

RESOURCES

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www.IllinoisAttorneyGeneral.gov

Illinois Criminal Justice Authority
www.icjia.state.il.us

Illinois Family Violence Council
www.ivpa.org

Illinois Coalition Against
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www.ilcadv.org

Mothers Against Drunk Driving
www.madd.org

Parents of Murdered Children
www.pomc.com

Alliance Against
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www.aaim1.org

Illinois Coalition Against
Sexual Assault
www.icasa.org

Children's Advocacy Centers
of Illinois
www.cacionline.org



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Crime Victims Assistance Line
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Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

A Resource Guide to Help Victims Cope



The Effects Of Crime

Crime has a devastating impact on its victims. Criminal victimization can cause both short-term and long-term stress reactions. While many people who experience long-term stress reactions continue to function, those who cannot may be suffering from Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

PTSD can appear at any age and occurs in survivors of crime—both direct victims and family members of victims. Victims will react differently depending on the type of violation endured and their personality, experiences, and support systems.

PTSD is the diagnosis mental health professionals apply to people who have suffered severe trauma in their lives and have developed certain symptoms as a result. Many, but not all, crime victims experience PTSD.

Being in crisis does not mean a victim of crime will develop PTSD. However, victims who do not have the opportunity to work through their experience and begin to heal are more likely to develop PTSD. When victims seek and receive appropriate crisis intervention and counseling, the chance of developing PTSD is reduced.

Diagnosing PTSD

Victims who are diagnosed with PTSD persistently re-experience the traumatic event in at least one of the following ways:

- Recurrent, intrusive, and distressing recollections of the event, including images, thoughts, or perceptions.
- In children, repetitive play may occur in which themes or aspects of the trauma are expressed.
- Recurrent distressing dreams of the event during which the event is replayed.
- In children, there may be frightening dreams without recognizable content.
- Acting or feeling as if the traumatic event were recurring, including a sense of reliving the experience, illusions, hallucinations, and dissociative flashback episodes lasting from a few seconds to a number of hours.
- In children, trauma-specific re-enactment may occur.
- Intense psychological distress at exposure to internal or external cues that symbolize or resemble an aspect of the traumatic event.
- Physiological reactivity upon exposure to triggers that symbolize or resemble an aspect of the traumatic event.

Recovering From Trauma

Not all victims will develop PTSD. If the trauma is dealt with quickly, the severity of reactions may be eased. A therapist or counselor can help victims restructure the fragments of their lives and accept some irrevocable changes brought about by the trauma.

Seek counseling if the following symptoms begin to cause stress or trouble:

- Rage, irritability, fear, sleeplessness, restlessness, hyper vigilance, cynicism, or suspicion of others.
- Extreme fatigue, severe depression, or inability to concentrate.
- Unwillingness to trust anyone, a wish to withdraw from everything.
- Significant increase/decrease in food consumption or use of sedatives/alcohol to cope with stress.