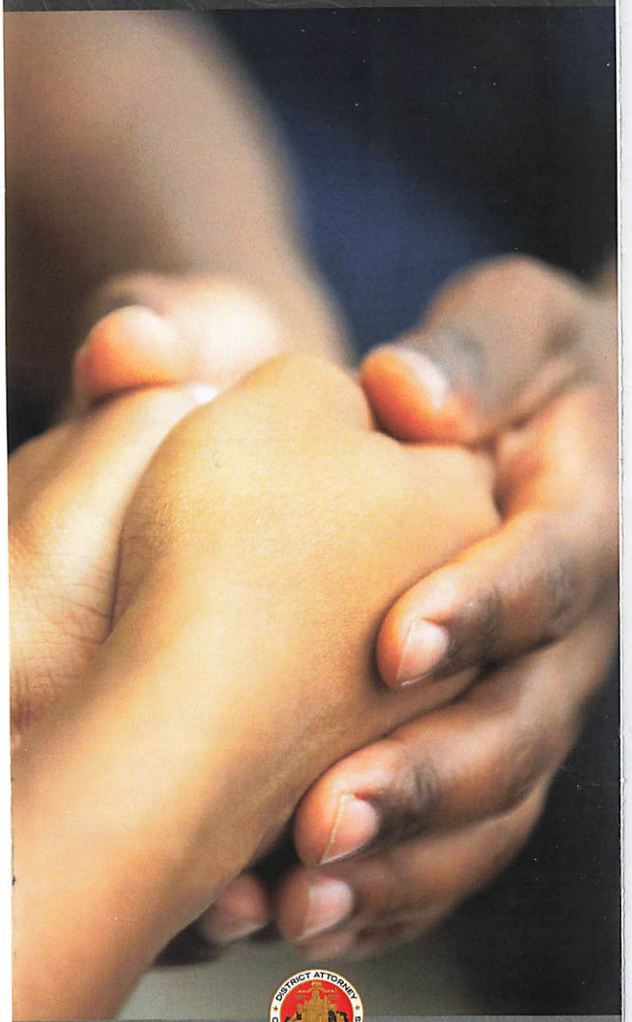
FAMILIES SURVIVING

CRIMINAL HOMICIDE



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da.lacounty.gov @LADAOffice @LACountyDA

What Is Criminal Homicide?

Individuals commit criminal homicide if they intentionally, knowingly, recklessly, or with criminal negligence cause the death of another person.

Homicides that are neither justifiable nor excusable are considered crimes and can lead to criminal charges.

These charges may include murder, manslaughter, vehicular homicide/manslaughter, and driving under the influence manslaughter.

The facts and circumstances from a police investigation and applicable laws will determine what charges, if any, are filed.

Families should consult with police, prosecutors, and victim services representatives if they have questions about the possible charges and the relevant laws.

Dealing With Grief

The loss of a loved one from a criminal homicide often intensifies grief. Overcoming grief takes time and the healing process happens gradually. Ask for and accept help if you need it. Although there is no right or wrong way to grieve, surviving family members have found the following helpful:

- Talking with others, especially family members, friends, support groups, and professional counselors
- Reading books and listening to other victims' stories – especially how they experienced a similar loss, learned to cope, or became active in a cause
- Writing down innermost thoughts and feelings when the depth of loss prevents you from speaking about them
- Calling upon religious organizations, clergy and the faith-based community for healing, strength, and solace
- Exercising the body to release anxiety, built-up anger, and distress

Funeral/Burial Costs

A family member or friend who pays for funeral and burial expenses of a criminal homicide victim may be eligible for reimbursement up to $12,818 from the California Victim Compensation Board. Contact a victim services representative from the District Attorney's Bureau of Victim Services before final arrangements are made with the funeral home to discuss victim compensation claim benefits.

Autopsy

The Los Angeles County Department of Medical Examiner must investigate any death in which criminal homicide is suspected. An autopsy will be performed to try to determine the manner and cause of death. The victim's body will not be released to family members for burial until the medical examiner-coroner investigation has been completed. Please call **(323) 343-0506** to ensure proper notification concerning the release of the victim's body. **To obtain a copy of the autopsy report, contact the Los Angeles County Department of Medical Examiner records section at (323) 343-0695.**

Return of Property

The Los Angeles County Department of Medical Examiner may have custody of personal effects, jewelry, and clothing on the victim at the time of death. Police investigators also may have custody of a victim's property that is needed for the investigation. For items held by the medical examiner-coroner, contact the Personal Property Section at **(323) 343-0515**. For all others, contact the police investigator. Next of kin can contact their local victim services representative for assistance and guidance.

Scan here to view this pamphlet online.

Helping Crime Victims Become Survivors

- For Counseling Referrals
- For Crisis Intervention
- For Case Status Notification
- For Emergency Assistance
- For Restitution Assistance
- For Court Escort

Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office
Bureau of Victim Services
da.lacounty.gov/victims

(800) 380-3811

Death Certificate

When its findings are completed, the Los Angeles County Department of Medical Examiner will issue a death certificate, which will be filed with the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health. Next of kin may purchase a certified copy of the death certificate at the Department of Public Health's Vital Records Office or from Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk's offices located throughout the county. The funeral home also may assist in obtaining a copy of the death certificate.

Media Consideration

When a criminal homicide has media interest, the family should decide whether to maintain privacy or respond to requests for interviews. Some reasons to grant media requests include assisting in the apprehension of the suspect(s), honoring the victim's memory, maintaining public interest in the case, and correcting misinformation about the victim. The family should consult with police investigators and prosecutors to avoid compromising the investigation or prosecution.

Victim Services and Compensation

The District Attorney's Bureau of Victim Services has victim services representatives available in courthouses and police stations throughout the county to assist crime victims with crisis intervention, emergency shelter, mental health referrals, return of property, court support, orientation to the criminal justice system, relocation, restitution, and other victim services. The representatives also assist victims in filing for reimbursement through the California Victim Compensation Board for medical bills, counseling, loss of wages/support, funeral/burial expenses, moving expenses, and other crime-related expenses.

Next of Kin Rights

Family survivors, as next of kin, have certain rights. These include the right to be notified of court dates, to be seated in court, to be reasonably protected from the defendant, to give a victim impact statement at sentencing, to request restitution, and to be informed of the case's disposition and release of the defendant. You must make a request to prosecutors and the judge to have certain rights honored. The **Crime Victims Know Your Rights** and **Marsy's Law** pamphlets published by the District Attorney's Office contain additional information about these rights.

Case Settlement and Dismissal

Prosecutors continuously reevaluate the strengths and weaknesses of cases after charges are filed because prosecutors are required to prove the charges beyond a reasonable doubt. A defendant may plead guilty and may receive an agreed-upon sentence without a trial. Also, judges may dismiss cases or certain charges whenever they find that there is legally insufficient evidence to support a defendant's conviction.

Trial Verdicts

Defendants are presumed innocent of the charges until they are found guilty. The jury, or a judge in some cases, will decide whether a defendant is guilty or not guilty based upon the evidence presented in court and applicable laws.

A not guilty verdict stands forever and cannot be appealed. After a guilty verdict, the case will be set for sentencing and may be appealed to a higher court by the defendant.

If jurors cannot reach a unanimous verdict, a judge will declare a mistrial and the defendant may face a new trial.

Victim Impact Statements

At the defendant's sentencing, members of the victim's family have the right to make statements explaining how the crime affected them. The statement may address the victim's life, the family's loss, and any wishes for the defendant's sentence.

If a person is unable or reluctant to speak in court, they may have someone else read the statement or may submit a recorded or written statement to the judge.

They also may use photographs to illustrate their statement. The statement is considered at sentencing and at parole hearings if the defendant goes to prison.

The Los Angeles County Probation Department also will contact family members for a statement for the sentencing report. Both statements allow family survivors to have their voices become a permanent part of the case record.

Victim services representatives can assist family members in preparing their impact statements.

Notice of Parole

A family member who wants to be notified of a parole hearing or the scheduled release or escape of an inmate sentenced to state prison should complete the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) Request for Victim Services Form 1707 and always keep the CDCR's Office of Victim and Survivor Rights and Services informed of their current address. To obtain the form and filing instructions, call **(877) 256-6877** or visit **cdcr.ca.gov/victim_services**. Victim services representatives can assist in completing and submitting the form.

Resources

211 Los Angeles Grief Support
211la.org/services/HxQjQQ5nC2re1qktql8dp1CLoErqD/bereavement-and-grief-support-groups

California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation
Office of Victim and Survivor Rights and Services
(877) 256-6877
cdcr.ca.gov/victim_services

California Victim Compensation Board
(800) 777-9229
victims.ca.gov/

Los Angeles County Department of Medical Examiner
1104 North Mission Road
Los Angeles, California 90033
General information: **(323) 343-0512**
Notification for release of body: **(323) 343-0506**
Personal Property Section: **(323) 343-0515**
me.lacounty.gov

Los Angeles County Department of Public Health
Vital Records Office - Death Section
313 North Figueroa Street, Room L-1
Los Angeles, California 90012
(213) 288-7816
publichealth.lacounty.gov/dca/dcadeath.htm

Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder/
County Clerk's Office
(800) 201-8999
lavote.gov

Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD)
madd.org

U.S. Department of Justice Office for Victims of Crime
ovc.ojp.gov/

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