

# Court services for victims

## Helping victims through the court process.

Court Services for Victims is a free and confidential service to help you take part in the court process. It's available from the defendant's first day in court, until sentencing and through any appeals.

Services are delivered by victim advisors, who are specialists in delivering services to victims of crime. Usually the same victim advisor will be assigned throughout the whole case. Your victim advisor can help you by:

- advising you about your rights under the Victims' Rights Act 2002
- providing information about your case
- helping you take part in the court process.

It's not a counselling service; emotional support is available to you from other organisations.

### How a victim advisor can help you

#### YOUR VICTIM ADVISOR CAN:

- explain how the court system works and what the jargon means
- tell you about other services, entitlements and financial assistance
- keep you updated on what's happening in your case
- make sure the Police and others connected with your case know about your concerns
- tell you what support and protection is available if you're worried about your (or your family's) safety
- give you information about restorative justice.

#### THEY CAN HELP YOU DURING THE HEARING BY:

- helping you tell the court how the crime affected you
- helping you prepare for court if you're a witness
- educating young witnesses about the court system and their role in it
- advising victims of sexual violence about alternative ways to give evidence in court
- helping you tell the court how you feel about name suppression and bail.

#### AFTER THE HEARING, THEY CAN HELP YOU BY:

- explaining any bail conditions and other decisions made by the judge
- helping get your property returned if it has been used for evidence
- explaining how you may be told when the offender is to be released from prison on parole, from home detention or from a secure mental health facility.

### Accessing restorative justice services

You may be able to attend a restorative justice conference if the case is in the district or high court. A restorative justice conference is a facilitated meeting held in a safe place between a victim, the offender and both of their support people, and an experienced facilitator.

The conference gives you a chance to tell the offender how the crime affected you and how the harm can be put right.

### Victim impact statements at court

As a victim, you have the right to tell the court how the crime has affected you. This is called a victim impact statement (VIS). Police will help you prepare your statement. The VIS is usually presented to the court in writing, but you can have your statement read out to the court. You can read it yourself, ask someone else to read it, or pre-record it.

If you want to do any of these things, you must let the police officer in charge of your case know as soon as possible. If you're not comfortable dealing with the police, your victim advisor can ask them for you.

When sentencing an offender, the judge takes many things into account, including your VIS, reports about the person who was convicted and sentences for similar cases.

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## Your rights

You have the right to be told about services that can help you, to be kept informed of the progress of the case through court and to know what to expect when you go to court. In some cases, you or your representative has the right to have a say on things like name suppression, bail, home detention or parole.

You can expect courteous, compassionate and respectful service from court officers, the police and anyone else involved in the case. You have the right to privacy.

Read the Victims Code to find out more about your rights and the treatment you can expect. It's on our website - see the link opposite. If you think your rights haven't been met, or you haven't received the standard of service you expect, you can make a complaint.

To contact a Court Victim Advisor, phone Victims Information on **0800 650 654**, 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday.

To read the Victims Code, go online to **[victimsinfo.govt.nz/support-and-services/victims-rights/](https://victimsinfo.govt.nz/support-and-services/victims-rights/)**

To find out more about restorative justice, ask your Court Victim Advisor or go online to **[victimsinfo.govt.nz/the-court-process/the-verdict/restorative-justice-services/](https://victimsinfo.govt.nz/the-court-process/the-verdict/restorative-justice-services/)**