

Confidentiality

In general the material in our possession is not released to other people. However, we may be required to produce documents to a court where there is other legal action.

Will my privacy be protected?

Victims Services is required to comply with the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 (NSW)* and the *Health Records and Information Privacy Act 2002 (NSW)*.

Contact details

Victims Services:

Phone (02) 8688 5511
Freecall (*outside Metropolitan area*) 1800 069 054
Fax (02) 8688 9630
DX 8232 Parramatta
Email vct@agd.nsw.gov.au
Website www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/vs
Mailing address: The Director, Victims Services
Locked Bag 5118,
Parramatta NSW 2124

Victims Support Line (24 hours, seven days a week):

Phone (02) 8688 5400
Freecall 1800 633 063

For people who use a TTY machine:

TTY (02) 8688 5575

Telephone Interpreting Service (TIS):

TIS 131 450

Further information for victims of crime can be found at:

Website www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/voc

Further copies of this brochure and the *Application for 2 Hours of Approved Counselling* are available from Victims Services. They can also be downloaded from our website www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/vs ('Forms & Publications').

How can counselling help me?

As a victim of violent crime, counselling can allow you to:

- talk about what happened
- understand what you are feeling
- find ways to cope following the crime
- help you gain the support you need
- deal with symptoms such as poor concentration, not sleeping, avoiding socialising or being unable to work
- reduce the extent to which your life is changed by the crime.

Counselling can assist you to recover from the emotional effects of a crime. Some victims of crime who have received counselling have made these comments:



“Counselling has made me understand myself better and not be angry with myself for what happened.”

“With counselling I realised how much my partner and children were affected as well.”

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This information is available on our website www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/vs (go to 'Forms and Publications'). For alternative formats such as Braille, audiotape, large print or computer disk, contact Diversity Services on (02) 8688 8460 (voice), (02) 8688 7733 (TTY - for people who are deaf or have a speech impairment) or diversity_services@agd.nsw.gov.au

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Approved Counselling Scheme for Victims of Violent Crime

Victims Support and Rehabilitation Act 1996



New South Wales Government
Attorney General's Department
Victims Services

What is the Approved Counselling Scheme?

The Approved Counselling Scheme provides free face to face counselling to victims of violent crimes that have occurred in NSW.

Who are the Approved Counsellors?

The counsellors with the Scheme are social workers, psychologists, clinical psychologists or psychiatrists in private practice who have proven experience in working with victims of crime. They are paid by Victims Services and are available in the metropolitan and most rural and regional areas in NSW. There is a list of Approved Counsellors on the Victims Services website www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/vs

Am I eligible to receive Approved Counselling?

You are eligible to receive free counselling from an Approved Counsellor if you are:

- the victim of an act of violence and are injured as a result
- injured as a result of witnessing an act of violence
- the parent or guardian of a victim of an act of violence who was under 18 years of age at the time of the act
- are a member of the family of a homicide victim (refer to *Support for Family Members of Homicide Victims* pamphlet)
- injured while trying to:
 - prevent someone from committing an act of violence
 - arrest someone who is committing, or has just committed an act of violence
 - help or rescue someone against whom an act of violence is being committed, or has just been committed.

You may be able to apply for counselling even if you applied for compensation under the repealed *Victims Compensation Act 1987*.

What is an act of violence?

An act of violence is an act or series of related acts, committed by one or more persons that:

- has apparently occurred in the course of the commission of an offence in NSW
- has involved violent conduct against the person(s)
- has resulted in injury or death to one or more of those persons.

When am I not eligible to receive Approved Counselling?

You are not eligible for Approved Counselling where:

- the act of violence occurred outside NSW
- an act of violence cannot be established
- the application arises from a crime against property
- the application arises from injuries caused by a motor vehicle, except in certain circumstances involving homicide.

Other counselling support

You can access counselling from a variety of organisations throughout NSW. Counselling is provided by NSW Health, and a number of community based organisations or you can contact your local GP who can refer you to a counsellor. These services are generally free of charge. Alternatively, you can see a counsellor of your choice, but you may have to pay the costs yourself. You can call the **Victims Support Line** on **1800 633 063** for more information.

How do I apply for Approved Counselling?

You may apply for an initial period of 2 hours of counselling by completing an *Application for 2 Hours of Counselling* form. The two-page form requires basic information about yourself and the act of violence to allow an assessor to consider your application.

This form can be completed and lodged on our website www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/vs Alternatively, you can fax or post the form to Victims Services.

Who can help with my application?

Anyone may help you fill out the application or you can contact the Victims Support Line for assistance with your application or for information on Approved Counsellors. We do not pay costs to a solicitor or anyone else who helps you complete the application for Approved Counselling.

How many hours of Approved Counselling can I receive?

It is possible that you may only require the initial 2 hours to overcome the problems you are experiencing as a result of the act of violence and you may decide not to proceed further.

If you and your counsellor decide you will benefit from further counselling the counsellor will write a brief report to us. The report will outline the act of violence, the injuries you have received and the assistance counselling will provide, with a recommendation as to the number of further hours required. You will be asked to fill out a form for further counselling.

How is my application for Approved Counselling processed?

Once we have received all the information necessary to process your application, the matter will be given to an assessor for consideration. We will inform you or your solicitor of the decision within two working days. Once your application for counselling has been approved, you may contact your Approved Counsellor for an appointment.

Special requirements

We can arrange for an interpreter to assist you in your counselling sessions. We can provide help if you have disability requirements. If you live interstate and have been a victim of a violent crime in NSW, counselling may be organised in the state where you are now living.