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The Massachusetts Victim Bill of Rights

The Massachusetts Victim Bill of Rights provides the following rights to crime victims in order to ensure victims a meaningful role in the criminal justice system:

The Right to Information on the Criminal Justice System:

- You have the right to be informed of how a criminal case progresses through the system, what your role is in the process, what will be expected of you, and why.
- You have the right to be informed of rights and services for victims in the court process.
- You have the right to assistance in applying for social services, financial assistance and certification to receive information about an offender.

The Right to Information on the Criminal Case Involving You:

- Upon request, you have the right to be updated on significant developments in the case.
- You have the right to be notified in a timely manner of any changes in schedule for court appearances for which you have been ordered to appear.
- You have the right to be notified of the final disposition of the case, including an explanation of the type of sentence imposed and a copy of the conditions of probation, if any.

- You have the right to be notified by the supervising probation officer whenever an offender seeks to change a restitution order.

The Right to be Heard and to be Present at Court Proceedings:

- You and your family members have the right to present a Victim Impact Statement to the court about the physical, emotional and financial effects of the crime on you and about your opinion regarding the sentence to be imposed.
- You have the right to submit your Victim Impact Statement to the Parole Board as part of its records on the offender.
- You have the right to be heard at any other time deemed appropriate by the judge.

The Right to Confer at Key Stages in the Court Process:

- You have the right to confer with the prosecutor before the start of the case, before a case is dismissed, and before a sentence recommendation is made.
- You have the right to confer with the prosecutor whenever a defense motion is made to obtain your psychiatric records or other confidential information.
- You have the right to confer with the probation officer about the impact of the crime on you before the officer files a full presentence report on the offender with the court.

The Right to Financial Assistance:

- You may be eligible to apply for Victim Compensation for certain out-of-pocket expenses such as medical, counseling or funeral costs, or lost wages incurred as a direct result of the crime.
- You have the right to a witness fee for each day that you are required to be in court.
- You have the right to request that the judge order the offender to pay restitution for your crime-related losses, and to receive a copy of the offender's schedule of restitution payments.
- You may be able to pursue a civil suit for damages caused as a result of the crime by consulting with a private attorney.

The Right to be Notified of an Offender's Release:

- Upon request, you have the right to advance notification whenever the offender is moved to a less secure correctional facility.
- Upon request you have the right to advance notification whenever the offender receives a temporary, provisional or final release from custody.

- You have the right to be informed by the Parole Board of the offender's parole eligibility.
- You may be eligible to get additional information about the offender, such as a criminal record or the offender's compliance with the terms of a sentence.

The Right to Other Protections in the Criminal Justice System:

- You have the right to request confidentiality for yourself and family members during the court proceedings for personal information, including home address, telephone number, school and place of employment.
- You have the right to protection by law enforcement from harm or threats of harm as a result of your cooperation with the court process.
- You have the right to a safe waiting area which is separate from the defendant and the defendant's family during court proceedings.
- You have the right to a prompt disposition of the case involving you.
- You have the right to request employer and creditor intercession by the prosecutor's office if the crime or your involvement in the court process causes problems with an employer or in meeting financial obligations.
- You have the right to have any property seized as evidence returned to you as soon as possible once it is no longer needed for law enforcement purposes.
- You, as a homicide survivor, have the right to possess in the courtroom an 8x10 or smaller photograph of the victim so long as it is not displayed.