



NAVIGATING CONNECTICUT'S VICTIM COMPENSATION FUND

A FACTSHEET FOR ADVOCATES AND SERVICE PROVIDERS WORKING WITH SEX WORKERS AND MARGINALIZED PEOPLE*



SEX WORKERS & ALLIES NETWORK

YALE GLOBAL HEALTH JUSTICE PARTNERSHIP

People in sex work, individuals involved with the criminal legal system, and other marginalized people may be eligible for compensation from Connecticut's Victim Compensation Fund if they are victims of a crime that took place in Connecticut. The Office of Victim Services (OVS) manages the fund. OVS does not consider lifestyle or prior criminal history in deciding if a person is eligible for compensation. Each decision is made case-by-case, based on a short list of eligibility criteria viewable on the OVS website.

The Fund **covers crime-related expenses not covered by insurance or other financial resources.**¹

The Fund is an important resource, given the **ongoing issue of police sexual violence against sex workers, and violence faced more generally by these populations.**

IF YOU ARE ASSISTING SOMEONE INVOLVED IN THE SEX TRADES TO APPLY FOR COMPENSATION, THE FOLLOWING MAY BE RELEVANT:

- There are **two types of applications**: Emotional injury is for where this is the only injury. Physical injury includes cases where both physical and emotional injury occurred, and should be used for cases of sexual assault.
- The Fund **covers only specifically listed types of expenses** with amounts capped, and does not include, e.g., property damage, transport to appointments, attorneys' fees, or basic needs such as housing or food.¹
- The Fund **will not provide money in advance**. This is a barrier to access for low-income or precariously housed individuals. The Fund covers expenses already incurred and bills received but not paid. An application can be submitted and then later updated with relevant bills and receipts.²
- **Receiving compensation will not impact taxes or access to benefits**, since the Fund provides reimbursement not additional income.
- Victims **must generally seek reimbursement from other sources, such as health insurance, first.**³ However, they can apply to the Fund directly if they do not have access to other financial resources. In cases of sexual assault, the survivor may receive compensation for expenses normally covered by health insurance if sharing information with the primary insurance holder would cause harm.⁴
- Victims must be **legally employed** to seek compensation for lost wages.³ OVS uses tax records, payroll records, etc. to calculate lost wages. **People working in the informal economy**, including many sex workers, will be unable to get compensation for income where they cannot produce these documents.
- **Survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault or human trafficking are not required to report the crime to police to be eligible**, if they have told service providers listed in OVS resources, in a set time.¹
- However, **other claimants must have reported the crime to police** within five days of it happening, or within five days of when a report could reasonably be made, **and must cooperate with the police investigation of the crime and the Victim Compensation Fund** to be eligible.¹ Cooperation with police might entail willingness to come forward and make a statement.

*If a victim has concerns about this requirement, particularly if the person who committed the crime against them was a law enforcement officer, they may wish to seek legal advice from a lawyer first.*¹



The OVS website contains useful information and resources to share with clients, including a brochure, frequently asked questions, details on the range of expenses covered, and a summary of the process, deadlines and overall timeline.

- Generally, victims **must not have caused the crime**.¹ For example, an individual assaulted while using drugs is likely eligible for compensation if the drug use was unrelated to the circumstances of the assault. However, an individual assaulted by the person they were buying drugs from might be denied.
- Victims **do not have to be United States citizens** to be eligible. However, access and protections for undocumented persons, if any, are unclear. Connecting your client to someone who can provide legal advice is recommended. See information on who can assist you below. You can also provide them with resources like Red Cards from the Immigrant Legal Resource Center (ILRC) (use QR code below).
- **Minors are eligible for compensation**, but the application must be filed by a parent or guardian.⁵
- **Individuals other than the person harmed may be eligible for compensation**, including relatives, carers, child witnesses of domestic violence, and individuals who have paid for certain expenses.¹
- A person **may still be eligible for compensation even if application deadlines are missed**, but they must also submit a request for a waiver of the filing deadline, available on the OVS website.¹

WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS OR NEED HELP ASSISTING MY CLIENTS IN FILLING AN APPLICATION?

- If you have questions about the application or need help with the claim process, you can call the **Victim Compensation Program** at 1-888-286-7347 or email OVSCompensation@jud.ct.gov.
- The **Sex Workers and Allies Network** (SWAN) is an outreach program of the Connecticut Harm Reduction Alliance. Call them at 203-935-5701.
- The **Connecticut Institute for Refugees and Immigrants** (CIRI) provides legal, economic, linguistic, and social services to immigrants, refugees, survivors of human trafficking and torture, and unaccompanied minors throughout Connecticut. Call at 203-336-0141 or email at info@cirict.org.

IF YOUR CLIENT IS SEEKING COMPENSATION RELATED TO A SEXUAL ASSAULT:

- They can call **Connecticut's 24/7 statewide hotline** to get immediate support (including anonymously) and to receive help with filling the application: 1-888-999-5545 for English, 1-888-568-8332 para Español.
- They can also contact a member organization of the **Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence** to request that a sexual assault victim advocate assist them with the application. Telling an advocate about the assault means that a police report is not required for compensation eligibility. They can also provide support over the phone or Zoom (including anonymously) or in-person, and can accompany survivors to receive medical care and/or complete a Sexual Assault Kit and/or to report to police. Use their website to find the center for your area. Call the Alliance at 860-282-9881, or email at info@endsexualviolencect.org

Use the QR codes below to access the organizations' websites and resources:



* This factsheet is not, and is not intended to be, legal counsel or advice. It summarizes available information on the Victim Compensation Fund.

1. Victim Compensation Program. Connecticut Judicial Branch Office of Victim Services. <https://www.jud.ct.gov/crimevictim/compensation.htm>.

2. Personal Injury Application. Connecticut Office of Victim Services. <https://www.jud.ct.gov/webforms/forms/vs008PI.pdf>; Emotional Injury Application. Connecticut Office of Victim Services. <https://www.jud.ct.gov/webforms/forms/vs008EI.pdf>.

3. Victim Compensation Program Benefits. Connecticut Office of Victim Services. <https://www.jud.ct.gov/webforms/forms/vs047.pdf>.

4. In cases involving sexual assault, domestic violence or child abuse, OVS may waive consideration of health insurance as a collateral source if the dissemination of treatment information associated with the health insurance claim would cause undue harm: C.G.S 54-208(e). https://www.cga.ct.gov/current/pub/chap_968.htm#sec_54-208.

5. C.G.S 54-204. https://www.cga.ct.gov/current/pub/chap_968.htm#sec_54-204.

6. Frequently Asked Questions: Victim Compensation Process. (2016). Connecticut Judicial Branch Office of Victim Services. https://www.jud.ct.gov/crimevictim/comp_FAQ.pdf