

VIRGINIA ACTS OF ASSEMBLY -- 1999 SESSION

CHAPTER 844

An Act to amend and reenact §§ 19.2-11.01 and 19.2-265.01 of the Code of Virginia, relating to attendance of victims at trial.

[S 370]

Approved March 29, 1999

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That §§ 19.2-11.01 and 19.2-265.01 of the Code of Virginia are amended and reenacted as follows:

§ 19.2-11.01. Crime victim and witness rights.

A. In recognition of the Commonwealth's concern for the victims and witnesses of crime, it is the purpose of this chapter to ensure that the full impact of crime is brought to the attention of the courts of the Commonwealth; that crime victims and witnesses are treated with dignity, respect and sensitivity; and that their privacy is protected to the extent permissible under law. It is the further purpose of this chapter to ensure that victims and witnesses are informed of the rights provided to them under the laws of the Commonwealth; that they receive authorized services as appropriate; and that they have the opportunity to be heard by law-enforcement agencies, attorneys for the Commonwealth, corrections agencies and the judiciary at all critical stages of the criminal justice process to the extent permissible under law. Unless otherwise stated and subject to the provisions of § 19.2-11.1, it shall be the responsibility of a locality's crime victim and witness assistance program to provide the information and assistance required by this chapter.

1. Victim and witness protection.

a. In order that victims and witnesses receive protection from harm and threats of harm arising out of their cooperation with law-enforcement, or prosecution efforts, they shall be provided with information as to the level of protection which may be available pursuant to § 52-35 or to any other federal, state or local program providing protection, and shall be assisted in obtaining this protection from the appropriate authorities.

b. Victims and witnesses shall be provided, where available, a separate waiting area during court proceedings that affords them privacy and protection from intimidation.

2. Financial assistance.

a. Victims shall be informed of financial assistance and social services available to them as victims of a crime, including information on their possible right to file a claim for compensation from the Crime Victims' Compensation Fund pursuant to Chapter 21.1 (§ 19.2-368.1 et seq.) of Title 19.2 and on other available assistance and services.

b. Victims shall be assisted in having any property held by law-enforcement agencies for evidentiary purposes returned promptly in accordance with §§ 19.2-270.1 and 19.2-270.2.

c. Victims shall be advised that restitution is available for damages or loss resulting from an offense and shall be assisted in seeking restitution in accordance with §§ 19.2-305, 19.2-305.1, Chapter 21.1 (§ 19.2-368.1 et seq.) of Title 19.2, Article 21 (§ 58.1-520 et seq.) of Chapter 3 of Title 58.1, and other applicable laws of the Commonwealth.

3. Notices.

a. Victims and witnesses shall be (i) provided with appropriate employer intercession services to ensure that employers of victims and witnesses will cooperate with the criminal justice process in order to minimize an employee's loss of pay and other benefits resulting from court appearances and (ii) advised that pursuant to § 18.2-465.1 it is unlawful for an employer to penalize an employee for appearing in court pursuant to a summons or subpoena.

b. Victims shall receive advance notification when practicable from the attorney for the Commonwealth of judicial proceedings relating to their case and shall be notified when practicable of any change in court dates in accordance with § 19.2-265.01 if they have provided their names, current addresses and telephone numbers.

c. Victims shall be notified by the Department of Corrections or a sheriff or jail superintendent in whose custody an escape, change of name, transfer, release or discharge of a prisoner occurs pursuant to the provisions of §§ 53.1-133.02 and 53.1-160 if they have provided their names, current addresses and telephone numbers in writing.

d. Victims shall be advised that, in order to protect their right to receive notices and offer input, all agencies and persons having such duties must have current victim addresses and telephone numbers given by the victims.

4. Victim input.

a. Victims shall be given the opportunity, pursuant to § 19.2-299.1, to prepare a written victim

impact statement prior to sentencing of a defendant and may provide information to any individual or agency charged with investigating the social history of a person or preparing a victim impact statement under the provisions of §§ 16.1-273 and 53.1-155 or any other applicable law.

b. Victims shall have the right to remain in the courtroom during a criminal trial or proceeding pursuant to the provisions of § 19.2-265.01 ~~unless excluded by the court as a material witness.~~

c. On motion of the attorney for the Commonwealth, victims shall be given the opportunity, pursuant to §§ 19.2-264.4 and 19.2-295.3, to testify prior to sentencing of a defendant regarding the impact of the offense.

5. Courtroom assistance.

a. Victims and witnesses shall be informed that their addresses and telephone numbers may not be disclosed, pursuant to the provisions of §§ 19.2-11.2 and 19.2-269.2, except when necessary for the conduct of the criminal proceeding.

b. Victims and witnesses shall be advised that they have the right to the services of an interpreter in accordance with §§ 19.2-164 and 19.2-164.1.

c. Victims of certain sexual offenses shall be advised that there may be a closed preliminary hearing in accordance with § 18.2-67.8 and, if a victim is twelve years of age or younger, two-way closed-circuit television may be used in the taking of testimony in accordance with § 18.2-67.9.

B. For purposes of this chapter, "victim" means (i) a person who has suffered physical, psychological or economic harm as a direct result of the commission of a felony or of assault and battery in violation of §§ 18.2-57, 18.2-57.1 or § 18.2-57.2, stalking in violation of § 18.2-60.3, sexual battery in violation of § 18.2-67.4, attempted sexual battery in violation of § 18.2-67.5, maiming or driving while intoxicated in violation of § 18.2-51.4 or § 18.2-266, (ii) a spouse or child of such a person, (iii) a parent or legal guardian of such a person who is a minor, or (iv) a spouse, parent or legal guardian of such a person who is physically or mentally incapacitated or was the victim of a homicide; however, "victim" does not mean a parent, child, spouse or legal guardian who commits a felony or other enumerated criminal offense against a victim as defined in ~~subdivision~~ *clause* (i) of this subsection.

C. Officials and employees of the judiciary, including court services units, law-enforcement agencies, the Department of Corrections, attorneys for the Commonwealth and public defenders, shall be provided with copies of this chapter by the Department of Criminal Justice Services or a crime victim and witness assistance program. Each agency, officer or employee who has a responsibility or responsibilities to victims under this chapter or other applicable law shall make reasonable efforts to become informed about these responsibilities and to ensure that victims and witnesses receive such information and services to which they may be entitled under applicable law, provided that no liability or cause of action shall arise from the failure to make such efforts or from the failure of such victims or witnesses to receive any such information or services.

§ 19.2-265.01. Victims, certain members of the family and support persons not to be excluded.

During the trial of every criminal case and in all court proceedings attendant to trial, whether before, during or after trial, including any proceedings occurring after an appeal by the defendant or the Commonwealth, at which attendance by the defendant is permitted, whether in a circuit or district court, any victim as defined in § 19.2-11.01 may remain in the courtroom *and shall not be excluded unless the court determines, in its discretion, the presence of the victim would substantially impair the conduct of a fair trial.* In any case involving a minor victim, the court may permit an adult chosen by the minor to be present in the courtroom during any proceedings in addition to or in lieu of the minor's parent or guardian.

~~However, if either the attorney for the Commonwealth or any defendant represents to the court that he intends to call as a material witness any victim as defined in § 19.2-11.01, the court shall exclude that person from the trial or proceedings.~~

The attorney for the Commonwealth shall give prior notice when practicable of such trial and attendant proceedings and changes in the scheduling thereof to any known victim and to any known adult chosen in accordance with this section by a minor victim, at the address or telephone number, or both, provided in writing by such person.