

## Contact Us

The Office of Crime Victim Services maintains a toll-free phone line to answer questions from victims or witnesses from 7:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on weekdays.

### Phone

800-446-6564, press  
option #2 for VRC

### Email

[ocvs@doj.state.wi.us](mailto:ocvs@doj.state.wi.us)

### Website

<https://www.doj.state.wi.us/ocvs>

### Mailing Address

Office of Crime Victim  
Services

P.O. Box 7951

Madison, WI 53707-7951



## Victim Resource Center

The Victim Resource Center (VRC) operates within the Wisconsin Department of Justice (DOJ) Office of Crime Victim Services (OCVS). The VRC provides services and supportive resources to victims of crime, their families, and witnesses after the commission of a crime. VRC staff provide assistance to ensure that victims of crime understand and can exercise their statutory and constitutional victim rights.

### Victim Rights Spotlight: When Victim Rights Vest

The Wisconsin Constitution (Article 1, Section 9m) and Wis. Stat. Chapter 950 give special rights to victims of crime. Some rights are automatic while others must be requested. Along with understanding the rights that victims are afforded and how they are exercised within the criminal justice system, it is important to also understand *when* these victim rights apply.

Victim rights contained in the Constitution and state statutes are similar, yet slightly different. Some statutory victim rights are worded different in the Constitution, while other victim rights are brand new and do not have a statutory counterpart. One important difference is when rights are first afforded to victims.

### What do the statutes say versus the Constitution?

[Wis. Stat. §950.03](#) “Eligibility of victims. A victim has the rights and is eligible for the services under this chapter only if the crime has been reported to law enforcement authorities.”

[WI Const art 1 §9m\(2\)](#) “In order to preserve and protect victims’ rights to justice and due process throughout the criminal and juvenile justice process, victims shall be entitled to all of the following rights, which shall vest at the time of victimization and be protected by law in a manner no less vigorous than the protections afforded to the accused:”

### What does this mean?

Statutory victim rights vest at the time that a victim reports a crime to law enforcement. Constitutional victim rights, however, vest at the time of victimization, or at the time the crime is committed. When a right is vested, the person with the right has a guaranteed legal claim or entitlement that can be enforced. Therefore, victims do not need to report a crime to law enforcement to exercise their constitutional victim rights.

### What does this look like in practice?

There are some constitutional rights that logistically require a crime to be reported and/or charged before they can be afforded to a crime victim. Examples would be the right to be notified of proceedings and the right to confer with the prosecutor. Other important rights do not need to be

reported, however, because they may apply at the time of victimization. Examples would be the right to privacy and the right to be treated with dignity, respect, courtesy, sensitivity, and fairness.

**Why is this important for you?**

These differences may seem insignificant at first glance, but they are important to keep in mind when working with crime victims, as being a victim of crime and navigating the criminal justice system can be a terrifying and confusing experience for many. Victim service providers are often one of the first contacts a victim has following a crime, and they play a pivotal part in establishing and sustaining victim engagement throughout the criminal justice process.

For many reasons, victim service providers may be contacted by victims who have not yet reported the crime to law enforcement and/or may decide to never report. It is important to remember and inform these victims that they still have the right to be treated with respect and afforded privacy, regardless of whether there is a report made.

The VRC provides training and technical assistance to allied professionals to increase understanding about the rights and needs to crime victims. For more information about crime victim rights, please contact the DOJ Office of Crime Victim Services- Victim Resource Center at 608-264-9497 or [ocvs@doj.state.wi.us](mailto:ocvs@doj.state.wi.us).