

An illustration of two hands shaking, rendered in dark blue and light blue tones, positioned on the left side of the cover. The background is a light blue color with a repeating geometric pattern of interlocking lines.

VICTIM'S GUIDE
TO THE



District of Columbia Justice System

The logo for the Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants, featuring the letters O, V, S, J, and G in a stylized font with three stars above them.

Office of Victim Services
and Justice Grants

The logo for the Council for Court Excellence, featuring the letters C, C, and E in a stylized font.

Council for
Court Excellence
Improving Justice for the Community

About the Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants

The mission of the Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants (OVSJG) is to develop, fund, and coordinate programs that improve public safety; enhance the administration of justice; and create systems of care for crime victims, youth, and their families in the District of Columbia. To accomplish its mission, OVSJG coordinates and funds community-based and District agency services for victims of crime and returning citizens. Additionally, OVSJG manages efforts that aim to reduce truancy in the District's public and charter schools, and supports juvenile diversion, mentoring, and gang intervention efforts. OVSJG is the State-Administering Agency responsible for the direction of D.C.'s systemic criminal justice planning, coordination, management, research, training, and technical assistance. OVSJG also provides policy making expertise, advice, and counsel to the Executive on the role of victims and offenders in the criminal justice system, and evidence-based practices to respond to, intervene in, and prevent violence.

About the Council for Court Excellence

Formed in the District of Columbia in 1982, the Council for Court Excellence (CCE) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan civic organization that envisions a justice system in the District of Columbia that equitably serves its people and continues to be a model for creating stronger and more prosperous communities.

CCE's mission is to enhance the justice system in the District of Columbia to serve the public equitably. CCE identifies and proposes solutions by collaborating with diverse stakeholders to conduct research, advance policy, educate the public, and increase civic engagement.

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Request a hard copy by emailing info@courtexcellence.org.

Acknowledgments

CCE thanks the members of the project steering committee for giving their time and expertise to update the *Victim's Guide to the District of Columbia Justice System*.

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This guide was produced by the Council for Court Excellence under Grant Award Number 2017-CCE-01, awarded by the Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants, Executive Office of the Mayor, District of Columbia. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this guide are those of the contributors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the Executive Office of the Mayor.

Message

from the Co-chairs

September 2017

The District of Columbia criminal justice process can be very difficult for crime victims to navigate, and it also can be overwhelming for victims to seek and secure resources available to assist them. To assist crime victims in the District of Columbia with these issues, the Council for Court Excellence (CCE) first published *A Victim's Guide to the D.C. Criminal Justice System* in 1988. To date, more than 100,000 copies of the *Victim's Guide* have been distributed throughout D.C.

Thanks to a generous grant from the D.C. Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants, we are pleased to present this fourth edition of the *Victim's Guide to the District of Columbia Justice System*. This edition of the guide was updated and expanded by a steering committee of CCE board directors and local victim services practitioners and experts. We would like to extend our thanks to them and the other community members and volunteers who contributed to this project.

This guide is for informational purposes only and is not intended to serve as legal advice. If D.C. crime victims wish to consult with a lawyer to discuss their particular circumstances, they should contact the Victim Legal Network of D.C. at 202-629-1788 or online at vlndc.org. For any other questions a D.C. crime victim may have, assistance is available from the D.C. Victim Hotline, a 24-hour, non-police hotline, by phone or text at 1-844-4-HELPDC (1-844-443-5732) or online chat at dcvictim.org.

We hope that this *Victim's Guide* provides useful information to D.C. crime victims. If you have any questions about the guide, or would like to request additional copies, please contact the Council for Court Excellence at 202-785-5917 or info@courtexcellence.org.

Sincerely,



Gail L. Westover
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Visit victimsguide.courtexcellence.org
for the online (website) version of this guide.

Urgent Issues for D.C. Victims

Who to contact for urgent help or to report a crime

Victims should call 911 to request urgent assistance. In D.C., it is permissible to call 911 to report crimes and to seek police assistance, even if there is not an active emergency. D.C. crime victims can seek urgent non-police assistance from the D.C. Victim Hotline.

Urgent Numbers for Crime Victims—Who to Call First

911

Call 911 if you are in immediate danger, to receive emergency services, or to report a crime.

D.C. Victim Hotline
1-844-4-HELPDC
(1-844-443-5732)
Talk or text

This 24-hour, non-police hotline provides free and confidential information and support to all D.C. crime victims.

dcvictim.org
Online chat

I Need Medical Help

For emergency medical assistance, victims should call 911. Urgent medical assistance can also be obtained by traveling to a nearby hospital, emergency room, or urgent care center. The D.C. Victim Hotline can refer victims to emergency medical forensic care. For non-emergency medical assistance, victims should contact their regular health care professional.

I Don't Feel Safe

Victims who feel they are in immediate danger or are threatened should call 911, and notify their assigned advocate, law enforcement officer, and/or prosecutor. Victims of domestic violence, stalking, or sexual assault who do not believe that the danger is immediate but are worried about unwanted contact can apply for a Civil Protection Order (CPO), which is a court order instructing a person to avoid contact with another person for up to one year. See page 30 for more information about obtaining a CPO.

Many other resources are available to D.C. victims to help regain a sense of safety. For instance, victims may be able to receive financial assistance to change their locks, or to move residences altogether. For more information about the D.C. Crime Victims Compensation Program, see page 25. Victims can also call the D.C. Victim Hotline to learn about what assistance is available.

I Need Legal Help

In a criminal trial, a government prosecutor will try the case against the defendant. However, the prosecutor represents the public, not any specific victim. Victims may want their own attorney to represent their interests and assist with legal issues separate from the criminal case that may arise. To learn about available resources, victims should contact the Victim Legal Network of D.C. (202-629-1788), which assists victims of crimes to connect with attorneys who provide free or low-cost legal assistance.



Attorneys can assist crime victims with many issues, including:

- Protecting their confidentiality during legal proceedings;
- Giving input at court proceedings involving release, plea agreements, sentencing, or parole;
- Obtaining a Civil Protection Order;
- Applying for financial assistance from the D.C. Crime Victims Compensation Program;
- Addressing immigration issues connected to a crime; and
- Obtaining public benefits.

I Need Help with Costs Related to a Crime

A crime victim might need to take immediate action following a crime, such as repairing broken windows and doors, or arranging burial services of a loved one. Victims may be eligible for funding from the D.C. Crime Victims Compensation Program to assist with these expenses. Read more about the Crime Victims Compensation Program on page 25.

I Am a Victim of Domestic Violence

Special resources and services are available to assist D.C. victims of domestic violence. For instance, advocates are available to help victims create a safety plan for their families, locate temporary housing, obtain counseling for themselves and their children, and/or pursue Civil Protection Orders. For more information about accessing services for domestic violence victims, see page 29.

I Am an Undocumented Immigrant

Help also is available for undocumented immigrants who have been victimized. In the District of Columbia, Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) officers will not ask about immigration status, except in narrow circumstances, such as when they

are investigating human trafficking issues. MPD officers encourage the reporting of crime, whether someone is a victim or a witness, and encourage cooperation with both police and prosecutors. MPD will not contact federal immigration authorities upon suspicion that a victim of a crime is in the U.S. without documentation. Instead, MPD should provide undocumented immigrants who are victims of crime or witnesses with information and resources about the protections and support available to them. Other law enforcement agencies investigating crime in D.C., such as the FBI or Metro Transit Police, may have policies about undocumented immigrants that differ from MPD.

Besides reporting crime to MPD, it is also important for undocumented immigrants to seek legal assistance. An undocumented immigrant who has been a victim of or who has witnessed a crime that happened in the United States may be eligible for special protections. Victims should contact the Victim Legal Network of D.C. (202-629-1788) to be connected to an attorney and for information about visas available to victims and witnesses of domestic violence or other crimes.



This guide primarily references the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) as the investigating agency, but numerous law enforcement agencies investigate crime in D.C., including the FBI, the U.S. Park Police, the Metro Transit Police, and the U.S. Capitol Police.

Navigating the D.C. Criminal Justice System

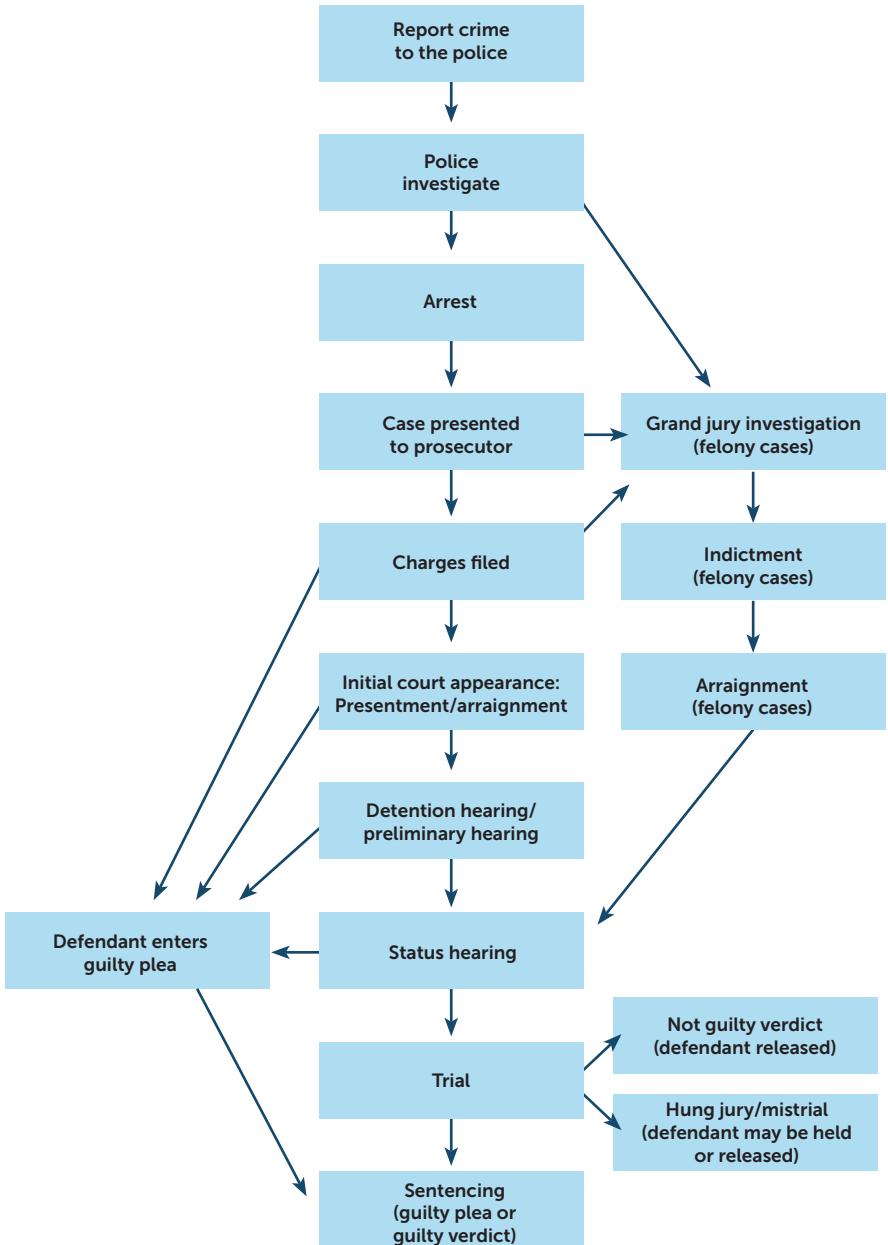
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D.C. Criminal Justice System Map

For a more detailed version of this map, see page 50.



Since the District of Columbia is not a state, but a special federal district, it has a unique criminal justice system that involves both local and federal agencies. The map on page 6 outlines the steps of the D.C. criminal justice process that occur before a case goes to trial, which are described in more detail in the following section. For a more detailed version of this map, see page 50.

Pretrial Criminal Justice Process

Reporting a Crime

A victim who decides to report a crime should contact MPD by calling 911 (used to report crimes even if there is not an emergency). Also certain crimes can be reported online.¹ Victims should keep the police report number and the names and phone numbers of the police officers they speak to for their records. This information can be recorded in the Case Diary starting on page 64. When a crime is reported, MPD will connect the victim to its Victims Services Branch, which is staffed by civilian victim specialists who are the primary contacts for victims and their families throughout MPD's criminal investigation.

Investigation

An MPD detective (not the MPD police officer who responds to the crime) will be assigned to investigate the case. Sometimes a specialized unit will investigate the case, such as the Sex Assault Unit or the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Unit. MPD attempts to make investigations as efficient as possible, but they do take time. As the investigation proceeds, victims have the right to get updates on their cases. Some victims may think that their cases are progressing slowly. Real-life criminal investigations do not happen as quickly as they may appear to on television police dramas.

When a victim's property is important to an investigation, it may be held by MPD as evidence. MPD understands this process can be inconvenient and strives to

¹ Only certain types of crimes can be reported online. To see the full list of eligible crimes, and to report a crime online, see: <https://mpdc.dc.gov/service/file-police-report-online>.

complete all necessary tests and investigations as quickly as possible. The investigating officer should tell the victim why the property is being held and how long MPD expects to hold it.



This guide primarily describes the adult criminal justice system. Some key differences in the D.C. juvenile justice system include:

- No grand juries;
- Court sessions are confidential and closed to the public; only the immediate families of the accused and the victim can attend;
- No juvenile parole; and
- Limited information available to the victim about the juvenile offender's post-release status.

For more information about the D.C. juvenile justice system, visit courtexcellence.org/digital-library for English and Spanish versions of *Guide to the D.C. Juvenile Justice System*.

Arrest

After MPD determines that a crime has been committed, a suspect must be identified and arrested for the case to proceed. Sometimes a suspect is identified and arrested at the scene of the crime. Other times an arrest occurs after an investigation, which can take weeks, months, or years, depending on the case. Sometimes, unfortunately, no suspect is identified and arrested.



If a victim reports a crime to the police, and later sees the perpetrator, the victim should call 911 for immediate police assistance. The police are authorized to arrest the person based on the victim's second sighting. The victim should share the initial police report number with the responding officers. Use the Case Diary starting on page 64 to record important information.

Prosecutor Decides Whether to File Criminal Charges

Within 24 to 48 hours after a person has been arrested, MPD presents information about the crime to the prosecuting agency, which decides if criminal charges will be filed in court. In D.C., there are two prosecuting agencies: The local Office of the Attorney General for the District of Columbia and the federal U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia (USAO-DC). See below for more information about these agencies. If charges are filed, a victim advocate who works for the prosecutor is available to support the victim through the trial process. It is important that the victim respond to phone calls and return any messages from the prosecutor's office.

If Criminal Charges Are Not Filed

If the prosecutor does not file charges, the accused must be released. If this happens, MPD or the prosecutor should explain to the victim why charges will not be filed. Even if charges are not filed, the victim can still receive assistance from MPD's Victims Services Branch and can still contact the USAO-DC Victim Witness Assistance Unit for referrals and guidance. Also, a victim can still seek a Civil Protection Order against the accused or file a civil lawsuit. For more information about Civil Protection Orders, see page 30. For more information about civil lawsuits, see page 21.

Prosecuting Agencies in D.C.

Office of the Attorney General for the District of Columbia (OAG)

OAG prosecutes the following categories of crimes:

- Criminal offenses being tried in the juvenile justice system, including sexual offenses;
- Criminal traffic offenses, including reckless driving;
- Certain weapons offenses;
- Quality of life offenses, including indecent exposure;
- D.C. municipal violations, such as counterfeit vehicle tags; and
- Select fraud offenses, including welfare fraud.

OAG's Public Safety division prosecutes violations of Civil Protection Orders. OAG has a Victim Witness Assistance Unit staffed by Victim Witness Specialists, who act as the primary contact for victims and their families.

U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia (USAO-DC)

USAO-DC prosecutes most crimes committed in D.C., including both local and federal crimes.

USAO-DC's Criminal Division prosecutes the following categories of federal crimes:

- National security offenses;
- Violent crimes and drug trafficking;
- Fraud and public corruption; and
- Asset forfeiture and money laundering.

USAO-DC's Superior Court Division prosecutes most local crimes that occur in D.C., including:

- Homicide;
- Sexual assault;
- Domestic violence;
- Other violent crimes;
- Theft;
- Weapons offenses; and
- Drug offenses.

The Victim Witness Assistance Unit of the U.S. Attorney's Office provides comprehensive support and assistance to victims and their families, including court accompaniment, safety planning, witness security assessment, travel/lodging coordination for out-of-town victims, emotional support and crisis response, notification services, and referrals for counseling, housing, transportation, crime victims' compensation, and physical or mental health needs.

Trial Process

Initial Appearance

The first time a defendant appears in D.C. Superior Court is called the “arraignment” (misdemeanor cases) or the “presentment” (felony cases). First appearances in U.S. District Court are arraignments, for both misdemeanor and felony cases. Victims are not required to attend this hearing but may if they wish. At this hearing, the criminal charges are read to the defendant, and the judge determines if there is enough evidence to proceed. The judge also decides whether to initially hold or release the defendant. Defendants charged with a misdemeanor are usually released if the judge believes they will return to the court for trial. The judge may decide to hold a defendant if the defendant has another criminal case pending or is on probation or parole for another criminal offense. For certain violent felony offenses, the judge must grant the prosecutor’s request to initially hold the defendant until the detention hearing.

If the defendant is released pending trial, the judge may impose conditions of release, including electronic monitoring, home confinement, or placement in a halfway house. The prosecutor can request that the judge order a criminal “stay away” order requiring the defendant not to make contact with the victim at any point while the case is pending. Regardless of whether the judge approves a stay away order, victims of domestic violence, stalking, or sexual assault can seek a Civil Protection Order. For more information about Civil Protection Orders, see page 30. A victim has the right to give input to the court at any public hearing involving a defendant’s release. For a full listing of a crime victim’s rights, see pages 52 to 56.



If a case goes to trial, the victim will likely be contacted by the defense attorney seeking to ask questions about the case. The victim can choose whether or not to speak to the defense attorney. If the victim has questions or concerns about an interaction with the defense attorney, the victim should contact an advocate or the prosecutor.

Pretrial Detention Hearing

If the judge ordered the defendant to be initially held in jail, another hearing occurs within 3 to 5 days. At this hearing, another judge determines whether the defendant should continue to be held or if the defendant can be released with conditions imposed. These conditions are designed to ensure the safety of the victim and the community, and to ensure that the defendant will return to court. It is not uncommon for a defendant who is initially held to be released after this second hearing.

Preliminary Hearing – Is There Probable Cause?

In felony cases, a preliminary hearing must occur no later than 20 days after the initial appearance, unless the defendant waives this right. At this hearing, a judge determines if there is enough evidence or “probable cause” to show that the defendant committed the crime. The prosecutor usually calls a police officer to testify about the facts of the case.

At the preliminary hearing, if the judge does not find probable cause, the case will be dismissed. If the case is dismissed, the prosecutor may choose to gather more evidence and recharge the accused. If the judge finds there is probable cause, the case will proceed to a grand jury.

Grand Jury Decides Whether to Issue an Indictment

In felony cases, even if a judge finds probable cause at the preliminary hearing, the law requires a second finding of probable cause by a grand jury. A grand jury is different from a “petit,” or trial, jury, which determines whether a criminal defendant has been proved guilty beyond a reasonable doubt. Grand jury proceedings are not public, meaning that no member of the public, including the victim, is permitted to attend unless called to testify. Neither the accused nor the defense attorney is permitted to attend. The grand jury hears evidence against the accused presented by the prosecutor and decides whether there is probable cause to believe that the accused committed the crime. If the evidence is sufficient, the grand jury issues an “indictment” (pronounced “in-DITE-ment”), which is a written statement of the specific crime(s) charged against the accused. If the evidence is not sufficient, the charges against the accused will be dismissed. To obtain an indictment, the victim is usually required to testify before the grand jury. In this case, the victim will

receive a subpoena (an official notice to attend) with the date, time, and place for the grand jury proceeding.

Arraignment

If a grand jury indicts the accused (now defendant), a felony arraignment will be scheduled. At this hearing, the defendant is informed of the charges, advised of their constitutional rights, and required to enter a plea of guilty or not guilty. The defendant may enter a “no contest” plea, meaning the defendant denies responsibility for the charges but agrees to accept punishment.

Sometimes a defendant will plead guilty at this hearing, following negotiations between the prosecutor and the defendant. The prosecutor may offer to drop one or more of the charges against the defendant, to seek lesser charges, or to ask for a lesser sentence, if the defendant enters a guilty plea. In certain misdemeanor cases, the prosecutor may offer a deferred sentencing agreement, where the defendant agrees to waive the right to a trial, pleads guilty to the offense, and agrees to complete certain conditions, such as counseling and/or community service. If the defendant completes these conditions, the court will allow the defendant to withdraw the guilty plea, and the government will dismiss the charges. If the defendant does not complete the conditions, the guilty plea will be permanently included in the defendant’s record, and the defendant will be sentenced by the court, which may include jail, community supervision, or a fine.

Before the judge accepts the guilty plea, the judge will ask the defendant questions to be certain that the defendant is sure of their rights and is not pleading guilty because of pressure or fear. If the judge accepts a no contest or guilty plea, no trial occurs, and the defendant is sentenced at a separate hearing. In a misdemeanor case, sentencing can take place within a few days or weeks. If the case is a felony, sentencing typically happens at least six weeks later. See page 15 for more information about sentencing.

Status Hearings

If the defendant enters a plea of not guilty, the judge will hold one or more pretrial hearings, called “status hearings,” to obtain updates on the case and to ensure that the attorneys are ready for trial. Motion hearings may also be held to resolve certain

legal issues before the trial begins. For example, the defense may file a motion for a pretrial hearing to determine whether certain evidence was unconstitutionally obtained by police and should be excluded from the trial.

TIP

Tips for Testifying

- Always tell the truth.
- Listen carefully to each question and make sure you understand it before you answer. It is okay to ask to have the question repeated.
- Do not guess at answers or offer your opinion unless the judge asks you to do so. If you do not know the answer to a question, simply say that you do not know.
- Do not memorize your answers.
- Speak slowly and loudly enough for everyone in the courtroom to hear you.
- Do your best to remain calm. Try not to become upset, even if one of the attorneys makes you angry or hurts your feelings.
- Listen to the judge. If one of the attorneys makes an objection, stop testifying until the judge tells you to continue.
- If you are confused or have a question, ask the judge for help.

Trial

If the defendant pleads not guilty, a trial takes place. Victims will be notified by the prosecutor's office of the trial's date, time, and place. Victims are not required to attend each day of the trial, but must attend if they are required to testify. Defendants charged with felony offenses have a right to a jury trial, and for most misdemeanor cases the final decision, or "verdict," is made by a judge. During a trial, the prosecution presents evidence and conducts direct examinations where the witnesses are questioned. The defense attorney is allowed to then question the prosecution's witnesses, which is called a cross examination. After the prosecutor's case is presented, the defense attorney may present evidence or call witnesses, but is not required to, because the prosecutor has the burden to prove the case. The defendant has a constitutional right to remain silent and not testify. If the defendant chooses to testify, the prosecutor is permitted to cross examine the defendant. If

the defense does present evidence, the prosecutor is permitted to cross examine all defense witnesses and to respond by introducing “rebuttal evidence.”

Verdict – Guilty or Not Guilty?

At the end of the trial, the judge or jury decides whether the prosecution has proved the defendant guilty beyond a reasonable doubt. When the jury is deciding, it is called “deliberations.” All of the jurors must agree on the verdict. If the jury cannot agree, or even if only one juror does not agree, there is no verdict. This is called a “hung jury” or a “mistrial.” If there is a hung jury, the prosecutor’s office can retry the defendant, make a new plea offer, or dismiss the case. If the defendant is found guilty, the judge will set a date for the sentencing hearing and will decide if the defendant (now called the offender) will be held in jail until this hearing. In very rare cases, a judge may overturn a jury’s guilty verdict. If this happens, the judge can issue a not guilty verdict or order a new trial. The prosecutor will remain in contact with the victim after the trial ends to answer any questions, and victim advocates from the prosecutor’s office will remain available to support the victim.

If the defendant is found not guilty, the defendant is “acquitted” and is free to go. Even if the case is dismissed, victims have the right to seek a Civil Protection Order, or to bring a case in civil court against the defendant. More information about the D.C. civil justice system can be found starting on page 21.

Sentencing Hearing

After a guilty verdict or a guilty plea, the judge will schedule a sentencing hearing. Victims can choose to, but are not required to, attend the sentencing hearing. Before the sentencing hearing, the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency (CSOSA) will submit a pre-sentence report to the judge. This report includes information about the defendant and the Victim Impact Statement if the victim writes one prior to the completion of the pre-sentence report. Victim Impact Statements can also be

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Accused
A person who is suspected of committing a crime but has not yet been charged.

Defendant
A person who has been charged with committing a crime.

Offender
A person who has been convicted of a crime.

submitted through the prosecutor or directly to the judge. A victim can choose to make a verbal Victim Impact Statement at sentencing in addition to or instead of a written statement.

At the sentencing hearing, the prosecution and defense will present information about the circumstances surrounding the offender's criminal behavior, such as what led that person to commit the crime. Victims have the right to make a statement at the sentencing hearing if they choose. At the conclusion of the hearing, the judge will sentence the defendant.

Victim Impact Statement

In criminal proceedings, the victim has the right to submit, prior to sentencing, a written Victim Impact Statement describing any emotional, psychological, financial, or physical harm done to or loss suffered by the victim. The judge will consider the Victim Impact Statement in determining the appropriate sentence to be imposed. A victim can also make a verbal Victim Impact Statement at sentencing in addition to or instead of a written one. Victim advocates can assist victims in preparing these statements. The Victim Impact Statement should describe:

- How the crime affected the victim and the victim's family;
- The emotional impact of the crime on the victim and the victim's family;
- The financial impact on the victim and the victim's family;
- The victim's recommendations about how the offender should be sentenced; and
- Any other information the victim would like to tell the court.

In deciding a sentence, judges are guided in their decision by formal sentencing guidelines, but they can consider special circumstances as well. A judge may find good reasons to give a lighter sentence or decide that the crime was serious enough to justify a harsher sentence. For some crimes, there are mandatory minimum sentences that require judges to impose a sentence no shorter than a period of incarceration set by law.

After the Criminal Trial

Where D.C. Offenders Are Incarcerated

If the judge sentences the offender to a period of incarceration, there are many different facilities where the defendant may be held, depending on the length of the sentence, whether the defendant was convicted as an adult or as a juvenile, whether the crime was a local or federal offense, and other factors.

Central Detention Facility

The Central Detention Facility, also known as the D.C. Jail, is the main detention facility for adult pretrial defendants and adults sentenced to less than one year.

Correctional Treatment Facility

This is a separate detention facility located next to the D.C. Jail that holds special populations, including women, juveniles who have been charged or convicted as adults, and people with acute health needs.

Federal Bureau of Prisons

People convicted of local crimes in D.C. who are sentenced to one or more years of incarceration are held at Federal Bureau of Prisons facilities throughout the United States. People who are convicted of federal crimes in D.C. and are sentenced to any length of incarceration are held at these facilities as well.

D.C. Youth Services Center

This facility holds male and female juvenile offenders awaiting adjudication in the juvenile justice system.

New Beginnings Youth Development Center

This facility holds male and female offenders who have been sentenced as a juvenile to a period of incarceration.

Incarcerated people can be located using the Victim Information and Notification Everyday (VINE) System, an automated victim notification system that informs victims of inmate status changes, including release and facility transfers. To locate an incarcerated or recently released offender, or to register for automated VINE notifications, call 1-877-329-7894 or visit [vinelink.com](https://www.vinelink.com).

The Victim Information and Notification Everyday (VINE) System

VINE continuously monitors the files of the D.C. Department of Corrections for status changes of inmates, including release, facility transfer, court hearing, or re-incarceration. Once a status change occurs, the VINE system notifies victims with an automated call or email to their registered phone numbers or email addresses. Registered victims can also call **1-877-329-7894** to obtain up-to-date status information on an inmate. To register for automatic VINE updates, call **1-877-329-7894** or visit vinelink.com.

Community Supervision

A judge may sentence a defendant to community supervision (commonly known as probation) instead of jail time, meaning that the defendant will be released but required to comply with certain conditions. A judge also can order a defendant to be incarcerated for a period of time and then enter community supervision (commonly known as parole). Conditions of community supervision can include, but are not limited to, reporting weekly to the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency (CSOSA), electronic monitoring, curfews, drug/alcohol testing and treatment, and a requirement to make no contact with the victim.

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The **No Contact Order** that the judge enforced during the case is terminated after sentencing, but the judge may make a No Contact Order a condition of the defendant's probation or parole. If this is the case, making contact after release will be a violation that can result in re-incarceration.

With the exception of juvenile offenders who are supervised by D.C. Superior Court's Family Court Social Services Division, most D.C. offenders on community supervision are supervised by CSOSA. A CSOSA community supervision officer monitors an offender to ensure compliance with the court-ordered requirements. CSOSA has a Victim Services Program, which conducts outreach to victims to

ensure that they have access to resources and, above all, are safe. If the offender is being monitored by CSOSA, the victim may contact CSOSA, which will assess the victim's needs, assist with safety planning, and make referrals to necessary services.

If an Offender Violates Terms of Community Supervision

If an offender violates the terms of community supervision, the supervision officer may notify the judge and request a “show cause hearing.” At a show cause hearing, the defendant has the burden to explain to the judge why the defendant's community supervision should not be revoked. If the judge decides to revoke the defendant's community supervision, the judge will then re-sentence the defendant and may recommend stricter supervision conditions or impose a period of incarceration. A victim has the right to attend this hearing and may be required to testify.

Appealing a Criminal Verdict

It is very common for defendants to appeal their convictions after being found guilty. These appeals are usually technical, regarding court procedures and rulings made by the judge, including decisions about evidence and jury instructions. Appeals of verdicts in D.C. Superior Court occur in the D.C. Court of Appeals. Appeals of verdicts in U.S. District Court are heard in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit.

When deciding an appeal, the appellate court only reviews the written case record, and no new evidence or testimony is introduced during an appeal. Attorneys for the prosecution and the defense file written briefs that outline their arguments about the appeal. The court may schedule an oral argument where a prosecuting attorney and a defense attorney present their arguments and answer questions from a panel of judges. Victims are allowed to attend this public hearing. After this hearing, it may take several months for the court to decide the appeal. The court will decide the appeal in one of three ways.

Potential Outcomes of Criminal Appeals

Affirmed

The appeals court determines that the verdict should stay in place.

Reversed

The appeals court determines that the verdict should be overturned.

Reversed and remanded

The appeals court determines that the verdict is flawed and orders the trial court to conduct a new trial or to take some further action.

Navigating the D.C. Civil Justice System

In addition to the criminal justice system, victims can pursue remedies in the D.C. civil justice system. The criminal and civil justice systems are completely separate justice processes. Pursuing a civil case does not affect a criminal case—civil cases can be filed before, during, or after a criminal trial. Similarly, even if a prosecutor does not pursue criminal charges against the accused, the victim still has a right to file a civil lawsuit against the accused as long as the time for doing so has not expired.

Through civil cases, victims can hold offenders accountable for their offenses and seek compensation known as “damages.” There are time limits on bringing a civil case, so victims who consider filing a lawsuit should talk to an attorney as soon as possible.

Issues to Consider When Deciding to Pursue a Civil Case

Filing a civil lawsuit may not always be the best course of action for crime victims. A victim should consider the following issues when deciding whether to pursue a civil suit.

- There are very few free legal resources to help people pursue civil cases. Most likely, the victim will need to hire an attorney to litigate the civil case, which can be a great expense.
- A civil lawsuit may take eight months or more, and the victim will need to spend time working on the case, including meeting with an attorney and attending court proceedings.
- Civil court proceedings are most often public, so victims may lose their confidentiality and privacy during a civil case and may be required to testify during the trial.
- Even if a victim wins a civil case it still may be difficult to collect a financial award from the defendant.

Key Differences Between Criminal Prosecutions and Civil Lawsuits

Criminal Prosecution

- Goal is to hold the defendant accountable to the community.
- Government prosecutor controls the case. While the prosecutor may seek the victim’s input, the victim cannot require the prosecutor to handle the case a certain way.
- The prosecutor must prove that the defendant is guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.
- If the defendant is found guilty, the defendant might be sentenced to jail time and/or probation. The victim will not be awarded money, unless the court orders the defendant to pay for the victim’s expenses related to the crime.

Civil Lawsuit

- Goal is to hold the defendant accountable to the victim.
- Victim (the “plaintiff”) initiates and controls the case. As a party to the lawsuit, or someone named in the case, the plaintiff is entitled to all documents relating to the case and can make decisions regarding the case, such as agreeing to a settlement.
- The plaintiff must prove that it is more likely than not that the defendant is “liable,” meaning responsible by law.
- If the defendant is found liable, the defendant may be required to pay the victim for pain and suffering, any expenses related to the crime, and an additional financial penalty to punish the defendant for their actions. The court may also issue an order requiring the defendant to take certain actions and/or stay away from the victim in the future.

List adapted from the National Center for Victims of Crime at: victimsofcrime.org/media/reporting-on-child-sexual-abuse/criminal-and-civil-justice.



Who is a Secondary Victim?

Secondary victims include:

- A victim's spouse; biological, step, and adopted children; grandchildren; parents; stepparents; siblings; half siblings; or spouse's parents.
- A person who lives in the victim's household at the time of the crime or when the crime is discovered.
- A survivor of a victim who was entirely or partially dependent on the victim for care and support, including a child of the victim born after the victim's death.
- A person who pays medical and/or funeral and burial expenses directly related to the crime.
- A person with close ties to the victim.
- A person who witnessed the crime.

D.C. Crime Victims Compensation Program

The D.C. Crime Victims Compensation Program provides D.C. crime victims with financial support to ease the financial impacts of these crimes. Compensation is available for expenses paid by victims or their families that directly stem from the crimes committed against them, excluding expenses covered by personal insurance or other benefits programs. This program does not provide compensation for a victim's pain and suffering or damage to personal property.

This section describes general eligibility guidelines for the D.C. Crime Victims Compensation Program; however, each compensation claim is decided on an individual basis, and the victim or the victim's family will be required to submit documentation of all expenses included in the claim.

Eligibility for Compensation

Victims and “secondary victims” are eligible for compensation if:

- They suffered injury or death due to a violent crime committed in D.C., or they are a D.C. resident who suffered injury or death due to a terrorist act or act of mass violence committed outside of the United States;
- The crime was reported to law enforcement within seven days after it occurred (with some exceptions, described below);
- An application for compensation is filed within one year of the crime or within one year of learning of the program (if it can be shown that the delay was reasonable);
- They cooperated with law enforcement regarding the criminal investigation; and
- They did not participate in, agree to, or provoke the crime.

Some victims are eligible for compensation even if the crime is not reported to law enforcement:

- Sexual assault victims are eligible if they get a sexual assault examination;
- Domestic violence victims are eligible if they seek a Civil Protection Order; and
- Victims of child cruelty are eligible if a neglect petition is filed in D.C. Superior Court.

How to Apply for Compensation

Victims must complete an application, which is available online at [dcourts.gov](https://dccourts.gov) or at D.C. Superior Court. Victims should contact their advocate or the prosecutor for assistance with completing this application. Applications can be submitted in person at:

D.C. Superior Court Building A

515 5th Street NW, Suite 109

Washington, DC 20001

202-879-4216

(Also accepts mailed petitions.)

United Medical Center (D.C. SAFE)

1328 Southern Avenue SE, Room 311

Washington, DC 20032

202-561-3000

To facilitate timely processing of claims, submit copies of supporting documentation, such as police reports, Civil Protection Orders, and bills or receipts.

Claim examiners will verify the information in the application by contacting police, the victim's employer, the hospital where the victim was treated, and/or other related agencies or organizations. The victim will be notified by mail of the claim examiner's decision.

Appealing a Compensation Decision

If a compensation application is rejected, or approved in an amount lower than requested, victims should contact their advocate for assistance and to determine whether an appeal is possible. If new information related to the case becomes available within 30 days of the claim being rejected, victims can submit a "Request for Reconsideration."

Types of Compensation

Victims and secondary victims can seek compensation for the items detailed below. A maximum of \$25,000 can be issued for each claim. These amounts are accurate as of September 2017; visit the D.C. Crime Victims Compensation Program website at [dcourts.gov](https://dccourts.gov) for updates.

Medical expenses

Includes physical or occupational therapy, or rehabilitation.

Mental health counseling

Maximum of \$3,000 for adults; \$6,000 for children (also for secondary victims).

Lost wages

Compensation not to exceed 52 weeks or \$10,000.

Loss of support to dependents

Where victim is deceased and Social Security is denied; up to \$2,500 per dependent, not to exceed \$7,500 per victimization.

Funeral expenses

Up to \$6,000.

Crime scene clean-up

Up to \$1,000.

Replacement of clothing held as evidence by police

Up to \$100; not available if victim is deceased.

Temporary emergency food and housing

Made necessary as a result of the crime; not to exceed 120 days with maximums of \$400 for food costs and \$3,000 for housing costs.

Moving expenses

Up to \$1,500; only available within 120 days of the crime if moving is necessary as a result of the crime because the victim's health and safety is endangered.

Transportation costs

Up to \$100 for local transportation and \$500 for out-of-state transportation. Can only be used to participate in the investigation or prosecution of the case, or to receive medical treatment or some other service necessary as a result of the crime.

Replacement of doors, windows, locks, or other items to secure the victim's home

Up to \$1,000.

Attorneys' fees

To assist in the appeal of a determination only; not to exceed \$500 or 10 percent of award, whichever is less.

Emergency award

Up to \$1,000.

Information for Victims of Domestic Violence

This section includes specific information for D.C. victims of domestic violence. Specialized resources are available to those facing domestic violence, stalking, or harassment, even if they choose not to file a police report against their abuser.

Under D.C. law, domestic violence includes “**intimate partner violence**” and “**intrafamily violence**.”

Intimate partner violence is when a crime is committed or threatened by a person against their spouse, domestic partner, or someone they are in a romantic, dating, or sexual relationship with.

Intrafamily violence is when a crime is committed or threatened by a person against someone they are related to by blood, adoption, legal custody, marriage, or domestic partnership, or against someone they have a child with.

Urgent Assistance

For urgent or emergency police and medical assistance, call 911. If you do not want to call the police but still need immediate assistance, call or text the D.C. Victim Hotline at 1-844-4-HELPDC (1-844-443-5732), or visit dcvictim.org for online chat. Either the police or the hotline can connect you to an advocate who can discuss options that may be available to you, including emergency shelter.



The Domestic Violence Intake Center provides comprehensive support to D.C. domestic violence victims, including counseling, safety planning, and help with Civil Protection Order petitions. A collaboration among D.C. government agencies and nonprofit organizations, the Domestic Violence Intake Center operates at two locations: D.C. Superior Court and United Medical Center. See page 47 for contact information and a description of services at each location.

Obtaining a Civil Protection Order (CPO)

Many victims of domestic violence choose to obtain a Civil Protection Order as a first step because they can be obtained without a police report or initiating criminal procedures. D.C. crime victims should contact the D.C. Victim Hotline at 1-844-4-HELPDC (1-844-443-5732) to be connected with an advocate who can help them obtain a Civil Protection Order. Below is information about the three types of Civil Protection Orders available in the District of Columbia. A Civil Protection Order is different from a criminal “stay away order” issued by judges to a defendant during a criminal trial. See page 11 for more information about stay away orders. Different protection mechanisms are available for college students who have been sexually assaulted. Students should contact their university for more information about these protections.

Types of Civil Protection Orders

Temporary Protection Order (TPO)

This is a court protection order that covers the interim period after the petition for a Civil Protection Order is filed and before the hearing where a judge determines whether to grant the Civil Protection Order. Any victim seeking a Civil Protection Order is issued a Temporary Protection Order on the same day the petition for a Civil Protection Order is filed.

Civil Protection Order (CPO)

This is a court order, signed by a judge, instructing a person to stop threatening, approaching, or even contacting a victim for up to a year. Violation of this order can result in a criminal contempt of court charge. Civil Protection Orders last for one year and can be extended for another year if the victim requests the extension before the original Civil Protection Order expires.

Emergency Temporary Protection Order

This is a court order issued outside of normal court hours in the event that a victim is in imminent danger. This order lasts for five days and must be initiated through D.C. SAFE. This process will also involve MPD and the Office of the Attorney General for the District of Columbia.

To obtain a Civil Protection Order, a victim must file a petition at the Domestic Violence Intake Center, which has one location at D.C. Superior Court and another at United Medical Center in Southeast D.C. See pages 30 and 47 for more information. Victim advocates are available to assist with the petition and discuss options for serving the court papers on the person from whom protection is sought (the “respondent”). A Civil Protection Order will not be ordered unless the notice about the hearing is properly served on the respondent within 14 days (unless an extension is granted). If the respondent agrees to the proposed order, then the judge will grant it. If the respondent does not consent, the matter will go to a hearing before a judge, who will decide whether to grant the petition. If the judge does not grant the Civil Protection Order, a victim should speak with the court clerk or call 1-844-4-HELPDC (1-844-443-5732) for more options.

When issuing a Civil Protection Order, the judge can order a person to:

- Stop the abuse (including hurting or threatening the victim);
 - Stay away from the victim and their children (temporary custody of children can be awarded to the victim);
 - Move out of a shared residence;
 - Stop contacting the victim by any means;
 - Attend counseling for substance abuse or anger management;
 - Surrender firearms; or
 - Comply with any other conditions specific to the situation.
-

What if a Person Violates a Civil Protection Order?

A respondent who continues to stalk, harass, or abuse the victim, or violates any other terms of the order, is ignoring an order from the court, which is a criminal offense. If the respondent violates the Civil Protection Order, the victim can call the police and/or file a motion for criminal contempt of court. Either the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District



Petitioner

Person seeking a Civil Protection Order.

Respondent

Person that the petitioner is seeking protection from.

of Columbia or the Office of the Attorney General for the District of Columbia can prosecute the violation. If they choose to prosecute, an attorney from one of these offices will contact the victim to discuss the case. Sometimes these cases are resolved by the respondent accepting a plea deal, where the respondent pleads guilty in exchange for a reduced sentence. Other times, cases are criminally prosecuted and decided through a trial. The victim may be required to testify at the trial, in which case the prosecutor will meet with the victim first to help prepare the victim to testify.

Safety Issues at the Victim's Residence

Victims of domestic violence can submit a written request to their landlords to change their locks and are also allowed to break their leases on a D.C. apartment if they feel unsafe at their residence after the crime. To break a lease, victims should give their landlords a letter with notification that they are terminating the lease in 14 days due to domestic violence. Attached to this letter should be a letter from a victim advocate, a police officer, a doctor, or a D.C. Housing Authority representative that attests the tenant is a victim of domestic violence, or a copy of a Civil Protection Order if the victim has obtained one. Victims of stalking or sexual assault should consult with their advocate or the Victim Legal Network (202-629-1788) about options with regard to their residence.

Financial Assistance for Domestic Violence Victims

Domestic violence victims may face unexpected expenses as a result of the crime committed against them. Victims can apply for financial assistance from the D.C. Crime Victims Compensation Program, although such compensation is not guaranteed and is limited to certain items and amounts set by D.C. Superior Court, which administers the program. Domestic violence victims who seek a Civil Protection Order are eligible for these funds even if they choose not to report the crime to the police. See page 25 for more information about the D.C. Crime Victims Compensation Program.

Domestic violence victims who receive benefits through D.C.'s Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program may be eligible for specialized services and resources through the Program on Work Employment and Responsibility (POWER), including exemption from TANF's work requirements.

For more information, visit dhs.dc.gov/page/benefits-dhs or contact the D.C. Department of Human Services at dhs@dc.gov or 202-671-4200 (711 for TTY).

TIP

If you are a domestic violence victim seeking to leave your abuser, free emergency foster care may be available for your pets. Contact the Humane Rescue Alliance at 202-723-5730, and ask about the Safe Haven Program or visit www.humanerescuealliance.org/domestic-violence-support.

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The information in the Resources section is accurate as of September 2017. As updated information becomes available, the Council for Court Excellence (CCE) will update the digital versions of the *Victim’s Guide*.

Download this guide in PDF format at courtexcellence.org/digital-library.

Visit victimsguide.courtexcellence.org for the online (website) version of this guide.

Map of Judiciary Square

D.C. courts and prosecutor and public defender offices are located in the Judiciary Square neighborhood, which is accessible by public transportation. There are two entrances to the Judiciary Square Metro Station, which is on the Red Line.



Contact Information for Courts and Government Agencies

Local Police – Metropolitan Police Department (MPD)

Headquarters

300 Indiana Avenue NW, Room 5059
202-727-9099
711 | TTY
mpd@dc.gov
mpdc.dc.gov

First District

101 M Street SW
202-698-0555
202-727-8506 | TTY

Second District

3320 Idaho Avenue NW
202-715-7300
202-364-3961 | TTY

Third District

1620 V Street NW
202-673-6815
202-518-0008 | TTY

Fourth District

6001 Georgia Avenue NW
202-715-7400
202-722-1791 | TTY

Fifth District

1805 Bladensburg Road NE
202-698-0150
202-727-5437 | TTY

Sixth District

5002 Hayes Street NE
202-698-0880
202-398-5397 | TTY

Seventh District

2455 Alabama Avenue SE
202-698-1500
202-889-3574 | TTY

In an emergency, always call 911. Call 311 or visit 311.dc.gov for non-emergency police and other D.C. government services.

MPD headquarters and district stations are open to the public 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. For non-emergencies, you can call your district station. If nobody answers your call right away, an officer will return a message within 24 hours. More information for all of the MPD offices can be found at mpdc.dc.gov.

Specialized MPD Units

For a complete list of specialized MPD units, please visit mpdc.dc.gov/page/specialized-units.

Asian Liaison Unit (ALU)

202-535-2653

202-347-8164 | TTY

asian.liaison@dc.gov

mpdc.dc.gov/page/asian-liaison-unit

ALU is a team of dedicated officers that focuses on the public safety needs of the Asian community.

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Liaison Unit (DHHU)

202-553-7874

202-347-8164 | TTY

mpd.dhhu@dc.gov

mpdc.dc.gov/node/139002

DHHU is a team of dedicated officers that focuses on the public safety needs of the deaf and hard of hearing community.

Domestic Violence Unit

202-727-7137

mpdc.dc.gov/page/domestic-violence-unit

The Domestic Violence Unit serves as a liaison among MPD, the U.S. Attorney's Office, other law enforcement agencies, victim service agencies, victim advocates, and the community.

Latino Liaison Unit / La Unidad de Enlace Latino (LLU)

202-673-4445

202-347-8164 | TTY

unidadenlace.latino@dc.gov

mpdc.dc.gov/page/latino-liaison-unit

LLU is a team of dedicated officers that focuses on the public safety needs of the Latino community.

La Unidad de Enlace Latino fue creada para ayudar a la comunidad latina y para aumentar la confianza y comunicación que existe entre la comunidad latina y MPD.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Liaison Unit (LGBTLU)

202-506-0714

202-347-8164 | TTY

mpdc.dc.gov/node/139172

LGBTLU is a team of dedicated officers that focuses on the public safety needs of the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender community and its allies.

Sex Assault Unit

202-727-3700

mpdc.dc.gov/page/sex-assault-unit

MPD's Sex Assault Unit investigates sexual assaults involving victims ages 18 and older. Sexual assaults involving juvenile victims are investigated by the Youth and Family Services Division. Victim specialists with the MPD's Victim Services Unit work with Sex Assault Unit detectives, to provide information, support, and referrals to victims of sexual assault and their families during the investigation.

Victim Services Branch

202-724-4339

mpdc.dc.gov/page/victim-services-branch

MPD's Victim Services Branch provides support, information, and referrals to victims and their families; it includes the Family Liaison Specialist Unit (FLSU), the Major Case Victims Unit (MCVU), and the Victim Specialists Unit (VSU).

Youth and Family Services Division (YFSD)

202-576-6768

mpdc.dc.gov/page/youth-and-family-services-division

YFSD is responsible for investigating child abuse and neglect, child sexual abuse and exploitation, and juvenile missing persons and parental kidnapping, among other matters. It also processes all juveniles arrested in D.C.

Select Other Law Enforcement Agencies

Metro Transit Police Department

Washington Metropolitan Area
Transit Authority
600 5th Street NW
Washington, DC 20001

202-962-2121 | 24-hours
MyMTPD (696783) | via text
301-955-5000 | Criminal Investigations Unit

[wmata.com/about/transit-police/
contact-us.cfm](https://wmata.com/about/transit-police/contact-us.cfm)

Metro Transit Police has jurisdiction over crimes that occur in D.C., Maryland, and Virginia Metro facilities, buses, and trains.

United States Capitol Police

119 D Street NE
Washington, DC 20510

202-224-5151 | Victim-Witness Assistance
202-224-5151 | Non-emergency (24 hours)
202-224-1677 | Public Information Office

AskUSCP@uscg.gov
uscg.gov

U.S. Capitol Police has jurisdiction over crimes that occur on the grounds of the U.S. Capitol.

United States Park Police

Criminal Investigations Branch (CIB)
1901 Anacostia Drive SE
Washington, DC 20019

202-610-8730 | CIB
202-610-7500 | 24-hour Emergency
202-610-7505 | 24-hour Non-emergency
202-439-1808 | Records

nps.gov/subjects/uspp/index.htm

U.S. Park Police has jurisdiction over crimes that occur in any National Park located in the District of Columbia, including the National Mall.

Prosecuting Agencies

Office of the Attorney General for the District of Columbia

Victim Witness Assistance Unit
441 4th Street NW
Washington, DC 20001

202-727-3400
202-727-3400 | TTY

dc.oag@dc.gov
oag.dc.gov/page/victim-witness-assistance-unit

Hours of operation:
Mon–Fri, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The Office of the Attorney General for the District of Columbia (OAG) prosecutes criminal offenses being tried in the juvenile justice system, along with a limited number of other adult criminal offenses. OAG’s Victim Witness Assistance Unit provides support services to victims of violent crimes when OAG is prosecuting the offender.

U.S. Attorney’s Office for the District of Columbia

Victim Witness Assistance Unit
555 4th Street NW, Suite 1412
Washington, DC 20530

202-252-7130
202-305-9195 | TTY

justice.gov/usao-dc/victim-witness-assistance

Hours of operation:
Mon–Fri, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The U.S. Attorney’s Office for the District of Columbia (USAO-DC) is a federal agency that prosecutes most D.C. crimes. USAO-DC’s Victim Witness Assistance Unit provides comprehensive support and assistance to victims and their families, including court accompaniment, safety planning, witness security assessment, travel/lodging coordination for out-of-town victims, emotional support and crisis response, notification services, and referrals for counseling, housing, transportation, crime victims’ compensation, and medical or mental health needs.

Public Defenders

The Public Defender Service for the District of Columbia (main office)

633 Indiana Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20004

202-628-1200

1-800-341-2582 | toll free

202-824-2531 | TTY

pdsdc.org

Hours of operation:

Mon–Fri, 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

This office represents people accused of local crimes who cannot afford an attorney.

Office of the Federal Public Defender for the District of District of Columbia

625 Indiana Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20004

202-208-7500

dc.fd.org

Hours of operation:

Mon–Fri, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

This office represents people accused of federal crimes who cannot afford an attorney.

Trial Courts

Superior Court of the District of Columbia

H. Carl Moultrie Courthouse
500 Indiana Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20001

202-879-1400

dccourts.gov/superior-court

Hours of operation:

Mon–Fri, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

D.C. Superior Court typically hears civil and criminal cases involving D.C. law. Criminal cases can be tried in the Superior Court’s Criminal Division, Family Court, or Domestic Violence Unit. Clerks at the court entrance and Criminal Information Center staff (located on the fourth floor in Room 4001) can provide information about the time and location of a trial and give directions to a courtroom.

U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia

E. Barrett Prettyman U.S. Courthouse
333 Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20001

202-354-3080

dcd.uscourts.gov

Hours of operation:

Mon–Fri, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

U.S. District Court typically hears civil and criminal cases involving federal law.

Appeals Courts

District of Columbia Court of Appeals

Historic Courthouse
430 E Street NW
Washington, DC 20001
202-879-2700

dccourts.gov/court-of-appeals

Hours of operation:
Mon–Fri, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The D.C. Court of Appeals hears appeals of cases tried in D.C. Superior Court.

U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit

E. Barrett Prettyman U.S. Courthouse
333 Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20001
202-216-7000

cadc.uscourts.gov

Hours of operation:
Mon–Fri, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit hears appeals of cases tried in the U.S. District Court for D.C.

Supervision Agencies

Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency (CSOSA)

Domestic Violence Intervention Program
910 Rhode Island Avenue NE
Washington, DC 20018
202-442-1824

[csosa.gov/supervision/branches/
domestic_violence.aspx](https://csosa.gov/supervision/branches/domestic_violence.aspx)

Hours of operation:
Mon–Fri, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

This federal program provides supervision and treatment services to those convicted of domestic violence offenses, including monitoring compliance with court-imposed curfews and stay-away orders.

Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency (CSOSA)

Victim Services Program
300 Indiana Avenue NW, Suite 2121
Washington, DC 20001
202-585-7377

[csosa.gov/supervision/
victim_services.aspx](https://csosa.gov/supervision/victim_services.aspx)

Hours of operation:
Mon–Fri, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

CSOSA has a Victim Services Program that conducts outreach to victims to ensure that they receive proper treatment, have access to resources, and, above all, are safe.

Pretrial Services Agency for the District of Columbia

633 Indiana Avenue NW, Suite 1120
Washington, DC 20004
202-220-5500

psa.gov

Hours of operation vary depending on the type of case and court. Please call the number above for more information.

This federal agency, which provides assistance in both local and federal cases, is responsible for gathering information about newly arrested defendants, making recommendations about release conditions, and supervising defendants who are released pending trial.

**Superior Court of the District of
Columbia Family Court Social Services
Division (FCSSD)**

Court Building B
510 4th Street NW, Floor 3
Washington, DC 20001

202-508-1900

[dccourts.gov/superior-court/
family-social-services](https://dccourts.gov/superior-court/family-social-services)

Hours of operation:
Mon–Fri, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

FCSSD is the District’s juvenile probation agency, and is responsible for serving and supervising juveniles involved in the “front-end” of the District’s juvenile justice system. Among other functions, FCSSD screens and assesses each newly arrested youth, advises the court throughout all phases of adjudication, and coordinates services for and monitoring of all court-involved youth.

Select Other Government Agencies and Resources

Crime Victims Compensation Program

Superior Court of the District of Columbia
Court Building A
515 5th Street NW, Room 109
Washington, DC 20001
202-879-4216

[dccourts.gov/services/
crime-victims-compensation-matters](https://dccourts.gov/services/crime-victims-compensation-matters)

Hours of operation:
Mon–Fri, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

This program provides financial assistance to eligible victims of violent crime in the District of Columbia, reimbursing them for crime-related expenses not covered by other sources such as private insurance, Medicaid, Medicare, Social Security, an employer’s wage continuation program, worker’s compensation benefits, or other sources.

Domestic Violence Intake Centers

Superior Court of the District of Columbia
H. Carl Moultrie Courthouse
500 Indiana Avenue NW, Room 4550
Washington, DC 20001
202-879-0152

dccourts.gov/superior-court

Hours of operation:
Mon, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Tue–Fri, 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The intake center at D.C. Superior Court handles all aspects of a case, including requests for Temporary Protection Orders (TPO). TPO hearings requested in the Moultrie Courthouse are held in person before a Judge. This center provides counseling, social services, and legal assistance to clients.

United Medical Center (D.C. SAFE)
Greater Southeast Intake Center
1328 Southern Avenue SE, Room 311
Washington, DC 20032
202-561-3000

dcsafe.org

Hours of operation:
Mon–Fri, 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The Greater Southeast Intake Center handles initial filings for Civil Protection Orders (CPO) and motions. Clients can request a TPO at this center, and hearings are conducted via teleconference. To obtain a CPO, parties must go to the D.C. Superior Court Moultrie Courthouse. This center provides counseling, social services, and legal assistance to victims.

Both intake centers have representatives from the court, D.C. SAFE, MPD, OAG, and USAO-DC, as well as other organizations serving domestic violence victims and survivors. Visit dccourts.gov/superior-court/domestic-violence-unit for more information.

**Office of the Chief Medical Examiner
(OCME)**

401 E Street SW
Washington, DC 20024

202-698-9000
202-442-8797 | TTY

ocme@dc.gov
ocme.dc.gov

Hours of operation:
Mon–Fri, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

OCME provides the following services: Cremation, anatomical donation and burial at sea approvals, death investigations, data fusion and epidemiology, fatality review services, forensic toxicology laboratory services, grief counseling, and public disposition services.

D.C. Department of Corrections VINELink

Victim Information and Notification
Everyday (VINE) System

1-877-329-7894 | 24 hours
1-866-847-1298 | TTY

vinelink.com

The D.C. Department of Corrections provides VINELink as part of your safety plan. VINELink is an online resource that allows searches and automatic phone and email notifications for information on an offender’s current custody status, including release, transfer, or escape. Do not depend solely on VINE for protection. If you think that you may be at risk, take precautions as if the offender has already been released.

Getting Started

Many government agencies and organizations provide programs and services to D.C. crime victims. To find help, the best place to start is the D.C. Victim Hotline, which is mentioned throughout this guide.

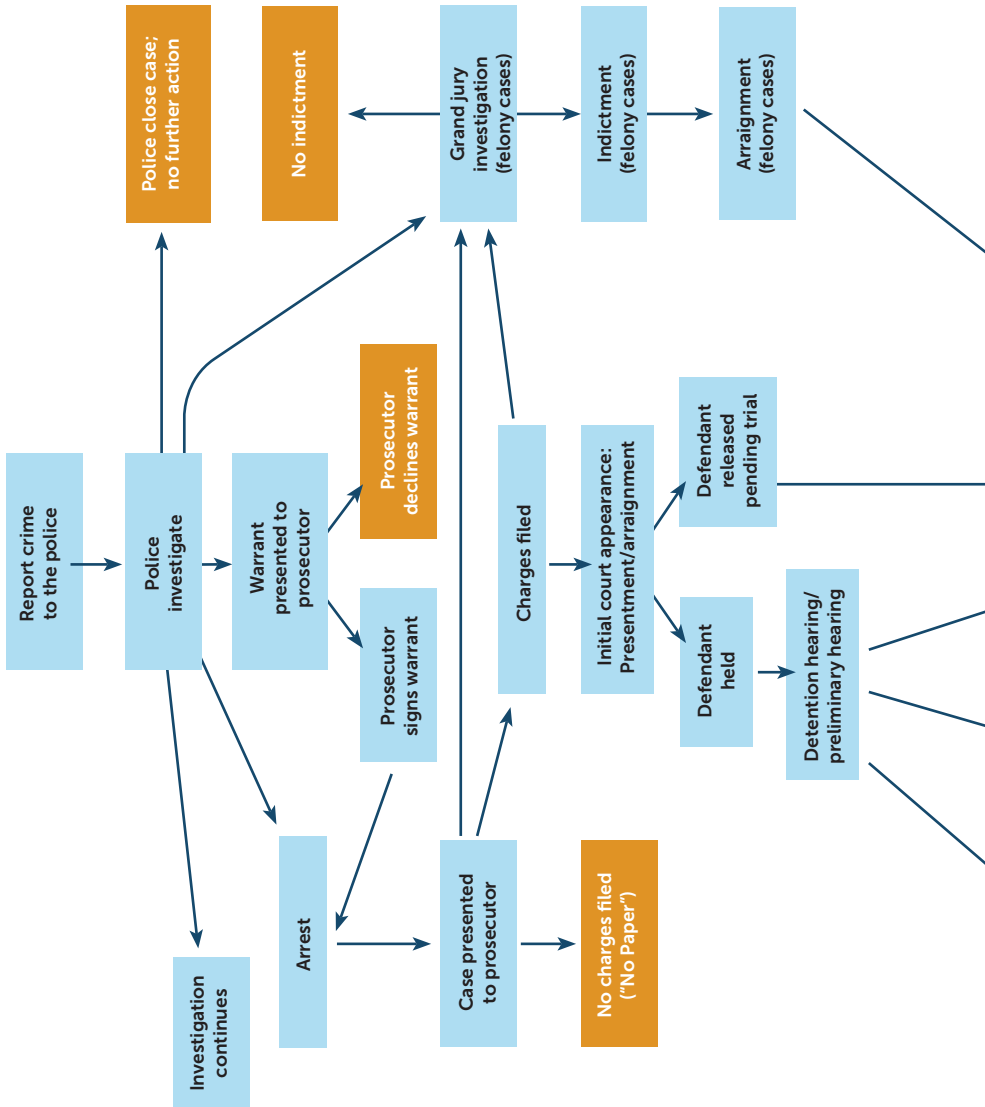
The D.C. Victim Hotline is a 24-hour, non-police service that connects victims to advocates who provide free, confidential information and support services. The hotline can help victims find resources such as emergency shelter, emergency health care, grief counseling, domestic violence resources, and legal aid.

Call or text the D.C. Victim Hotline at

1-844-4-HELPDC (1-844-443-5732)

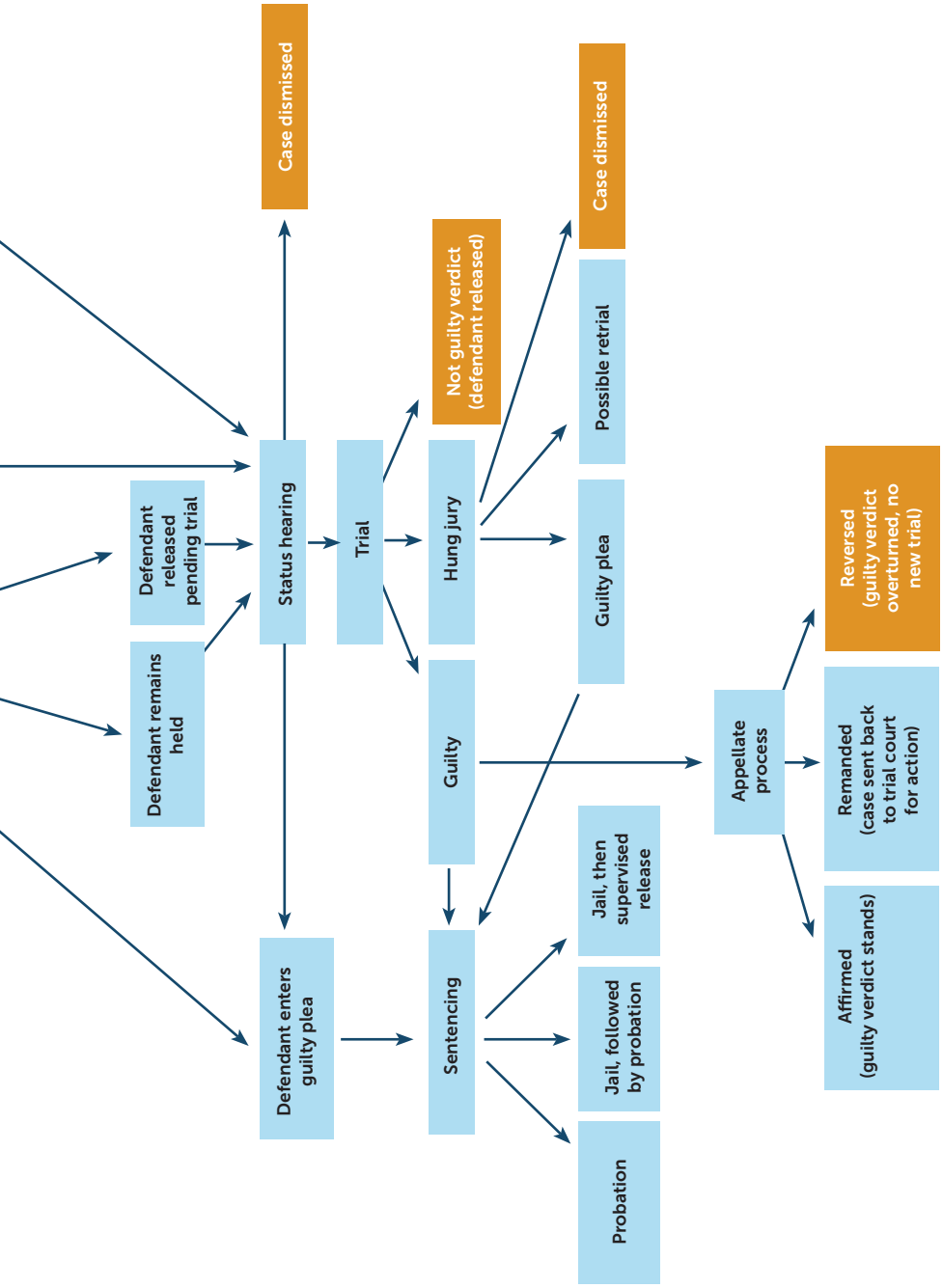
Visit dcvictim.org for online chat.

For emergency assistance, call 911.



D.C. Criminal Justice System Map

This is a more detailed version of the criminal justice system map included on page 6.



Rights of D.C. Crime Victims

Local and federal laws establish rights for D.C. crime victims that government employees, including prosecutors, defense attorneys, and judges, must respect. If victims think that their rights have been violated by a government employee, they should communicate their concerns to their advocate. Victims may also wish to file a complaint regarding the violation to the relevant government agency. For information about how to submit a complaint, see pages 57 to 58.

D.C. Crime Victim's Bill of Rights

D.C. crime victims are entitled to the following rights, and D.C. employees are legally required to make their best efforts to ensure these rights are afforded to victims. Section 23-1901 of the D.C. Code states that a crime victim has the right to:

1. Be treated with fairness and with respect for the victim's dignity and privacy.
2. Be reasonably protected from the accused offender.
3. Be notified of court proceedings.
4. Be present at all court proceedings related to the offense, including the sentencing, and release, parole, record-sealing, and post-conviction hearings, unless the court determines that testimony by the victim would be materially affected if the victim heard other testimony or where the needs of justice otherwise require.
5. Confer with an attorney for the prosecution in the case (although the victim does not have the authority to direct the prosecution of the case).
6. An order of restitution from the person convicted of the criminal conduct that caused the victim's loss or injury.
7. Information about conviction, sentencing, imprisonment, detention, and release of the offender, and about any court order to seal the offender's criminal records.
8. Notice of the rights provided in this chapter and under the laws of the District of Columbia.
9. Be notified of any available victim advocate or other appropriate person to develop a safety plan and appropriate services.

D.C. Victims' Rights in the Juvenile Justice System

When an accused offender is a juvenile being tried in the D.C. juvenile justice system, a victim has the right to:

1. Be treated with dignity, respect, courtesy, sensitivity, and with respect for their privacy.
2. Be notified in advance of the dates and times of all hearings and trials.
3. Be provided a waiting area that is separate from the respondents and their friends and family to the extent possible.
4. Be informed of financial assistance, compensation, and any other available social services.
5. Have stolen and other property promptly returned unless otherwise used for evidence.
6. Be informed by the Office of the Attorney General for the District of Columbia about a victim's right to request restitution, when applicable.
7. Submit a Victim Impact Statement, and to have the statement considered in the disposition of the case.
8. Be provided with appropriate safeguards to minimize the contact that may occur between the respondent, the respondent's family, witnesses for the respondent, and the victim.

Additionally:

- Except when mandated by law, the D.C. government shall not be required to disclose the victim's name or address prior to a hearing.
- The respondent, the respondent's attorney, or another person acting on behalf of the respondent shall clearly identify themselves as being, representing, or acting on behalf of the respondent at the beginning of any contact with the victim, the victim's family, or witnesses.

This is a summary of section 16-2340 of the D.C. Code. See the statute for the complete text of the law.

Federal Crime Victims' Rights Act

Victims of federal crimes have the following rights under the federal Crime Victims' Rights Act (18 U.S.C. § 3771):

1. The right to be reasonably protected from the accused.
2. The right to reasonable, accurate, and timely notice of any public court proceeding, or any parole proceeding, involving the crime or of any release or escape of the accused.
3. The right not to be excluded from any such public court proceeding, unless the court, after receiving clear and convincing evidence, determines that testimony by the victim would be materially altered if the victim heard other testimony at that proceeding.
4. The right to be reasonably heard at any public proceeding in the district court involving release, plea, sentencing, or any parole proceeding.
5. The reasonable right to confer with the attorney for the Government in the case.
6. The right to full and timely restitution as provided in law.
7. The right to proceedings free from unreasonable delay.
8. The right to be treated with fairness and with respect for the victim's dignity and privacy.
9. The right to be informed in a timely manner of any plea bargain or deferred prosecution agreement.
10. The right to be informed of these rights under this section and the services described in section 503(c) of the Victims' Rights and Restitution Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. § 10607(c)) and provided contact information for the Office of the Victims' Rights Ombudsman of the Department of Justice.

Sexual Assault Survivors' Bill of Rights

Sexual assault survivors have the following rights established by federal law:

1. The right not to be prevented from, or charged for, receiving a medical forensic examination.
2. The right to have a sexual assault evidence collection kit or its probative contents preserved, without charge, for the duration of the maximum applicable statute of limitations or 20 years, whichever is shorter.
3. The right to be informed of any result of a sexual assault evidence collection kit, including a DNA profile match, a toxicology report, or other information collected as part of a medical forensic examination, if such disclosure would not impede or compromise an ongoing investigation.
4. The right to be informed in writing of policies governing the collection and preservation of a sexual assault evidence collection kit.
5. The right to, upon written request, receive written notification from the appropriate official with custody of the evidence collection kit not later than 60 days before the date of the intended destruction or disposal of the kit.
6. The right to be granted, upon written request, further preservation of the kit or its probative contents.
7. The right to be informed of these rights.

This is a summary of the Survivor's Bill of Rights Act of 2016 (Public Law No. 114-236 (10/07/2016)).

Rights of Child Victims

Child victims have the following rights established by federal law:

1. In some cases, a court may permit the child to testify outside the court, using a two-way closed circuit television, or in a deposition before the trial.
2. A child victim's identity must remain confidential.
3. When possible, a child abuse team, including police, prosecutors, doctors, and therapists, should be assembled to support the victimized child and prevent further trauma.
4. In some cases, the judge may order the courtroom closed to anyone who does not have a direct interest in the case.
5. In some cases, the judge may appoint a guardian ad litem to advocate throughout the court proceedings for the best interests of the child.
6. When testifying, the child has the right to be accompanied and supported by an adult.

This is a summary of rights enumerated in 18 U.S. Code § 3509.

Contact Information for Filing Complaints Against Select Government Agencies

Commission on Judicial Disabilities and Tenure

515 5th Street NW, Suite 246
Washington, DC 20001

202-727-1363
202-727-1363 | TTY

dc.cjdt@dc.gov
cjdt.dc.gov

Hours of operation:
Mon–Fri, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The commission reviews complaints concerning the misconduct of judges of the District of Columbia Court of Appeals and the Superior Court of the District of Columbia. The commission does not review complaints about the decisions these judges make in deciding cases. Do not contact the commission to complain about a judge’s decision in a case. An attorney can explain the process of seeking review of a judge’s decision in a particular case.

D.C. Office of Police Complaints (OPC)

1400 I Street NW, Suite 700
Washington, DC 20005

202-727-3838
1-866-588-0569 | 24-hour hotline
711 | TTY

policecomplaints.dc.gov

Hours of operation:
Mon–Fri, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

OPC is independent of the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) and the D.C. Housing Authority Police Department (DCHAPD). Staffed by civilians, OPC investigates six types of citizen complaints of police officer misconduct: Harassment, inappropriate language or conduct, retaliation, unnecessary or excessive force, discrimination, and failure to identify. OPC also offers citizens the opportunity to commend officers who do exemplary work serving the public by submitting a commendation form on MPD’s website (see below).

Judicial Council of the District of Columbia Circuit

ATTN: Circuit Executive
E. Barrett Prettyman U.S. Courthouse
333 Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20001

202-216-7340
cadc.uscourts.gov/internet/home.nsf/content/Judicial+Misconduct

The Judicial Council reviews complaints about the behavior of judges of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit and the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, but not about the decisions these judges make in deciding cases. Do not contact the Judicial Council to complain about a judge’s decision in a case. An attorney can explain the process of seeking review of a judge’s decision in a particular case.

**Metropolitan Police Department
Internal Affairs Division (IAD)**

64 New York Avenue NE
Washington, DC 20002

202-727-4385

1-800-298-4006 | 24-hour hotline

202-898-1454 | TTY

citizen.complaints@dc.gov
[mpdc.dc.gov/page/
internal-affairs-bureau](https://mpdc.dc.gov/page/internal-affairs-bureau)
[mpdc.dc.gov/page/how-file-citizen-
complaint-or-commendation](https://mpdc.dc.gov/page/how-file-citizen-complaint-or-commendation)

IAD is the internal MPD unit responsible for ensuring that all complaints of officer misconduct are handled properly. IAD investigates complaints filed at any time alleging any type of misconduct, including misconduct that can be investigated by the D.C. Office of Police Complaints and anonymous complaints. Citizens also can commend officers who do exemplary work serving the public by submitting a commendation form on MPD's website.

**U.S. Department of Justice
Office of the Victims' Rights
Ombudsman**

Executive Office for U.S. Attorneys
950 Pennsylvania Avenue NW,
Room 2261
Washington, DC 20530

202-252-1010

1-877-574-9302 | toll free

usao.VictimOmbudsman@usdoj.gov
[justice.gov/usao/resources/
crime-victims-rights-ombudsman](https://justice.gov/usao/resources/crime-victims-rights-ombudsman)

This federal office hears complaints filed by victims of federal crimes regarding alleged violations by Department of Justice employees of the victim's federal rights under the Crime Victims' Rights Act of 2004.

Hours of operation:

Mon–Fri, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

For more information on how to compliment or complain about other professionals in the D.C. justice system, please visit

courtexcellence.org/uploads/publications/Compliments_Complaints_Guide_2013.pdf.

Glossary of Terms

Accused

A person who is suspected of committing a crime but has not yet been charged. (See also *Defendant* and *Offender*.)

Acquittal

A decision made by a judge or jury that the accused was not proved guilty of committing the crime.

Appeal

To take a case to a higher court for review. The higher court can affirm (approve), overturn (reverse and dismiss), or remand (send back to the lower court to be retried because of a legal mistake).

Arraignment

The initial court hearing at which a person accused of a crime is brought before a judge, informed of the charges against them, and asked to enter a plea of guilty or not guilty. (See also *Presentment*.)

Arrest

To take a person suspected of committing a crime into legal custody so that the person can be charged and tried for committing the crime.

Charge

The specific law that the prosecutor accuses the defendant of having violated.

Civil Protection Order (CPO)

A court order that prohibits contact between two persons; establishes temporary custody and visitation schedules in cases of domestic violence; and designates treatment programs for alcohol or drug abuse, domestic violence, or parenting skills as a response to domestic violence issues. The respondent (the person whose behavior will be restrained by the order) has a right to be present for the CPO hearing.

Criminal Justice Act (CJA)

Attorney

An attorney appointed and paid by the court to represent a criminal defendant who cannot otherwise afford a lawyer. (See also *Public Defender*.)

Continuance

A delay or postponement of a court hearing to another date or time.

Conviction

A decision made by a judge or jury that the defendant is guilty beyond a reasonable doubt of committing the crime for which the defendant was tried.

Court

An agency of the judicial branch of government with legal authority to decide questions of law and disputes brought before it.

Defendant

A person who has been charged with committing a crime. (See also *Accused* and *Offender*.)

Defense Attorney

The lawyer for the defendant.

Domestic Violence

A systematic pattern of behavior in which one person uses various forms of abusive behavior such as hitting, threatening, destroying property, or emotional abuse to control others in intimate and family relationships.

Evidence

Testimony, information, and exhibits presented in court by the prosecutor and the defense.

Felony

A serious crime typically punishable by more than one year in a prison and/or a fine. Felonies include crimes such as murder, rape, burglary, and robbery.

Grand Jury

A group of up to 23 D.C. residents who hear evidence presented by the prosecutor and decide whether there is enough evidence to charge and try the accused.

Guilty

A decision of a judge or a jury in a criminal case that the defendant committed the crime as charged.

Guilty Plea

A formal admission in court by the defendant that they committed the crime.

Indictment (in-DITE-ment)

A written accusation made by a grand jury charging the accused with committing a crime.

Investigation

The gathering of evidence by police and prosecutors to determine whether a crime was committed and who committed the crime, which continues until the police and/or prosecutors have sufficient evidence to charge and prosecute a particular person for the crime.

Judge

In the District of Columbia, a person recommended to the President of the United States by the D.C. Judicial Nomination Commission, appointed by the President, and confirmed by the U.S. Senate to preside over legal proceedings in a court of law.

Jury

A group of D.C. residents who hear the evidence presented in court and decide whether the government has or has not proved beyond a reasonable doubt that the defendant is guilty.

Mandatory Minimum

This is a sentence that is written into the law. When a defendant is convicted of a crime with a mandatory minimum, the judge must use the sentence prescribed by law.

Misdemeanor

A crime that is less serious than a felony and is typically punishable by no more than one year in jail and/or a fine.

Misdemeanors include offenses such as petty theft, most traffic violations, and possession of marijuana.

No Contest Plea

A statement to the court by the defendant denying responsibility for the charges but agreeing to accept punishment.

Not Guilty Plea

A statement to the court by the defendant denying that they committed the crime.

Offender

A person who has been convicted of a crime.

Papering

The decision made by the prosecutor about whether to file charges against the accused.

Perjury

A lie told while a person is under oath to tell the truth.

Personal Recognizance

The written promise made by the accused to the judge that they will return to court when ordered to do so; a frequent form of pretrial release in D.C. criminal cases.

Plea

A defendant's formal answer in court denying or admitting that they committed the crime they are accused of.

Plea Bargain

An agreement between the prosecutor and the defendant that the defendant will plead guilty.

Preliminary Hearing

A hearing to determine if there is enough evidence to continue with the case.

Pre-sentence Report

A report by the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency (CSOSA) describing the past behavior, family circumstances, and personality of the defendant, as well as specifics about the crime committed. This report helps the judge determine the sentence. (See also *Victim Impact Statement*.)

Presentment

In D.C. Superior Court, the initial court hearing at which a person accused of a felony is brought before a judge, informed of the charges against them, and asked to enter a plea of guilty or not guilty. (See also *Arraignment*.)

Pretrial Detention

When a defendant is held in jail after being charged with a crime and before the trial.

Probable Cause

The amount of proof needed by the police, the prosecutor, and the judge to believe that a crime was committed and that the case should proceed.

Probation

A court sentence allowing the offender to go free under supervision of a probation, or community supervision, officer.

Proffer

A preliminary offering or preview of testimony or evidence that will be said or shown. Also known as an offer of proof.

Prosecutor

In a criminal case, the lawyer representing the government; in D.C., the prosecutor is an Assistant U.S. Attorney or an Assistant D.C. Attorney General.

Public Defender

An attorney employed by The Public Defender Service for the District of Columbia or the Office of the Federal Public Defender for the District of Columbia who represents defendants who cannot afford to pay for a lawyer. (See also *Criminal Justice Act Attorney*.)

Sentence

The punishment a judge orders for a defendant who has been found guilty of a crime.

Status Hearings

Court hearings to provide updates about the status of the case and determine whether the prosecution and defense are ready for trial.

Subpoena

A written order requiring a person to appear at a certain time and place to give testimony about a crime either in court or before a grand jury.

Suspect

A person who is thought to have committed a crime and is under investigation, but has not been arrested or charged.

Temporary Protection Order (TPO)

A court order that restrains someone from specific behaviors. The TPO lasts for 14 days, at which time there will be a hearing to determine if a Civil Protection Order (CPO) should be granted. The respondent (the person whose behavior will be restrained by the order) need not be present in order for a TPO to be issued.

Testimony

Statements made in court by witnesses who are under oath to tell the truth.

Trial

A court proceeding at which evidence is presented for a judge or a jury to decide whether or not the prosecution proved beyond a reasonable doubt that the defendant committed the crime.

Verdict

The decision of the judge or jury at the end of a trial that the defendant is either guilty or not guilty of the crime.

Victim

A person directly or proximately harmed as a result of a crime. This can include (among others) the individual against whom a crime, or an attempted crime, was committed, and the family of an individual who was murdered.

Victim Impact Statement

A victim's description of the physical, emotional, psychological, and financial impact of the crime on the victim's life and the victim's family, which is used by the judge at the time of sentencing. (See also *Pre-sentence Report*.)

Witness

A person who has seen or knows something about a crime. The victim is usually a witness, too.

Witness Conference

A discussion between the victim, the witness, and the prosecutor to prepare for trial.

Case Diary

Name(s) of the Accused/Defendant/Offender

Police Report Number

Court Case Number (Case docket information is available online at:
dccourts.gov/cco.)

Charge(s)

Crime Date

Presentment/Arraignment Date

Detention Hearing Date

Preliminary Hearing Date

Status Hearings Date(s)

Grand Jury Date

Trial Date

Sentencing Date

Other Important Dates

Police Officer's Name and Contact Information

Police Detective’s Name and Contact Information

Prosecutor’s Name and Contact Information

Defense Attorney/Investigator and Contact Information

Victim Advocate’s Name and Contact Information

Insurance Information *(Company, agent’s name, contact information, and claim number)*

Other Important Contact Information

More Community Education Guides from the Council for Court Excellence

Since 1982, community education has been part of CCE's core mission. Visit our Digital Library at courtextcellence.org/digital-library to download these and other publications:

- *Community Guide to the Courts* [English and Spanish]
- *Jury Duty: Tips for Citizens*
- *How the District of Columbia Gets Its Judges*
- *When Someone Dies: A Non-lawyer's Guide to Probate in Washington, D.C.*
[English and Spanish]
- *Personal Affairs Record Book* (companion to *When Someone Dies*)
[English and Spanish]
- *Guide to the D.C. Juvenile Justice System* [English and Spanish]
- *Compliments and Complaints*

Email info@courtextcellence.org to request hard copies of these publications.

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