



UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

VICTIMS' COUNSEL PROGRAM

For more information, visit
www.afjag.af.mil
@AFVics_Counsel

The Victims' Counsel Program empowers victims of crime worldwide through independent advice and victim-centered legal representation. Victims' Counsel (VC) assist victims in obtaining support and recovery resources, and promotes greater confidence in the military justice process and the United States Air Force.

VCs represent victims at every step of the military justice process to enforce their rights. VCs represent victims at law enforcement interviews, trial and defense counsel interviews, every pre-trial hearing and in trial. VCs enforce victims' rights to safety, privacy, and right to be treated fairly and respectfully.

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“During the most stressful, most discouraging, most painful experience of my life, my VC was there to guide me. My VC didn't just file papers; he knew the best strategies and always said things in exactly the right way so I could understand. I owe him my sanity.”

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VCs engage with base leaders and other decision makers to ensure that a victim's voice and choices are heard. VCs are attorneys who form a protected attorney-client relationship with the victim, so that they can talk about every concern privately. VCs are supported by Victims' Paralegals (VPs). Together, their primary duty is to represent the victim. The VC/VP chain of command is independent from every base chain of command.

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“[My VC] fought for me fiercely... He provided me with all of my options (as far as writ of mandamus and appeals go), then allowed me to make my own decision.”

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VCs and VPs provide a broad range of assistance, represent the victim in other related proceedings, such as a separation or parole board and can work with local authorities when a case is not prosecuted by the military. Victims can be represented by an VC after the courts-martial through the post-trial clemency and parole hearings.

Which victims can be given a VC upon request? In most cases, victims who are Active Duty, Reserve, Air National Guard members, USAFA or BMT trainees simply have to ask for a VC, regardless of the accused's duty status. Victims who are dependent spouses or children and retirees can be represented by an VC, upon request, if the accused is subject to the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ).

DoD civilian employees can be represented by an VC, upon request, if the accused is subject to the UCMJ and there is a connection between the assault and the victim's workplace. However, any other victim can request an VC by making an "Extraordinary Circumstances Request" which will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Contact your servicing VC office for additional guidance.

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Of all the programs that exist with regards to sexual assault in the military, the VC program is by far the most important one ...Without my VC, I would have felt I was drowning and powerless to have my voice heard.”

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Who does a victim ask to get a VC? A victim can always call or visit a Victims' Counsel Office. A victim can ask military law enforcement members, Sexual Assault Response Coordinators, Family Advocate Program members, chaplains, members of the legal office, or Victim Witness Assistance Program advocates.