A Message from
Assemblyman
John Ceretto

New York State has a number of laws and programs in place to help and support crime victims. If you or someone you know has been a victim of crime, there are a variety of resources you can turn to for legal, psychological, financial and other support. This brochure offers important information and lists state and federal agencies and programs that can help.

Remember to report all crimes immediately by calling 911 or your local police department.

Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns about this or any other matter.

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Help for crime victims

Compliments of
Assemblyman
John Ceretto

Your Rights

The **Fair Treatment Standards for Crime Victims** outlines the treatment of crime victims and includes information on victims' rights relating to judicial proceedings, victim impact statements, restitution and more.

You can get help from advocates working with the **Victim Assistance Program** who can assist with referrals, compensation claims, personal advocacy, emotional support and follow-up.

To find an advocate in your area, visit the NYS Office of Victim Services' website (www.ovs.ny.gov/locate-program).

The **Division of Parole** can keep victims notified of the parole and release status of the offenders who victimized them. Victims can also submit testimony to parole boards. For more information, contact the Victim Impact Unit at 1-800-783-6059 or 518-445-6161.

Victim Information and Notification Everyday (VINE) notifies victims who request to be alerted when offenders are released from state prison or sheriff's custody. Victims can request notification online at vinelink.com or by calling 1-888-VINE-4-NY.

Compensation and Restitution

As a crime victim, you have the right to request restitution from the perpetrator of the offense for damages of a physical or economic nature. In order to request restitution, contact the local District Attorney's office handling your case so that it can be ordered by the court at sentencing. You can find out more about restitution at the New York State Office of Victim Services' website (www.ovs.ny.gov).

The New York State Office of Victim Services offers compensation to innocent victims of crime and resources to help crime victims, including referrals to appropriate offices. In order to be eligible for compensation, claims must be filed within one year of the crime or the victim's death. Emergency benefits are also available for those who would otherwise suffer undue financial hardship.

Financial compensation for out-of-pocket expenses can be used for:

- Medical bills, including long-term health care
- Mental health counseling
- Burial and funeral costs
- Forensic medical exams after sexual assault
- Crime scene cleanup
- Lost wages
- Relocation
- Transportation expenses to court
- Legal fees

For more information, please visit www.ovs.ny.gov or call 1-800-247-8035.

The U.S. Department of Justice Office for Victims of Crime (www.ojp.gov/ovc/help/index.html) offers additional information and resources for crime victims.

Domestic Violence

Domestic violence can include physical as well as emotional and psychological abuse of a partner and children. It is often comprised of behaviors designed to exert control and can include:

- Isolation – cutting off the person from family and friends
- Economic abuse – controlling money completely so as to make a partner powerless
- Coercion and threats
- Partner sexual assault

The Family Protection and Domestic Violence Intervention Act of 1994 requires the police to treat domestic violence as a serious crime. If you call the police regarding a domestic violence incident, they must investigate, and if a felony or misdemeanor has occurred, an arrest will result.[1]

[1] opdv.ny.gov/whatisdv/about_dv/nyresponse/nysdv.pdf

An order of protection, which restricts contact between you and your abuser can be obtained through family court, or in some cases, criminal court.

The New York State Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence has important information about domestic violence, what your rights are, what you can do and where you can go for help (www.opdv.ny.gov).

To find free legal help in your community, visit lawhelp.org.

Sexual Assault

Rape Crisis Centers are available throughout the state and provide crisis intervention and counseling as well as programs designed to prevent sexual assault.

If you believe you have been a victim of sexual assault, you are encouraged to go to an emergency room or a Rape Crisis Center as soon as possible. Services are confidential, and you are not required to report the assault if you do not wish to do so. The evidence will be held for 30 days if you do decide to make a report.

The Sexual Assault Forensic Examiner (SAFE) program mandates specialized training and standards of evidence collection at specific emergency rooms. While victims can seek help at any emergency room, SAFE hospitals conform to additional requirements for care and evidence collection. A list of SAFE hospitals can be found online at: www.health.ny.gov/prevention/sexual_violence/what_to_do.htm#safe_program.

For further information, assistance and referrals to local centers, call the New York State Domestic and Sexual Violence Hotline at 1-800-942-6906.