



**Office of the Victim Advocate**  
**2012-2013 Administrative Digest**  
Garvin G. Ambrose, Esq. • State Victim Advocate  
A Division of the Office of Governmental Accountability

## At a glance

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<b>Statutorily established:</b>	June 8, 1998
<b>Operational:</b>	September 1999
<b>Statutory authority:</b>	CGS Sec. 46a-13b et seq.
<b>Central office:</b>	505 Hudson Street, 5 <sup>th</sup> Floor, Hartford, CT 06106
<b>Website address:</b>	<a href="http://www.ct.gov/ova">www.ct.gov/ova</a>
<b>Email address:</b>	<a href="mailto:ova.info@ct.gov">ova.info@ct.gov</a>
<b>Number of full-time employees:</b>	3
<b>Recurring operating expenses:</b>	\$ 315,235 for Fiscal Year 2013 (amount appropriated)
<b>Organizational structure:</b>	Independent state agency headed by Victim Advocate, Garvin G. Ambrose

## Mission

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The Office of the Victim Advocate (OVA) seeks to ensure that victims of crime become an integral part of the criminal justice system. Through public education of the rights and services available to crime victims, collaboration with law enforcement and service providers, as well as court and legislative advocacy, the OVA believes that the voices of crime victims will become a necessary component of our state.

## Overview

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The Office of the Victim Advocate (OVA) was statutorily established in 1998, and became operational in 1999, as an independent state agency charged with the promotion and protection of the constitutional and statutory rights of crime victims in Connecticut. Among its many responsibilities, the OVA provide oversight of state and private agencies that provide services to crime victims, and advocacy to crime victims when a violation of their rights is at issue.

In order to fulfill its mandate, the OVA receive and reviews complaints of persons concerning the actions of any state agency or other entity that provides services to crime victims. When appropriate, the OVA may also initiate formal investigations into the circumstances of a complaint so as to remedy the concern in a systemic manner.

As part of its enforcement abilities, the Victim Advocate is statutorily authorized to file a limited special appearance in any court proceeding for the purpose of advocating for a victim when their state constitutional and statutory rights have been violated. In addition, as part of its advocacy efforts, the OVA conducts programs of public education on the rights of crime victims, undertakes legislative advocacy when necessary, and recommends systemic changes in state policies to ensure the proper treatment and protection of crime victims.

The Office of the Victim Advocate currently operates under the following statute when determining who is a "victim of crime" or "crime victim:" --- **C.G.S. § 1-1k:** Except as otherwise provided by the general statutes, "victim of crime" or "crime victim" means an individual who suffers direct or threatened physical, emotional or financial harm as a result of a crime and includes immediate family members of a minor, incompetent individual or homicide victim and a person designated by a homicide victim in accordance with section 1-56r.

## Statutory Responsibility

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To fulfill the mandates of the OVA, the Victim Advocate may:

- Evaluate the delivery of services to victims by state agencies and entities that provide services to victims;
- Coordinate and cooperate with other private and public agencies concerned with the implementation, monitoring and enforcement of the constitutional rights of victims; enter into cooperative agreements with such agencies for the furtherance of these rights;
- Review procedures established by any state agency or other entity providing services to victims with respect to the constitutional rights of victims;
- Receive and review complaints of persons concerning the actions of any state or other entity providing services to victims; investigate those complaints where it appears that a victim or family of a victim may be in need of assistance from the Victim Advocate;
- File a limited special appearance in any court proceeding to advocate for any right guaranteed to a crime victim by the state constitution or any other right provided to a crime victim by the general statutes; however, no appearance may be filed in cases involving infractions or misdemeanors that do not involve the use, attempted use or threatened use of physical force against another person;
- Ensure a centralized location for victim services information;
- Recommend changes in state policies concerning victims;
- Conduct programs of public education, undertake legislative advocacy, and make proposals for systemic reform;
- Monitor the provision of protective services to witnesses by the Chief State's Attorney pursuant to C.G.S. §54-82t ; and
- Take appropriate steps to advise the public of the services of the OVA, the purpose of the office and procedures to contact the office.

## Public Service

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The State Victim Advocate and his staff continually endeavor to appropriately address the concerns brought forth by crime victims or those on behalf of crime victims. As part of this effort, the State Victim Advocate and his staff frequently engage with crime victims, state agencies who provide services to crime victims, and non-profit organizations to discuss the handling of particular matters that may require action by the OVA. The goal of the OVA is always to provide the necessary advocacy and education to victims so that they remain knowledgeable and vigilant in their efforts to become survivors instead of victims.

## Fiscal Responsibility

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The Office of the Victim Advocate is dedicated to increasing efficiency and advocacy while reviewing its current operating procedures to reduce waste.

## Improvements/Achievements 2012-2013

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During the 2012/2013 fiscal year the Office of the Victim Advocate (OVA) operated as a functional state agency committed to effectively and efficiently carrying out its statutory mandates. During this time there was a change of administration. The following specific achievements in this regard are noted:

### **Under the administration of Michelle S. Cruz, Esq.**

- The OVA provided its legal opinion to CONNSACS on the issues of statutes of limitations for civil and criminal cases involving the sexual abuse of minors.
- The Victim Advocate participated on Talk of the Town with Larry Rifkin on WATR Radio
- The Victim Advocate participated on Shattered Lives Talk Show
- The OVA sponsored the showing of The Invisible War at Trinity College in Hartford, CT
- The Victim Advocate conducted Domestic Violence Recertification Classes at The Meriden Police Department.
- The Victim Advocate met with Norwich Police Chief regarding Missing Person Cases in their area

- The OVA collaborated with The Department of Children and Families regarding Sex Trafficking of minors
- The Victim Advocate participated as a guest on the taping of the TV Show “Beyond Violence”
- The OVA conducted training for the Manchester Police Department regarding Victims Rights and issues
- The OVA presented at Lincoln College in Hartford, CT explaining Victims Rights and issues
- The Victim Advocate issued a press release announcing an investigation into the circumstances that led to the triple homicide on November 25, 2010 in East Hartford, CT
- The OVA hosted a Missing Persons training for all law enforcement personnel
- The OVA co-hosted with CCSU Women’s Center “My Inner Strength Now”-- an event to empower women
- The Victim Advocate issued a press release appealing the immediate suspension of the Risk Reduction Earned Credit Program
- The Victim Advocate attended the 2012 National Crime Victim Law Conference in Portland, Oregon
- The OVA attended a Torrington, CT Rotary Club meeting and made a presentation of the OVA
- The Office of the Victim Advocate took on the responsibility of coordinating the Vendor Program in the office building collecting donations for non-profit service providers in CT
- The OVA hosted an information session regarding how criminal matters involving a juvenile offender impact crime victims. Open to crime victims and their supporters concerning prospective legislative changes to parole eligibility of offenders who were under 18 at the time a crime was committed.
- The OVA advocated in court on behalf of a victim whose offender violated his probation conditions. The OVA worked with the offender’s probation officer and the prosecutor assigned to the case to ensure that the offender was held accountable for his actions.
- The OVA advocated on behalf of an assault victim, a judicial branch employee, for the removal of her name from the judicial branch website and to replace her physical home address with a P.O. Box in the human resource files.
- The OVA advocated in court on behalf of a domestic violence victim who was seeking a restraining order pursuant to an amendment in the restraining order statute to cover situations where there is a pattern of threatening by a family or household member.
- The OVA advocated in court on behalf of a victim seeking restitution in a larceny/criminal impersonation case
- The OVA filed a limited special appearance and motion in a criminal proceeding seeking an order to quash a subpoena ad testificandum that was served upon a minor victim. The subpoena mandated the victims’ presence in criminal court despite her therapist’s opinion that it was not in her best interest.
- The OVA filed a limited special appearance and a motion seeking an order to allow the victim an opportunity to address the court concerning the defendant’s plea agreement after the plea had already been accepted by the court, but prior to the sentencing hearing.
- The OVA advocated on behalf of a domestic violence victim whose offender failed to complete EXPLORE, a family violence diversionary program. After the case was sent back to prosecutors, the victim was able to obtain a standing criminal protective order for herself and her mother at the disposition of the case.
- The OVA advocated on behalf of a domestic violence victim for a modification of a standing criminal protective order post conviction.
- The OVA worked with the probation department regarding a defendant who failed to comply with his probation condition to make restitution payments. Following the probation department’s action to violate the defendant’s probation, the OVA advocated in court for the issuance of a written order of restitution.
- The OVA submitted correspondence to the United States Embassy in Nigeria in support of the surviving family members of a homicide victim who resided in Nigerian, so that the family members could travel to the United States to attend the sentencing hearing of the criminal defendant. Additionally, the OVA coordinated the sentencing date with the state’s attorney’s office so that the family members would have sufficient time to apply for and obtain the necessary travel documents. Ultimately, the homicide victim’s oldest son was granted the appropriate travel Visa to attend the sentencing hearing of the defendant.
- The OVA advocated in court for the disclosure of grand jury transcripts in the investigation of Dominic Badarraco.
- The OVA notified the probate Court of Brett Bednarz’ arrest and the pending prosecution in Hartford Judicial Court and advocated before the Probate Court for a delay of any distribution of assets to any heirs and claimants of Ms. Therrien’s estate until a final disposition of the criminal prosecution against Brett Bednarz. Following a hearing on the OVA’s request, the court ruled that there would be no disbursements of Beverly Therrien’s estate, except to creditors, until the criminal case against Brett Bednarz was resolved.

### **Under the administration of Garvin G. Ambrose, Esq. (March 15, 2013 to June 30, 2013)**

- The OVA was invited and attended the State's Attorney's Diversity Luncheon prior to beginning tenure.
- The Victim Advocate began developing relationships with other state agencies, police, legislators, and prosecutors through meetings at various offices and courthouses throughout the State.
- The Victim Advocate was invited to and attended the South Central Child Advocacy Center Accreditation Celebration in New Haven, CT.
- The Victim Advocate intervened on behalf of the victim's family in the matter of State v. Skipwith out of Waterbury Judicial District. Together with State's Attorney Platt, we were able to convince the Judge to allow the victim's to address the Court post-sentencing.
- The Victim Advocate participated at the "Take Back the Night" Event at the University of St. Joseph regarding sexual abuse awareness
- The Victim Advocate participated in a march against violence, and in recognition of the victims of homicide, that was coordinated by Mothers United against Violence (M.U.A.V).
- The OVA participated at the National Crime Victims' Rights Week Event at the University of New Haven
- The OVA presented the 2013 Crime Victim Assistance Award to John Duffey of the Victim Services Unit with the Department of Correction.
- The Victim Advocate attended and set up an information table at the Race to End Violence event at CCSU in New Britain, CT.
- The Victim Advocate was appointed by Gov. Malloy, as a Commissioner, to serve on the Criminal Justice Policy Advisory Commission (CJPAC) (4/10/13) – first time for OVA
- The Victim Advocate was appointed by Gov. Malloy to serve as a Public Member on the Police Officer Standards and Training Council (POSTC) (4/30/13) – first time for OVA
- Staff of the OVA attended a School Safety Training sponsored by CREC
- The Victim Advocate submitted testimony on several pieces of legislation regarding the criminal justice system and its impact on crime victims. Some testimony was supportive of legislation, while others were in opposition.
- The Victim Advocate was invited to attend, and attended a vigil for homicide victim Shamari Jenkins that was coordinated by Mothers United against Violence (M.U.A.V).
- The Victim Advocate attended and spoke at the MADD 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Walk in West Hartford; he also brought the UConn Cheerleaders to the event to support the walkers
- The OVA created a new identity for the office through the development of an office seal and new logo designed by a DAS graphic designer.
- The OVA Co-sponsored the 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Melanie Ilene Rieger Memorial Conference against Violence; Victim Advocate gave opening remarks.
- The Victim Advocate and the Complaint Officer coordinated and attended a meeting between a victim of sexual assault and the Hartford State's Attorney, Gail Hardy. The OVA staff also guided the victim through the sentencing phase of the court proceeding, and the navigation of the media.
- The OVA held and sponsored an Identity Theft Training provided by the National Victim Assistance Organization, for law enforcement, service providers and prosecutors.
- The OVA staff were invited to and presented at the Annual Professional Development Conference for Prosecutors held by the Division of Criminal Justice. A first for the OVA.
- The OVA staff held a community service day and read to children at the Community Renewal Team (CRT) in Hartford, CT.
- The OVA coordinated a meeting between the surviving family members of the decedent, Nancy Benno Liphardt, and the Waterbury State's Attorney concerning the status of the investigation and their concerns with the lack of prosecution.
- The OVA staff attorney attended a Conference on the Freedom of Information Laws sponsored by the CT Freedom of Information Commission.
- The OVA urged the Governor and General Assembly to amend legislation aimed at protecting the privacy of the Newtown victims, to include protection of all crime victims. Public Act 13-311 was successfully amended and adopted to include protections for all victims of homicide.

### **Information reported as required by State statute**

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The Office of the Victim Advocate has complied with all federal and state requirements regarding affirmative action and equal opportunity, and continues to operate in conformance with C.G.S. §46a-13b et seq.