

Coping with Crime

- Simplify your life for a while. Make a list of the things that you are responsible for in your life, such as taking care of the kids, buying groceries, or going to work. Then, look at your list and see which things are absolutely necessary. Is there anything you can put aside for a while? Are there things you can let go of completely?
- Take care of your mind and body. Eat healthy food. Exercise regularly, even if it is only a long walk every day. Exercise will help lift depression and help you to sleep better. Massage can also help release tension and comfort you.
- Rely on people you trust. Seek information, advice, and help from them.
- Begin to restore order in your world by re-establishing old routines at work, home, or school as much as possible. Stay busy with work that occupies your mind; avoid over-taxing yourself with too much activity; leave yourself some down time to relax.
- Talk to your children, who are often the invisible victims of these crimes, and make sure they are part of your reactions, activities, and plans.
- Ask for help from family, friends, or professionals when you need it. Healing trauma, grief, and loss is similar to healing your body after illness or an accident. Just as there are doctors and nurses who are trained to help heal the body, there are professionals who are trained to help people recover from loss and cope with emotional pain.
- Think about things that give you hope. Make a list of these things and turn to them on bad days.

If You Have a Complaint About the FBI

If you believe that you have been denied a right or service to which you are entitled by the FBI, you may lodge a formal complaint with the:

Victim's Rights Complaint Coordinator
Federal Bureau of Investigation
935 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Victim Services Division
Washington, D.C. 20535
Toll-free: 877-236-8947
Email: victimrights@fbi.gov

Complaints must be submitted in writing via letter or email. Please include the following information in your complaint:

- Your name and contact information;
- The name and contact information of the employee who is the subject of the complaint, or other identifying information if the complainant is not able to provide the name and contact information;
- The FBI case number; and,
- The nature of the complaint.

Your FBI Victim Specialist

The FBI Victim Specialist assigned to your case is there to make sure you have information and support to help you get through this process. She or he will explain the criminal justice process, listen to your concerns, help you find counseling and other forms of assistance, and keep you updated on the status of the case. The Victim Specialist works for the FBI but is not an Agent. Instead, the Victim Specialist is often someone with a social work or counseling degree and experience working with young people and adults who have been victims of violent crime.

The Victim Specialist works as part of a team with the FBI Agent and employees from the U.S. Attorney's Office. While most of the discussions that you have with your Victim Specialist are confidential, there may be times when the Victim Specialist will need to share information you provide with other team members. If you have questions about limited confidentiality, you may contact your Victim Specialist for clarification. Generally, the Victim Specialist and the Agent will make every effort to protect your privacy.

Important FBI Contacts

FBI Victim Specialist: _____

Phone: _____

FBI Special Agent: _____

Phone: _____



Federal Bureau of Investigation
Victim Services Division
J. Edgar Hoover Building
935 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington D.C. 20535
(202) 324-3000

www.fbi.gov/resources/victim-services

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Help for Victims of Crime

PROVIDING SERVICES
PROTECTING RIGHTS
PURSUING JUSTICE

Introduction

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) is responsible for investigating a wide range of federal crimes. Part of the FBI's work involves providing information and assistance to victims of those crimes. Crimes can have a devastating effect on victims and their families who may need help coping with the impact of victimization. This brochure is designed to give you a summary of what to expect during the course of an FBI investigation.

The Role of an FBI Agent

FBI Agents are criminal investigators. The FBI may investigate a crime if there is reason to believe that the crime violated federal law.

If the FBI concludes that a federal crime may have been committed, one or more FBI agents will conduct an investigation. As part of the investigation, the agent will gather evidence, which may include an interview with you and other victims or witnesses.

FBI investigations can be both complex and lengthy. It can take an extended period of time to complete a thorough, accurate investigation. It may involve several agencies, some federal and some local.

Every effort will be made to tell you about major events in an investigation, such as an arrest or indictment. The FBI is committed to providing such information to you before it is released to the public, when possible. However, the FBI must always be careful not to reveal sensitive information that could hurt the investigation.

The FBI will tell you when an investigation is over. At that point, there are several possible scenarios:

- The FBI may conclude that there was no federal crime and close the case.
- The FBI may conclude that there was a federal crime, but the Department of Justice (DOJ) US Attorney's Office (USAO) may decide not to prosecute the case. In some of those instances, the FBI will refer the case to state or local law enforcement authorities.
- The DOJ USAO may decide to prosecute the case. At that time a prosecuting attorney or Victim Witness Coordinator from the USAO will be contacting you.

The Role of an FBI Victim Specialist

In addition to an FBI agent, each case with an identified victim will have an FBI Victim Specialist assigned. A Victim Specialist is a highly trained professional who can assist you with support, information, and resources. The Victim Specialist will serve as the point of contact between you and the FBI.

If you are Threatened or Harassed

Your safety is paramount. If anyone threatens you or you feel that you are being harassed because of your cooperation with an investigation, you should report this to the assigned FBI agent or Victim Specialist. If you are in immediate danger, contact your local law enforcement agency immediately.

If you Need Financial Help or Support Services

Every state has a crime victim compensation program that may help cover some expenses resulting from crime. Your state program may pay for medical and mental health care costs, lost wages and support, and funeral and burial expenses not covered by insurance or other benefits. Your Victim Specialist can help you with the application process, if you are eligible.

Your Victim Specialist can also refer you to other types of programs and services, such as emergency housing, counseling, medical assistance, support groups and credit counseling. At your request, the FBI can notify an employer and/or creditor for you, if your victimization causes you to be absent from work or affects your ability to make timely payments to creditors.

If the offender is charged and is convicted or pleads guilty, the court may order payment to you by the offender, called restitution, which may help cover expenses and losses caused by your victimization.

It is recommended that you and family members keep copies of all receipts that may be necessary for victim compensation or restitution claims.

If your Property was Stolen or Held as Evidence

If your property was stolen, we hope to recover it as part of our investigation and return it as soon as possible. Please understand that some property we receive as evidence may have been damaged during the course of the crime. We will return this property to you as is when possible. If your property is held as evidence, the FBI will notify you, maintain it in the current condition, and make every effort to see that it is returned to you as quickly as possible once it is no longer needed as evidence.

Your Rights as a Victim

Under the *Victims' Rights and Restitution Act (VRRRA)*, 34 U.S.C. § 20141, victims are entitled:

- To be notified they have been the victim of a federal crime;
- To be informed of the place where they may receive medical and social services;
- To be informed of public and private programs available for counseling, treatment, and other support services;
- To receive reasonable protection from a suspected offender and persons acting in concert with or at the behest of the suspected offender;
- To know the status of the investigation of the crime, to the extent it is appropriate and it will not interfere with the investigation;
- To have personal property being held for evidentiary purposes maintained in good condition and returned as soon as it is no longer needed for evidentiary purposes.

There may be additional rights and resources for sexual assault victims.

Victims' Rights After Charges are Filed

If an offender is charged with a crime, you will have certain additional rights (under Title 18 United States Code Section 3771), such as the right to notification of public events in the case, including the trial or entry of a guilty plea. The prosecuting US Attorney's Office (USAO) will contact you and notify you of the date of those proceedings. Each USAO has a Victim/Witness Coordinator to help answer your questions and deal with your concerns during the prosecution of a case, but an FBI Victim Specialist also may continue to be involved in the case to assist you.