

# Albany County Crime Victim and Sexual Violence Center

*Proudly serving the community since 1975*

ADVOCACY HOTLINE  
COUNSELING EDUCATION

112 State Street, Room 1010, Albany, NY 12207

**24-Hour Sexual Assault Hotline** (518) 447-7716

**Main Office & Information** (518) 447-7100

**Fax** (518) 447-7102

**email** [cvsvc@albanycountyny.gov](mailto:cvsvc@albanycountyny.gov)

**website** [www.albanycounty.com/cvsvc](http://www.albanycounty.com/cvsvc)



*Visit us on Facebook @albanycountycvsvc*

*Free advocacy and confidential counseling for crime victims in Albany County*

*If you have questions about the immediate or long-term steps following a homicide, or if you are not sure where to find information and resources, please do not hesitate to contact us.*

## ***YOU DON'T HAVE TO GO THROUGH THIS ALONE***



The **mission** of the Crime Victim and Sexual Violence Center (CVSVC) is to provide direct and comprehensive services to all individuals affected by sexual assault and other crimes of personal violence. Utilizing therapy, advocacy, community mobilization, prevention education and bystander engagement, CVSVC seeks to change societal conditions that allow and perpetuate oppression.



**Daniel P. McCoy**  
Albany County Executive

2018

No person in the United States shall, on the basis of actual or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, sex, gender identity (as defined in paragraph 249(c)(4) of title 18, United States Code), sexual orientation, or disability, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity funded in whole or in part with funds made available under [VAWA], and any other program or activity funded in whole or in part with funds appropriated for grants, cooperative agreements, and other assistance administered by the Office on Violence Against Women.

# Survivors of Homicide: Picking Up the Pieces

Information regarding end of life details, victim resources, grief, self-care and the justice system for those who have lost a loved one to homicide



***YOU DON'T HAVE TO GO THROUGH THIS ALONE***

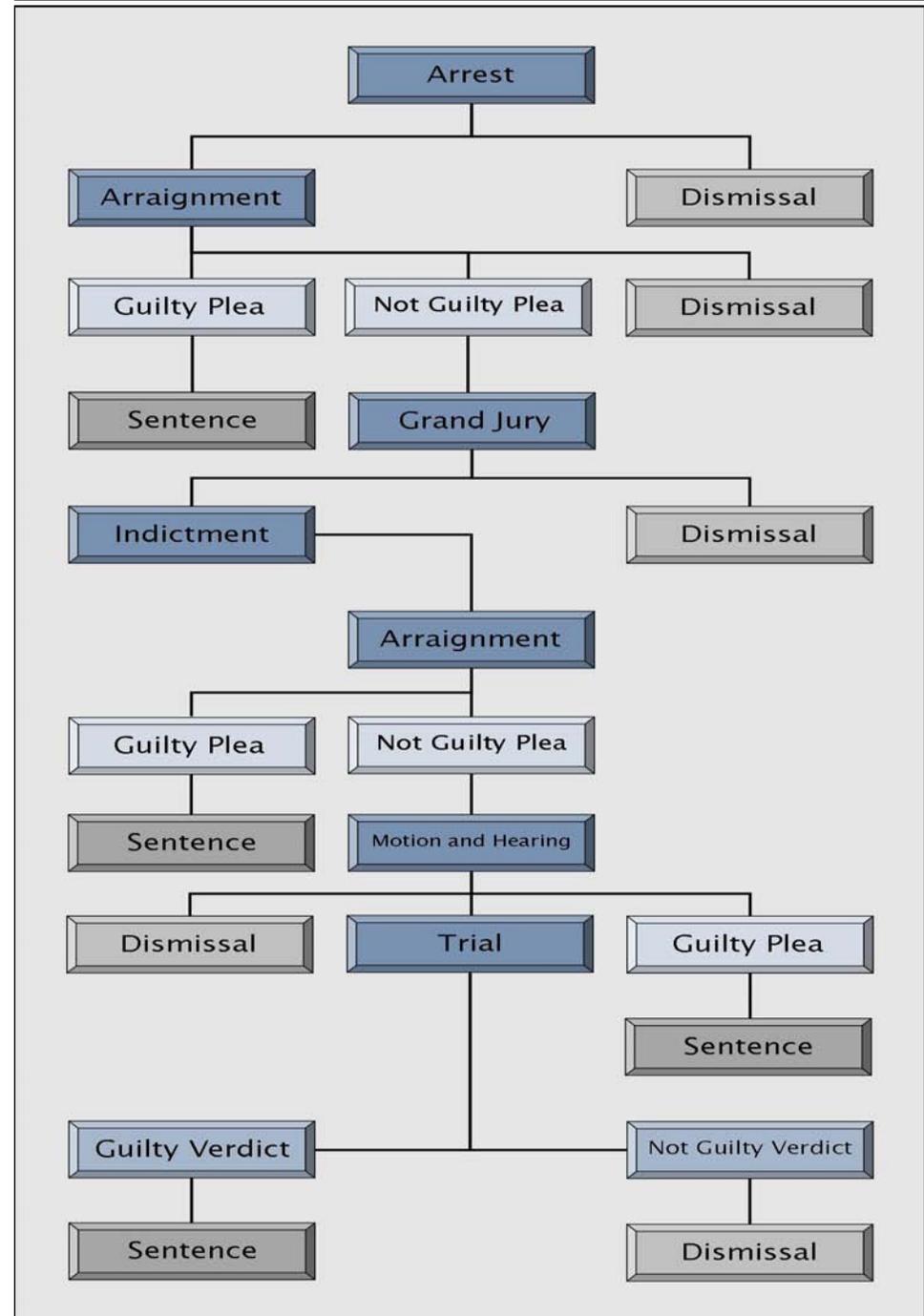
*The Albany County Crime Victim and Sexual Violence Center has created this brochure to help you through your grief, pain, anger, confusion and fear following the loss of your loved one. Please know that we are available if you have questions about the immediate or long-term steps following a homicide, or if you are not sure where to find information and resources. You don't have to go through this alone.*

### AFTER A HOMICIDE: STEPS FOR SURVIVORS

1. Plan for funeral arrangements. The funeral home will be able to provide guidance concerning the obituary and how to obtain a certified death certificate. A certified death certificate is required to claim survivor benefits and to settle the estate of the deceased. In a murder investigation, the victim's body is considered to be the primary evidence" and there may be a delay in releasing the body to the funeral home.
2. Find and collect important documents of the deceased. *(refer to list on page 3)*
3. Notify:
  - Employers
  - Medical and health providers
  - Insurance companies (auto, home, life)
  - Social Security Administration (1-800-772-1213)
  - Financial institutions and creditors
4. Check with present and previous employers and file for any survivors' benefits that may be payable, such as life insurance, accidental death insurance, pension benefits or Worker's Compensation.
5. Fill out the New York State Office of Victim Services (OVS) application for potential compensation. Information, applications and a comprehensive guide to NYS crime victims' rights can be found at [www.OVS.ny.gov](http://www.OVS.ny.gov). In addition, the Albany County Crime Victim and Sexual Violence Center can assist you in obtaining, completing and submitting an application.
 

New York State Office of Victim Services  
1-800-247-8035 and (518) 457-8727  
Albany County Crime Victim and Sexual Violence Center  
(518) 447-7100
6. Along the way, take care of yourself and those surviving the loss. Take care of your basic needs (food, drink, shelter, comfort and rest). Seek counseling or support from your family, friends, medical provider, church or community. *(refer to pages 4-7 for information and referrals on grieving and self-care)*

### FELONY COURT PROCESS IN ALBANY COUNTY COURTS



Graphic used with permission of Albany County District Attorney

## TYPES OF HOMICIDE

Homicide is a felony. Felony cases occurring in Albany County are prosecuted by the Albany County District Attorney in the Albany County Courthouse on Lodge Street in the City of Albany.

**Homicide** falls into four general categories:

- Murder
- Manslaughter
- Criminally Negligent Homicide
- Justifiable Homicide

**Murder** is the intentional killing of another.

**Murder in the First Degree** is the intentional killing of a person in the course of certain felonies, or when the victim of the crime is a judge, police officer or witness. (There are other limited categories of First Degree Murder as well)

**Murder in the Second Degree** is either the intentional killing of another, or when someone is killed in the course of certain felonies by another participant in that felony.

**Manslaughter** is the reckless killing of another.

**Criminally Negligent Homicide** is causing the death of another in a negligent manner when the death is a foreseeable result of the conduct.

**Justifiable Homicide** usually involves the use of deadly physical force in self-defense, or in defense of another person. This determination may be made by the police, prosecutors and sometimes grand juries.

If you have questions about the Albany County courts, court process and/or the legal system contact the



**Office of the Albany County District Attorney**

6 Lodge Street, Albany, NY 12207

(518) 487-5460

Information provided by the Office of the Albany County District Attorney

## DOCUMENTS NEEDED AFTER A DEATH

- Certified death certificates (you will need multiple copies)
- Social Security card
- Marriage certificate
- Birth certificates for deceased and any surviving children
- Insurance policies (life, health, homeowners, auto)
- Deeds and titles to property
- Motor vehicle titles and registration papers
- Stock and bond certificates
- Bank statements
- Pension, IRA, retirement statements
- Military records and discharge papers
- Recent income tax forms and W-2 forms
- Loan, utility and creditor statements
- Itemized funeral bill & contract

## RESOURCES

**National Center for Victims of Crime**

(855) 4-VICTIM (855-484-2846)

[www.victimsofcrime.org](http://www.victimsofcrime.org)

**Jenkins, Bill. *What to Do When the Police Leave:***

***A Guide to the First Days of Traumatic Loss***

Chicago, IL: WBJ Press, 2001 (3rd Ed.)

Written by a victim for other victims and their caregivers, this book offers authoritative and invaluable advice, guidance and resources for families dealing with the traumatic loss of a family member or friend.

**National Organization of Parents of Murdered Children, Inc**  
*For the families and friends of those who have died by violence*

[www.pomc.com/survivors.html](http://www.pomc.com/survivors.html)

**Survivors of Homicide**

[www.survivorsofhomicide.com](http://www.survivorsofhomicide.com)

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## THE GRIEF PROCESS



The initial news of a loved one's death can be shocking and paralyzing. You may feel many emotions, have many questions, and you may be suddenly overwhelmed with many decisions and plans. You may experience grief in different steps; shock and disbelief in the immediate aftermath of the crime, despair and abandonment during trial, and perhaps relief and longing following the trial and during holidays and anniversaries. In addition, homicide survivors have little privacy due to news and social media, who often report inaccurate or inappropriate information. Things to keep in mind throughout your mourning and grieving process:

**Everyone's way of processing or coping with grief is different**, so it is important to remember that no one is reacting "right" or "wrong". We all respond differently. During your own process of recovery, it is important to empower yourself to take your own steps while not expecting too much of yourself or others.

**Grief is not orderly and predictable.** You may reach a period of relative calm followed by intense grief. You may wonder if you are making any progress at all - you are! Be patient and gentle with yourself. As time passes, you will heal.

**You will get through this.** In time, grief will eventually become more manageable. You will gradually feel stronger and more in charge. Allow yourself to take steps to gain strength and peace.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO IF SOMEONE YOU KNOW HAS LOST A LOVED ONE THROUGH HOMICIDE

Sometimes we don't know what to do or say to help others who have experienced loss. We have listed some ideas and web links here. Please help in whatever way is safe and comfortable for you.

Above all, it is important to remember to actively listen without judgement. Allow the survivor to speak openly and freely about their feelings without questioning or attempting to explain their experience.

<http://tinybuddha.com/blog/speak-someone-unspeakable-loss/>  
[www.pennlive.com/opinion/2014/07/some\\_words\\_to\\_remember\\_when\\_yo.html](http://www.pennlive.com/opinion/2014/07/some_words_to_remember_when_yo.html)

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## CIVIL JUSTICE

Every crime victim has the right to file a civil lawsuit seeking financial compensation from the offender or other parties whose unreasonable conduct gave rise to conditions which allowed the crime to occur.

Regardless of whether there was a successful criminal prosecution or any prosecution at all, victims can bring their claims before the court and ask to have the responsible parties held accountable.

For more information on civil lawsuits contact:

The National Crime Victim Bar Association  
2000 M Street, NW, Suite 480

Washington, DC 20036

(202) 467-8753

victimbar@ncvc.org

www.victimbar.org



## RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

Restorative Justice is a voluntary, private and confidential process facilitated by trained and certified mediators. This process engages the person who caused harm, the person(s) harmed and the community to cooperatively identify and repair damage by transforming the traditional, punitive governmental response. The purpose is healing, not punishment.

The best way to do this is to help all persons involved meet to discuss those harms and how to about bring resolution. All affected persons must agree to participate, and this action can occur at any point in the judicial process.

For information or to speak with a certified facilitator contact:

Mediation Matters

10 N. Russell Rd, 2nd Floor

Albany, NY 12206

(518) 446-0356

www.mediationmatters.org



## CRIMINAL JUSTICE

It is both helpful and important for survivors to have knowledge of the criminal justice system and the trial process. You should be aware of all possible outcomes and verdicts of the case. It may take months or even years for your case to be settled. It is important to remember that you are entitled to ask as many questions as you feel necessary.

Upon learning of a homicide in Albany County, law enforcement contacts the Albany County offices of the District Attorney and the County Coroner, who both respond to the crime scene. Victim/Witness Specialists from the District Attorney's office immediately begin forming bonds with surviving family and friends of the victim, which last throughout the long court process and often continue beyond the trial. The Assistant District Attorney and Victim/Witness Specialist will keep you informed of the progress of the case, provide information about how the criminal justice system works and your rights and provisions under NYS laws, and answer any questions that you may have. Victim advocates at both the District Attorney's office and the Albany County Crime Victim and Sexual Violence Center are available to offer support, information, OVS assistance and referrals throughout the criminal process.

The NYS Office of Victim Services (OVS) may provide compensation for expenses, such as medical and counseling costs, loss of personal property, burial/funeral costs, lost wages, loss of support and more. Information, applications and a comprehensive guide to NYS crime victims' rights can be found at <http://www.ovs.ny.gov>.

The National Crime Victim Law Institute (NCVLI) website offers information for victims about their rights, the criminal justice system and resources. [https://law.lclark.edu/centers/national\\_crime\\_victim\\_law\\_institute/](https://law.lclark.edu/centers/national_crime_victim_law_institute/)

Office of the Albany County District Attorney  
(518) 487-5460

Albany County Coroner  
(518) 445-7604

Albany County Crime Victim and Sexual Violence Center  
(518) 447-7100

### Some things you can say:

"I can't imagine what you are going through."  
"Is there anything I can do to help?"  
"It breaks my heart to see you suffering."  
"This is so unfair."

### Some things you can do:

If the surviving person is ready, talk about the person who was lost.  
Share a memory or story.  
Offer your assistance with daily living tasks like grocery shopping, meal preparation, child care, etc.  
Accompany survivors to appointments, support groups, counseling, court  
Be there and offer long-term support

## CHILDREN AND GRIEF

**Children may grieve differently.** Children affected by a violent death may experience one or many of the following:

- *Fear of death* (their own, loved ones, etc.)
- *Anxiety*
- *Regression in behavior* (clingy/irritable behavior, need for more attention, bed wetting or thumb sucking)
- *Sleep disorders* (nightmares or night terrors, fear of going to bed, not able to sleep or sleepwalking)
- *Physical complaints* (stomachaches, headaches, heartaches)
- *Eating habit changes* (loss of appetite, anorexic behaviors, bulimia, increased appetite or weight gain)
- *Reliving the violent experience in play or memory*
- *Changes in school behavior and reduced ability to concentrate*
- *Affect change* (risk taking, aggressive, hopes, depressed)

In Albany County, The Community Hospice offers a free, child-specific grief counseling group called "Wave Riders" that may be helpful for a grieving child.



**The Community Hospice**  
445 New Karner Road  
Colonie, NY 12205  
(518) 724-0200

## LOCAL GRIEF SUPPORT SERVICES

### Urban Grief

Urban Grief is a trauma-informed, community-based organization that responds to the traumatic impact of community violence, death and loss through community education, crisis response, victim advocacy and grief support.

- Individual/Family listening support
- Trauma Response Team - Community Based Crisis Response
- Victim Advocacy
- Trauma/Grief/Loss Education
- Informational Resources
- Support Groups
- Individualized Crisis Response
- Referrals

Lisa Good, MSW - Director

Website: [www.urbangrief.org](http://www.urbangrief.org), Facebook: Urban Grief

email: [support@urbangrief.org](mailto:support@urbangrief.org), (518) 203-3818 or (518) 447-7100

### Albany County Crime Victim and Sexual Violence Center

*Free confidential trauma counseling and referrals*

(518) 447-7100

### The Community Hospice

*Free support for anyone grieving the death of a family member or friend*

Colonie, NY 12205

(518) 724-0200

[www.hospicegriefservices.com](http://www.hospicegriefservices.com)

### Parents of Murdered Children and Other Survivors of Homicide Victims (Albany chapter)

Woodlawn Reformed Church, Schenectady, NY

Contact Pat Gioia: (518) 377-1660

### Compassionate Friends

*Grief support following the death of a child*

Westminster Presbyterian Church, Albany, NY

Contact Jan Messina: (518) 439-0346

## SELF-CARE WHILE GRIEVING

Bereavement is the state of having suffered a loss and mourning and grief is an outward expression of loss. Going through the grieving process is important as the psychological effects of losing a loved one can be long-term. Self-care, the act of caring for and nurturing one's soul and well-being, can be an important part of processing and surviving grief. These self-care steps may help survivors get through the grief and tragedy.

**Be kind to yourself.** Take care of your basic needs (food, drink, shelter, comfort and rest) and don't take on more than you can handle.

**Ask for help and accept it.** If you need help or support, let others know. They may want to help, but not know how.

**Find support.** Share your feelings and find people you can talk to. Many community centers, churches and hospice agencies host grief support groups. See page 6 for a list of resources.

**Make a difference.** When you are ready, volunteering and helping friends or family may be a good distraction.

**Honor your loved one.** September 25<sup>th</sup> is the National Day of Remembrance for Murder Victims. Find a way individually, with family or with support from the community, to remember your loved one on this day. Have your loved one's name engraved on a brick to be placed on a walkway at the Empire State Plaza alongside the names of other victims of homicide. For information on the annual Bricks Ceremony, call (518) 447-7100 or visit <http://nycrimevictimstaskforce.org/>.

During the grief process, you may feel exhausted or as though your heart rate and blood pressure are dramatically increasing; or, your senses may be heightened. If this persists, or if you have concerns for your physical or mental health, it may be helpful to visit a medical professional. If you are having a hard time finding resources, please reach out to the Albany County Crime Victim and Sexual Violence Center, a community group or an individual with whom you feel comfortable.

Albany County Crime Victim and Sexual Violence Center

*Free confidential trauma counseling and referrals*

(518) 447-7100