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Frequently Asked Questions

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General Information

I am a victim of a violent crime. Where can I find help?

If you are a victim of a violent crime, the first thing you should do is call 911. Police will respond, and can give you information on services that can help you.

With your consent, the police will call [Victim Crisis Assistance and Referral Services \(VCARS\)](#). This program can send a team of trained volunteers to provide immediate help and emotional support. They can also refer you to agencies that can give you longer-term support. VCARS is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

If you have an immediate need for services that you cannot afford, VCARS will refer you to the [Victim Quick Response Program](#). This program can provide you with:

- Immediate, short-term counseling services
- Funeral expenses for victims of homicide
- Immediate emergency expenses, such as childcare or transportation.

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Services are available to eligible victims who apply within 14 days of reporting an incident.

For information about services in your area, call the Victim Support Line toll-free at 1-888-579-2888 (press two [2] for referral to victim supports and services, then press one [1] to find help and services in your community).

Where can I get help after being sexually assaulted?

If you have been sexually assaulted, call 911. After speaking to the police, you can call a sexual assault centre for support and assistance. There are 39 centres across the province.

The centres provide:

- 24-hour crisis and support lines for information, counselling and emotional support
- Support for victims at the hospital, in meetings with police and in court
- Supportive peer counselling services
- One-on-one information and referral services for victims
- Public and professional education regarding the nature and extent of sexual violence.

Contact the [Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres](#) for information about a centre in your area, or the [Assaulted Women's Helpline](#). The helpline is a province-wide, toll-free crisis line for women in need. It is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week at 1-866-863-0511. (TTY: 1-866-863-7868)

You can also contact a [Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence Care and Treatment Centre](#). These centres provide healthcare to women, men and children who have been recently sexually assaulted or experienced domestic violence.

The centres operate out of [34 hospitals](#) in Ontario. Services include:

- emergency medical and nursing care
- crisis intervention

- forensic evidence collection
- medical follow-up
- counselling.

For information about services in your area, call the Victim Support Line toll-free at 1-888-579-2888 (press two [2] for referral to victim supports and services, then press one [1] to find help and services in your community).

I have been abused by my partner. Where can I get help?

If you are a victim of domestic violence and feel you are in danger, call 911. For information and other support, you can call the Assaulted Women's Helpline. This is a toll-free crisis line for women in need. Call 1-866-863-0511, or #7233 on your cell phone. (TTY: 1-866-863-7868)

You can also contact a Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence Care and Treatment Centre. These centres provide care to women, men and children who have been recently sexually assaulted or experienced domestic violence.

The centres operate out of 34 hospitals in Ontario. Services include:

- emergency medical and nursing care
- crisis intervention
- forensic evidence collection
- medical follow-up
- counselling.

In some parts of the province, SupportLink can provide additional safety to victims who face a high risk of being assaulted again. This program can provide you with comprehensive safety planning. It may also be able to provide you with an emergency cell phone pre-programmed to dial 911.

I'm a victim of crime. Where can I get help with expenses?

If you are a victim of a violent crime, there are programs available that can help you with expenses.

1. *Victim Quick Response Program*

The Victim Quick Response Program can provide you with:

- Immediate, short-term counseling services
- Funeral expenses for victims of homicide
- Immediate emergency expenses, such as childcare or transportation.

Services are available to eligible victims who apply within 14 days of reporting an incident.

For information about services in your area, call the Victim Support Line toll-free at 1-888-579-2888 (press two [2] for referral to victim supports and services, then press one [1] to find help and services in your community).

2. *Criminal Injuries Compensation Board*

The Criminal Injuries Compensation Board is a government agency that awards compensation to victims of violent crime in Ontario.

It can provide compensation for:

- Expenses incurred as a result of injury or death, such as the cost of counselling, physiotherapy, eyeglasses, dentures, etc
- Emergency expenses incurred as a result of injury or death, such as medical costs, funeral expenses and interim counselling
- Loss of wages in cases where total or partial disability affects the victim's ability to work. The maximum award is \$50 per day and \$250 per week.
- Financial loss to dependants of a deceased victim
- Pain and suffering

- Care for a child born as a result of sexual assault

To be eligible for compensation, you must file a claim within two years of the date of the incident. Extensions may be granted upon request. Claims for minor victims under the age of 18 must be signed by a parent or guardian.

More information about the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board is available [online](#) or by calling toll-free at 1-800-372-7463.

3. *Internet Child Sexual Exploitation Counselling Program*

The Internet Child Sexual Exploitation Counselling Program supports children and youth who are victims of Internet sexual exploitation. It provides funding for short-term immediate counselling services to victims and their immediate family members. The program can provide up to \$1,500 per victim and up to \$800 per family member.

For more information, you can contact the program at (416) 326-2430 or by e-mail at [✉ ice@ontario.ca](mailto:ice@ontario.ca).

4. *Other supports and services available to help victims:*

- The [Ontario Disability Support Program](#), which meets the unique needs of people with disabilities who are in financial need or who want and are able to work and need support
- The [Workplace Safety and Insurance Board](#), which promotes workplace health and safety and provides a workers compensation system for the employers and workers of Ontario
- The [Ontario Works Program](#), which provides income and employment assistance for people who are in temporary financial need.

What kind of support is available to victims after charges have been laid?

The [Victim/Witness Assistance Program](#) offers support and responds quickly to any safety concerns you may have in the aftermath of violent crime.

If you are a victim of violent crime and the police have laid criminal charges, you can be referred to the program by police or prosecutors. Once referred, the program will try to contact you as quickly as possible.

Depending on the type of case and your needs, the Victim/Witness Assistance Program can offer a number of services, including:

- Helping you find community resources
- Providing you with emotional support and helping you find the support you need to address your safety concerns
- Giving you information about the court system, your court dates and courtroom procedures
- Helping you prepare for court
- Assisting you in preparing a victim impact statement
- Arranging for language interpreters.

For more information, call the Victim Support Line, toll-free at 1-888-579-2888.

What if the police don't lay charges?

If charges are not laid, and you have reasonable grounds to fear that a person may harm you or your family, you can go to your local courthouse and ask a Justice of the Peace to issue a peace bond.

A peace bond orders a person to keep the peace for a specified period of time, and can include conditions to protect you and your family. For example, it can direct a person to not contact or communicate with you or your family, or to not come within a specified distance of your home, place of employment, or school.

Domestic Violence

What is domestic violence?

Domestic violence is any use of physical or sexual force, actual or threatened, by your partner or ex-partner. Your partner or ex-partner may be opposite-sex or same-sex. Domestic violence can also include threats to harm children, other members of a family, pets and property.

Both women and men can be victims of domestic violence, but in a lot of cases the victims are women.

Domestic violence can be a one-time use of force. However, often these crimes happen in a pattern. The violence might be meant to scare, intimidate or humiliate, or to make a person feel powerless. The violence might also include a number of acts that could sound minor by themselves, but together make up a pattern of abuse.

If you are a victim of domestic violence, you should report the situation to your local police. After speaking to police, you can call the [Assaulted Women's Helpline](#). The helpline is a province-wide, toll-free crisis line for women in need. It is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week at 1-866-863-0511. (TTY: 1-866-863-7868)

For information about services in your area, call the Victim Support Line toll-free at 1-888-579-2888 (press two [2] for referral to victim supports and services, then press one [1] to find help and services in your community).

Is there any kind of special court to handle my domestic violence situation?

If you are a victim of domestic violence, you should report the situation to your local police.

If charges are laid, your case will be handled by a [domestic violence court](#) program. Domestic violence courts have teams of specialists who work to help you and your family get the support you need. They also help to make sure offenders are held responsible for their actions.

Ontario's domestic violence court program is the most comprehensive and extensive of its kind in Canada. It has specialized processes for domestic violence cases during the investigation and prosecution.

Teams of specialized professionals work together to help stop the cycle of domestic violence, improve support for victims and investigate and prosecute cases more efficiently. Teams include:

- Police
- Crown attorneys
- Victim / Witness Assistance Program staff
- Probation services
- Partner Assault Response program staff
- Other community agencies.

The domestic violence court program is available in every court jurisdiction in the province. To find the location nearest you, please use our online [Victim Services Directory](#) or call the Victim Support Line toll-free at 1-888-579-2888.

What should I do if I am afraid my partner could abuse me again?

If you think you are in danger, call 911.

If you have reasonable grounds to fear that a person may harm you or your family, you can go to your [local courthouse](#) and ask a Justice of the Peace to issue a peace bond.

A peace bond orders a person to keep the peace for a specified period of time, and can include conditions to protect you and your family. For example, it can direct a person to not contact or communicate with you or your family, or to not come within a specified distance of your home, place of employment, or school.

There are also several services you can call for information and support:

- The [Assaulted Women's Helpline](#), a province-wide, toll-free crisis line for women in need. It is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week at 1-866-863-0511 or #7233 on your cell phone. (TTY: 1-866-863-7868)
- Femaide, a Francophone helpline service for French-speaking women across Ontario. You can reach Femaide at 1-877-FEMAIDE (336-2433).
- The [Victim Support Line](#) can provide information, help and referrals to programs that can

help you develop a safety plan. You can call the Victim Support Line toll-free at 1-888-579-2888. Please note: this is not a crisis service. If you are in danger, call 911.

- In some parts of the province, [SupportLink](#) can provide additional safety to victims who face a high risk of being assaulted again. It can provide you with comprehensive safety planning. It may also be able to provide you with an emergency cell phone pre-programmed to dial 911.

What is the Partner Assault Response Program?

The [Partner Assault Response Program](#) provides educational counseling for domestic violence offenders. It also supports victims of domestic violence.

The court can order domestic violence offenders to attend the program. Through educational counseling, they are given an opportunity to examine their beliefs and attitudes towards domestic abuse. Offenders will also learn non-abusive ways of resolving conflict.

The program also helps victims of domestic violence receive the practical help they need to live safely, by providing:

- referrals to safety planning
- information about the program and the offenders' progress
- other options that assist women and children in rebuilding their lives.

The police laid domestic violence charges against my spouse. Can I have the charges dropped?

In Canada, police lay charges and Crown attorneys prosecute them.

Prosecutors will proceed with a case if they believe that charges can be proven. They also consider whether it is in the public interest to do so.

While domestic violence is a common charge, it often has dangerous consequences. Because of this, prosecutors will usually decide that it is in the public interest to proceed with the case even if you want the charges dropped.

I got a restraining order against my spouse but now want to cancel it. How do I do this?

It is important to remember that a family law restraining order remains in effect until a judge changes it.

To cancel a restraining order you need to return to family court to ask a judge to terminate the restraining order. You should get legal advice before you do this.

If you need a lawyer, you can contact the [Lawyer Referral Service](#) at 1-800-268-8326 or 416-947-3330 (within the GTA). This service will give you the name of a lawyer who will provide a free consultation for up to 30 minutes to help you determine your rights and options.

People with low incomes may get legal help through [Legal Aid Ontario](#). To find the office nearest you call toll free at 1-800-668-8258.

Family court information, including guides to court procedure are [available here](#).

Sexual Assault

What help is there for male victims of sexual assault?

Male victims of sexual assault can access a number of services, including:

- The province-wide [Victim Crisis Assistance and Referral Service \(VCARS\)](#)
- The [Victim/Witness Assistance Program \(V/WAP\)](#). This program is available once the police have laid a charge.
- Hospital-based [Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence Care and Treatment Centres](#).
- The [Victim Support Line](#), which provides referrals to services and resources.
- The [Criminal Injuries Compensation Board](#), which awards financial compensation to victims of violent crimes committed in Ontario.
- [The Men's Project](#), which provides specialized services to men and their families in Eastern Ontario. You can call them toll-free at 1-877-677-6532.

I was sexually abused as a child. Can I still report this to the police?

Yes. There is no time limit on reporting childhood sexual abuse. Your local police can give you more information about the reporting process.

You can also call the Victim Support Line toll-free at 1-888-579-2888 to be referred to counselling and other services that may be of assistance to you.

What support is available for children who are victims of sexual abuse or exploitation on the Internet?

The Internet Child Sexual Exploitation Counselling Program supports children and youth who are victims of Internet sexual exploitation.

It provides funding for short-term immediate counselling services to victims and their immediate family members. The program can provide up to \$1,500 per victim and up to \$800 per family member.

For more information, you can contact the program at (416) 326-2430 or by e-mail at [✉ ice@ontario.ca](mailto:ice@ontario.ca).

Children

Are there any programs to help child victims going through the court process?

Child victim/witness programs currently operate in London, Toronto, Waterloo Region, Peel and Ottawa. These programs are being expanded to every region of the province.

After charges are laid, these programs provide free services that support and help children through each stage of the court process. This includes accompanying children into the courtroom.

They work closely with Victim/Witness Assistance Program staff to provide the best possible assistance to children in the court process.

The court process

Where can I find information on the criminal justice system?

You can find information about how the court system works in several places:

- Through the Victim Support Line, toll-free at 1-888-579-2888
- If you are a victim of a violent crime and the police have laid charges, you can call your local [Victim/Witness Assistance Program](#).

I would like to be in court when the person who assaulted me appears. How do I get information about this?

If you are not sure what stage the case is at, contact your local police. The investigating officer can give you the information you need. There are different stages in the court process:

- *Bail hearings*: to find out when a bail hearing will take place, contact your local police, or the investigating officer.
- *Court dates*: if police or prosecutors have referred you to the Victim/Witness Assistance Program, program staff can give you information about the court process. They are usually notified after the bail process. They can keep you informed about any important dates after that. There are [Victim/Witness Assistance Program](#) offices across the province.

You can also get information from the [Victim/Witness Assistance Program](#) through the the Victim Support Line. You can call the line toll-free at 1-888-579-2888.

If you want a copy of transcripts from a court proceeding, go to the [court office](#) where the charges were laid.

How do I tell the Judge about the impact that the crime has had on me?

You can tell the judge how the crime has affected you by completing a Victim Impact Statement. A Victim Impact Statement is a written document that you fill in. You can choose to read the statement yourself in court, or the judge can do it for you.

There are three types of Victim Impact Statements :

- One for adults(18 years of age and older)
- One for older children and youths(12 to 17 years of age)
- One for younger children(11 years of age and younger).

The police or Crown attorney involved with your case can give you the Victim Impact Statement form and an information guide to help you complete it. The Ministry of the Attorney General's [Victim Witness Assistance Program \(VWAP\)](#) can help answer any questions you may have about the form and how to complete it.

You can find the VWAP office closest to you by using the [online victim services directory](#).

The offender in my case is appealing the conviction? Who can give me information about this?

For general information about the appeals process, you can call the Victim Support Line toll-free at 1-888-579-2888.

Your local [Victim/Witness Assistance Program](#) office will also be able to help and give you information about the process and upcoming court dates.

How can I find out when the offender in my case will be released from jail?

If the offender is an adult serving less than two years:

You can sign up for Victim Support Line's [automated victim notification](#). This is a special telephone service that uses a four-digit password to protect your privacy. Two to four weeks before a sentenced offender is released, you will be contacted. You can also contact the system for updates.

Call toll-free at 1-888-579-2888 and leave a message to register for this service.

If the offender is an adult serving more than two years:

Call the National Parole Board's [Information for Victims Line](#) toll-free at 1-866-789-INFO (4636).

Other incidents

What can I do if I was injured in a hit and run?

You should first call 911 and seek medical attention.

If charges are laid and the driver is found guilty, you may be entitled to restitution - money to cover your expenses caused by the accident. This depends on the circumstances of the case, and you should discuss it with the Crown prosecutor.

You may also have to contact your insurance company, or consult with a lawyer.

If you need a lawyer, you can contact the [Lawyer Referral Service](#) at 1-800-268-8326 or 416-947-3330 (within the GTA). This service will give you the name of a lawyer who will provide a free consultation for up to 30 minutes to help you determine your rights and options.

People with low incomes may get legal help through [Legal Aid Ontario](#). To find the office nearest you call toll free at 1-800-668-8258.

Victims' Justice Fund

Where does money earmarked for the Victims' Justice Fund go?

The Victims' Justice Fund is used to provide services to support victims of crime.

It is funded through the victim fine surcharge, which is added to all fines, except those for parking tickets.

How can I get money from the Victims' Justice Fund?

The Victims' Justice Fund does not provide individual victims with compensation.

It funds services that support victims, like the [Victim Crisis Assistance and Referral Services](#), the [Victim/Witness Assistance Program](#) and [Child Victim/Witness centres](#).

If you are looking for compensation after a violent crime, you should contact the Criminal

Injuries Compensation Board. Information about the board is available [online](#) or by calling toll-free at 1-800-372-7463.

Complaints

I have a complaint about the police. Who do I contact?

If you have a complaint about the police, you can either take it to:

- The police service involved
- The [Ontario Civilian Commission on Police Services](#). You can call the commission toll-free at 1-888-515-5005.

Starting in 2009, a new independent public body will oversee the province's police review system. It will accept complaints and decide who the appropriate investigator should be.

I have a complaint about a lawyer. Who do I contact?

If you have a complaint about a lawyer, you should first try to resolve the issue directly with them. If you cannot, there are organizations you can call.

The [Law Society of Upper Canada](#) regulates lawyers in Ontario. They deal with complaints about both behaviour and billing. You can call them toll-free at 1-800-268-7568.

If you received a legal aid certificate to pay for your lawyer's work, you can also complain to [Legal Aid Ontario](#). You can call them toll-free at 1-800-668-8258. (TTY: 1-866-641-8867)

Justice circles

What is a justice circle?

Justice circles are part of the restorative justice process. In a justice circle, the offender, their family and other affected parties meet with a facilitator. The goal is to support the offender as they take responsibility for their conduct. The circle will also develop a plan for the offender to make amends to both the victim and the community.

Justice circles are used by [Youth Justice Committees](#) and Aboriginal Community Justice Programs. They are particularly helpful to address low-risk offences, including property offences and minor assaults.

A central feature of restorative justice is the notion of repairing the harm caused by crime and restoring the parties to the state of wholeness that was disturbed by the crime.

I have been asked to take part in a justice circle with the person who assaulted me. Do I have to?

No - it is entirely your decision whether to participate. As a victim, you have no obligation to take part.

You may feel that this could be helpful to you, but if you do not, you can just say no. Someone from the community can speak about the impact of the offence.

Office for Victims of Crime

What is the Office for Victims of Crime?

The [Office for Victims of Crime](#) provides advice to the Attorney General on ways to ensure that the principles set out in the [Victims' Bill of Rights](#) are respected.

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