



GRANT ME JUSTICE

UNDERSTANDING YOUR RIGHTS AFTER HOMICIDE IN MISSISSIPPI

A PLAIN-LANGUAGE GUIDE FOR FAMILIES

**You have the right to be informed,
present, heard, and treated with dignity.**

This guide shows how to activate and use those rights.

MISSISSIPPI CONSTITUTION, ARTICLE 3, SECTION 26A

Updated July 2026 | Educational information - not legal advice

Activate your rights in writing

This step helps ensure the family receives notices and can participate throughout the case.

THE MOST IMPORTANT FORM

Request to Exercise Victims' Rights

For a deceased victim, a lawful representative may exercise the victim's rights.

The representative should not be a witness in the case.

COMPLETE AND SIGN THE FORM

1

List the victim, crime, date, offender if known, your contact information, and your relationship to the victim.

SEND IT TO BOTH OFFICES

2

Give a copy to the law-enforcement agency investigating the homicide and a copy to the district attorney or other prosecutor.

KEEP PROOF AND UPDATE YOUR CONTACT

3

Save copies and proof of delivery. Tell the investigator, prosecutor, court clerk, MDOC, and Parole Board whenever your phone, email, or address changes.

NEED THE FORM?

Call 800-829-6766 or visit the Mississippi Attorney General's Bureau of Victim Assistance.

Your core constitutional rights

Mississippi's Constitution protects victims throughout the criminal-justice process.

MISSISSIPPI CONSTITUTION - ARTICLE 3, SECTION 26A

Victims of crime shall have the right to be treated with fairness, dignity and respect; and to be informed, present and heard, when authorized by law, during public hearings.

FAIRNESS

Officials should treat the family fairly throughout the process.

DIGNITY + RESPECT

Your loved one and your family should be treated as people - not merely as a case number.

INFORMED

After the written request, you have rights to notices and case information provided by law.

PRESENT

You may attend public criminal proceedings, subject to lawful courtroom limits.

HEARD

You may share views at important stages, including pleas, sentencing, restitution, parole, and pardon.

IMPORTANT

Victims' rights give the family a voice and access - not control over charging or prosecution decisions.

Rights during the investigation

Stay connected to the investigator and document every contact.

1

INFORMATION PACKET

Law enforcement generally must provide information about crisis services, compensation, the process, and victims' rights within 72 hours, unless the victim is unavailable or incapacitated.

2

FREE INITIAL REPORT

Upon request, you may receive a free copy of the initial incident report, subject to legal confidentiality limits.

3

CASE-CONTACT INFORMATION

You should receive the investigating agency's contact information and information about the prosecutor's office.

4

PROPERTY RETURN

You may request return of property when it is no longer needed as evidence, subject to prosecutor approval and legal requirements.

5

SAFETY AND PRIVACY

Ask about safety planning, minimizing contact with the accused, and protection of address or identifying information where the law permits.

PRACTICAL TIP

Keep a written log: date, person contacted, what you asked, what you were told, and the next follow-up

Rights during prosecution and court

The prosecutor becomes the main source of notices once the case moves into court.

NOTICE + PARTICIPATION

- Notice of charges filed and criminal proceedings, including changes, after your written request.
- A chance to confer with the prosecutor before final disposition and before trial.
- Information about plea offers and an opportunity to share views on dismissal, reduction, sentencing recommendations, and diversion.
- The right to attend public proceedings, including plea, trial, and sentencing, when authorized by law.

COURTROOM SUPPORT

- A separate waiting area when practicable and efforts to minimize contact with the accused and defense witnesses.
- Reasonable consideration of your schedule when court dates are set or changed.
- Protection from employment loss or threats because you respond to a subpoena or reasonably prepare for proceedings.
- The ability to obtain a transcript if you pay the required cost.

GRAND JURY LIMIT

Grand jury proceedings are secret. Families generally cannot attend. The prosecutor can explain what information can lawfully be shared about the result.

Ask the prosecutor for the victim-assistance coordinator assigned to the case.

Plea, sentencing, impact, and restitution

These are among the most important stages for a homicide family to be informed and heard.

BEFORE A PLEA

1

The prosecutor should make reasonable efforts to notify and confer with the family about a proposed plea. Share your views, questions, and concerns.

AT THE PLEA HEARING

2

The family may attend and may present an impact statement or information about the crime or sentence, as authorized by law.

BEFORE SENTENCING

3

You may provide a written or oral victim impact statement for the presentence report and should receive notice of the sentencing date.

AT SENTENCING

4

You have the right to be present and heard. Explain the human, emotional, physical, and financial impact without attacking or threatening the defendant.

RESTITUTION

Provide documented financial losses to the prosecutor. If restitution is ordered, ask how payments will be tracked and what steps are available if payments stop. Restitution is separate from Crime Victim Compensation.

Rights after conviction

Registration matters: the prosecutor's notices do not automatically replace MDOC and parole registration.

1

APPEAL NOTICES

Ask to receive notice of appellate arguments and decisions. Keep the Attorney General's Office updated with current contact information.

2

REGISTER WITH MDOC VICTIM SERVICES

Register as a survivor of a homicide victim to receive eligible offender-status and release notifications.

3

SUBMIT A PERMANENT STATEMENT

You may submit a written, audio, or video statement for the prisoner's MDOC record to be considered during status reviews and before release.

4

PAROLE OR PARDON

You have the right to notice and to submit a written or recorded statement when parole or pardon is considered.

5

RELEASE, ESCAPE, OR STATUS CHANGES

Ask which notifications require MDOC registration, Parole Board registration, or VINELink/SAVIN enrollment. Do not assume one registration covers every system.

MDOC VICTIM SERVICES

601-359-5628 | mdoc.ms.gov/victims | VINELink: vinelink.com

The complete rights list - Part 1

Official rights summarized from Miss. Code Ann. Section 99-43-1 et seq. and the Attorney General's published brochure.

1

INITIAL INCIDENT REPORT

Receive a copy of the initial incident report at no cost, upon request and subject to confidentiality law.

2

CHARGES FILED

Be notified of all charges filed against a person for the crime committed against the victim.

3

CRIMINAL PROCEEDINGS

Be notified as soon as practicable of proceedings other than the initial appearance, including changes.

4

CONFER BEFORE TRIAL

Talk with the prosecutor before the trial begins.

5

CONFER BEFORE FINAL DISPOSITION

Give views on dismissal, charge reduction, sentencing recommendations, and pretrial diversion.

6

TRIAL TRANSCRIPT

Receive a transcript of the trial at the victim's own cost.

7

FREEDOM FROM UNREASONABLE DELAY

Have the court consider the effect a continuance may have on the victim.

8

PRESENCE AT PROCEEDINGS

Be present at judge-held criminal proceedings, excluding lineups, grand jury proceedings, and matters not before a judge.

HOW TO CLAIM THESE RIGHTS

Submit the signed Request to Exercise Victims' Rights and keep your contact information current.

The complete rights list - Part 2

Official rights summarized from Miss. Code Ann. Section 99-43-1 et seq. and the Attorney General's published brochure.

9

SEPARATE WAITING AREA

Receive a separate waiting area when available, or reasonable efforts to minimize contact with the accused and defense witnesses.

10

PROTECTION OF IDENTIFYING INFORMATION

Ask the prosecutor to seek court protection of identity, residence, or employment facts when threats or intimidation create danger.

11

GUILTY PLEA AND SENTENCING

Be present and provide an impact statement or information about the crime or sentence.

12

CASE OUTCOME

Receive the date of a conviction, acquittal, or dismissal.

13

PRESENTENCE REPORT INFORMATION

Receive information about the report, the preparing office, and the defendant's access to it.

14

IMPACT STATEMENT FOR PRESENTENCE REPORT

Give an oral or written statement addressing the economic, physical, and psychological impact on the family.

15

SENTENCING

Be present and heard at sentencing.

16

SENTENCE IMPOSED

Be informed as soon as practicable of the sentence imposed.

HOW TO CLAIM THESE RIGHTS

Submit the signed Request to Exercise Victims' Rights and keep your contact information current.

The complete rights list - Part 3

Official rights summarized from Miss. Code Ann. Section 99-43-1 et seq. and the Attorney General's published brochure.

17

FUTURE-NOTICE CONTACTS

Receive contact information for agencies that handle later notifications.

18

APPEALS

Receive appellate status information and decisions within five business days after known or issued.

19

BOND PENDING APPEAL

Be told if the convicted defendant is released on bond while an appeal is pending.

20

ESCAPE AND RECAPTURE

Be notified of an escape and later recapture.

21

RETURN OF PROPERTY

Have property returned as soon as possible, subject to evidentiary needs and legal procedure.

22

RELEASE OR DEATH

Receive required notice before sentence-end release and notice of medical release or death.

23

MDOC STATEMENT

Submit a written, audio, or video statement for the prisoner's record and status or release reviews.

24

PAROLE OR PARDON

Receive notice and submit a written or recorded statement when parole or pardon is considered.

HOW TO CLAIM THESE RIGHTS

Submit the signed Request to Exercise Victims' Rights and keep your contact information current.

Family rights checklist

Use this list at the beginning of the case and review it after every major change.

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ Named the lawful family representative | ☐ Submitted Request to Exercise Victims' Rights to police |
| ☐ Submitted the same request to the prosecutor | ☐ Saved copies and proof of delivery |
| ☐ Received investigator and report information | ☐ Requested the free initial incident report |
| ☐ Met the prosecutor or victim-assistance coordinator | ☐ Asked how court-date notices will be delivered |
| ☐ Prepared a written victim impact statement | ☐ Documented financial losses and requested restitution |
| ☐ Registered with MDOC Victim Services | ☐ Registered for VINELink/SAVIN notifications |
| ☐ Updated every agency after contact changes | ☐ Kept a case log and copies of all letters |

KEY CONTACTS

Mississippi Attorney General - Bureau of Victim Assistance: 800-829-6766

MDOC Division of Victim Services: 601-359-5628

Grant Me Justice survivor support: grantmejustice.org

IF A RIGHT IS NOT HONORED

Write down what happened. Contact the prosecutor's victim-assistance coordinator and request correction in writing.

For additional help, contact the Attorney General's Bureau of Victim Assistance or speak with an attorney.

This guide is educational information, not legal advice. Rights can depend on the case and procedural stage.