News Articles

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New York State Address Confidentiality Program Launches New Online Application for Victims of Violence to Help Save Lives

Victims of Domestic Violence, Sexual Offenses, Stalking, and Human Trafficking Can Now Apply Online

The Application Facilitates a Swift and Secure Enrollment to Get an Undisclosed Address to Individuals in Need of a Safe Domicile

Marks One Year Anniversary of Legislation Allowing Victims of Stalking, Sexual Offenses and Human Trafficking to Participate in Program

The New York State Department of State today announced a new online application for the Address Confidentiality Program (ACP) in which victims of domestic violence, stalking, sexual offenses and human trafficking can protect themselves from their perpetrators by getting a new undisclosed address. This online application will facilitate a swift and secure enrollment into the program for individuals who previously could only apply for the program via mail or fax.

The ACP is available to assist individuals who are trying to rebuild their lives after experiencing a violent situation that put them in harm's way. ACP is a free state program that allows victims to keep their physical address hidden from their perpetrators by using a substitute mailing address provided by the Department of State in lieu of their actual home, school or work address. The program currently serves approximately 3,200 people.

"In New York, we help protect our most vulnerable from violent situations that can endanger them and their families," said **Secretary of State Rossana Rosado who oversees this program**. "The online application for the Address Confidentiality Program will make it faster and easier for thousands of New Yorkers in threatening situations to get protection from their perpetrators and help save lives."

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OTDA Commissioner Mike Hein said, "Survivors of human trafficking should never have to live with the fear that their perpetrator may one day identify where they reside. The Address Confidentiality Program gives victims added confidence that they won't put themselves at risk when providing their mailing address. This added layer of security will help more survivors step out of the shadow of fear cast by their traffickers and onto the path toward lasting stability."

New York State Office for Victim Services Director Elizabeth Cronin said, "New York State's Address Confidentiality Program is an important tool for crime victims who are seeking a sense of safety and peace. I want to thank the Department of State for streamlining the application process and making this tool more accessible to victims, and the advocates helping them, as they work to secure safe housing. It is especially critical that we eliminate the requirement that these forms be printed and mailed or faxed, so applications for this program can be processed electronically during the global COVID-19 pandemic."

New York State Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence Executive Director Kelli Owens said, "New York State's Address Confidentiality Program is key to enabling survivors to break free from abusers, many of whom become most dangerous when survivors leave. The addition of online enrollment streamlines the process and assists survivors working to stay safe and rebuild their lives. The COVID-19 pandemic has created additional challenges for survivors seeking services, and this welcomed change removes a hurdle to access and helps domestic violence services in New York State become even more survivor-centered."

NYS Office of Children and Family Services Commissioner Sheila J. Poole said, "We are proud to partner with our sister agencies to support protecting vulnerable victims from abuse. Remaining in an abusive relationship or being subjected or exposed to abuse can have far-reaching effects for both the victim and any involved children. The ACP provides an additional assurance that those involved will be safe."

The ACP helps victims by:

- **Using an ACP substitute address.** Once certified, the ACP participant, will receive an ID card containing his/her name, unique ID number and the substitute address, which is a Post Office box in Albany, New York. The card will also indicate the expiration date for the program participant and includes ACP contact information.
- **Accepting service of process.** Participants in the ACP have designated the Secretary of State to accept any legal notices on their behalf. The Secretary of State's office will not reveal any identifying information to the process server. The program will only verify whether the person being served is an ACP participant. A copy of any process will be mailed to the participant via certified mail.
- **Handling their mail.** Any first class, registered, or certified mail sent to the substitute address will be re-packaged and forwarded to the participant's actual mailing address. This is done daily, Monday through Friday (except holidays). Participants should expect a five to seven-day delay in receiving their mail. ACP will not forward packages, periodicals and catalogs, unless clearly identified as pharmaceuticals (prescription drugs) or they were sent by a government agency.

According to the NYS Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence (OPDV), in 2018 there were 341,909 phone calls in its domestic violence and sexual assault hotlines. Moreover, the National Conference on Domestic Violence indicates that, on a regular day, there are more than 20,000 phone calls placed to

Domestic Violence indicates that, on a regular day, there are more than 20,000 phone calls placed to domestic violence hotlines nationwide. The numbers also show that in New York State in 2019, about 65 women died in the hands of an intimate partner.

New York State's Domestic and Sexual Violence Hotline can be reached by phone: 1-800-942-6906, text: 844-997-2121 or chat: @opdv.ny.gov. For a list of domestic violence hotlines by county, visit the New York State Domestic Violence Directory. The Office of Victim Services also funds a network of more than 200 community-based programs that support victims of crime and their families.

The New York State Response to Human Trafficking Program, which provides case management services and is funded by the state Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, has confirmed more than 250 cases of human trafficking in New York through October. Victims in confirmed human trafficking cases can now participate in ACP.

Applications for ACP will still be accepted via mail and fax and through Application Assistance Providers located throughout the state. For more information and assistance with the application process, please visit the ACP webpage at www.dos.ny.gov/acp or call toll free at (855) 350-4595.