

National Association of Crime Victim Compensation Boards

Crime Victim Compensation: Resources for Recovery

Financial assistance for crime victims affiliated with the military is available in every state in the country, D.C., Puerto Rico, and the U.S.V.I.

Crime victim compensation programs administered by state governments promote the recovery of nearly 200,000 victims and their families every year, paying out close to \$500 million annually. Each state operates its program under its own state law, determining who and what to pay. The vast majority of the money to fund these programs comes from offender fees and fines, rather than taxpayer dollars, with about a third coming from the federal VOCA fund.

Victims of violent or personal crimes, including assault, domestic violence, rape, child abuse, and drunk driving, as well as family members of murder victims, are eligible for victim compensation.

If a victim suffers physical injury or emotional trauma as a result of violent or personal crime, she or he may be eligible for compensation. Property crimes, such as theft and burglary, generally are not covered, with a few limited exceptions in a handful of states.

Crimes falling under local, state, federal, tribal, and military jurisdiction are equally eligible in state compensation programs.

Any violent crime can be covered by state compensation programs, regardless of the criminal jurisdiction, or who is investigating or prosecuting the crime. Apprehension and conviction of the offender are not requirements for eligibility. While substantial federal resources fund state programs, there is no national crime victim compensation program, except for victims of international terrorism committed outside the U.S. However, the military's "transitional compensation" for victims of domestic violence may be available.

Each state covers crimes within its jurisdiction, and some cover crimes in foreign countries.

A victim of a crime in the U.S. should apply in the state where the crime occurred, regardless of the state of residency. So, for example, a Texan victimized in Florida should apply in Florida for compensation. About half the states also will cover their residents if they are victimized in foreign countries. If someone is victimized in a foreign country, inquiry should be made of the state of residency to see whether victim compensation is available.

Crime victim compensation programs pay primarily for medical care, mental health counseling, lost wages and support, and funerals.

These are the major expense categories covered by the programs, but there are a host of miscellaneous expenses that also may be paid for. Property losses generally are not covered, except for crime-scene cleanup, and limited amounts in just a few states.

Each state sets limits on the amount of compensation available.

Maximums typically are about \$25,000, though some states have lower and higher maximums. In addition, there may be limits on some types of benefits, such as mental health counseling or funeral costs.

To qualify for compensation, victims must meet certain requirements.

While every state operates under its own law, the requirements are broadly similar. Victims must:

1. Report the crime promptly
2. Cooperate with law enforcement
3. File a timely application
4. Be innocent of criminal activity or misconduct that caused the crime
5. Have an expense or loss not covered by insurance or another public benefit program, like the Tricare, Medicaid, and other federal programs.

Victim-witness and law enforcement personnel need to tell victims about this vital resource.

Without information about compensation programs, victims will never be able to access the financial help that is available to them. The compensation programs themselves operate with small staffs and depend heavily on the help of others who work with victims.

Please tell victims about crime victim compensation and help them apply for benefits!

More information about each state is accessible in the Program Directory at www.nacvcb.org.

The National Association of Crime Victim Compensation Boards

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