

If the answer is no, the counsellor will provide a brief report to us which states this professional opinion.

If the answer is yes, your counsellor will provide a report to us setting out a brief history of the act of violence, the injuries you have received and the assistance counselling will provide.

A recommendation by your counsellor as to the number of hours required will also be included in the report.

► **How do I apply for Further Counselling?**

To apply for further counselling you must have received the initial 2 hours of counselling approved by us and your counsellor has recommended further counselling. You will need to complete the one page *Request for Further Counselling* form. These forms can be obtained from us or from your counsellor.

► **Can I change my Approved Counsellor?**

Yes. You need to let us know the reasons why you wish to change your Approved Counsellor. Please note that prior approval is needed before changing your Approved Counsellor.

► **Do I have to pay for the Approved Counselling?**

No. Approved Counselling is paid for by us. Your counsellor will forward an invoice

for payment directly to us. We will process the payment and forward it directly to the counsellor.

You do not have to worry about payment for the counsellor, nor should your counsellor charge you for any counselling sessions you receive through the Scheme.

► **What if my application for counselling is refused?**

If you disagree with the decision of the Assessor, you may request a review of the decision by the Director, Victims Services.

The request should be made in writing and sent to the Director, Victims Services.

► **How can I receive counselling if I am not eligible for Approved Counselling?**

You can access counselling from a variety of organisations throughout NSW. For example, counselling is provided by the NSW Health Department and a number of community based organisations. These services are generally free of charge.

Alternatively, you can see any counsellor of your choice, but you need to be aware that you may have to pay the costs yourself.

► **Will my privacy be protected?**

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

► **Am I entitled to victims compensation?**

The brochure *Compensation for Victims of Violent Crime* details who is eligible to apply for compensation, how the claim for compensation is determined and how to apply for compensation.

For further information or copies of this brochure, please phone us on:
(02) 9374 3111 or 1800 069 054 (Toll Free)

Or contact the 24hr Victims Support Line on:
(02) 9374 3000 or 1800 633 063 (Toll Free)

For people who use a TTY machine:
(02) 9374 3175

Telephone Interpreting Service:
131 450

Website address:
<http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/vs>

Practical Information for victims of crime can be found at:
<http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/voc>

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Victims Services
Attorney General's
department of nsw

Approved Counselling Scheme for Victims of Violent Crime

► What is Approved Counselling?

Approved Counselling is counselling which is approved by the Victims Compensation Tribunal in accordance with s21 of the Victims Support and Rehabilitation Act 1996. The Scheme provides early intervention counselling to help address the trauma and psychological impact often experienced by victims of violent crime.

Approved Counselling is provided in addition to any entitlement you may have to victims compensation.

► Can I receive Approved Counselling even if I have not put in a claim for victims compensation?

Yes. Counselling is separate from the compensation process.

► Can I get an interpreter, if I have trouble speaking or understanding English?

Yes. We can arrange for an interpreter to assist you in your counselling sessions.

► Can I claim immediate counselling?

Yes. You may apply for an initial period of 2 hours counselling. This usually includes up to half an hour for your counsellor to prepare any notes or a brief report in relation to further counselling.

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.

A decision regarding the application of counselling should be given within 48 hours.

► How will I know if I am eligible to receive Approved Counselling?

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

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

But, 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.

► Can I receive Approved Counselling even if I am not eligible for compensation?

Yes. Eligibility for Approved Counselling is different from that for compensation. However, in order to be eligible for Approved Counselling, you must have sustained an injury as a direct result of an act of violence.

► Can a child claim for Approved Counselling?

Yes. If the victim of an act of violence is a child, an application may be made by a relative or other suitable person on the child's behalf.

► How do I apply for the initial 2 hours counselling?

You need to complete an *Application for 2 hours of Counselling* form. The two page form requires basic information about yourself and the act of violence to enable an assessor to consider your claim.

The form can be completed and lodged on-line at www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/vs

Alternatively the form can be sent to:

The Director, Victims Services
Locked Bag A5010
Sydney South NSW 1235

The approved counselling must be provided by an Approved Counsellor. You can contact us for a list of Approved Counsellors in your area or you can find the list at www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/vs

Please note that you need our prior approval before organising an appointment with the Approved Counsellor.

► Who can help me fill out the form?

Anyone may help you fill out the form, or you can contact us for help. Please note, if your solicitor, or anyone else, helps you complete the application for Approved Counselling we do not pay any of the costs of that service.

► How is my application for Counselling processed?

Once we have received all the information necessary to process your application, the matter will be given to an Assessor for consideration.

You or your solicitor will be sent a letter telling you the result of your application. If your application for counselling has been approved, you may contact your Approved Counsellor for an appointment.

► What happens after the initial 2 hours?

During the initial 2 hours, you and your counsellor will decide whether or not you will benefit from further counselling.