

Chapter 7.69 RCW
CRIME VICTIMS, SURVIVORS, AND WITNESSES

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Domestic violence leave: Chapter 49.76 RCW.

RCW 7.69.010 Intent. In recognition of the severe and detrimental impact of crime on victims, survivors of victims, and witnesses of crime and the civic and moral duty of victims, survivors of victims, and witnesses of crimes to fully and voluntarily cooperate with law enforcement and prosecutorial agencies, and in further recognition of the continuing importance of such citizen cooperation to state and local law enforcement efforts and the general effectiveness and well-being of the criminal justice system of this state, the legislature declares its intent, in this chapter, to grant to the victims of crime and the survivors of such victims a significant role, including enhanced accessibility, in the criminal justice system. The legislature further intends to ensure that all victims and witnesses of crime are treated with dignity, respect, courtesy, and sensitivity; ensure that all victims and witnesses are afforded access to justice to participate in criminal justice proceedings, including the opportunity to participate and attend court hearings in person or remotely, including by video or other electronic means as available in the local jurisdiction; and that the rights extended in this chapter to victims, survivors of victims, and witnesses of crime are honored, protected, and upheld by law enforcement agencies, prosecutors, and judges in a manner no less vigorous than the protections afforded criminal defendants. [2024 c 297 s 9; 1985 c 443 s 1; 1981 c 145 s 1.]

Effective date—2024 c 297: See note following RCW 7.68.127.

Severability—1985 c 443: "If any provision of this act or its application to any person or circumstance is held invalid, the remainder of the act or the application of the provision to other persons or circumstances is not affected." [1985 c 443 s 27.]

Effective date—1985 c 443: "This act is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, and safety, the support of the state government and its existing public institutions, and shall take effect on July 1, 1985." [1985 c 443 s 28.]

RCW 7.69.020 Definitions. Unless the context clearly requires otherwise, the definitions in this section apply throughout this chapter.

(1) "Crime" means an act punishable as a felony, gross misdemeanor, or misdemeanor under the laws of this state or equivalent federal or local law.

(2) "Survivor" or "survivors" of a victim of crime means a spouse or domestic partner, child, parent, legal guardian, sibling, or grandparent. If there is more than one survivor of a victim of crime, one survivor shall be designated by the prosecutor to represent all survivors for purposes of providing the notice to survivors required by this chapter.

(3) "Victim" means a person against whom a crime has been committed or the representative of a person against whom a crime has been committed.

(4) "Victim impact statement" means a statement submitted to the court by the victim or a survivor, individually or with the assistance of the prosecuting attorney if assistance is requested by the victim or survivor, which may include but is not limited to information assessing the financial, medical, social, and psychological impact of the offense upon the victim or survivors.

(5) "Witness" means a person who has been or is expected to be summoned to testify for the prosecution in a criminal action, or who by reason of having relevant information is subject to call or likely to be called as a witness for the prosecution, whether or not an action or proceeding has been commenced.

(6) "Crime victim/witness program" means any crime victim and witness program of a county or local law enforcement agency or prosecutor's office, any rape crisis center's sexual assault victim advocacy program as provided in chapter 70.125 RCW, any domestic violence program's legal and community advocate program for domestic violence victims as provided in chapter 70.123 RCW, or any other crime victim advocacy program which provides trained advocates to assist crime victims during the investigation and prosecution of the crime. [2008 c 6 s 404; 1993 c 350 s 5; 1985 c 443 s 2; 1981 c 145 s 2.]

Part headings not law—Severability—2008 c 6: See RCW 26.60.900 and 26.60.901.

Findings—1993 c 350: "The legislature finds that domestic violence is a problem of immense proportions affecting individuals as well as communities. Domestic violence has long been recognized as being at the core of other major social problems including child abuse, crimes of violence against person or property, juvenile delinquency, and alcohol and drug abuse. Domestic violence costs include the loss of lives as well as millions of dollars each year in the state of Washington for health care, absence from work, and services to children. The crisis is growing.

While the existing protection order process can be a valuable tool to increase safety for victims and to hold batterers accountable, specific problems in its use have become evident. Victims have difficulty completing the paperwork required; model forms have been modified to be inconsistent with statutory language; different forms create confusion for law enforcement agencies about the contents and enforceability of orders. Refinements are needed so that victims have

the easy, quick, and effective access to the court system envisioned at the time the protection order process was first created.

Valuable information about the reported incidents of domestic violence in the state of Washington is unobtainable without gathering data from all law enforcement agencies. Without this information, it is difficult for policymakers, funders, and service providers to plan for the resources and services needed to address the issue." [1993 c 350 s 1.]

Severability—Effective date—1985 c 443: See notes following RCW 7.69.010.

RCW 7.69.030 Rights of victims, survivors, and witnesses. (1)

There shall be a reasonable effort made to ensure that victims, survivors of victims, and witnesses of crimes have the following rights, which apply to any adult or juvenile criminal proceeding and any civil commitment proceeding under chapter 10.77 or 71.09 RCW:

(a) With respect to victims of violent or sex crimes, to receive, at the time of reporting the crime to law enforcement officials, a written statement of the rights of crime victims as provided in this chapter. The written statement shall include the name, address, and telephone number of a county or local crime victim/witness program, if such a crime victim/witness program exists in the county;

(b) To be informed by local law enforcement agencies or the prosecuting attorney of the final disposition of the case in which the victim, survivor, or witness is involved;

(c) With respect to victims of violent offenses, domestic violence, or sex offenses, to be informed by local law enforcement agencies or the prosecuting attorney that charges have been filed and when the defendant has been found not competent to stand trial and referred for restoration services;

(d) To be notified by the party who issued the subpoena that a court proceeding to which they have been subpoenaed will not occur as scheduled, in order to save the person an unnecessary trip to court;

(e) To receive protection from harm and threats of harm arising out of cooperation with law enforcement and prosecution efforts, and to be provided with information as to the level of protection available;

(f) To be informed of the procedure to be followed to apply for and receive any witness fees to which they are entitled;

(g) To be provided, whenever practical, a secure waiting area during court proceedings that does not require them to be in close proximity to defendants and families or friends of defendants;

(h) To have any stolen or other personal property expeditiously returned by law enforcement agencies or the superior court when no longer needed as evidence. When feasible, all such property, except weapons, currency, contraband, property subject to evidentiary analysis, and property of which ownership is disputed, shall be photographed and returned to the owner within ten days of being taken;

(i) To be provided with appropriate employer intercession services to ensure that employers of victims, survivors of victims, and witnesses of crime will cooperate with the criminal justice process or the civil commitment process under chapter 10.77 or 71.09 RCW in order to minimize an employee's loss of pay and other benefits resulting from court appearance;

(j) To have access to immediate medical assistance and not to be detained for an unreasonable length of time by a law enforcement agency before having such assistance administered. However, an employee of the law enforcement agency may, if necessary, accompany the person to a medical facility to question the person about the criminal incident if the questioning does not hinder the administration of medical assistance. Victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking, as defined in RCW 49.76.020, shall be notified of their right to reasonable leave from employment under chapter 49.76 RCW;

(k) With respect to victims of violent and sex crimes, to have a crime victim advocate from a crime victim/witness program, or any other support person of the victim's choosing, present at any prosecutorial or defense interviews with the victim, and at any judicial proceedings related to criminal acts committed against the victim. This subsection applies if practical and if the presence of the crime victim advocate or support person does not cause any unnecessary delay in the investigation or prosecution of the case. The role of the crime victim advocate is to provide emotional support to the crime victim;

(l) With respect to victims of violent offenses, domestic violence, or sex offenses, such victims may attend court proceedings or required interviews in person or remotely, including by video or other electronic means, as available in the local jurisdiction, to ensure access to justice to participate in criminal justice proceedings;

(m) With respect to victims and survivors of victims, to be physically present in court during trial, or if subpoenaed to testify, to be scheduled as early as practical in the proceedings in order to be physically present during trial after testifying and not to be excluded solely because they have testified;

(n) With respect to victims and survivors of victims in any felony case, any case involving domestic violence, or any final determination under chapter 10.77 or 71.09 RCW, to be informed by the prosecuting attorney of the date, time, and place of the trial and of the sentencing hearing or disposition hearing upon request by a victim or survivor;

(o) To submit a victim impact statement or report to the court, with the assistance of the prosecuting attorney if requested, which shall be included in all presentence reports and permanently included in the files and records accompanying the offender committed to the custody of a state agency or institution;

(p) With respect to victims and survivors of victims in any felony case or any case involving domestic violence, to present a statement, personally or by representation, at the sentencing hearing; and

(q) With respect to victims and survivors of victims, to entry of an order of restitution by the court in all felony cases, even when the offender is sentenced to confinement, unless extraordinary circumstances exist which make restitution inappropriate in the court's judgment.

(2) If a victim, survivor of a victim, or witness of a crime is denied a right under this section, the person may seek an order directing compliance by the relevant party or parties by filing a petition in the superior court in the county in which the crime occurred and providing notice of the petition to the relevant party or parties. Compliance with the right is the sole available remedy. The

court shall expedite consideration of a petition filed under this subsection. [2024 c 297 s 10; 2023 c 197 s 11; 2022 c 229 s 1; 2009 c 138 s 5; 2008 c 286 s 16; 2004 c 120 s 8; 1999 c 323 s 2; 1997 c 343 s 1; 1993 c 350 s 6; 1985 c 443 s 3; 1981 c 145 s 3.]

Effective date—2024 c 297: See note following RCW 7.68.127.

Effective date—2008 c 286: See RCW 49.76.900.

Effective date—2004 c 120: See note following RCW 13.40.010.

Intent—1999 c 323: See note following RCW 9.94A.885.

Findings—1993 c 350: See note following RCW 7.69.020.

Severability—Effective date—1985 c 443: See notes following RCW 7.69.010.

Child victims and witnesses, additional rights: Chapter 7.69A RCW.

RCW 7.69.032 Right to make statement before postsentence release of offender. (1) The legislature recognizes the significant concerns that many victims, survivors of victims, and witnesses of crimes have when offenders are considered for postsentence release from confinement. Therefore, it is the intent of the legislature to ensure that victims, survivors of victims, and witnesses of crimes are afforded the opportunity to make a statement that will be considered prior to the granting of postsentence release from confinement for any offender under the jurisdiction of the indeterminate sentence review board or its successor, or by the governor regarding an application for pardon or commutation of sentence.

(2) Victims, survivors of victims, and witnesses of crimes have the following rights:

(a) With respect to victims, survivors of victims, and witnesses of crimes, to present a statement to the indeterminate sentence review board or its successor, in person or by representation, via audio or videotape or other electronic means, or in writing, prior to the granting of parole or community custody release for any offender under the board's jurisdiction.

(b) With respect to victims and survivors of victims, to present a statement to the clemency and pardons board in person, via audio or videotape or other electronic means, or in writing, at any hearing conducted regarding an application for pardon or commutation of sentence. [2009 c 138 s 1.]

RCW 7.69.035 Protection of witnesses who testify against criminal gang members—Intent. The legislature recognizes that witnesses are often fearful of testifying against criminal gang members. Witnesses may be subject to harassment, intimidation, and threats. While the state does not ensure protection of witnesses, the state intends to provide resources to assist local prosecutors in combating gang-related crimes and to help citizens perform their civic duty to testify in these cases. [2008 c 276 s 501.]

Severability—Part headings, subheadings not law—2008 c 276: See notes following RCW 36.28A.200.

RCW 7.69.040 Representation of incapacitated or incompetent victim. For purposes of this chapter, a victim who is incapacitated or otherwise incompetent shall be represented by a parent or present legal guardian, or if none exists, by a representative designated by the prosecuting attorney without court appointment or legal guardianship proceedings. Any victim may designate another person as the victim's representative for purposes of the rights enumerated in RCW 7.69.030. [1985 c 443 s 4.]

Severability—Effective date—1985 c 443: See notes following RCW 7.69.010.

RCW 7.69.050 Construction of chapter—Other remedies or defenses. Nothing contained in this chapter may be construed to provide grounds for error in favor of a criminal defendant in a criminal proceeding, nor may anything in this chapter be construed to grant a new cause of action or remedy against the state, its political subdivisions, law enforcement agencies, or prosecuting attorneys. The failure of a person to make a reasonable effort to ensure that victims, survivors, and witnesses under this chapter have the rights enumerated in RCW 7.69.030 shall not result in civil liability against that person. This chapter does not limit other civil remedies or defenses of the offender or the victim or survivors of the victim. [1985 c 443 s 5.]

Severability—Effective date—1985 c 443: See notes following RCW 7.69.010.