

## **NEW YORK VICTIMS' RIGHTS LAWS<sup>1</sup>**

### **Constitution**

*New York does not have a victims' rights amendment to its constitution.*

### **McKinney's Executive Law; Article 23, Fair Treatment Standards for Crime Victims**

#### **§ 640 – Fair Treatment Standards for Crime Victims**

1. The commissioner of the division of criminal justice services, in consultation with the director of the office of victim services and other appropriate officials, shall promulgate standards for the treatment of the innocent victims of crime by the agencies which comprise the criminal justice system of the state.
2. For the purposes of this article the term “criminal justice” shall include juvenile justice and the objectives and criteria set forth in sections six hundred forty-one and six hundred forty-two of this article shall apply to presentment agencies as defined in subdivision twelve of section 301.2 of the family court act.

#### **§ 641 – Objectives of Fair Treatment Standards**

The object of such fair treatment standards shall be to:

1. Ensure that crime victims routinely receive emergency social and medical services as soon as possible and are given information pursuant to section six hundred twenty-five-a of this chapter on the following:
  - (a) availability of crime victim compensation;
  - (b) availability of appropriate public or private programs that provide counseling, treatment or support for crime victims, including but not limited to the following: rape crisis centers, victim/witness assistance programs, elderly victim services, victim assistance hotlines and domestic violence shelters;
  - (c) the role of the victims in the criminal justice process, including what they can expect from the system as well as what the system expects from them; and
  - (d) stages in the criminal justice process of significance to a crime victim, and the manner in which information about such stages can be obtained.

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<sup>1</sup> Not intended to be exhaustive.

2. Ensure routine notification of a victim or witness as to steps that law enforcement officers or district attorneys can take to protect victims and witnesses from intimidation.
3. Ensure notification of victims, witnesses, relatives of those victims and witnesses who are minors, and relatives of homicide victims, if such persons provide the appropriate official with a current address and telephone number, either by phone or by mail, if possible, of judicial proceedings relating to their case, including:
  - (a) the arrest of an accused;
  - (b) the initial appearance of an accused before a judicial officer;
  - (c) the release of an accused pending judicial proceedings; and
  - (d) proceedings in the prosecution of the accused including entry of a plea of guilty, trial, sentencing, but prior to sentencing specific information shall be provided regarding the right to seek restitution and reparation, and where a term of imprisonment is imposed, specific information shall be provided regarding maximum and minimum terms of such imprisonment.

#### **§ 642 – Criteria for Fair Treatment Standards**

Such fair treatment standards shall provide that:

1. The victim of a violent felony offense, a felony involving physical injury to the victim, a felony involving property loss or damage in excess of two hundred fifty dollars, a felony involving attempted or threatened physical injury or property loss or damage in excess of two hundred fifty dollars or a felony involving larceny against the person shall, unless he or she refuses or is unable to cooperate or his or her whereabouts are unknown, be consulted by the district attorney in order to obtain the views of the victim regarding disposition of the criminal case by dismissal, plea of guilty or trial. In such a case in which the victim is a minor child, or in the case of a homicide, the district attorney shall, unless the family refuses or is unable to cooperate or his, her or their whereabouts are unknown, consult for such purpose with the family of the victim. In addition, the district attorney shall, unless he or she (or, in the case in which the victim is a minor child or a victim of homicide, his or her family) refuses or is unable to cooperate or his, her or their whereabouts are unknown, consult and obtain the views of the victim or family of the victim, as appropriate, concerning the release of the defendant in the victim's case pending judicial proceedings upon an indictment, and concerning the availability of sentencing alternatives such as community supervision and restitution from the defendant. The failure of the district attorney to so obtain the views of the victim or family of the victim shall not be cause for delaying the proceedings against the defendant nor shall it affect the validity of a conviction, judgment or order.
  2. The victims and other prosecution witnesses shall, where possible, be provided, when awaiting court appearances, a secure waiting area that is separate from all other witnesses.
- 2-a. (a) All police departments, as that term is defined in subdivision a of section eight

hundred thirty-seven-c of this chapter, district attorneys' offices and presentment agencies, as that term is defined in subdivision twelve of section 301.2 of the family court act, shall provide a private setting for interviewing victims of a crime defined in article one hundred thirty or section 255.25, 255.26, or 255.27 of the penal law. For purposes of this subdivision, "private setting" shall mean an enclosed room from which the occupants are not visible or otherwise identifiable, and whose conversations cannot be heard, from outside such room. Only (i) those persons directly and immediately related to the interviewing of a particular victim, (ii) the victim, (iii) a social worker, rape crisis counselor, psychologist or other professional providing emotional support to the victim, unless the victim objects to the presence of such person and requests the exclusion of such person from the interview, and (iv) where appropriate, the parent or parents of the victim, if requested by the victim, shall be present during the interview of the victim.

- (b) All police departments, as that term is defined in subdivision a of section eight hundred thirty-seven-c of this chapter, shall provide victims of a crime defined in article one hundred thirty of the penal law with the name, address, and telephone of the nearest rape crisis center in writing.
3. Law enforcement agencies and district attorneys shall promptly return property held for evidentiary purposes unless there is a compelling reason for retaining it relating to proof at trial.
  4. The victim or witness who so requests shall be assisted by law enforcement agencies and district attorneys in informing employers that the need for victim and witness cooperation in the prosecution of the case may necessitate absence of that victim or witness from work. In addition, a victim or witness who, as a direct result of a crime or of cooperation with law enforcement agencies or the district attorney in the investigation or prosecution of a crime is unable to meet obligations to a creditor, creditors or others should be assisted by such agencies or the district attorney in providing to such creditor, creditors or others accurate information about the circumstances of the crime, including the nature of any loss or injury suffered by the victim, or about the victim's or witness' cooperation, where appropriate.
  5. Victim assistance education and training, with special consideration to be given to victims of domestic violence, sex offense victims, elderly victims, child victims, and the families of homicide victims, shall be given to persons taking courses at state law enforcement training facilities and by district attorneys so that victims may be promptly, properly and completely assisted.

#### **§ 642a – Fair Treatment of Child Victims as Witnesses**

To the extent permitted by law, criminal justice agencies, crime victim-related agencies, social services agencies and the courts shall comply with the following guidelines in their treatment of child victims:

1. To minimize the number of times a child victim is called upon to recite the events of the case and to foster a feeling of trust and confidence in the child victim, whenever practicable and where one exists, a multi-disciplinary team as established pursuant to

subdivision six of section four hundred twenty-three of the social services law and/or a child advocacy center shall be used for the investigation and prosecution of child abuse cases involving abuse of a child, as described in paragraph (i), (ii) or (iii) of subdivision (e) of section one thousand twelve of the family court act, sexual abuse of a child or the death of a child.

2. Whenever practicable, the same prosecutor should handle all aspects of a case involving an alleged child victim.
3. To minimize the time during which a child victim must endure the stress of his involvement in the proceedings, the court should take appropriate action to ensure a speedy trial in all proceedings involving an alleged child victim. In ruling on any motion or request for a delay or continuance of a proceeding involving an alleged child victim, the court should consider and give weight to any potential adverse impact the delay or continuance may have on the well-being of the child.
4. The judge presiding should be sensitive to the psychological and emotional stress a child witness may undergo when testifying.
5. In accordance with the provisions of article sixty-five of the criminal procedure law, when appropriate, a child witness as defined in subdivision one of section 65.00 of such law should be permitted to testify via live, two-way closed-circuit television.
6. In accordance with the provisions of section 190.32 of the criminal procedure law, a person supportive of the "child witness" or "special witness" as defined in such section should be permitted to be present and accessible to a child witness at all times during his testimony, although the person supportive of the child witness should not be permitted to influence the child's testimony.
7. A child witness should be permitted in the discretion of the court to use anatomically correct dolls and drawings during his testimony.

#### **§ 643 – Fair Treatment Standards for Crime Victims; Agencies Generally**

1. As used in this section, "crime victim-related agency" means any agency of state government which provides services to or deals directly with crime victims, including (a) the office of children and family services, the office for the aging, the division of veterans affairs, and correctional alternatives the division of parole, office of victim services the department of motor vehicles, the office of vocational rehabilitation, the workers' compensation board, the department of health, the division of criminal justice services, the office of mental health, every transportation authority and the division of state police, and (b) any other agency so designated by the governor within ninety days of the effective date of this section.
2. Each crime victim-related agency shall review its practices, procedures, services, regulations and laws to determine the adequacy and appropriateness of its services with respect to crime victims, including victims with special needs, particularly the elderly, disabled or victims of child abuse, domestic violence or sex-related offenses. Such review

shall include reasonable opportunity for public comment and consultation with crime victims or their representatives, and may include public hearings.

3. After the review, and not later than one hundred eighty days after the effective date of this section, each crime victim-related agency shall submit a report to the governor and the legislature, setting forth the findings of the review including a description of the services provided by the agency and recommendations for changes in its practices, procedures, services, regulations and laws to improve its services to crime victims and to establish and implement fair treatment standards for crime victims.
  
4. Subject to the direction of the governor, and to the extent practicable, each crime victim-related agency shall expeditiously implement the recommendations of its report.

#### **§ 644 – Implementation**

The commissioner of the division of criminal justice services and the director of the office of victim services shall assist criminal justice agencies in implementing the guidelines promulgated by the commissioner.

#### **§ 645 – Fair Treatment Standards for Crime Victims in the Courts**

The chief administrator of the courts, in consultation with the commissioner of the division of criminal justice services, the director of the office of victim services and other appropriate officials, shall promulgate standards for the treatment of the innocent victims of crime by the unified court system. These standards shall conform to and be consistent with the regulations promulgated pursuant to section six hundred forty of this article.

#### **§ 646 – Police Reports**

1. A victim of crime shall be entitled, regardless of physical injury, without charge to a copy of a police report of the crime.
  
2. An individual whose identity was assumed or whose personal identifying information, as defined in section 190.77 of the penal law, was used in violation of section 190.78, 190.79 or 190.80 of the penal law, or any person who has suffered a financial loss as a direct result of the acts of a defendant in violation of section 190.78, 190.79, 190.80, 190.82 or 190.83 of the penal law, who has learned or reasonably suspects that his or her personal identifying information has been unlawfully used by another, may make a complaint to the local law enforcement agency of the county in which any part of the offense took place regardless of whether the defendant was actually present in such county, or in the county in which the person who suffered financial loss resided at the time of the commission of the offense, or in the county where the person whose personal identification information was used in the commission of the offense resided at the time of the commission of the offense as provided in paragraph (l) of subdivision four of section 20.40 of the criminal procedure law. Said local law enforcement agency shall take a police report of the matter and provide the complainant with a copy of such report free of charge.

## **§ 646 – Objectives**

The object of these fair treatment standards shall be to:

1. Ensure that crime victims are given information on the following:
  - (a) the role of the victims in the criminal justice process, including what they can expect from the system as well as what the system expects from them;
  - (b) stages in the criminal justice process of significance to a crime victim, and the manner in which information about such stages can be obtained; and
  - (c) how the court can address the needs of the victims at sentencing.
2. Ensure routine notification of a victim or witness as to steps that the court can take to protect victims and witnesses from intimidation, including the issuance of orders of protection and temporary orders of protection.
3. Ensure notification of victims, witnesses, relatives of those victims and witnesses who are minors, and relatives of homicide victims, if such persons provide the appropriate court official with a current address and telephone number, either by phone or by mail, if possible, of judicial proceedings relating to their case, including:
  - (a) the initial appearance of an accused before a judicial officer;
  - (b) the release of an accused pending judicial proceedings;
  - (c) proceedings in the prosecution of the accused, including entry of a plea of guilty, trial, sentencing, and where a term of imprisonment is imposed, specific information shall be provided regarding maximum and minimum terms of such imprisonment; and
  - (d) the reversal or modification of the judgment by an appellate court.

## **§ 646-a – Information Relative to the Fair Treatment Standards; Pamphlet**

1. The district attorney shall provide the victim, at the earliest time possible, with an informational pamphlet detailing the rights of crime victims which shall be prepared by the division of criminal justice services in consultation with the director of the office of victim services and distributed to each district attorney's office.
2. The pamphlet shall summarize provisions of this article. It shall also include specific information with appropriate statutory references on the following:
  - (a) the rights of crime victims to compensation and services;
  - (b) the rights of crime victims to routine notification of judicial proceedings relating to their case as provided in section six hundred forty-one of this article, in section 330.20, and section 440.50 of the criminal procedure law and section one hundred forty-nine-a of the correction law;

- (c) the rights of crime victims to be protected from intimidation and to have the court, where appropriate, issue protective orders as provided in sections 530.12 and 530.13 of the criminal procedure law and sections 215.15, 215.16 and 215.17 of the penal law;
  - (d) the rights of crime victims to submit, where appropriate, a victim impact statement for the pre-sentencing report and the parole hearing as provided in section 390.30 of the criminal procedure law and section two hundred fifty-nine-i of this chapter;
  - (e) the rights of crime victims, where a defendant is being sentenced for a felony, to request the right to make a statement at the time of sentencing as provided in section 380.50 of the criminal procedure law; and
  - (f) the rights of crime victims to request restitution and have the district attorney present such request to the court and assist the crime victim in the filing and collection of a restitution order in cooperation with the designated agency of the court as provided in section 420.10 of the criminal procedure law and section 60.27 of the penal law.
  - (g) the rights of crime victims to be aware of the defendant's incarceration status by providing the division of parole's contact information, including the division's toll-free telephone number, as provided for in subdivision two of section two hundred fifty-nine-i of this chapter. Such notice shall advise the crime victim to use the division's toll-free telephone number to update contact information.
3. This pamphlet shall provide space for the insertion of the following information:
- (a) the address and phone number of the office of victim services;
  - (b) the address and phone numbers of local victim service programs, where appropriate;
  - (c) the name, phone number and office location of the person in the district attorney's office to whom inquiries concerning the victims case may be directed; and
  - (d) any other information the division deems appropriate.
4. (a) The commissioner of the division of criminal justice services in consultation with the director of the office of victim services shall develop and prepare a standardized form for the use of district attorney offices for the purpose of reporting compliance with this section. The form is to be distributed to each district attorney. Every district attorney's office in the state shall complete the reporting form annually and send it to the director of the office of victim services by the first day of January each year subsequent to the effective date of this subdivision.
- (b) A copy of the report shall be retained by the district attorney and upon request, a victim of a crime or relative of a victim shall be entitled to receive from the district attorney a copy of their district attorney's annual report without charge. Any other person requesting a copy of the report shall pay a fee not to exceed the actual cost of reproduction.

## **§ 647 – Criteria**

Fair treatment standards for crime victims in the courts shall provide that:

1. The court shall consider the views of the victim of a violent felony offense, a felony involving physical injury to the victim, a felony involving property loss or damage in excess of two hundred fifty dollars, a felony involving attempted or threatened physical injury or property loss or damage in excess of two hundred fifty dollars or a felony involving larceny against the person, or of the family of a homicide victim or minor child, regarding discretionary decisions relating to the criminal case, including, but not limited to, plea agreements and sentence. In addition, the court shall consider the views of the victim or family of the victim, as appropriate, concerning the release of the defendant in the victim's case pending judicial proceedings upon an indictment, and concerning the availability of sentencing alternatives such as community supervision and restitution from the defendant. The failure of the court to consider the views of the victim or family of the victim shall not be cause for delaying the proceedings against the defendant nor shall it affect the validity of a conviction, judgment or order.
2. The victims and other prosecution witnesses shall, where possible, be provided, when awaiting court appearances, a secure waiting area that is separate from all other witnesses.
3. The court shall assist in and expedite the return of property held for evidentiary purposes unless there is a compelling reason for retaining it relating to proof at trial.
4. Victim assistance education shall be given to judicial and nonjudicial personnel of the unified court system so that victims may be promptly, properly and completely assisted.

## **§ 648 – Review; Report and Implementation**

1. The chief administrator of the unified court system shall review court practices, procedures, services, regulations and laws to determine the adequacy and appropriateness of its services with respect to crime victims, including victims with special needs, particularly the elderly, disabled or victims of child abuse, domestic violence or sex-related offenses. Such review shall include reasonable opportunity for public comment and consultation with crime victims or their representatives, and may include public hearings.
2. After the review, and not later than two hundred seventy days after the effective date of this section, the chief administrator of the unified court system shall submit a report to the governor and the legislature, setting forth the findings of the review, including a description of the services provided by the components of the unified court system and recommendations for changes in its procedures, services, regulations and laws to improve its services to crime victims and to establish and implement fair treatment standards for crime victims.
3. Subject to the direction of the chief administrator, the components of the unified court system shall expeditiously implement the recommendations of its report.

## **§ 649 – Miscellaneous**

Nothing in this article shall be construed as creating a cause of action for damages or injunctive relief against the state or any of its political subdivisions or officers or any agency thereof.

## **McKinney's Social Services Law § 483-aa**

### **§ 483-aa. Definitions**

The following definitions shall apply to this article:

- (a) “Human trafficking victim” means a person who is a victim of sex trafficking as defined in section 230.34 of the penal law or a victim of labor trafficking as defined in section 135.35 of the penal law.
- (b) “Pre-certified victim of human trafficking” is a person who has a pending application for federal certification as a victim of a severe form of trafficking in persons as defined in section 7105 of title 22 of the United States Code (Trafficking Victims Protection) but has not yet obtained such certification, or a person who has reported a crime to law enforcement and it reasonably appears to law enforcement that the person is such a victim.

### **§ 483-bb. Services for victims of human trafficking**

- (a) The office of temporary and disability assistance may coordinate with and assist law enforcement agencies and district attorney's offices to access appropriate services for human trafficking victims.
- (b) In providing such assistance, the office of temporary and disability assistance may enter into contracts with non-government organizations for providing services to pre-certified victims of human trafficking as defined in subdivision (b) of section four hundred eighty-three-aa of this article, insofar as funds are available for that purpose. Such services may include, but are not limited to, case management, emergency temporary housing, health care, mental health counseling, drug addiction screening and treatment, language interpretation and translation services, English language instruction, job training and placement assistance, post-employment services for job retention, and services to assist the individual and any of his or her family members to establish a permanent residence in New York state or the United States. Nothing in this section shall preclude the office of temporary and disability assistance, or any local social services district, from providing human trafficking victims who are United States citizens or human trafficking victims who meet the criteria pursuant to section one hundred twenty-two of this chapter with any benefits or services for which they otherwise may be eligible.

### **§ 483-cc. Confirmation as a victim of human trafficking**

- (a) As soon as practicable after a first encounter with a person who reasonably appears to a law enforcement agency or a district attorney's office to be a human trafficking victim, that agency or office shall notify the office of temporary and disability assistance and

the division of criminal justice services that such person may be eligible for services under this article.

- (b) Upon receipt of such a notification, the division of criminal justice services, in consultation with the office of temporary and disability assistance and the referring agency or office, shall make a preliminary assessment of whether such victim or possible victim appears to meet the criteria for certification as a victim of a severe form of trafficking in persons as defined in section 7105 of title 22 of the United States Code (Trafficking Victims Protection) or appears to be otherwise eligible for any federal, state or local benefits and services. If it is determined that the victim appears to meet such criteria, the office of temporary and disability assistance shall report the finding to the victim, and to the referring law enforcement agency or district attorney's office, and may assist that agency or office in having such victim receive services from a case management provider who may be under contract with the office of temporary and disability assistance, or from any other available source. If the victim or possible victim is under the age of eighteen, the office of temporary and disability assistance also shall notify the local department of social services in the county where the child was found.

## **Statutes**

### **McKinney's Executive Law Ch. EIGHTEEN, Art. 23, Refs & Annos**

#### CROSS REFERENCES

Action against offender's estate; victim as creditor, see Civil Rights Law § 79-d.

Action by victim of criminal offense, time limits, see CPLR 213-b.

Compensation for crime victims, see Executive Law § 620 et seq.

Deaf victim, appointment of interpreter, see Judiciary Law § 390.

Dispositions of offenders, restitution and reparation, see Penal Law § 60.27.

Dispute resolution, notice and opportunity for victim to be heard prior to referral, see CPL 215.10; CPL 215.20.

Employer unlawfully penalizing victim witness, misdemeanor, see Penal Law § 215.14.

Forfeiture of proceeds of crime, see CPLR 1310 et seq.

Intimidation of victim, felony, see Penal Law § 215.15 et seq.

Judicial administration, chief administrator, see Judiciary Law § 212.

Mentally incapacitated defendant, notice to potential victim of release, see CPL 730.60.

Notice to crime victim of case disposition, see CPL 440.50.

Orders of protection for crime victims while action pending, see CPL 530.12; CPL 530.13.

Parole board, consideration of crime victim's statement, see Executive Law § 259-i.

Proceeds of crime, recovery by victim, see Executive Law § 632-a.

Released inmates; notification to victims and family members, see Correction Law § 149-a.

Restitution and reparation to crime victim, see Penal Law § 60.27.