

Committee on Victims' Rights

Helen L. McGonigle, Chair

Purpose

The committee continues its vigorous involvement in matters related to crime victims' rights in the criminal and civil justice systems in Connecticut and elsewhere throughout the country. Particular attention is paid to incorporating aspects of crime victims' rights and legal representation into the private practice of law.

Other areas of significant importance are the cooperative efforts of private attorneys with crime victim advocacy, working together with private-based community service groups like the Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Service Center and governmental entities like the Office of Victim Services. Through the work of the committee, CBA members may participate in projects that contribute to the administration of justice and advancement of victims' rights.

The committee has maintained constructive relationships with other, non-legal professionals, such as psychologists, social workers, and other mental health providers, who share the common interest in crime victims' rights and assisting crime victims. Toward that end, the committee has maintained its unique advisory committee comprised of victim advocates and private service providers to offer a more informed approach to advancing and protecting the interests of crime victims.

Annual Report

The Victims' Rights Committee has been monitoring legislative initiatives designed to promote and protect the interests of crime victims. Our committee generally communicates via e-mail. A listserv was established in 2004 through the effort and cooperation of Connsacs. Since the committee has no funding or staff, it was grateful for the generous offer to coordinate this task.

The Victims' Rights Committee chair and certain members continue to work directly or to network with local and national community-based organizations like Connsacs, Connecticut Coalition on Domestic Violence, Mother's Against Drunk Driving, Survivors of Homicide, the National Center for Victims of Crime, National Crime Victims Bar Association, and Justice for Children. A presentation on privacy and confidentiality for victims of sexual assault was made at the annual convention for the National Center for Victims of Crime in July of 2005 with committee member Jamie Mills.

In accordance with Conn. Gen. Stat. § 46a-13f, the chair participated in quarterly meetings held by the advisory committee to the Office of the Victim Advocate together with representatives of both state agencies and entities which serve the interest of crime victims. This entailed oversight of the victim advocate and preparation of the annual evaluation report on the effectiveness of the Office of Victim Advocate.

The committee chair continues, on a volunteer basis and to the extent possible, to service those crime victims who make contact with her office and make referrals to the appropriate state agencies, private agencies, or attorneys in order to serve the needs of crime victims.