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BOARD OF PARDONS AND PAROLES
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Office of Victim Services (OVS) Advocates
provide support and services to victims during the parole or pardon process.
For more information regarding the OVS, please visit: <http://www.jud.ct.gov/crimevictim/> .

Victim Advocates

Carmen Sierra - (203) 805-6595; Carmen.Sierra@JUD.CT.GOV
Melissa Zavickas - (203) 805-6687; Melissa.Zavickas@JUD.CT.GOV

Parole and Community Service **Manager for the Victim Service Unit** (VSU) of the Board of Pardons and Paroles Jessica Bullard - (203) 805-6626

The following is a brief summary of the options available to a victim or the legal representative of a victim within the Parole and Pardon hearing process.

Victim Input in the Parole and Pardon Process

Since not all persons registered to be notified of the events associated with an offender's sentence are direct victims of the offender's crime, the Board uses the definition of "victim" found in the Connecticut General Statutes section 54-126a (a). [LINK HERE](#) Should you have questions regarding your status, please contact one of the staff members listed above.

Sec. 54-126a. Testimony of crime victim at parole hearing. (a) For the purposes of this section, "victim" means a person who is a victim of a crime, the legal representative of such person, a member of a deceased victim's immediate family or a person designated by a deceased victim in accordance with section 1-56r.

(b) At a hearing held by a panel of the Board of Pardons and Paroles for the purpose of determining the eligibility for parole of an inmate incarcerated for the commission of any crime, such panel shall permit any victim of the crime for which the inmate is incarcerated to appear before the panel for the purpose of making a statement for the record concerning whether the inmate should be released on parole or the nature of any terms or conditions to be imposed upon any such release. In lieu of such appearance, the victim may submit a written statement to the panel and the panel shall make such statement a part of the record at the parole hearing.

(c) Nothing in this section shall be construed to prohibit the board from exercising its discretion to permit a member or members of a victim's immediate family to appear before the panel and make a statement in accordance with subsection (b) of this section.

The victim and members of his or her family or support system may attend the hearing of the Board of Paroles or of the Board of Pardons and provide testimony for the record. In lieu of live testimony before a Board panel, victims may submit a written statement. Victim statements are not confidential and may be disclosed if a request is made to the Board under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

Live testimony or statements must address:

- 1) whether the inmate should be released on parole or the nature of any terms or conditions to be imposed upon any such release; or
- 2) whether an offender should be granted a pardon and the reason(s) for the victim's support or objection to such pardon.

Requests by the victim, legal representative of the victim, or any member of a deceased victim's family to address a Board panel or submit a written statement should be made through a Victim Advocate in the Board's Victim Services Unit (VSU).

Things to consider

All parole hearings are audio recorded. Statements made by a victim or their representative will be recorded as a part of the official record.

Do you have any concerns about presenting information to the Board that you do not want the offender to hear?

Are you concerned about being seen or heard by the offender at the hearing?

Some hearings are covered by CT-N for later broadcast. The Victim Advocate will notify you if the hearing you want to attend will be videotaped by CT-N soon as the Board is made aware of their planned presence.

The victim may choose not to participate in a hearing, but will still be notified of the Board's decision, including reasons for denial or the stipulations that have been set for the supervision of the inmate. The victim may opt to be notified by mail and or email.

Pardons hearings are open to the public, but are not recorded in any manner. Victim statements submitted in writing do, however, become part of the public record and are subject to Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests.

Victim Registration

You may register as a victim of crime with both the Office of Victim Services (OVS) and the Department of Correction, Victim Services Unit (DOC-VSU).

Office of Victim Services operates a Post Conviction Notification Program, which offers information about changes in the status in the convicted inmates. This may include the dates and locations of: Parole Hearings, Sentence Reviews, Sentence Modifications, discharge from the Correctional Institution, Parole Release, Halfway House Release, Transitional Supervision release and Pardons Hearings. The Post conviction notification program does not provide information regarding furloughs, non convicted persons, or convicted persons sent to state hospital for mental illness.

Department of Corrections Victim Services Unit also operates a Confidential Victim Notification Program that provides notification when an inmate is released, escapes, or is scheduled for a sentence review for parole hearing.

Registration is confidential.

- OVS – 1-800-822-8428; Monday through Friday – 8:00am to 4:30pm;
<http://www.jud2.ct.gov/webforms/forms/vs005.pdf>
- DOC- VSU – 1-888-869-7057; <http://www.ct.gov/doc/cwp/view.asp?a=1502&q=270108>

Victim Impact Statement

Pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes sections 54-126a and 54-130d, a victim's verbal testimony or written statement to the Board for inclusion in a parole or pardon applicant's file are a part of public record. The Board of Pardons and Paroles may be required to release a victim statement to comply with a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request, which could come from the public, including an inmate or the media.

There are no limitations on the length of the statement provided to the Board, nor are statements edited for length or content.

Written statements should be provided prior to the date of the hearing so the Victim Advocates can present it to the board for review and consideration.

Statements previously provided for court proceedings or to other agencies are acceptable.

In preparing your testimony or statement, consider the following:

- In what ways does the crime continue to affect you and your family? Be specific in your description.
- For the parent of a child victim - how has the offense affected your child's emotional and physical well-being? How is your child doing (academically, socially) as a result?
- Do you or your family members require or continue to receive medical services as a result of the crime?
- Has the offender (or their family or friends) attempted or made contact you (or your family and friends in any way? If so, how did you feel about the contact? What, if any, problems or resolutions resulted? Describe.
- For victims of inmates eligible for parole - do you have any specific fears regarding the possibility of this offender back into the community at this time? If so, what are they? Do you have recommendations/suggestions for special conditions of release if paroled?
- Is there any additional information that you feel would be helpful to the Board in making its decision?

How can we help?

Victims are encouraged to contact an advocate in the Victim Services Unit at the Board of Pardons and Paroles – Carmen Sierra **203.805.6595** or Melissa Zavickas **203.805.6687** - for assistance with an impact statement, information and referrals, or answers to questions about the parole or pardon processes.