

Your Voice: Victim Impact Statement

The Victim Impact Statement (VIS) is your chance to describe how the crime affected you. The VIS is a form completed by victims of crime, the guardian of a victim, or a close relative of a deceased victim, to record the emotional, physical, and financial impact the crime had on their lives. The VIS is considered by prosecutors, judges, and the Board of Pardons and Paroles when making important decisions involving your case.

Prosecutors may use information in the VIS to help present a case to the court and to request restitution as part of the sentence. The judge may consider the information in the VIS before accepting a plea bargain. If the defendant receives community supervision (probation), the VIS is made available to the probation officer for notification purposes. If the defendant is sentenced to state prison, the VIS is included with the commitment papers sent to the TDCJ Correctional Institutions Division and is also forwarded to TDCJ Victim Services Division for notification purposes.

Information contained in the VIS is used by TDCJ Victim Services Division to provide notification to victims regarding the parole review process, which includes an offender's status and release. The VIS is considered by the Board of Pardons and Paroles prior to voting a case during the parole review process.

If you wish to complete a VIS, you may download the form from the TDCJ website (www.tdcj.state.tx.us/publications). If you do not have access to the internet, you may obtain a VIS form from county and district attorneys, from victim service providers throughout the state, and from our office directly. Please call or write to us. If requested, we may also add your name, address, and phone number to our confidential victim notification system.

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Protective Order

If an offender is the subject of a protective order issued on or after September 1, 1999, and is confined or imprisoned on the date the protective order expires, Texas Statutes mandate that the protective order be extended for one year from the date the offender is released from confinement or imprisonment. If you wish to initiate the process for extending a protective order, please contact Victims Initiative for Counseling Advocacy and Restoration of the Southwest (VICARS) at 888-343-4414.

Restitution

Some offenders are ordered to pay financial restitution to compensate victims for losses incurred as a result of the crime. Restitution can be ordered only by the sentencing judge and must be recorded on the sentence and judgment or order revoking probation. For more information about restitution, contact the TDCJ Business & Finance Division at 866-464-4137.

Victim Offender Mediation Dialogue

Victim Offender Mediation Dialogue is a program initiated at the request of the surviving victim(s) or surviving family members in cases of violent crime. The purpose is to provide victims the opportunity to have a structured in-person meeting with their offender(s) in a secure, safe environment in order to facilitate a healing process. Victims may receive answers to questions and experience a sense of empowerment through participation.

For more information about the program, contact the TDCJ Victim Services Division, Victim Offender Mediation/Dialogue Program at 800-848-4284.

It is our goal to ensure that victims are not left behind at the crime scene but can be involved, if they desire, at any stage of the criminal justice process.

VICTIM SERVICES DIVISION



Victim Services Division

8712 Shoal Creek Blvd.
Suite 265
Austin, Texas 78757-6899
800-848-4284
Fax: 512-452-0825

E-mail:
victim.svc@tdcj.state.tx.us
Visit the TDCJ website at:
www.tdcj.state.tx.us

The mission of Victim Services Division is to provide a central mechanism for crime victims to participate in the Criminal Justice System.

Texas Department of Criminal Justice
Victim Services
Division

Your
RIGHTS
Your
VOICE
Your
PARTICIPATION



Services we provide

This brochure provides information about your rights as a crime victim and your voice and participation in the criminal justice system.

The Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) Victim Services Division has a toll-free number that can be used by victims whose offenders are incarcerated in the TDCJ Correctional Institutions Division. Victim Services staff are available to assist you Monday through Friday, 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM CST. The toll-free number is:

800-848-4284

Victims may use the toll-free number to register for notifications regarding an offender's status. Registrants have the option to be notified by letter, email, or both. Victims will also have the option to register for an automated phone notification when the offender is being processed for release from the TDCJ Correctional Institutions Division. We invite you to contact the TDCJ Victim Services Division to provide us with your contact information and notification preference. All of your contact information will remain confidential.

Victims may also use the toll-free number to inquire about offender status, to learn about services provided by the Victim Services Division, and to obtain additional information and referrals.

Call the toll-free hotline for assistance or write to victim.svc@tdcj.state.tx.us.

- Victim Notification;
- Assistance in determining offender status;
- Processing of Victim Impact Statements (VIS), protests, and other information submitted by victims, concerned citizens, and victim service providers;
- Assistance to victims requesting interviews or meetings with Board of Pardons and Paroles members during the parole review process;
- Explanation of parole and mandatory supervision laws;
- Victim witness preparation and accompaniment when viewing an execution;
- Victim Offender Mediation Dialogue;
- Information and referral services for victims, victim service providers, and criminal justice professionals through the Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse;
- Referral for restitution inquiries; and
- Training opportunities for victims, victim service providers, and criminal justice professionals, including workshops, webinars, and the Texas Victim Assistance Training (TVAT) Online.

Victims are welcome to visit our office to discuss additional concerns. To make an appointment for your visit call the hotline or e-mail us at:

victim.svc@tdcj.state.tx.us

IMPORTANT REMINDER

PLEASE NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF YOUR
E-MAIL ADDRESS, MAILING ADDRESS
OR TELEPHONE NUMBER CHANGES

Be Informed. Be Involved.

The TDCJ Victim Services Division manages the victim notification system in order to keep victims informed of offender status after conviction and sentencing to the TDCJ Correctional Institutions Division.

Contact is made through the confidential Victim Notification System when the:

- Offender enters the parole review process;
- Parole review process is completed and offender receives a tentative favorable vote for release or release is denied;
- Offender's release certificate is issued for parole or mandatory supervision;
- Offender is discharged at time of release;
- Offender's parole or mandatory supervision is revoked by the Board of Pardons and Paroles;
- Offender dies while incarcerated or while under supervision;
- Offender is released to or received from a bench warrant; and
- Offender escapes and is recaptured.

In addition to our victim notification letters and e-mails, victims and their families can retrieve limited offender status information via telephone 24 hours a day through the Victim Information and Notification Everyday (VINE) system by calling 877-894-8463 and entering their Personal Identification Number (PIN) provided by the TDCJ Victim Services Division. If requested, VINE can call victims automatically to notify them that their offender is being processed for release.

If a victim was registered with VINE in the county where the offender was jailed while awaiting trial, he or she will need to register again for the automated VINE call after conviction. When the offender enters the TDCJ Correctional Institutions Division, please register by calling:

800-848-4284

The VINE program is designed to provide victims with quick and easy access to **limited** information regarding the offender's status. To register for **complete** notification and be involved in the protest process, the victim must register with the TDCJ Victim Services Division. Contact us at:

800-848-4284

victim.svc@tdcj.state.tx.us

Participating in the review process

As often as you wish, you may send protest e-mails or letters to our office to be included in an offender's file. You may describe how the crime affected you and continues to impact you and your family. Any new information, pictures, pertinent newspaper articles, etc., may be included, all of which will be placed in the offender's file for consideration by the Board of Pardons and Paroles during the parole review process. This is the permanent file; anything submitted will remain in the file and cannot be returned.

As a statutory victim you have the right to request to meet with the Board of Pardons and Paroles during the offender's parole review process.

You may also request that the Board of Pardons and Paroles consider imposing special conditions on the offender's supervision if released. For example, you may request that upon release the offender not be allowed to enter your county of residence.

All correspondence and phone calls, including the VIS, are confidential.