

Know Your Rights: Surviving Violence



Your right to break free from your abuser.

Crime Victims: What If I Don't Have Money for Medical Treatment?

Surviving violence can come with some hefty financial burdens - burdens that can become barriers to victims getting help. For this reason, Maine has a Crime Victims' Compensation Fund to defray the costs of seeking medical help. Victims may be eligible for up to \$15,000 to cover expenses and/or losses from violent crimes, if they are not covered by insurance.

Generally, the fund covers medically-related expenses; counseling; lost wages; funeral, burial and other homicide-related expenses; and travel and loss of income for family members caring for the victim. Funds can also be used to cover the cost of changing locks or security devices, crime scene clean-up, and security deposits. Compensation for mental health treatment directly related to the crime may also be available for a witness or a surviving family or household member.

If you or your dependent has been a victim of a violent crime such as murder, assault, sexual assault, robbery, kidnapping, stalking, etc., you must report it to the police within 5 days of the crime or discovery of the crime in order to be eligible for support from this Fund. Note: the time limit may be waived for good cause delay and will be waived for children.

You can find fact sheets about the Fund at the prosecutor's office or from law enforcement agencies. If you think

you are eligible for compensation, you must submit a report in writing to the Maine Crime Victims' Compensation Fund Board with the details of the incident and your expenses. Claims must be filed with the Board within 3 years of the occurrence of the injury or loss OR within 60 days of the discovery of the injury or loss, whichever is later.

For more information or for an application, contact the Victims' Compensation Program at the Attorney General's Office.
Tel.: 207-624-7882 or 800-903-7822
www.maine.gov/ag/crime/victims_compensation/index.shtml

Sexual Assault

The Maine Crime Victim's Compensation Fund covers the costs of forensic exams for sexual assault victims, up to \$750, even if you do not report the assault to the police. These confidential exams must gather forensic evidence and test and treat pregnancy and STDs. Hospitals must omit identifying information when they bill the Fund directly, and they may not bill you for the forensic exam services, even if the costs exceed \$750.

If you received and were billed for services that were not part of the initial testing and treatment for a sexual assault, such as follow-up medications or counseling, you can file an application with the Fund for reimbursement so long as you have reported the crime to law enforcement according to Fund guidelines.

How Do I Hide My New Address from My Abuser?

As part of your efforts to escape the violence, you may choose to move to a new address to avoid contact with your abuser. The Secretary of State's office can help prevent your abuser from finding your new address via public records, by providing you with a fake address via the Address Confidentiality Program. The program provides victims of domestic violence, sexual assault or stalking with a designated address that can be used on any form you might need to fill out, and will automatically (confidentially) forward your mail to your actual address.

To enroll in this program, you must fill out an application with a certified Application Assistant (for a list of locations, visit www.maine.gov/sos/acp/apply.html). Once enrolled, you may remain in the program indefinitely, as long as you re-enroll every 4 years.

Questions? Call the ACP Manager at 207-626-8400 or email acp.sos@maine.gov.



Maine Women's Policy Center

THE VOICE OF MAINE WOMEN

P.O. Box 85
Hallowell, Maine 04347
(207) 622-0851
MaineWomensPolicyCenter.org

The Maine Women's Policy Center is a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the lives of women and girls.

What will I Do for Money until I Get Back on My Feet?

If you have lost your income due to domestic violence, the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program (TANF, commonly called “welfare”) may be able to provide you with financial assistance if you have children or are an expectant mother and are temporarily unable to support yourself. Though there is a 5-year time limit for receiving TANF benefits (effective January 2012), exceptions exist for victims of domestic violence, individuals with disabilities, etc.

If you qualify for TANF, you may be required to participate in the ASPIRE program (Additional Support for People in Retraining and Employment). ASPIRE is an education, training, support and employment services program that helps you



find or create a job with high enough pay to allow you to transition off of public assistance. As part of your ASPIRE family contract with the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), you may be required to work a certain number of hours or participate in educational programs in order to receive benefits. However, you may qualify for an exception if domestic violence is disrupting your life and making it impossible for you to meet your contract requirements.

In addition to the

financial assistance available through TANF and the employment training from ASPIRE, you may be eligible to receive other benefits, including some assistance to help you afford childcare, transportation, car insurance, clothing and uniforms, tuition and school fees, etc., while working your way toward financial self sufficiency. Contact your local DHHS office for information about these and other programs, which may help you get back on your feet after escaping a violent situation.

What if I Lost My Job?


Unemployment benefits may be available to you if domestic violence has caused you to lose your job, regardless of whether you were fired or left voluntarily. For example, if you were fired because you were late, which was necessary to protect yourself or an immediate family member from domestic violence, your employer cannot label your actions as misconduct that would disqualify you from benefits (as long as you made all reasonable efforts to keep your job).

Also, if you reasonably believed that continuing at your job would jeopardize your safety or the safety of an immediate family member, you may not be disqualified from unemployment benefits for voluntarily leaving your job (as long as you made all reasonable efforts to keep your job).


Unemployment benefits can be helpful because they can temporarily provide you with income if you lost your job through no fault of your own. Benefits are calculated by looking at your previous earnings, and the weekly benefit amount is a percentage of your average weekly wage, up to a maximum of \$366.00.* Requests for unemployment benefits are typically filed online, but you can also file by phone (800-593-7660; TTY 888-457-8884) or by mail. To access the online and printed forms, visit <http://maine.gov/labor/unemployment/index.html>.

*For more information about how the weekly benefit amount is calculated, please visit the Maine.gov website (<http://www.maine.gov/labor/unemployment/faqs.html>).

Crisis Hotlines/Shelters

 **Domestic Abuse Helpline for Men and Women**
DAHMW.org 888-7-HELPLINE

 **Emergency Shelters**
www.MaineHousing.org/HomelessShelters.aspx


 **Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault
Crisis and Support Line**
800-871-7741

 **Statewide Domestic Violence Helpline**
866-83-4-HELP

Get Legal Help

 **Cumberland County Legal Aid Clinic**
877-780-2522

 **Maine Volunteer Lawyers Project**
VLP.org 800-442-4293

 **Pine Tree Legal Assistance**
PTLA.org



Employment leave can provide job security while you deal with and transition out of a domestic violence situation. Federal and state Family Medical Leave, and Maine’s employment leave for victims of violence, allow eligible employees to take extended time off from work to care for themselves or a loved one.

Please see our *Employment Leave* handout for more information.