

THE VICTIMS' VOICE

OFFICE OF THE VICTIM ADVOCATE

Volume 2, Issue 1

January 2010

SAVE THE OFFICE OF THE VICTIM ADVOCATE BUDGET CRISIS

The OVA needs your help.

The Office of the Victim Advocate was asked to reduce our budget by 5%. The OVA appreciates and is cognizant that the state is suffering a 300 million dollar deficit; however, the impact of a 5% reduction to the budget of the OVA will have a devastating effect on the office.

Over the past year alone the OVA has suffered a loss of over 100K or a third of our overall budget. The OVA is a tiny office and yet we serve the entire state of Connecticut, a state with over 3.5 million¹ residents. According to the United States Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Statistics, in 2007, there were reported 177,064 crimes involving victims. That's 177K Connecticut residents joining the ranks of crime victims in 2007 alone. However, the OVA currently has only three full-time staff persons – a Staff Attorney, a Complaint Officer and the State Victim Advocate and one part-time Office Assistant. We have lost one full time position, a complaint officer, and are currently predicting 60K plus deficit.

A reduction of another 5% percent of the allocated budget, or a reduction of 15K, would essentially cause the OVA to have to lay off two of our staff persons. To reduce the OVA's staff by half, would drastically affect our ability to properly advocate for crime victims. Although every agency director in the state has been asked to provide an impact statement regarding a reduction of 5%, the OVA is uniquely affected due to its staff size and minimal budget. Additionally, the OVA has already suffered enormously by last years' 100K reduction of the OVA's budget; the result of last years' reductions have forced the OVA into a deficit which is already affecting the functionality of the OVA. Specifically, the OVA is no longer able to provide materials to the public regarding crime victims' rights, we cannot purchase paper to author letters and requests, we are limited to the transcripts we can requests, and as supplies run out, we cannot replenish them. These are just a few of the daily struggles facing the OVA with our current budget crisis.

The impact of a 5% reduction would devastate the Office of the Victim Advocate. To put this in perspective, the OVA responds to approximately 900 phone calls from crime victims throughout the state, as well as, responding to referrals from other state agencies and victims service providers for assistance per year. On a daily basis the OVA answers calls from crime victims who are attempting to navigate the confusing and difficult landscape of the criminal justice system. Unfortunately, Connecticut does not have a court based victim advocate in every court at this time. In courts that are fortunate enough to have an advocate, those advocates are out numbered significantly. Most advocates carry case loads in the hundreds or, to put it another way, there is only one advocate for a Judicial District Court (JD) or Geographical Area Court (GA), to respond to hundreds of crime victims. Additionally, the court-based advocates are only authorized to assist crime victims who have suffered a physical injury. Thus, victims of arson, burglary, home invasion, larceny and robbery are not technically authorized to utilize the services of the court-based victim advocates. As a result crime victims often call the OVA for assistance, guidance, and advocacy.

The OVA, in a number of cases, has entered limited special appearances in court to address violations of crime victims' Constitutional Rights. The OVA is the only agency which is authorized and allowed to act in court on behalf of crime victims whose rights are being affected. A further reduction of 5%, would gravely affect the OVA's ability to advocate for crime victims in court. The demand for assistance simply cannot be met with a staff of two persons. In fact, the demand cannot be met with the current small staff. The OVA often supplements its staff with interns from local colleges and law schools. However, interns are not always available to augment the staff and respond to the crime victims needs in Connecticut. Additionally, interns, despite their importance to the OVA, simply cannot replace the everyday assignments of the OVA staff.

Without the support from the community, the OVA is at risk and the voices of crime victims throughout the state of Connecticut could be forever silenced. Please contact your local legislator and/or the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) to voice your concerns over the budget crisis at the OVA.

For more information on the OVA, please contact us at (860) 550-6632 or visit our website at www.ova.state.ct.us.

¹ State of Connecticut, Public Health Department, population statistics as of July 1, 2007.

Michelle S. Cruz, Esq.
State of Connecticut Victim Advocate

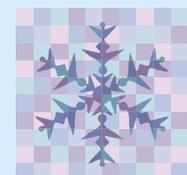
Headlines...

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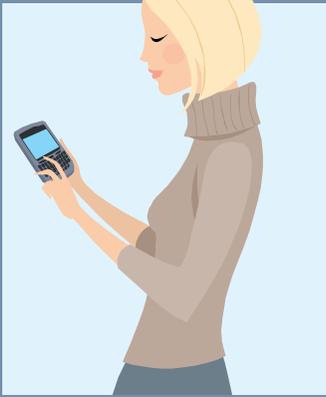


Michelle S. Cruz, Esq.
CT State Victim Advocate

“According to the United States Department of Justice’s Bureau of Statistics, in 2007, there were reported 177,065 crimes involving victims. That’s 177K Connecticut residents joining the ranks of crime victims in 2007 alone.”



Sexting Tips provided by ConnectSafely.org



What is "Sexting"?

(a portmanteau of sex & texting)

"Sexting" is the act of sending sexually explicit messages or photos electronically, primarily between cell phones.

"Sexting" usually refers to teens sharing nude photos via cell phone, but it's happening on other devices and the Web too. The practice can have serious legal and psychological consequences, so – teens and adults – consider these tips!

It's illegal: Don't take or send nude or sexually suggestive photos of yourself or anyone else. If you do, even if they're of you or you pass along someone else's – you could be charged with producing or distributing child pornography. If you keep them on your phone or computer you could be charged with possession. If they go to someone in another state (and that happens really easily), it's a federal felony.

Non-legal consequences: Then there's the emotional (and reputation) damage that can come from having intimate photos of yourself go to a friend who can become an ex-friend and send it to everyone you know. Not only can they be sent around; they can be distributed and archived online for people to search for pretty much forever.

Not just on phones: Sexting can be done on any media-sharing device or technology – including email and the Web. Teens have

been convicted for child porn distribution for emailing sexually explicit photos to each other.

Many causes: In some cases, kids are responding to peer pressure in a form of cyber bullying or pressure from a boyfriend or girlfriend (they break up, and sometimes those photos get sent around out of revenge). Sometimes it's impulsive behavior, flirting, or even blackmail. It's always a bad idea.

Parents: Talk with your kids about sexting in a relaxed setting. Ask them what they know about it (they may not have heard the term, so "naked photo-sharing" works too). Express how you feel in a conversational, non-confrontational way. A two-way dialog can go a long way toward helping your kids understand how to minimize legal, social and reputation risks.

The bottom line: Stay alert when using digital media. People aren't always who they seem to be, even in real life, and sometimes they change and do mean things. Critical thinking about what we upload as well as download is the best protection.

What to do: We're not in a position to provide legal advice, but we can tell you that the laws vary from state to state, each jurisdiction enforces the law differently, and the applicable laws were written before sexting was "invented." With sexting, the same minor can be both perpetrator and victim when producing and sending photos of him or herself – a very tricky situation under current laws.

Parents:

- If your children have sent any nude pictures of themselves, make sure they stop immediately. Explain that they're at risk of being charged with producing and distributing child pornography. If they've received a nude photo, make sure they haven't sent it to anyone else.
- Either way, the next most important thing is to have a good talk. Stay calm, be supportive and learn as much as you can about the situation. For example, see if it was impulsive behavior, a teen "romance" thing, or a form of harassment.
- Consider talking with other teens and parents involved, based on what you've learned.
- Some experts advise that you report the photo to your local police, but consider that, while intending to protect your child, you could incriminate another – and possibly your own child. That's why it's usually good to talk to the kids and their parents first. If malice or criminal intent is involved, you may want to consult a lawyer, the police, or other experts on the law in your jurisdiction, but be aware of the possibility that child-pornography charges could be filed against anyone involved.

Teens:

- If a sexting photo arrives on your phone, first, do not send it to anyone else (that could be considered distribution of child pornography). Second: Talk to a parent or trusted adult. Tell them the full story so they know how to support you. And don't freak out if that adult decides to talk with the parents of others involved – that could be the best way to keep all of you from getting into serious trouble.
- If the picture is from a friend or someone you know, then someone needs to talk to that friend so he or she knows sexting is against the law. You're actually doing the friend a big favor because of the serious trouble that can happen if the police get involved.
- If the photos keep coming, you and a parent might have to speak with your friends' parents, school authorities or the police.

These tips were written in April 2009, after several reported cases of teens being prosecuted for taking, distributing, and possessing pictures of themselves or friends. While we are aware that such activity is inappropriate and risky, we do not feel that – in most cases – law enforcement should treat sexting as a criminal act. Except in the rare cases involving malice or criminal intent, law enforcement should play an educational role, along with parents, community leaders, school officials and other caring adults.

Disclaimer: Any views or opinions presented in this article are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the Office of the Victim Advocate.

<http://www.safekids.com/sexting-tips/>

22% of teen girls and 20% of teen boys have sent nude or semi-nude photos of themselves

22% of teens admit that technology makes them personally more forward and aggressive

38% say exchanging sexy content makes dating or hooking up with others more likely

29% believe those exchanging sexy content are "expected" to date or hook up

Revealing photos can be re-sent to a vast audience

Sending a sexual image to a minor is illegal!

Facts provided by
Common Sense Media

October - Domestic Violence Awareness Month

The OVA would like to thank the following agencies for including the OVA in their speaking events during Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

The OVA sends a special thank you to:

Brunette's Hair Studio in Hartford, CT

and

University of Hartford, Department of Nursing, Freshman Success Center, SGA Connections Health Education & Wellness Center and the Women and Gender Resource Center for sponsoring "The Real Deal on Violence".

Connecticut Domestic Violence Facts...

In 2007, there were 22 family violence homicide incidents involving 25 victims.

In 2007, there were 20,042 incidents of family violence in which at least 1 person was arrested.

There were 18,180 victims of family violence in 2007

Enough is enough! Let's take a stand-
Zero Tolerance to Domestic Violence.

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Connecticut Cold Case

REWARD

\$50,000.00

On July 9, 1993, Bertha Reynolds, was found murdered in her home, located at 84 Laurel Hill Ave., Norwich, CT.



Bertha Reynolds

The New London County State's Attorney's Cold Case Unit is seeking the help of the public in obtaining information leading to the arrest and conviction of the person and or persons responsible for the death of Bertha Reynolds.

If you have information relative to this investigation, please contact the Cold Case toll - free tip line.

Connecticut Cold Case Unit: 1-866-623-8058

or

Cold.Case@po.state.ct.us

Safe at Home: Confidential Address Program

The Safe at Home program is a *free* confidential address program available for Connecticut crime victims who are or have been victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, or risk of injury to a minor. Anyone living in the same household as the victim may also be eligible to participate.

If you have moved or are planning to move, contact the OVA to see if this program is appropriate for you prior to your move or the purchase of a new home. This program will keep your *new* address private, so contact the OVA to schedule a time to come in and fill out an application; once your application has been certified by the Office of the Secretary of State, you are given a new substitute address, certification code, and a certification card. Your certification information will be sent to you with your information and with a brochure explaining how it can be used when filling out forms.

For more information or to fill out an application, please contact the OVA at (860) 550-6632 or email us at info.ova@ct.gov. Additionally, more information regarding the Safe at Home Program can be found on the Secretary of States website at: www.sots.ct.gov

SAVE THE DATE!!

Crime Victims' Rights Week
April 18-24, 2010

Visit the OVA website, more information to come...

14th Annual
Melanie Ilene Rieger Conference
Melanie Rieger: *A Daughter, Sister, Friend & College Student: A Domestic Violence Statistic*
June 8-9, 2010
to be held at the
Central Connecticut State University
1615 Stanley Street
New Britain, CT 06050

For more information, please visit:
www.melanieriegerconference.com or
E-mail: SRIEGER243@att.net

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**Giving voices to crime victims throughout
the state of Connecticut!**



The OVA would like to send our *heartfelt appreciation* to the Interval House, the Network against Domestic Abuse and their surrounding community for donating Christmas presents for two Connecticut domestic violence families in need.
Thank you from the OVA!



OVA's Independent Investigative Report



Jennifer Gauthier Magnano

During the late evening of August 23, 2007, Jennifer Gauthier Magnano's four month struggle to be free from her abusive husband came to a violent end when she was murdered by her abusive husband, Scott Magnano, who then turned the gun on himself and took his own life.

The Office of the Victim Advocate (OVA), whose charge it is to evaluate the services provided to crime victims as they journey through the criminal justice system, has conducted an investigation into the services, or lack of services provided to Jennifer and children when she, for the first time, bravely attempted to escape her violent and controlling husband.

As you will see in the report which was released on November 30, 2009, there were numerous obstacles and gaps in the services provided to crime victims. The purpose of the investigative report was to retrace the steps taken by Jennifer through review of various documents, statements, reports, as well as information gleaned from interviews from both agencies and individuals. Once the facts were established, the OVA then assessed whether the systems in place to protect domestic violence victims from harm at the hands of their abuser were appropriate, and more importantly, were being administered in the manner intended by the legislature and policy makers in the state.

The OVA has reached out to the agencies mentioned in the report and have provided them with detailed recommendations to try to avoid such a tragedy in the future. The OVA would like **praise the Connecticut State Police** for acknowledging the importance of reaffirming the procedures in place for law enforcement and working in a collaborative effort with the OVA to educate Connecticut State Police on domestic violence related issues in light of the Magnano Report. Additionally, we would like to **acknowledge Connecticut Legal Aid** for providing the report to their staff attorneys to utilize as a reference tool. Lastly, the OVA would like to extend their appreciation to the agencies and residents of Connecticut for their continued support.

The Magnano Investigative Report is available on the OVA website at www.ova.state.ct.us.