir at law of the decedent, whether a proponent or contestant of the will, and the personal representative of the decedent may waive the privilege created by this section.</p> <p>¹ M.C.L.A. § 333.16222. ² M.C.L.A. § 333.16281.</p>
<p>Physician-Patient Privilege</p>	<p>Mich. Comp. Laws Ann. § 600.2157.</p> <p>Except as otherwise provided by law, a person duly authorized to practice medicine or surgery shall not disclose any information that the person has acquired in attending a patient in a professional character, if the information was necessary to enable the person to prescribe for the patient as a physician, or to do any act for the patient as a surgeon. If the patient brings an action against any defendant to recover for any personal injuries, or for any malpractice, and the patient produces a physician as a witness in</p>

	<p>the patient’s own behalf who has treated the patient for the injury or for any disease or condition for which the malpractice is alleged, the patient shall be considered to have waived the privilege provided in this section as to another physician who has treated the patient for the injuries, disease, or condition. If a patient has died, the heirs at law of the patient, whether proponents or contestants of the patient’s will, shall be considered to be personal representatives of the deceased patient for the purpose of waiving the privilege under this section in a contest upon the question of admitting the patient’s will to probate. If a patient has died, the beneficiary of a life insurance policy insuring the life of the patient, or the patient’s heirs at law, may waive the privilege under this section for the purpose of providing the necessary documentation to a life insurer in examining a claim for benefits.</p>
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SELECT DEFINITIONS

<p>Definitions of the terms used in the above-referenced privileges are included below, when available.</p>	
<p>Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Counselor-Victim Privilege Definitions</p>	<p>Mich. Comp. Laws Ann. § 600.2157a(1).</p> <p>(a) “Confidential communication” means information transmitted between a victim and a sexual assault or domestic violence counselor, or between a victim or sexual assault or domestic violence counselor and any other person to whom disclosure is reasonably necessary to further the interests of the victim, in connection with the rendering of advice, counseling, or other assistance by the sexual assault or domestic violence counselor to the victim.</p> <p>(b) “Domestic violence” means that term as defined in section 1501 of Act No. 389 of the Public Acts of 1978, being section 400.1501 of the Michigan Compiled Laws.</p> <p>(c) “Sexual assault” means assault with intent to commit criminal sexual conduct.</p> <p>(d) “Sexual assault or domestic violence counselor” means a person who is employed at or who volunteers service at a sexual assault or domestic violence crisis center, and who in that capacity provides advice, counseling, or other assistance to victims of sexual assault</p>

	<p>or domestic violence and their families.</p> <p>(e) “Sexual assault or domestic violence crisis center” means an office, institution, agency, or center which offers assistance to victims of sexual assault or domestic violence and their families through crisis intervention and counseling.</p> <p>(f) “Victim” means a person who was or who alleges to have been the subject of a sexual assault or of domestic violence.</p>
<p>Social Worker-Client Privilege Definitions</p>	<p>Mich. Comp. Laws Ann. § 333.18501.</p> <p>(1) As used in this part:</p> <p>(a) “Health facility” means a health facility or agency licensed under article 17 1 or a hospital, psychiatric hospital, or psychiatric unit licensed under the mental health code, 1974 PA 258, MCL 330.1001 to 330.2106.</p> <p>(b) “Licensed bachelor’s social worker” means an individual licensed under this article to engage in the practice of social work at the bachelor’s level.</p> <p>(c) “Licensed master’s social worker” means an individual licensed under this article to engage in the practice of social work at the master’s level.</p> <p>(d) “Practice of medicine” means that term as defined in section 17001.2</p> <p>(e) “Practice of osteopathic medicine and surgery” means that term as defined in section 17501.3</p> <p>(f) “Practice of social work at the bachelor’s level” means, subject to subsections (2) and (4), all of the following applied within the scope of social work values, ethics, principles, and skills:</p> <p>(i) The application of social work theory, knowledge, methods, and ethics to restore or enhance social, psychosocial, or biopsychosocial functioning of individuals, couples, families, groups, organizations, or communities, with particular attention to the person-in-environment configuration.</p> <p>(ii) Social work case management and casework, including assessments, planning, referral, and intervention with individuals, families, couples, groups, communities, or organizations within the context of social work values, ethics, principles, and skills.</p> <p>(iii) Helping communities, organizations, individuals, or groups improve their social or health services by utilizing social work practice skills.</p> <p>(iv) The administration of assessment checklists that do not require special training and that do not require interpretation.</p>

	<p>(g) “Practice of social work at the master’s level” means, subject to subsection (5), all of the following applied within the scope of social work values, ethics, principles, and advanced skills:</p> <p>(i) The advanced application of the knowledge of human development and behavior and social, economic, and cultural institutions.</p> <p>(ii) The advanced application of macro social work processes and systems to improve the social or health services of communities, groups, or organizations through planned interventions.</p> <p>(iii) The application of specialized clinical knowledge and advanced clinical skills in the areas of assessment, diagnosis, and treatment of mental, emotional, and behavioral disorders, conditions, and addictions. Treatment methods include the provision of advanced social work case management and casework and individual, couple, family, or group counseling and psychotherapy whether in private practice or other settings.</p> <p>(h) “Social service technician” means an individual registered under this article who is specially trained to practice only under the supervision of a licensed master’s social worker or a licensed bachelor’s social worker.</p> <p>(2) An individual who performs 1 or more of the functions described in subdivision (f)(i) through (iv) but not all of those functions is not considered engaged in the practice of social work at the bachelor’s level.</p> <p>(3) In addition to the definitions of this part, article 14 contains general definitions and principles of construction applicable to all articles in this code and part 1615 contains definitions applicable to this part.</p> <p>(4) The practice of social work at the bachelor’s level does not include the practice of medicine or the practice of osteopathic medicine and surgery, including, but not limited to, the prescribing of drugs, the administration of electroconvulsive therapy, the practice of psychotherapy, and other advanced clinical skills pursuant to section 18501(g)(iii) 6 or the administration or interpretation of psychological tests, except as otherwise provided in subdivision (f)(iv).</p> <p>(5) The practice of social work at the master’s level does not include the practice of medicine or the practice of osteopathic medicine and surgery, including, but not limited to, the prescribing of drugs or administration of electroconvulsive therapy.</p>
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<p>Psychiatrist and Psychologist-Patient Privilege Definitions</p>	<p>Mich. Comp. Laws Ann. § 330.1700.</p> <p>As used in this chapter, unless the context requires otherwise:</p> <p>(a) “Criminal abuse” means 1 or more of the following:</p> <p>(i) An assault that is a violation or an attempt or conspiracy to commit a violation of sections 81 to 90 of the Michigan penal code, Act No. 328 of the Public Acts of 1931, being sections 750.81 to 750.90 of the Michigan Compiled Laws. Criminal abuse does not include an assault or an assault and battery that is a violation of section 81 of Act No. 328 of the Public Acts of 1939, being section 750.81 of the Michigan Compiled Laws, and that is committed by a recipient against another recipient.</p> <p>(ii) A criminal homicide that is a violation or an attempt or conspiracy to commit a violation of section 316, 317, or 321 of Act No. 328 of the Public Acts of 1931, being sections 750.316, 750.317, and 750.321 of the Michigan Compiled Laws.</p> <p>(iii) Criminal sexual conduct that is a violation or an attempt or conspiracy to commit a violation of sections 520b to 520e or 520g of Act No. 328 of the Public Acts of 1931, being sections 750.520b to 750.520e and 750.520g of the Michigan Compiled Laws.</p> <p>(iv) Vulnerable adult abuse that is a violation or an attempt or conspiracy to commit a violation of section 145n of the Michigan penal code, Act No. 328 of the Public Acts of 1931, being section 750.145n of the Michigan Compiled Laws.</p> <p>(v) Child abuse that is a violation or an attempt or conspiracy to commit a violation of section 136b of Act No. 328 of the Public Acts of 1931, being section 750.136b of the Michigan Compiled Laws.</p> <p>(b) “Health care corporation” means a nonprofit health care corporation operating under the nonprofit health care corporation Reform Act, Act No. 350 of the Public Acts of 1980, being sections 550.1101 to 550.1704 of the Michigan Compiled Laws.</p> <p>(c) “Health care insurer” means an insurer authorized to provide health insurance in this state or a legal entity that is self-insured and provides health care benefits to its employees.</p> <p>(d) “Health maintenance organization” means an organization licensed under part 210 of the Public Health Code, Act No. 368 of the Public Acts of 1978, being sections 333.21001 to 333.21098 of the Michigan Compiled Laws.</p>
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	<p>(e) “Money” means any legal tender, note, draft, certificate of deposit, stock, bond, check, or credit card.</p> <p>(f) “Nonprofit dental care corporation” means a dental care corporation incorporated under Act No. 125 of the Public Acts of 1963, being sections 550.351 to 550.373 of the Michigan Compiled Laws.</p> <p>(g) “Person-centered planning” means a process for planning and supporting the individual receiving services that builds upon the individual’s capacity to engage in activities that promote community life and that honors the individual’s preferences, choices, and abilities. The person-centered planning process involves families, friends, and professionals as the individual desires or requires.</p> <p>(h) “Privileged communication” means a communication made to a psychiatrist or psychologist in connection with the examination, diagnosis, or treatment of a patient, or to another person while the other person is participating in the examination, diagnosis, or treatment or a communication made privileged under other applicable state or federal law.</p> <p>(i) “Restraint” means the use of a physical device to restrict an individual’s movement. Restraint does not include the use of a device primarily intended to provide anatomical support.</p> <p>(j) “Seclusion” means the temporary placement of a recipient in a room, alone, where egress is prevented by any means.</p> <p>(k) “Support plan” means a written plan that specifies the personal support services or any other supports that are to be developed with and provided for a recipient.</p> <p>(l) “Treatment plan” means a written plan that specifies the goal-oriented treatment or training services, including rehabilitation or habilitation services, that are to be developed with and provided for a recipient.</p>
<p>Psychologist-Patient Privilege</p>	<p>Mich. Comp. Laws Ann. § 333.18201.</p> <p>(1) As used in this part: (a) “Psychologist” means an individual licensed under this article to engage in the practice of psychology.</p>

	<p>(b) “Practice of psychology” means the rendering to individuals, groups, organizations, or the public of services involving the application of principles, methods, and procedures of understanding, predicting, and influencing behavior for the purposes of the diagnosis, assessment related to diagnosis, prevention, amelioration, or treatment of mental or emotional disorders, disabilities or behavioral adjustment problems by means of psychotherapy, counseling, behavior modification, hypnosis, biofeedback techniques, psychological tests, or other verbal or behavioral means. The practice of psychology shall not include the practice of medicine such as prescribing drugs, performing surgery, or administering electro-convulsive therapy.</p> <p>(2) In addition to the definitions in this part, article 1¹ contains general definitions and principles of construction applicable to all articles in this code and part 161² contains definitions applicable to this part.</p> <p>¹ M.C.L.A. § 333.1101 et seq. ² M.C.L.A. § 333.16101 et seq.</p>
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¹ See *Office for Victims of Crime, Ethical Standards, Section I: Scope of Services*, https://www.ovc.gov/model-standards/ethical_standards_1.html.

² Additional examples of system-based advocate titles include: district attorney’s office/state attorney’s office advocates or victim-witness coordinators; law enforcement advocates; FBI victim specialists; U.S. attorney’s office victim-witness coordinators; board of parole and post-prison supervision advocates; and post-conviction advocates.

³ Examples of community-based advocates include: crisis hotline or helpline staff; rape crisis center staff; domestic violence shelter staff; campus advocates; and homicide support program staff.

⁴ See Nat’l Crime Victim Law Inst., *Refusing Discovery Requests of Privileged Materials Pretrial in Criminal Cases*, NCVLI Violence Against Women Bulletin (Nat’l Crime Victim Law Inst., Portland, Or.), June 2011, at 3 n.30 (listing victims’ constitutional and statutory rights to privacy and to dignity, respect or fairness).

⁵ See, e.g., *Whalen v. Roe*, 429 U.S. 589, 599–600 (1977) (recognizing that the United States Constitution provides a right of personal privacy, which includes an “individual interest in avoiding disclosure of personal matters”); *Roe v. Wade*, 410 U.S. 113, 152–53 (1973) (“[A] right to personal privacy . . . does exist under the Constitution.”).

⁶ There are different levels of privileges: absolute, absolute diluted and qualified. When an absolute privilege attaches, only a victim has the right to authorize disclosure of that information and the court can never order the information to be disclosed without the victim’s consent. Absolute privileges are rare, however, because privileges are seen to run contrary to the truth finding function of courts.

⁷ See, e.g., Ala. R. Evid. 503A(a)(7) (“‘Victim counselor’ means any employee or supervised volunteer of a victim counseling center or other agency, business, or organization that provides counseling to victims, who is not affiliated with a law enforcement agency or prosecutor’s office and whose duties include treating victims for any emotional or psychological condition resulting from a sexual assault or family violence.”); Alaska Stat. Ann. § 18.66.250(5)(B) (“‘[V]ictim counseling center’ means a private organization, an organization operated by or contracted by a branch of the armed forces of the United States, or a local government agency that . . . is not affiliated with a law enforcement agency or a prosecutor’s office[.]”); Haw. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 626-1, Rule 505.5(a)(6) (“A ‘victim counseling program’ is any activity of a domestic violence victims’ program or a sexual assault crisis center that has,

as its primary function, the counseling and treatment of sexual assault, domestic violence, or child abuse victims and their families, and that operates independently of any law enforcement agency, prosecutor’s office, or the department of human services.”); Ind. Code Ann. § 35-37-6-5(2) (“[V]ictim service provider’ means a person . . . that is not affiliated with a law enforcement agency[.]”); Neb. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 29-4302(1) (“Advocate means any employee or supervised volunteer of a domestic violence and sexual assault victim assistance program or of any other agency, business, or organization that is not affiliated with a law enforcement or prosecutor’s office whose primary purpose is assisting domestic violence and sexual assault victims[.]”); N.M. Stat. Ann. § 31-25-2(E) (“[V]ictim counselor’ means any employee or supervised volunteer of a victim counseling center or other agency, business or organization that provides counseling to victims who is not affiliated with a law enforcement agency or the office of a district attorney[.]”).

⁸ Terms that inform the intersection of victim services and HIPAA, FERPA, FOIA or VOCA are “implied consent” and “waiver.” “Informed consent” is defined as “1. [a] person’s agreement to allow something to happen, made with full knowledge of the risks involved and the alternatives. For the legal profession, informed consent is defined in Model Rule of Professional Conduct 1.0(e); [or] 2. [a] patient’s knowing choice about a medical treatment or procedure, made after a physician or other healthcare provider discloses whatever information a reasonably prudent provider in the medical field community would give to a patient regarding the risks involved in the proposed treatment or procedure.” *Informed consent*, Black’s Law Dictionary (8th ed. 2004). “Waiver” is defined as “[t]he voluntary relinquishment or abandonment—express or implied—of a legal right or advantage” *Waiver*, Black’s Law Dictionary (8th ed. 2004).

⁹ *School Resource Officers, School Law Enforcement Units, and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)*, https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/sites/default/files/resource_document/file/SRO_FAQs_2-5-19_0.pdf.

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² *Id.*

¹³ *Are law enforcement records considered education records?*, <https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/faq/are-law-enforcement-records-considered-education-records>.

¹⁴ *Id.*

¹⁵ *Office for Victims of Crime, Crime Victims Fund*, <https://www.ovc.gov/pubs/crimevictimsfundfs/intro.html#VictimAssist>.

¹⁶ *Id.*

¹⁷ *Id.*

¹⁸ Department of Justice Guide to the Freedom of Information Act, at 1, <https://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/oip/legacy/2014/07/23/exemption6.pdf>.

¹⁹ *Id.*

²⁰ *Ethic*, Merriam-webster.com, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ethics> (last visited July 31, 2019).

²¹ *Office for Victims of Crime, Purpose & Scope of The Standards*, https://www.ovc.gov/model-standards/purpose_and_scope.html.

²² *Id.* Each of the five sections contain ethical standards and corresponding commentaries, explaining each standard in detail. For “Scope of Services,” the ethical standards and their corresponding commentaries can be located at https://www.ovc.gov/model-standards/ethical_standards_1.html. For “Coordinating within the Community,” the ethical standards and their corresponding commentaries can be located at https://www.ovc.gov/model-standards/ethical_standards_2.html. For “Direct Services,” the ethical standards and their corresponding commentaries can be located at https://www.ovc.gov/model-standards/ethical_standards_3.html. For “Privacy, Confidentiality, Data Security and Assistive Technology,” the ethical standards and their corresponding commentaries can be located at https://www.ovc.gov/model-standards/ethical_standards_4.html. For “Administration and Evaluation,” the ethical standard and the corresponding commentary can be located at https://www.ovc.gov/model-standards/ethical_standards_5.html.

²³ *Office for Victims of Crime, Ethical Standards for Serving Victims & Survivors of Crime*, https://www.ovc.gov/model-standards/ethical_standards.html.

²⁴ For a sample law enforcement-based victim services code of ethics drafted by the International Association of Chiefs of Police, see *Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services – Template Package I: Getting Started*, https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/LEV/Publications/Template%20Package%20I%20C%20final_11.02.20.pdf.

²⁵ See *Weatherford v. Bursey*, 429 U.S. 545, 559 (1977).

²⁶ See *United States v. Agurs*, 427 U.S. 97, 106–07 (1976).

²⁷ *Strickler v. Greene*, 527 U.S. 263, 280 (1999).

²⁸ *Id.*

²⁹ See, e.g., *Eakes v. Sexton*, 592 F. App'x 422, 429 (6th Cir. 2014) (finding that “contrary to the district court’s conclusion that the [state] prosecutor was not responsible for failing to disclose the Victim-Advocate report because the Advocate was located ‘in a separate part of the District Attorney’s office,’ the prosecutor is in fact responsible for disclosing all *Brady* information in the possession of that office, such as the Victim-Advocate report, even if the prosecutor was unaware of the evidence prior to trial”); *Commonwealth v. Liang*, 747 N.E.2d 112, 114 (Mass. 2001) (concluding that “the notes of [prosecution-based] advocates are subject to the same discovery rules as the notes of prosecutors[,]” and “[t]o the extent that the notes contain material, exculpatory information . . . or relevant ‘statements’ of a victim or witness . . . the Commonwealth must disclose such information or statements to the defendant, in accordance with due process and the rules of criminal procedure”).

³⁰ Notably, for advocates/entities that receive VOCA funding, because this disclosure is “compelled by statutory or court mandate,” it does not pursuant to statute, require a signed, written release from the victim. Nevertheless, if disclosure is required, VOCA requires that advocates make reasonable attempts to notify the victim affected by the disclosure and take whatever steps are necessary to protect their privacy and safety.

³¹ Defendant John Giglio was tried, convicted and sentenced for forgery related crimes. While Giglio’s case was pending appeal, his attorney filed a motion for a new trial, claiming that there was newly discovered evidence that the key Government witness—“the only witness linking [Giglio] with the crime”—had been promised that he would not be prosecuted in exchange for his testimony. The defense attorney’s motion was initially denied, but certiorari review was granted “to determine whether the evidence [that was] not disclosed . . . require[d] a new trial under the due process criteria of” cases, including *Brady v. Maryland*, 373 U.S. 83, 87 (1963), which “held that suppression of material evidence justifies a new trial” whether the prosecutor intended to withhold information or not. “An affidavit filed by the Government as part of its opposition to a new trial confirm[ed] [Giglio’s] claim that a promise was made to [the key Government witness]” by the former Assistant United States Attorney “that [the witness] would not be prosecuted if he cooperated with the Government.” This promise of leniency was made by the formerly assigned Assistant United States Attorney who did not handle the trial; and the Assistant United States Attorney who handled the trial was unaware of the promise. The Supreme Court held that nondisclosure of material evidence “is the responsibility of the prosecutor”—whether nondisclosure was intentional or not—and that such action is directly attributable to the Government. Addressing the topic of “turnover,” principally, the Court explained that “[t]o the extent this places a burden on the large prosecution offices, procedures and regulations can be established to carry that burden and to [e]nsure communication of all relevant information on each case to every lawyer who deals with it.” Giglio’s conviction was reversed, and the case was remanded to the lower court.

³² This section addresses subpoenas directed to system-based advocates. For information concerning community-based advocates and subpoenas, please contact NCVLI for technical assistance.

³³ Terminology for subpoenas varies from jurisdiction-to-jurisdiction. Common examples of subpoenas include: “subpoenas”; “subpoenas duces tecum”; “deposition subpoenas”; and “subpoenas ad testificandum.” See *Subpoena*, Black’s Law Dictionary (8th ed. 2004).

³⁴ See *Subpoena*, Black’s Law Dictionary (8th ed. 2004) (defining “subpoena” as “[a] writ commanding a person to appear before a court or other tribunal, subject to a penalty for failing to comply”); *subpoena duces tecum*, Black’s Law Dictionary (8th ed. 2004) (defining “subpoena duces tecum” as “[a] subpoena ordering the witness to appear and to bring specified documents, records, or things”); *deposition subpoena*, Black’s Law Dictionary (8th ed. 2004) (defining “deposition subpoena” as “1. [a] subpoena issued to summon a person to make a sworn statement in a time and place other than a trial[;] [and] 2. [i]n some jurisdictions, [this is referred to as] a subpoena duces tecum”).

³⁵ Attorney work product “is generally exempt from discovery or other compelled disclosure.” *Work product*, Black’s Law Dictionary (8th ed. 2004).

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