

Being a victim of a serious crime is a horrific thing, and hopefully something you and your loved ones will never have to experience. However, if the unthinkable happens, you should know what resources are available to you and how to take advantage of them. What most people don't realize is that when the state prosecutes a person for committing a crime, the state's interest is first and foremost to seek justice on behalf of the public at large. That is, the prosecutor representing the state is focused primarily on obtaining a conviction and sentence against the criminal defendant, not on obtaining compensation on behalf of the victims.

Yet victims have often suffered serious injuries that need relief such as medical bills, lost wages, funeral expenses, and other losses. This is where Washington's Crime Victims Compensation Fund (the "Fund") can help. The Fund offers some financial relief for crime victims who meet its eligibility criteria and who submit an application for aid. To qualify, (1) you must have suffered a bodily injury or severe emotional distress from a crime, (2) the crime must be a gross misdemeanor or a felony, (3) you must file a report with law enforcement within one year of the date the crime occurred or within one year of when it reasonably could have been reported, (4) you must provide reasonable cooperation with law enforcement, and (5) you must apply for benefits within two years of the crime being reported to law enforcement (or, for good cause, within five years).

While the Fund will not cover every loss and expense, it can still be of great help. The Fund will cover a maximum of \$190,000 per claim for the following expenses/losses:

- medical/dental/mental health treatment, including medication (\$150,000 maximum),
- lost wages (60% of wages up to \$15,000 if returning to work or up to \$40,000 if permanently disabled),
- grief counseling, and
- funeral expenses (up to \$6,170).

Keep in mind that if you have insurance, the insurance must cover any losses first before the Fund will offer coverage. And if you later obtain money through a settlement with the criminal defendant in a civil suit or by restitution ordered by the court, you may have to reimburse the Fund for the benefits you received.

Please understand that these are the basics regarding the Fund. There may be additional considerations if you were the victim of a sexual assault or a loved one was the victim of a homicide. Further information and directions for applying are available online at (<https://lni.wa.gov/claims/crime-victim-claims/apply-for-crime-victim-benefits/>). While we hope that you will never need to seek these benefits, we also hope to inform you in case the unthinkable ever happens.