Resources for Information and Assistance State Resources

Victims of Crime and Leniency
State Office
P.O. Box 4449
Montgomery, AL 36103
(334) 262-7197
1-800-239-3219
www.vocalonline.org/contacts.htm

Alabama Crime Victims
Compensation Commission
P.O. Box 231267
Montgomery, AL 36123-1267
(334) 290-4420
1-800-541-9399 (victims only)
www.acvcc.alabama.gov

Alabama Attorney General's Office
for Victim Assistance
Alabama State House
11 South Union St. 3rd Floor
Montgomery, AL 36130
(334) 242-7300
1-800-626-7676
www.ago.state.al.us

Governor's Office for
Victims of Crime
State Capitol
600 Dexter Avenue
Montgomery, AL 36104
(334) 242-7100
www.governor.state.al.us/staff.htm

Resources for Information and Assistance National Resources

The Compassionate Friends
630-990-0010
www.compassionatefriends.org

Concerns of Police Survivors
1-800-784-2677
www.nationalcops.org

Mothers Against Drunk Driving
1-800-GET-MADD
1-800-438-6233
www.madd.org

National Center for Victims of Crime
1-855-4-VICTIM
1-855-484-2846
www.ncvc.org

National Organization for
Victim Assistance
1-800-TRY-NOVA
1-800-879-6682
www.try-nova.org

Office for Victims of Crime
Resource Center
1-800-627-6872
TTY 1-877-712-9279
www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/ovcres/
welcome.html

The National Coalition of Homicide
Survivors, Inc.
520-740-5729
www.mivictims.org/NCHS

National Organization of Parents of
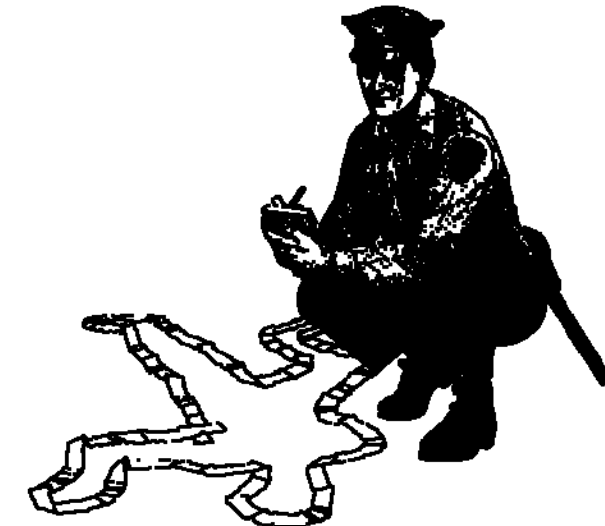Murdered Children
1-888-818-POMC
1-888-818-7662
www.pomc.com

Alabama Crime Victims Compensation Commission

P. O. Box 231267
Montgomery, Alabama 36123-1267
Phone (334) 290-4420
1-800-541-9388 (Victims only)
FAX (334) 290-4455

Homicide Co-victims

*Advocating for the
Fair Treatment of Crime Victims*

What is homicide?

Homicide is generally defined as the willful, intentional killing of one human being by another. There are different types of homicide, including murder and manslaughter. People from all walks of life and all types of backgrounds can be victims of homicide. Family members and significant others become co-victims when their loved one is murdered.

The violent death of a family member, intimate partner, or close friend is one of the most traumatic experiences you could ever face. It is an event for which no one can adequately prepare but that results in a

wide range of emotional pain and upheaval. Everyone close to the victim will grieve in different ways. In addition, the sudden and unnatural manner of death presents feelings and emotions that compound those caused by your grief.

As a homicide co-victim, you may experience many kinds of loss. You may feel a loss of self or feel changed from the person you used to be. You may feel that you have lost control of your life and your sense of safety and security. You may question your faith or religion.

When co-victims first learn about the homicide, many experience shock and disbelief, numbness, changes in appetite or sleeping patterns, difficulty concentrating, confusion, anger, fear, and worry. It is hard to understand how others are able to go on with their daily routine. For a long time, the emotional and physical suffering may seem to use up all the energy you have. Even though you knew before the murder that bad things happen, you may have thought they only happened to other people, so you did not feel vulnerable to crime. Now, you have a new sense of vulnerability for yourself and others.

If You Are a Homicide Co-victim

A homicide is almost always violent. The knowledge that your loved one experienced an intentional death can be traumatic and will cause grief. The death that took your loved one probably feels unlike any other loss you have experienced. You may feel vast swings in emotion. You may feel guilty for not being able to protect your loved one, even if you know that was impossible. Even many years after a murder, co-victims may find themselves suddenly crying over their loss.

Such experiences are called trauma and grief "spasms." Certain events, such as birthdays or anniversaries, may trigger this kind of grief.

Your involvement with the criminal justice system may complicate your grief. Often, homicide co-victims are depersonalized throughout the criminal process. Through the police investigation, you may hear for the first time certain details about your loved one that can be confusing and sometimes hurtful. Inaccurate or inappropriate information about your loved one may come out in court or in the media. In addition, court rules and continuances can be very frustrating. Co-victims find that arrests do not always end in prosecution, prosecutions do not always end in convictions, and convictions do not always mean stiff sentences. If the murderer is never arrested, your grief process may be even more difficult.

Remember, each person deals with tragedy in his or her own way. At times, you may feel depressed or hopeless and lack interest in things you once enjoyed. Emotions may come and go or overwhelm you. Know that intense feelings are normal. What you feel is what you need to feel moment by moment. Co-victims are forever changed by homicide. Life will never be the same for you and your family, but many homicide co-victims find that with time, they can face life with new understanding and new meaning.

Where can you get help?

Information is crucial for you to deal with this overwhelming event in your life. You and your family might want to seek the support and understanding of others who have gone through similar trauma. Many co-victims say that attending a homicide support group,

though sometimes difficult, helped them in their grieving process. These support groups can help you realize that you are not alone and that others experience and survive the same depth and complexity of emotions and frustrations. Call on victim assistance programs in your community or seek out counselors who understand the grief that follows traumatic death. Counselors can provide you with information and a full range of victim support services and assist you through the criminal justice process. Social services program personnel and other trained professionals also can help you find out about crime victim rights in your state.

When a loved one has been killed, the financial impact can be a second victimization. Homicide may mean a loss of income for your family. If the victim survived briefly before death, there may be large medical bills to pay. Funeral expenses can be a burden. All states now have crime victim compensation programs that reimburse victims' families for certain out-of-pocket expenses, including funeral expenses, medical expenses, counseling, and other financial needs considered reasonable. Contact the Alabama Crime Victims Compensation Commission to discuss eligibility requirements.

What are the facts about homicide?

♦ There were an estimated 15,533 homicides during 1999 throughout the United States. (Crime in the United States 1999. Washington, DC: FBI, 2000)

♦ Firearms were used in 7 out of 10 homicides during 1999. (Crime in the United States 1999. Washington, DC: FBI, 2000)

♦ Arguments were the cause of 30% of homicides in 1999; whereas 17% happened in conjunction with

another crime, such as robbery or arson. (Crime in the United States 1999. Washington, DC: FBI, 2000)

♦ In 1999, 76% of murder victims were male, and males constituted 90% of those who committed murder in cases in which gender was reported. (Crime in the United States 1999. Washington, DC: FBI, 2000)

♦ In 1999, 48% of all murder victims knew their assailants: 14% were related to the offenders, and 34% were acquainted with them. (Crime in the United States 1999. Washington, DC: FBI, 2000)

♦ Murder is most often intraracial. Data based on incidents involving one victim and one offender show that in 1999, 94% of black murder victims were killed by black offenders and 85% of white murder victims were killed by white offenders. (Crime in the United States 1999. Washington, DC: FBI, 2000)

♦ In the United States, homicide causes 20% of all deaths among persons ages 10 to 24. (MMWR-CDC Surveillance Summaries: Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance, United States 1997,47(55-3). Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1998)

♦ Since the mid-1980s the rate of murder committed by youth has doubled, increasing by 102%. (State Legislative Responses to Violent Juvenile Crime: 1996-97 Update. Washington, DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 1998)

♦ In 1999, 32% of all female murder victims were killed by their current or former spouses or boyfriends, whereas 3% of male murder victims were killed by their current or former spouses or girlfriends. (Crime in the United states 1999. Washington, DC: FBI, 2000)

♦ Among women, being black, young, divorced, or separated; earning lower incomes; living in rental housing; and living in an urban area were all associated with higher rates of intimate partner victimization between 1993 and 1998. (Intimate Partner Violence. Washington, DC: BJS,2000)

♦ During 1997, the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Program (NCAVP) documented 3,327 cases of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender domestic violence victimization. Men reported 1,746 of the incidents, women reported 1,581 of the incidents. (Annual Report on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Domestic Violence. New York, NY: NCAVP, 1998)