



LAW ENFORCEMENT-BASED VICTIM SERVICES IN FLORIDA: PRIVACY, PRIVILEGE AND CONFIDENTIALITY

INTRODUCTION

Best practice in victim services is about facilitating victims' ability to exercise meaningful choices. This requires understanding and supporting the exercise of victims' rights, which are found in state constitutions, statutes, rules and policies. For victims' rights to be meaningful, both compliance with and enforcement of these rights is necessary. Compliance is the fulfillment of legal responsibilities to victims and making efforts to reduce willful, negligent or inadvertent failures to fulfill those legal responsibilities; enforcement is the pursuit, by a victim or someone on behalf of a victim, of a judicial or administrative order that either mandates compliance with victims' rights or provides remedies for violations of victims' rights laws.

In addition to understanding victims' rights, best practices in victim services require understanding one's legal and ethical obligations as an advocate with regard to victim privacy, confidentiality and privilege, and the scope of one's services. Informing victims—at the first or earliest possible contact with them—of their rights and the advocate's role, including limitations on that role, is critical to victims' ability to make informed decisions about whether and how to exercise their rights, as well as whether, what and how much to share with any particular service provider. In addition, advocates need to build and maintain relationships throughout the community in order to provide meaningful referrals to victim service providers with complementary roles when a victim needs the referral.

USING THIS RESOURCE

This resource is designed to enhance victim services personnel's knowledge and understanding of the law governing crime victims' rights to privacy, confidentiality and privilege in Florida. It provides an overview of key concepts and excerpts of key legal citations that can help facilitate victims' meaningful choices regarding these rights. To keep this *Guide* as user-friendly as possible in light of the breadth, complexity and evolving nature of law, the *Guide* does not include all laws. It does not constitute legal advice, nor does it substitute for legal advice. This resource is best used together with its companion resource: *Select Victims' Rights - Florida*.

This resource was developed by the National Crime Victim Law Institute (NCVLI) under 2020-V3-GX-K001, awarded to the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) by the Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this draft publication are those of the contributors and do not necessarily represent the official position of the U.S. Department of Justice.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....1

Using This Resource1

Overview3

 System-Based and Community-Based Advocates3

 Privacy, Confidentiality and Privilege4

 HIPAA, FERPA, VOCA, VAWA and FOIA8

 Ethical Code Relevant to Advocates12

Brady v. Maryland.....13

Giglio v. United States16

 Subpoena Considerations16

Select Laws18

 Privacy.....18

 Confidentiality.....20

 Privilege21

 Definitions.....26

OVERVIEW

What are the key similarities and differences between system-based and community-based advocates?

Key Takeaways

- System-based advocates are typically employed by a law enforcement agency, prosecutor's office, corrections, or another governmental agency.
- Community-based advocates are typically employed by a nonprofit/non-governmental agency.
- The United States Supreme Court and state laws impose on the prosecutor's office—and by extension on other governmental agencies such as law enforcement—legal obligations to disclose information to the accused and their lawyer. These obligations are sometimes called *Brady* Obligations or Discovery Obligations.
- *Brady*/Discovery Obligations generally attach to system-based advocates, and these obligations can override an advocate's ability to keep something confidential. That means anything shared with a system-based advocate may have to be disclosed to law enforcement, prosecutors, and eventually the accused and their lawyer.
- Community-based advocates are generally not directly linked to a government actor, and therefore not subject to *Brady*/Discovery Obligations; this means that they can hold more things confidential, and depending on local law, may also be bound by privilege (which is an even stronger privacy protection than confidentiality).

Discussion

It is imperative that an advocate understands and communicates clearly—at the first encounter or earliest possible contact—whether one is a community-based or system-based advocate, the advocate's legal and ethical obligations with regard to privacy, confidentiality and privilege and the scope of the services that the advocate offers.¹ This information will assist the victim in understanding the role of the advocate and any limitations of that role regarding: (1) the services that the advocate can provide and (2) the privacy protections that exist regarding information shared with the advocate. Further, providing a clear explanation of the advocate's role to the victim will help the victim make informed decisions, build rapport and avoid misunderstandings.

While both system-based and community-based advocates serve victims and operate under a general ethical rule of confidentiality, there are significant differences between them. System-based advocates are typically employed by a law enforcement agency, office of the prosecuting attorney, corrections or another entity within the city, county, state or federal government. Titles for system-based advocates vary; for example, they can be called victim advocates, victim-witness coordinators or victim assistance personnel.² Because system-based advocates are typically a component of a government agency or program, a primary focus of their work is assisting victims in their interactions with the system, and they will

typically be able to provide services to the victims during the pendency of the investigation, prosecution and post-conviction legal aspects of a case. In addition, this placement as part of a government agency or program generally means that system-based advocates are subject to the *Brady* disclosure obligations (*see Brady v. Maryland* Section below for additional information) and generally, their communications with victims are not protected by privilege.

By contrast, community-based advocates are generally not directly linked to any government actor or agency. As such, they are not subject to *Brady*; generally, can assist victims even if a crime has not been reported; can assist before, during and after a criminal case; can provide holistic services aimed at victims' broad needs; and, depending on the jurisdiction's laws and funding source, can maintain privileged communications with victims.³

Because each type of advocate has different duties and protections that they can offer victims, knowledge of and partnerships between them is an integral part of facilitating meaningful victim choice and helping victims access holistic services.

What are privacy, confidentiality and privilege? Why do the differences matter?

Key Takeaways

- Privacy is the broad right that allows one to control the sharing of personal information.
- Many jurisdictions have state constitutional and statutory protections for affording victims the right to privacy, including explicit rights to privacy and the broader stated rights to be treated with fairness, dignity and respect. A federal Constitutional right to privacy also exists.
- Confidentiality is a form of privacy protection; it is the legal and ethical duty to keep private the victim-client's information that was learned in confidence. The duty of confidentiality is found in laws and regulations that govern particular professions (e.g., community-based advocates and licensed mental health professionals) as well as certain types of information (e.g., health and educational records). In addition, certain funding sources (such as VOCA and VAWA) contain confidentiality requirements that govern anyone receiving the funds.
- Courts have the authority to require disclosure of a victim's confidential information when certain conditions are met. Circumstances that may compel disclosure of victims' otherwise confidential information include if the information is shared with a mandatory reporter and in the case of system-based advocates, if the information falls within the state's required disclosures to defendant pursuant to *Brady/Discovery Obligations*.
- Privilege is another privacy protection and is stronger than confidentiality. Privileges are defined by statute and rule and protect communications between victims and certain people, such as doctors, psychotherapists/counselors, attorneys

and in some jurisdictions, victim advocates. Key terms in the law may be defined in a way to limit the privilege. For example, among those jurisdictions that recognize an advocate-victim privilege, the term “advocate” is often narrow (e.g., only sexual assault advocates). Disclosure of privileged communications is prohibited unless the victim consents.

- Because privacy is so critical to victims it is important to understand what level of privacy protection can be afforded to a victim with whom one works and to communicate that BEFORE the victim shares any information.

Discussion

Privacy

“Privacy” is a fundamental right, essential to victim agency, autonomy and dignity, which—among other things—permits boundaries that limit who has access to our communications and information.

Privacy can be understood as the ability to control the sharing of personal information. See *Commonwealth ex rel. Platt v. Platt*, 404 A.2d 410, 429 (Pa. Super. Ct. 1979) (“The essence of privacy is no more, and certainly no less, than the freedom of the individual to pick and choose for [themselves] the time and circumstances under which, and most importantly, the extent to which, his attitudes, beliefs, and behavior and opinions are to be shared with or withheld from others.”). For many crime victims, maintaining privacy in their personal information and communications is vitally important. In fact, maintaining privacy is so important that some victims refrain from accessing critical legal, medical or counseling services without an assurance that treatment professionals will protect their personal information from disclosure. Understanding this and wishing as a matter of public policy to encourage access to services when needed, federal and state legislatures and professional licensing bodies have created frameworks of laws and regulations that help protect the information victims share with professionals from further dissemination. To this end, every jurisdiction has adopted statutory or constitutional victims’ rights; some jurisdictions explicitly protect victims’ rights to privacy, or to be treated with dignity, respect or fairness.⁴ Victims also have a federal Constitutional right to privacy.⁵

In addition to the broad rights to privacy that exist, privacy protections generally come in two forms: “confidentiality” and “privilege.” Professionals who work with victims should understand each concept.

Confidentiality

“Confidentiality” is a legal and ethical duty not to disclose the victim-client’s information learned in confidence.

As part of accessing services, victims frequently share highly sensitive personal information with professionals. A victim’s willingness to share this information may be premised on

the professionals' promise to not disclose it. The promise to hold in confidence the victim's information is governed by the professional's ethical duties, regulatory framework and/or by other various laws. Breaking the promise may carry sanctions. The promise not to disclose information that is shared in confidence—as well as the legal framework that recognizes this promise—are what qualifies this information as “confidential.”

Key aspects of confidential communications are that: (1) they are made with the expectation of privacy; (2) they are not accessible to the general public; (3) there may or may not be legal requirements that the recipient keep the information private; and (4) there may be a professional/ethical obligation to keep the information private.

Professional confidentiality obligations may be imposed by one's profession, e.g., advocate ethics; social worker ethics; attorney ethics; medical provider ethics; and mental health counselor ethics. In addition, certain laws may have confidentiality provisions that are tied to funding. If an entity receives such funds, then it is bound by confidentiality or risks losing funding. Examples of laws that impose confidentiality requirements include the: (1) Victims of Crime Act (VOCA), 28 C.F.R. § 94.115; (2) Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), 34 U.S.C. § 12291(b)(2)(A)–(B); and (3) Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA), 42 U.S.C. § 10406 (c)(5)(B). For example, VAWA (Section 3), VOCA and FVPSA regulations prohibit sharing personally identifying information about victims without informed, written and reasonably time-limited consent. VAWA and VOCA also prohibit disclosure of individual information without written consent. In addition, depending on the types of victim information at issue, other statutes may impose additional restrictions, including the Federal Educational Rights & Privacy Act (FERPA), 20 U.S.C. § 1232g (protections governing the handling of education records); the Health Insurance Portability & Accountability Act (HIPAA), 42 U.S.C. § 1320d et seq. (protections governing the handling of health records); and the Stored Communications Act (SCA), 18 U.S.C. § 2701 et seq. (protections governing electronic communications and transactions records).

When providing services, professionals should discuss with victims the consequences of sharing information before information is shared. These consequences may include the: (1) inability to “take back” a disclosure; (2) lack of control over the information once released; and (3) risk of the accused accessing the information. In addition, even when laws appear to prohibit disclosure, there are often exceptions that require disclosure, for instance in response to court orders or valid subpoenas. These limits should be explained to a victim. For example, a court may make a determination that an accused's interests outweigh the confidentiality protection afforded by a law and order the professional to disclose the victim's private information. Although a victim can be assured that a professional may not ethically disclose her confidential information unless legally required to do so, it is important that a victim understand that courts have the authority to require a professional to break the promise of confidentiality when certain conditions are met. Other circumstances that may compel disclosure of victims' otherwise confidential information include if the information is shared with a mandatory reporter of elder or child abuse and if the information falls within the state's required disclosures to defendant pursuant to the United

States Supreme Court case *Brady v. Maryland*.

Thus, although the basic rule of confidentiality is that a victim's information is not shared outside an agency unless the victim gives permission to do so, it is important to inform victims before they share information whether, when and under what circumstances information may be further disclosed.

Privilege

“Privilege” is a legal right of the victim not to disclose—or to prevent the disclosure of—certain information in connection with court and other proceedings.

Legislatures throughout the country have recognized that the effective practice of some professions requires even stronger legal protection of confidential communications between the professional and client. This recognition has resulted in the passage of laws that prevent courts from forcing these professionals to break the promise of confidentiality no matter how relevant the information is to the issues in the legal proceeding. This additional protection is a “privilege”—a legal right not to disclose certain information, even in the face of a valid subpoena.⁶ Key aspects of privileged communications are that: (1) they are specially protected, often by statute; (2) disclosure without permission of the privilege holder (*i.e.*, the victim) is prohibited; (3) they are protected from disclosure in court or other proceedings; (4) the protections may be waived only by the holder of the privilege (*i.e.*, the victim); and (5) some exceptions may apply. Examples of communications that may be protected by privilege depending on jurisdiction include: (1) spousal; (2) attorney-client; (3) clergy-penitent; (4) psychotherapist/counselor-patient; (5) doctor-patient; and (6) advocate-victim. Jurisdictions that recognize a given privilege may narrowly define terms, thereby limiting its applications. For example, among the jurisdictions that recognize an advocate-victim privilege, many define the term “advocate” to exclude those who are system-based (*i.e.*, affiliated with a law-enforcement agency or a prosecutor's office).⁷

Understanding the Differences

Because maintaining a victim's control over whether and how to disclose personal information is so important and because community-based and system-based advocates can offer different levels of protection regarding communications, every professional must know whether their communications with a victim are confidential or privileged, as well as how courts have interpreted the scope of each protection. This information should be shared with victims in advance of information disclosure. To do otherwise may provide victim-clients with a false sense of security regarding their privacy and inflict further harm if their personal information is unexpectedly disclosed.

What are HIPAA, FERPA, VOCA, VAWA and FOIA, and why are these relevant to my work as an advocate?⁸**Key Takeaways**

- Federal and many state laws protect certain types of information from disclosure. These laws generally cover medical, therapy and other behavioral health records, educational records and certain advocacy records.
- HIPAA—the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act—requires the protection and confidential handling of protected health information (PHI). This is important because although it permits release of PHI in response to a valid court order, no such release may be made in response to a subpoena or other request except under very specific circumstances.
- FERPA—the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act—protects the privacy of student education records, as well as any personally identifiable information in those records. Although the Department of Education provides that law enforcement records are not education records, personally identifiable information collected from education records and shared with law enforcement remain protected from disclosure.
- Victim assistance programs that receive funding under either VOCA (the Victims of Crime Act of 1984) or VAWA (the Violence Against Women Act) are mandated to protect crime victims' confidentiality and privacy subject to limited exceptions, such as mandatory reporting or statutory or court mandates. Even if disclosure of individual client information is required by statute or court order, recipients of VOCA or VAWA funding must provide notice to victims affected by any required disclosure of their information, and take steps to protect the privacy and safety of the victims.
- Open records' laws—also commonly referred to as public records' laws or sunshine laws—permit any person to request government documents and, if the government refuses to turn them over, to file a lawsuit to compel disclosure. Every state and the federal government have such laws (the federal law is known as FOIA, the Freedom of Information Act), which carry a presumption of disclosure. That means that all government records are presumed open for public inspection unless an exemption applies. Many exemptions from disclosure exist, including for some types of law enforcement records. All advocates should understand their jurisdiction's open records' laws, especially as they relate to exemptions that may apply to law enforcement and other victim-related records.

Discussion

HIPAA: Federal law—as well as state law in many jurisdictions—provides crime victims with different forms of protections from disclosure of their personal and confidential information. This includes protections against the disclosure of medical and/or therapy and other behavioral health records without the victim's consent. HIPAA—codified at 42

U.S.C. § 1320d et seq. and 45 C.F.R. § 164.500 et seq.—is the acronym for the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, a federal law passed in 1996. HIPAA does a variety of things, but most relevantly, it requires the protection and confidential handling of protected health information (PHI). This is important because although it permits release of PHI in response to a valid court order, no such release may be made in response to a subpoena or other request unless one of the following circumstances is met:

1. The entity must receive “satisfactory assurance” from “the party seeking the information that reasonable efforts have been made by such party to ensure that the individual who is the subject of the protected health information that has been requested has been given notice of the request[.]” 45 C.F.R. § 164.512(e)(1)(ii)(A).
-or-
2. The entity must receive “satisfactory assurance” from the “party seeking the information that reasonable efforts have been made by such party to secure a qualified protective order” that meets certain requirements, detailed in subsection (iv), 45 C.F.R. § 164.512(e)(1)(ii)(B).

Advocates may wish to inform victims that they may proactively contact their medical providers, informing them that the victims are asserting privilege and other legal protections in their records, and requesting that these providers: (1) give them prompt notice of any request for the victims’ medical records; (2) refuse to disclose the records pursuant to any such request without first receiving a valid court order; and (3) ensure that no medical records are released without first permitting the victims to file a challenge to their release. Advocates who work for or with community-based organizations—including organizations that provide general mental health services as well as those that serve domestic violence or sexual assault victims—should advise victims about the possibility of asserting HIPAA protections if facing a request for their records.

FERPA: The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)—codified at 20 U.S.C. § 1232g—is a federal law that protects the privacy of student education records, and the [personally identifiable information] contained therein, maintained by educational agencies or institutions or by a party acting for the agencies or institutions.”⁹ FERPA applies to those agencies and institutions that receive funding under any U.S. Department of Education program.¹⁰ “Private schools at the elementary and secondary levels generally do not receive funds from the Department [of Education] and are, therefore, not subject to FERPA, but may be subject to other data privacy laws such as HIPAA.”¹¹

Protections afforded by FERPA include the right of parents or eligible students to provide a signed and dated, written consent that clearly identifies which education records or personally identifiable information may be disclosed by the educational agency or institution; the person who may receive such records or information; and the purpose for the disclosure prior to disclosure of an education record or personally identifiable information, except in limited circumstances such as health or safety emergencies.¹²

Notably, while the Department of Education provides that law enforcement records are not

education records, “personally identifiable information [collected] from education records, which the school shares with the law enforcement unit, do not lose their protected status as education records just because they are shared with the law enforcement unit.”¹³ Thus, law enforcement has a duty to understand and comply with FERPA when drafting police reports, supplemental reports and, generally, sharing or relaying information.

It is important that advocates have an understanding of FERPA as well as other federal laws, state laws and local policies that address student privacy in education records as eligible students or parents may be afforded privacy protections in addition to FERPA. For example, “the education records of students who are children with disabilities are not only protected by FERPA but also by the confidentiality of information provisions in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).”¹⁴

VOCA and VAWA: The Victims of Crime Act of 1984 (VOCA)—codified at 34 U.S.C. §§ 20101 to 20111—established the Crime Victims Fund (the Fund), which is managed by the Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. The Fund is financed by, *inter alia*, fines and penalties from persons convicted of crimes against the United States as opposed to by tax dollars.¹⁵ The Fund supports victim assistance programs that offer direct victim services and crime victim compensation.¹⁶ Examples of direct services are crisis intervention, emergency shelters or transportation, counseling and criminal justice advocacy; and crime victim compensation programs that cover expenses incurred as a result of the crime.¹⁷

The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)—enacted in 1994 and reauthorized in 2000, 2005 and 2013—created an array of federal protections for victims of crimes, including domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking. Additionally, VAWA provided funding for services and programs to combat violent crimes against women. VAWA funds are administered by the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW), U.S. Department of Justice.

Agencies that receive VOCA or VAWA funding are mandated to protect crime victims’ confidentiality and privacy subject to limited exceptions, such as mandatory reporting or statutory or court mandates. Specifically, state administering agencies and subrecipients of VOCA funding, are mandated “to the extent permitted by law, [to] reasonably protect the confidentiality and privacy of [victims] receiving services . . . and shall not disclose, reveal, or release, except . . . [in limited circumstances:] (1) [a]ny personally identifying information or individual information collected in connection with VOCA-funded services requested, utilized, or denied, regardless of whether such information has been encoded, encrypted, hashed, or otherwise protected; or (2) [i]ndividual client information, without the informed, written, reasonably time-limited consent of the person about whom information is sought” 28 C.F.R. § 94.115(a)(1)–(2). Agencies that receive VAWA funding are subject to nearly identical duties to protect crime victims’ confidentiality and privacy subject to limited exceptions. *See* 34 U.S.C. § 12291(b)(2).

Even if disclosure of individual client information is required by statute or court order, state

administering agencies and sub-recipients' privacy and confidentiality obligations owed to crime victims do not disappear. State administering agencies and subrecipients of VOCA funds "shall make reasonable attempts to provide notice to victims affected by the disclosure of the information, and take reasonable steps necessary to protect the privacy and safety of the persons affected by the release of the information." 28 C.F.R. § 94.115(b). VAWA imposes similar requirements on recipients of funding. *See* 34 U.S.C. § 12291(b)(2)(C) ("If release of information . . . is compelled by statutory or court mandate[,] . . . grantees and subgrantees shall make reasonable attempts to provide notice to victims affected by the disclosure of information[] and . . . shall take steps necessary to protect the privacy and safety of the persons affected by the release of the information."). VOCA also mandates that none of the protections afforded to victims be circumvented. For example, a crime victim may neither be required to release personally identifying information in exchange for services nor be required to provide personally identifying information for recording or reporting purposes. 28 C.F.R. § 94.115(d).

It is important that advocates are aware if their positions and/or offices are subject to VOCA's and VAWA's mandates regarding victims' confidentiality and privacy protections and if so, understand how these mandates interact with disclosure obligations.

FOIA: Open records' laws—also commonly referred to as public records' laws or sunshine laws—permit any person to request government documents and, if the government refuses to turn them over, to file a lawsuit to compel disclosure. Every state and the federal government have such laws, which carry a presumption of disclosure, meaning that all government records are presumed open for public inspection unless an exemption applies.

The federal open records' law, known as the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA or the "Act"), 5 U.S.C. §552, was enacted in 1966. Similar to its state counterparts, FOIA provides for the legally enforceable right of any person to obtain access to federal agency records subject to the Act, except to the extent that any portions of such records are protected from public disclosure by one of the nine exemptions. Three such exemptions, Exemptions 6, 7(C) and 7(F) protect different types of personal information in federal records from disclosure. Exemption 6 "protects information about individuals in 'personnel and medical files and similar files' when the disclosure of such information 'would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy.'"¹⁸ Exemption 7(C) "is limited to information compiled for law enforcement purposes, and protects personal information when disclosure 'could reasonably be expected to constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy.'" Under both exemptions, "the concept of privacy not only encompasses that which is inherently private, but also includes an 'individual's control of information concerning [his/her/their] person.'"¹⁹ Exemption 7(F), which also applies to law enforcement records, exempts records that contain information that "could reasonably be expected to endanger the life or physical safety of any individual."

Similar to FOIA, state open records' laws contain numerous exemptions, including for some types of law enforcement records (for example, prohibitions on disclosing identifying information of victims' and witnesses' generally or of child-victims and/or victims of

certain crimes). Advocates should have an understanding of their jurisdiction’s open records’ laws, especially as they relate to exemptions from disclosure that may be afforded to law enforcement and other victim-related records within their office’s possession. Jurisdiction-specific victims’ rights laws—including rights to privacy and protection—also provide grounds for challenging public records’ requests for victims’ private information.

Are there ethical standards relevant to my work as an advocate?

Key Takeaways

- Advocates should know what ethical standards apply to their work with victims.
- Law enforcement agencies should develop a code of ethics specific to victim services personnel or, at a minimum, expand the scope of existing codes of ethics to include them.

Discussion

Yes, there are ethical standards—or “principles of conduct”—that guides victim advocates in their work.²⁰ Although there is no formal regulatory board that oversees victim assistance programs, the *Model Standards for Serving Victims & Survivors of Crime (Model Standards)* was created by the National Victim Assistance Standards Consortium with guidance from experts across the nation “to promote the competency and ethical integrity of victim service providers, in order to enhance their capacity to provide high-quality, consistent responses to crime victims and to meet the demands facing the field today.”²¹

The *Model Standards* cover three areas: (1) Program Standards for Serving Victims & Survivors of Crime; (2) Competency Standards for Serving Victims & Survivors of Crime; and (3) Ethical Standards for Serving Victims & Survivors of Crime.

The third area—Ethical Standards for Serving Victims & Survivors of Crime—contains “ethical expectations” of victim service providers that are “based on core values” in the field and are intended to serve as guidelines for providers in the course of their work. The Ethical Standards are comprised of five sections:

- (1) Scope of Services;
- (2) Coordinating within the Community;
- (3) Direct Services;
- (4) Privacy, Confidentiality, Data Security and Assistive Technology; and
- (5) Administration and Evaluation.²²

Notably, “[p]rofessionals who are trained in another field (*e.g.*, psychology, social work) but are engaging in victim services will [also] abide by their own professional codes of ethics. If th[ose] ethical standards establish a higher standard of conduct than is required by law or another professional ethic, victim assistance providers should meet the higher ethical standard. If ethical standards appear to conflict with the requirements of law or another professional ethic, providers should take steps to resolve the conflict in a

responsible manner.”²³

Many law enforcement agencies have established their own code of ethics. Often, these codes of ethics are developed to guide the behavior of sworn personnel and may not encompass the role of victim services. Agencies are encouraged to develop a code of ethics specific to victim services personnel or, at a minimum, expand the scope of existing codes of ethics to include them.²⁴

What is the difference between discovery and production and how does this relate to the Supreme Court’s decision in *Brady v. Maryland*?

Key Takeaways

- In a criminal case, the term “discovery” refers to the exchange of information between parties to the case—the prosecutor and defendant. The term “production” refers to the defendant’s more limited right to obtain information from nonparties, such as victims. Sometimes the term “discovery” is used to describe the parties’ requests for information and records from nonparties, but this is an imprecise use of the word as it confuses the two ideas.
- In *Brady v. Maryland* the United States Supreme Court announced a rule, and state laws have adopted it also, that impose on the prosecutor’s office—and by extension on other governmental agencies such as law enforcement—legal obligations to disclose information to the accused and their lawyer even if they do not ask for it. These obligations are sometimes called *Brady* Obligations or Discovery Obligations.
- Pursuant to these obligations, the prosecutor is only constitutionally required to disclose information that is exculpatory and material to the issue of guilt, and which is within the custody or control of the prosecutor.
- Beyond that material to which a defendant is constitutionally entitled under *Brady*, state statute or procedural rule may entitle a criminal defendant to additional discovery materials.
- If records are not properly in the possession or control of the prosecutor, a defendant can only try to obtain them through their more limited right of production by seeking a subpoena pursuant to the jurisdiction’s statutes and rules governing production of documents from a nonparty.
- Federal and state courts have found that prosecution-based victim advocates are part of the “prosecution team” for *Brady* purposes. Therefore, *Brady*/Discovery Obligations generally attach to system-based advocates, and these obligations can override an advocate’s ability to keep something confidential. That means anything shared with a system-based advocate may have to be disclosed to the accused and their lawyer.
- Victims should be informed at the outset that disclosure requirements—imposed by *Brady* as well as a jurisdiction’s statutes and rules governing discovery—may impact victim privacy.

Discussion

The Supreme Court case Brady v. Maryland, as well as jurisdiction-specific statutes and court rules, impose discovery and disclosure obligations on the prosecution and defendant—not on the victim.

In criminal cases, victim privacy is routinely at risk by parties seeking personal records, such as counseling, mental health, medical, employment, educational and child protective services records. The law governing when these records must be disclosed to a defendant is complex, touching on a number of factors, including whether the records are within the government’s control; whether they are protected by a privilege; whether any applicable privilege is absolute or qualified; whether a victim has waived any privilege in full or in part; the scope of the jurisdiction’s constitutional or statutory rights and/or protections for victims; and the jurisdiction’s statutes and rules governing discovery and production. If the records sought are properly in the possession or control of the prosecutor, a defendant may be entitled to them, pursuant to constitutional, statutory or rule-based rights to discovery. If, however, the records are not in the possession (or properly in the possession) of the prosecutor, a defendant must subpoena those records pursuant to the jurisdiction’s statutes and rules governing production of documents from a nonparty. Although courts and practitioners sometimes refer to defendant’s receipt of materials from both the prosecutor and nonparties as “discovery,” this imprecise use of the term confuses a defendant’s right to discovery from the prosecutor with a defendant’s right to production from a nonparty.

In a criminal prosecution, the term “discovery” refers to the exchange of information between parties to the case—the prosecutor and defendant. *See, e.g., Fed R. Crim. P. 16* (entitled “Discovery and Inspection,” the rule explicitly and exclusively governs discovery between the government and defendant). It does not govern defendant’s ability to obtain information directly from a crime victim or other nonparty. With regard to discovery from the prosecutor, a criminal defendant has no general federal constitutional right to discovery.²⁵ The prosecutor, instead, is only constitutionally required to disclose information that is exculpatory and material to the issue of guilt, *see Brady v. Maryland*, 373 U.S. 83, 87–88 (1963), and which is within the custody or control of the prosecutor.²⁶ The *Brady* rule imposes an affirmative “duty to disclose such evidence . . . even [when] there has been no request [for the evidence] by the accused, . . . and . . . the duty encompasses impeachment evidence as well as exculpatory evidence.”²⁷ The prosecutor’s *Brady* obligation extends to all exculpatory material and impeachment evidence and to “others acting on the government’s behalf in th[e] case.”²⁸

Federal and state courts have found that prosecution-based victim advocates are considered part of the “prosecution team” for *Brady* purposes.²⁹ Beyond that material to which a defendant is constitutionally entitled, a prosecutor’s obligation to disclose information is governed by statute or procedural rule. A criminal defendant is often entitled to additional discovery materials from the prosecutor pursuant to statutes or rules, though discovery statutes and rules vary widely between jurisdictions.

Victims should be informed that disclosure requirements—imposed by Brady as well as a jurisdiction’s statutes and rules governing discovery—may impact victim privacy.

Prosecutors are required by law to disclose exculpatory statements to the defense. Because system-based advocates are generally considered agents of the prosecutors, and prosecutors are deemed to know what advocates know, such advocates are generally required to disclose to the prosecutors the exculpatory statements made by victims to advocates.³⁰ Examples of exculpatory statements might include:

- “I lied to the police.”
- “I hit him first and he was defending himself.”
- “The crime didn’t happen.”
- “The defendant is not really the person who assaulted me.”
- *Any other statement from a victim that directly implicates a victim’s truthfulness regarding the crime.*
- *Any other statement from the victim that provides information that could be helpful to a defendant’s case.*

Important steps that victim advocates may take to help ensure that their office has appropriate policies and procedures in place to protect victims in light of required disclosures to prosecutors’ offices include:

- Ensure that every person clearly understands the prosecutor’s interpretation and expectations regarding discovery and exculpatory evidence with regard to victim advocates.
- Work with the prosecutors’ offices to create a policy/practice that addresses the limits of system-based advocate confidentiality.
- Inform victims prior to sharing of information if the victim advocate is bound by the rules that govern prosecutors.
- Develop a short, simple explanation to use with victims to communicate your responsibilities (*e.g.*, don’t use the word “exculpatory”).
- Consider including a simple statement in the initial contact letter or notice explaining limitations.
- Determine how and when advocates will remind victims of the limits of confidentiality throughout the process.
- Identify what documentation an advocate might come into contact with and whether the prosecutors’ office considers it discoverable. For example: (1) victim compensation forms; (2) victim impact statements; (3) restitution documentation; and (4) U-Visa application documentation.
- Create policies regarding the types of documentation that an advocate may not need from the victim in order to provide effective victim advocacy (*e.g.*, victim statements, treatment plans, safety plans, opinions, conclusions, criticisms). Determine a process for clearly marking documents that are not discoverable to ensure they are not inadvertently disclosed. For example, use a red stamp that says, “Not Discoverable.”

- Inform the victim at the time they make a disclosure that constitutes exculpatory evidence—or soon as a statement is deemed exculpatory—that it is going to be disclosed.
- When possible, avoid receiving a victim impact statement in writing prior to sentencing.
- Develop relationships with complementary victim advocates and communicate about your obligations and boundaries regarding exculpatory evidence. This will allow everyone to help set realistic expectations with victims regarding privacy.
- Establish how exculpatory information will be communicated to the prosecutor’s office.

What is *Giglio*, and why is it relevant to my work as an advocate?

Key Takeaways

- The United States Supreme Court (in *Giglio v. United States*) clarified the affirmative responsibility of the prosecutor’s office to disclose to the defendant any information in its possession that is material to their guilt or innocence. This means that the prosecution does not wait for a defendant to ask for material but must disclose it even without them asking.

Discussion

Giglio v. United States, 405 U.S. 150 (1972), is a case that was heard before the United States Supreme Court.³¹ The impact of the Court’s decision in *Giglio* intersects with advocates’ work as it makes it imperative that advocates understand: (1) what “material evidence” is (see *Brady v. Maryland* section for additional information); (2) how the advocate’s role is or is not related to the prosecutor’s office along with any corresponding professional, ethical obligations; (3) ways to avoid re-victimization by preventing violations that would cause a victim to undergo a second trial for the same crime; (4) the types of procedures and regulations that need to be implemented for advocates to ensure—in the face of prosecutor or advocate turnover—that all relevant and appropriate information is provided to the prosecutor handling the case; and (5) whether state or other local laws impose additional obligations that build on those prescribed by *Giglio*.

What are key considerations for system-based advocates who receive a subpoena?³²

Key Takeaways

- Advocates may receive subpoenas to appear before the court or elsewhere to provide a sworn statement and/or to appear with specified documents.
- Victims should be informed immediately if advocates receive a subpoena for the information or documents related to a victim’s case.

- There may be grounds to challenge a subpoena issued to a system-based or community-based advocate. These challenges can be made by the prosecutor, the community agency and/or the victims (either with or without the help of an attorney).

Discussion

In addition to providing prompt notice of receipt of a subpoena to the victim—whose rights and interests are implicated—a key consideration for system-based advocates, their superiors and the attorneys with whom they work is determining the type of subpoena received.³³ Subpoenas that system-based advocates often encounter are subpoenas demanding either: (a) a person’s presence before a court or to a location other than a court for a sworn statement; or (b) a person’s presence along with specified documentation, records or other tangible items.³⁴

When system-based advocates receive the latter (which is called a subpoena duces tecum) there are a number of factors that should be considered, such as whether the documentation, record or item sought (a) is discoverable; or (b) constitutes *Brady* material, as defined by federal, state and local law. If an item, for example, is neither discoverable nor *Brady* material, an advocate, by law, may not be required to disclose the item. The same may be true if the item falls within an exception to discovery and does not constitute *Brady* material.³⁵ For additional information on *Brady* material, see the *Brady v. Maryland* section pertaining to disclosure obligations. Notably, this analysis is relevant to other types of subpoenas as well. For example, if a person is subpoenaed to testify and it is anticipated that defense counsel will attempt to elicit testimony that he/she/they are not legally entitled to, a prosecutor may file a motion in advance—such as a motion in limine or a motion for a protective order—requesting that the scope of the testimony be narrowly tailored or otherwise limited in accordance with the jurisdiction’s laws. For advocates employed by prosecutor’s offices, this analysis must be completed in cooperation with the prosecuting attorney.

Other key considerations for system-based advocates, their superiors and the attorneys they work with include determining: whether the requester has a right to issue a subpoena, and, more specifically, a right to issue a subpoena for the person’s attendance and/or items sought; whether the subpoena is unspecified, vague or overbroad to warrant an objection that the subpoena is facially invalid or procedurally flawed; whether court mechanisms are available to oppose the subpoena; whether such mechanisms are time sensitive and require immediate action; whether the victim received ample notice and adequate information; what the victim’s position is; and whether the law affords the victim privacy, confidentiality or privilege rights or protections that must be protected and enforced.

SELECT LAWS

SELECT PRIVACY LAWS

What are key privacy rights and/or protections in Florida?

In Florida, victims of crime—like all people—have an explicit state constitutional right to privacy. Fla. Const. art. I, § 23 (providing that “[e]very natural person has the right to be let alone and free from governmental intrusion into the person’s private life except as otherwise provided herein”). Victims in Florida also have a constitutional right to the nondisclosure of information and records that could be used to locate or harass them or their families or that could disclose the victims’ confidential or privileged information. *See* Fla. Const. art. I, § 16(b)(5) (affording victims the right “to prevent the disclosure of information or records that could be used to locate or harass the victim or the victim’s family, or which could disclose confidential or privileged information of the victim”).

In addition to these protections, crime victims in Florida have other constitutional rights—under Article 1, section 16 of Florida’s Constitution—that protect their privacy interests. *See, e.g.*, Fla. Const. art. I, § 16(b)(1) (affording victims the rights “to due process and to be treated with fairness and respect for the victim’s dignity”). In particular, the state constitution protects victim privacy through safety-related rights. *See, e.g., id.* at § 16(b)(2) (affording victims the right “to be free from intimidation, harassment, and abuse”); *id.* at § 16(b)(3) (affording victims the right to reasonable protection from the accused and persons acting on their behalf); *id.* at § 16(b)(4) (affording victims the right “to have the safety and welfare of the victim . . . considered when setting bail, including setting pretrial release conditions”). State statutes also protect victim privacy through safety-related provisions. *See, e.g.*, Fla. Stat. Ann. § 960.001(1)(s) (providing child-victims and their siblings with the right to request that a juvenile offender be required to attend a different school from them); *id.* at §§ 960.196, 960.198, 960.199 (providing victims of human trafficking, domestic violence and sexual battery with the right to relocation assistance); *id.* at § 914.27 (providing for confidentiality of victim-witness identifying and locating information where the victim is a part of the victim and witness protection program).

Florida also protects victim privacy in the context of pretrial discovery. *See, e.g.*, Fla. R. Crim. P. Rule 3.220(b)(2) (“If the court determines, in camera, that any police or investigative report contains irrelevant, sensitive information or information interrelated with other crimes or criminal activities and the disclosure of the contents of the police report may seriously impair law enforcement or jeopardize the investigation of those other crimes or activities, the court may prohibit or partially restrict the disclosure.”); Fla. R. Crim. P. Rule 3.220(h)(4), (6) (authorizing videotaped depositions of children under 18 and witnesses of “fragile emotional strength” or with an intellectual disability and establishing a witness coordinating office to schedule witness depositions); Fla. R. Crim. P. Rule 3.220(h)(7) (barring defendants from being physically present during a deposition except

on stipulation by the parties or pursuant to court order); Fla. R. Crim. P. Rule 3.220(1)(1) (protecting victim-witnesses from invasions of privacy by allowing protective orders, if good cause can be shown, to restrict, defer or exempt “specified disclosures,” to seal depositions or to allow any other court order appropriate under the facts and circumstances of a case); Fla. R. Crim. P. Rule 3.220(m)(1) (allowing any person, during discovery, to “move for an order denying or regulating disclosure of sensitive matters”).

Florida extends heightened privacy protections to certain categories of victims. For instance, courts in Florida have the authority to enter any order necessary to protect sexual offense victims “from severe emotional or mental harm due to the presence of the defendant if the victim . . . is required to testify in open court.” Fla. Stat. Ann. § 92.55(2). Sex offense victims also have an express right to not be subjected to an examination by a polygraph or other truth-telling device. *Id.* at § 960.001(1)(t). Courts may also limit the number of times a sex offense victim is interviewed or deposed, as well as require the submission of questions before the victim’s examination. *Id.* at § 92.55(4). Additionally, judicial proceedings and court records involving victims of sexual offenses and human trafficking are confidential and disclosure of the victim’s identity is generally not allowed. *Id.* at § 92.56(1); *see also id.* at § 794.03 (prohibiting the printing, publication or broadcasting of a sexual offense victim’s name, address or other identifying information). Such victims are entitled to use a pseudonym instead of their name in criminal proceedings. *Id.* at § 92.56(3). Indeed, sexual offense victims have a civil cause of action against any entity or individual who communicates to others, prior to open judicial proceedings, the victim’s identifying information. *Id.* at § 794.026. Sex offense victims are entitled to request that the courtroom be cleared of all persons other than the parties, certain justice system actors and newspaper reporters and broadcasters. *Id.* at § 918.16(2). Sexual assault victims are also entitled to have their anonymity protected when obtaining medical attention and treatment related to the crime committed against them. *Id.* at § 395.1021.

Similarly, child-victims and victims with intellectual disabilities have specific privacy-related rights. For instance, under certain circumstances, child-victims and victims with intellectual disabilities may testify via videotape or closed-circuit television instead of in open court. Fla. Stat. Ann. § 92.53; *id.* at § 92.54. Courts may employ any other means necessary to protect such victims from the emotional and mental harms they would suffer in testifying before the defendant and/or in open court, *id.* at § 92.55, such as clearing the courtroom of certain individuals when such victims are testifying about a sex offense, *id.* at § 918.16(1). Courts may also limit the number of times child-victims and victims with intellectual disabilities may be interviewed or deposed, as well as require the submission of questions before the victim’s examination. *Id.* at § 92.55(4); *see also id.* at § 914.16 (authorizing the chief judge of each judicial circuit, after consultation with the state attorney and the public defender for the circuit, the appropriate chief law enforcement officer and anyone else deemed appropriate by the chief judge, to order reasonable limits on the number of interviews that child-victims and victims with intellectual disabilities must submit to for law enforcement or discovery purposes). Child-victims generally may proceed under a pseudonym in criminal cases. *Id.* at § 92.56(3). Additionally, when an offender is sentenced for an offense involving a victim who was a minor at the time of the offense, the

court must stamp “VICTIM IS A MINOR” on the face of the judgment and note this fact in any document or information sent to law enforcement for its incorporation into the criminal justice information system. *Id.* at § 921.243.

Florida also protects the privacy rights of victims of domestic violence through its address confidentiality program, Fla. Stat. Ann. §§ 741.401 through 740.466, which is discussed more fully in the section “Select Confidentiality Laws.”

The section “Select Confidentiality Laws” details how Florida protects victims’ privacy interests in the context of public records requests.

SELECT CONFIDENTIALITY LAWS

What are key confidentiality rights and/or protections in Florida?

Crime victims in Florida have an explicit constitutional right to prohibit disclosure of information or records that may disclose victims’ confidential information. Fla. Const. art. I, § 16(b)(5).

The state also affords victims a range of statutory confidentiality protections related to the nondisclosure of their personal information. *See, e.g.*, Fla. Stat. Ann. § 960.001(1)(g)(2) (providing that a victim’s confidential information must be redacted from a presentence investigation report before another victim exercises their right to review a copy of the report); *id.* at § 92.56 (governing access to confidential records containing information related to victims of sexual offenses and human trafficking).

Florida also affords victims certain confidentiality protections in the context of public records requests. In particular, the state exempts from inspection or copying records related to: (1) criminal intelligence information or criminal investigation information involving the identity of victims of child abuse, human trafficking and any sexual offense, as well as photographs, videotapes or images of any part of the body of victims of sexual offenses, regardless of whether the image identifies the victim, Fla. Stat. Ann. § 119.071(2)(h)(1); (2) criminal intelligence information or criminal investigation information that reveals a victim’s personal assets, other than property stolen or destroyed during the commission of a crime, *id.* at § 119.071(2)(i); (3) any document that reveals certain identifying, locating or asset information of any victim of a crime and identifies that person as a crime victim, *id.* at § 119.071(2)(j)(1); (4) any additional information that reveals certain identifying, locating or asset information of a victim of sexual battery, aggravated child abuse, aggravated stalking, harassment, aggravated battery or domestic violence, upon written request by the victim, *id.*; (5) any information in a videotaped statement of a minor sex offense victim that reveals the victim’s identity and identifies the minor as a victim, *id.* at § 119.071(2)(j)(2); (6) law enforcement body worn camera recordings, *id.* at

§ 119.071(2)(l); (7) the personal identifying information of a victim of sexual harassment, *id.* at § 119.071(2)(n); (8) the address of a victim of an incident of mass violence, *id.* at § 119.071(2)(o); (9) photographs or video or audio recordings that depict the killing of a victim of mass violence or the killing of a law enforcement officer who is working in accordance with official duties, *id.* at § 199.071(2)(p); (10) any information contained in a record created by a domestic violence fatality review team that reveals the victim’s identity, *id.* at § 741.3165; (11) participation in the state’s address confidentiality program, *id.* at § 741.465; (12) the names, addresses and telephone numbers of victims of stalking or aggravated stalking if the victim signs a sworn statement of stalking, *id.* at § 741.4651; (13) the identity or location of a victim who is participating in the state’s victim and witness protection program, *id.* at § 914.27(1); (14) certain information contained in records held by the Department of Corrections related to a victim’s statement and identity and a victim-inmate’s health, *id.* at § 945.10; and (15) information regarding the identification of a sexual assault victim who seeks payment of medical expenses related to an initial forensic physical exam, *id.* at § 960.28(4).

Florida offers specific confidentiality protections to victims of domestic violence through its address confidentiality program, Fla. Stat. Ann. §§ 741.401 through 740.466. Under this program, victims of domestic violence are given an alternate address to use for mail, public records and other purposes. *Id.* at § 741.405; *id.* at § 741.406.

Florida law also protects the confidentiality of communications between victims and certain medical, mental health and other service providers. *See, e.g.*, Fla. Stat. Ann. §§ 90.5035(1)(e), (2) (sexual assault counselor-victim confidentiality); *id.* at §§ 90.5036(1)(d), (2) (domestic violence advocate-victim confidentiality); *id.* at § 90.5037 (human trafficking victim advocate-victim confidentiality). Such protections are discussed more fully in the section “Select Privilege Laws.”

SELECT PRIVILEGE LAWS

What are key privileges in Florida?

Victims in Florida have a number of privileges that they can assert to prevent disclosure of confidential communications, subject to certain exceptions and waivers. *See, e.g.*, Fla. Stat. Ann. § 90.503 (psychotherapist-patient privilege); *id.* at § 90.5035 (sexual assault counselor-victim privilege); *id.* at § 90.5036 (domestic violence advocate-victim privilege); *id.* at § 90.5037 (human trafficking victim advocate-victim privilege); *id.* at § 490.0147 (psychologist-patient privilege).

Notably, victims in Florida also have an explicit constitutional right to prohibit disclosure of information or records that may disclose victims’ privileged information. Fla. Const. art. I, § 16(b)(5).

There are exceptions to these privileges, such as for the mandatory reporting of abuse or neglect of a child or vulnerable adult. *See, e.g.*, Fla. Stat. Ann. § 39.201(1) (mandatory reporting of abuse, neglect or abandonment of a child); *id.* at § 415.1034(1) (mandatory reporting of abuse, neglect or exploitation of a vulnerable adult); *id.* at § 39.204 (abrogation of privileged nature of communications involving the perpetrator or alleged perpetrator in any situation involving known or suspected child abuse, abandonment or neglect).

Privilege may be waived through meaningful consent by the victim. *See, e.g.*, Fla. Stat. Ann. § 90.5035(2) (stating that confidential and privileged communications between a victim and a sexual assault counselor may only be made “with the prior written consent of the victim”); *id.* at § 90.5037(3) (same with respect to human trafficking advocate-victim privilege); *see generally id.* at § 90.507 (waiver of privilege by voluntary disclosure).

For reference, the key privileges referenced in this section appear below.

<p>Psychotherapist-Patient Privilege</p>	<p>Fla. Stat. Ann. § 90.503(2)–(4).</p> <p>(2) A patient has a privilege to refuse to disclose, and to prevent any other person from disclosing, confidential communications or records made for the purpose of diagnosis or treatment of the patient’s mental or emotional condition, including alcoholism and other drug addiction, between the patient and the psychotherapist, or persons who are participating in the diagnosis or treatment under the direction of the psychotherapist. This privilege includes any diagnosis made, and advice given, by the psychotherapist in the course of that relationship.</p> <p>(3) The privilege may be claimed by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) The patient or the patient’s attorney on the patient’s behalf. (b) A guardian or conservator of the patient. (c) The personal representative of a deceased patient. (d) The psychotherapist, but only on behalf of the patient. The authority of a psychotherapist to claim the privilege is presumed in the absence of evidence to the contrary. <p>(4) There is no privilege under this section:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) For communications relevant to an issue in proceedings to compel hospitalization of a patient for mental illness, if the psychotherapist in the course of diagnosis or treatment has reasonable cause to believe the patient is in need of hospitalization. (b) For communications made in the course of a court-ordered examination of the mental or emotional condition of the patient. (c) For communications relevant to an issue of the mental or emotional condition of the patient in any proceeding in which the
--	---

	<p>patient relies upon the condition as an element of his or her claim or defense or, after the patient’s death, in any proceeding in which any party relies upon the condition as an element of the party’s claim or defense.</p>
<p>Sexual Assault Counselor-Victim Privilege</p>	<p>Fla. Stat. Ann. § 90.5035(2)–(3).</p> <p>(2) A victim has a privilege to refuse to disclose, and to prevent any other person from disclosing, a confidential communication made by the victim to a sexual assault counselor or trained volunteer or any record made in the course of advising, counseling, or assisting the victim. Such confidential communication or record may be disclosed only with the prior written consent of the victim. This privilege includes any advice given by the sexual assault counselor or trained volunteer in the course of that relationship.</p> <p>(3) The privilege may be claimed by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) The victim or the victim’s attorney on his or her behalf. (b) A guardian or conservator of the victim. (c) The personal representative of a deceased victim. (d) The sexual assault counselor or trained volunteer, but only on behalf of the victim. The authority of a sexual assault counselor or trained volunteer to claim the privilege is presumed in the absence of evidence to the contrary.
<p>Domestic Violence Advocate-Victim Privilege</p>	<p>Fla. Stat. Ann. § 90.5036(2)–(3).</p> <p>(2) A victim has a privilege to refuse to disclose, and to prevent any other person from disclosing, a confidential communication made by the victim to a domestic violence advocate or any record made in the course of advising, counseling, or assisting the victim. The privilege applies to confidential communications made between the victim and the domestic violence advocate and to records of those communications only if the advocate is registered under s. 39.905 at the time the communication is made. This privilege includes any advice given by the domestic violence advocate in the course of that relationship.</p> <p>(3) The privilege may be claimed by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) The victim or the victim’s attorney on behalf of the victim. (b) A guardian or conservator of the victim. (c) The personal representative of a deceased victim.

	<p>(d) The domestic violence advocate, but only on behalf of the victim. The authority of a domestic violence advocate to claim the privilege is presumed in the absence of evidence to the contrary.</p>
<p>Human Trafficking Victim Advocate- Victim Privilege</p>	<p>Fla. Stat. Ann. § 90.5037(2)–(5).</p> <p>(2) A communication between a human trafficking victim advocate or trained volunteer and a human trafficking victim is confidential if it is not intended to be disclosed to third persons other than:</p> <p>(a) Those persons present to further the interest of the human trafficking victim in the consultation, examination, or interview.</p> <p>(b) Those persons necessary for the transmission of the communication.</p> <p>(c) Those persons to whom disclosure is reasonably necessary to accomplish the purposes for which the human trafficking victim advocate or trained volunteer is consulted.</p> <p>(3) A human trafficking victim has a privilege to refuse to disclose, and to prevent any other person from disclosing, a confidential communication made by the human trafficking victim to a human trafficking victim advocate or trained volunteer or a record made in the course of advising, counseling, or providing services to the human trafficking victim. Such confidential communication or record may be disclosed only with the prior written consent of the human trafficking victim. This privilege includes any advice given by the human trafficking victim advocate or trained volunteer to the human trafficking victim in the course of that relationship.</p> <p>(4) The privilege may be claimed by:</p> <p>(a) The human trafficking victim or the human trafficking victim’s attorney on his or her behalf.</p> <p>(b) The guardian or conservator of the human trafficking victim.</p> <p>(c) The personal representative of a deceased human trafficking victim.</p> <p>(d) The human trafficking victim advocate or trained volunteer, but only on behalf of the human trafficking victim. The authority of a human trafficking victim advocate or trained volunteer to claim the privilege is presumed in the absence of evidence to the contrary.</p> <p>(5) A human trafficking victim advocate or a trained volunteer shall:</p>

	<p>(a) Complete 24 hours of human trafficking training delivered by the Office of the Attorney General, the Bureau of Criminal Justice Programs and Victim Services, and the Florida Crime Prevention Training Institute.</p> <p>(b) Within 3 years after completing the training required under paragraph (a), complete an 8-hour human trafficking update course.</p>
<p>Psychologist-Patient Privilege</p>	<p>Fla. Stat. Ann. § 490.0147.</p> <p>(1) Any communication between a psychologist and her or his patient or client is confidential. This privilege may be waived under the following conditions:</p> <p>(a) When the psychologist is a party defendant to a civil, criminal, or disciplinary action arising from a complaint filed by the patient or client, in which case the waiver shall be limited to that action;</p> <p>(b) When the patient or client agrees to the waiver, in writing, or when more than one person in a family is receiving therapy, when each family member agrees to the waiver, in writing; or</p> <p>(c) When a patient or client has communicated to the psychologist a specific threat to cause serious bodily injury or death to an identified or readily available person, and the psychologist makes a clinical judgment that the patient or client has the apparent intent and ability to imminently or immediately carry out such threat, and the psychologist communicates the information to the potential victim. A disclosure of confidential communications by a psychologist when communicating a threat pursuant to this subsection may not be the basis of any legal action or criminal or civil liability against the psychologist.</p> <p>(2) Such privilege must be waived, and the psychologist shall disclose patient or client communications to the extent necessary to communicate the threat to a law enforcement agency, if a patient or client has communicated to the psychologist a specific threat to cause serious bodily injury or death to an identified or readily available person, and the psychologist makes a clinical judgment that the patient or client has the apparent intent and ability to imminently or immediately carry out such threat. A law enforcement agency that receives notification of a specific threat under this subsection must take appropriate action to prevent the risk of harm, including, but not limited to, notifying the intended victim of such threat or initiating a risk protection order. A psychologist’s disclosure of confidential communications when communicating a threat pursuant to this subsection may not be the</p>

	basis of any legal action or criminal or civil liability against the psychologist.
--	--

DEFINITIONS

Key definitions appear below.	
<p>Constitutional Definition of “Victim”</p>	<p>Fla. Const. art. I, § 16(e).</p> <p>As used in this section, a “victim” is a person who suffers direct or threatened physical, psychological, or financial harm as a result of the commission or attempted commission of a crime or delinquent act or against whom the crime or delinquent act is committed. The term “victim” includes the victim’s lawful representative, the parent or guardian of a minor, or the next of kin of a homicide victim, except upon a showing that the interest of such individual would be in actual or potential conflict with the interests of the victim. The term “victim” does not include the accused. The terms “crime” and “criminal” include delinquent acts and conduct.</p>
<p>Psychotherapist-Patient Privilege Definitions</p>	<p>Fla. Stat. Ann. § 90.503(1).</p> <p>For purposes of this section:</p> <p>(a) A “psychotherapist” is:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A person authorized to practice medicine in any state or nation, or reasonably believed by the patient so to be, who is engaged in the diagnosis or treatment of a mental or emotional condition, including alcoholism and other drug addiction; 2. A person licensed or certified as a psychologist under the laws of any state or nation, who is engaged primarily in the diagnosis or treatment of a mental or emotional condition, including alcoholism and other drug addiction; 3. A person licensed or certified as a clinical social worker, marriage and family therapist, or mental health counselor under the laws of this state, who is engaged primarily in the diagnosis or treatment of a mental or emotional condition, including alcoholism and other drug addiction; 4. Treatment personnel of facilities licensed by the state pursuant to chapter 394, chapter 395, or chapter 397, of facilities designated

	<p>by the Department of Children and Families pursuant to chapter 394 as treatment facilities, or of facilities defined as community mental health centers pursuant to s. 394.907(1), who are engaged primarily in the diagnosis or treatment of a mental or emotional condition, including alcoholism and other drug addiction; or</p> <p>5. An advanced practice registered nurse licensed under s. 464.012, whose primary scope of practice is the diagnosis or treatment of mental or emotional conditions, including chemical abuse, and limited only to actions performed in accordance with part I of chapter 464.</p> <p>(b) A “patient” is a person who consults, or is interviewed by, a psychotherapist for purposes of diagnosis or treatment of a mental or emotional condition, including alcoholism and other drug addiction.</p> <p>(c) A communication between psychotherapist and patient is “confidential” if it is not intended to be disclosed to third persons other than:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Those persons present to further the interest of the patient in the consultation, examination, or interview. 2. Those persons necessary for the transmission of the communication. 3. Those persons who are participating in the diagnosis and treatment under the direction of the psychotherapist. <p>(2) A patient has a privilege to refuse to disclose, and to prevent any other person from disclosing, confidential communications or records made for the purpose of diagnosis or treatment of the patient’s mental or emotional condition, including alcoholism and other drug addiction, between the patient and the psychotherapist, or persons who are participating in the diagnosis or treatment under the direction of the psychotherapist. This privilege includes any diagnosis made, and advice given, by the psychotherapist in the course of that relationship.</p> <p>(3) The privilege may be claimed by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) The patient or the patient’s attorney on the patient’s behalf. (b) A guardian or conservator of the patient. (c) The personal representative of a deceased patient. (d) The psychotherapist, but only on behalf of the patient. The authority of a psychotherapist to claim the privilege is presumed in the absence of evidence to the contrary. <p>(4) There is no privilege under this section:</p>
--	---

	<p>(a) For communications relevant to an issue in proceedings to compel hospitalization of a patient for mental illness, if the psychotherapist in the course of diagnosis or treatment has reasonable cause to believe the patient is in need of hospitalization.</p> <p>(b) For communications made in the course of a court-ordered examination of the mental or emotional condition of the patient.</p> <p>(c) For communications relevant to an issue of the mental or emotional condition of the patient in any proceeding in which the patient relies upon the condition as an element of his or her claim or defense or, after the patient’s death, in any proceeding in which any party relies upon the condition as an element of the party’s claim or defense.</p>
<p>Sexual Assault Counselor-Victim Privilege Definitions</p>	<p>Fla. Stat. Ann. § 90.5035(1).</p> <p>For purposes of this section:</p> <p>(a) A “rape crisis center” is any public or private agency that offers assistance to victims of sexual assault or sexual battery and their families.</p> <p>(b) A “sexual assault counselor” is any employee of a rape crisis center whose primary purpose is the rendering of advice, counseling, or assistance to victims of sexual assault or sexual battery.</p> <p>(c) A “trained volunteer” is a person who volunteers at a rape crisis center, has completed 30 hours of training in assisting victims of sexual violence and related topics provided by the rape crisis center, is supervised by members of the staff of the rape crisis center, and is included on a list of volunteers that is maintained by the rape crisis center.</p> <p>(d) A “victim” is a person who consults a sexual assault counselor or a trained volunteer for the purpose of securing advice, counseling, or assistance concerning a mental, physical, or emotional condition caused by a sexual assault or sexual battery, an alleged sexual assault or sexual battery, or an attempted sexual assault or sexual battery.</p>

<p>Domestic Violence Advocate-Victim Privilege Definitions</p>	<p>Fla. Stat. Ann. § 90.5036(1).</p> <p>For purposes of this section:</p> <p>(a) A “domestic violence center” is any public or private agency that offers assistance to victims of domestic violence, as defined in s. 741.28, and their families.</p> <p>(b) A “domestic violence advocate” means any employee or volunteer who has 30 hours of training in assisting victims of domestic violence and is an employee of or volunteer for a program for victims of domestic violence whose primary purpose is the rendering of advice, counseling, or assistance to victims of domestic violence.</p> <p>(c) A “victim” is a person who consults a domestic violence advocate for the purpose of securing advice, counseling, or assistance concerning a mental, physical, or emotional condition caused by an act of domestic violence, an alleged act of domestic violence, or an attempted act of domestic violence.</p> <p>(d) A communication between a domestic violence advocate and a victim is “confidential” if it relates to the incident of domestic violence for which the victim is seeking assistance and if it is not intended to be disclosed to third persons other than:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Those persons present to further the interest of the victim in the consultation, assessment, or interview. 2. Those persons to whom disclosure is reasonably necessary to accomplish the purpose for which the domestic violence advocate is consulted.
<p>Human Trafficking Advocate-Victim Privilege Definitions</p>	<p>Fla. Stat. Ann. § 90.5037(1).</p> <p>For purposes of this section, the term:</p> <p>(a) “Anti-human trafficking organization” means a registered public or private agency that offers assistance to victims of the offense of human trafficking, as defined in s. 787.06(2).</p> <p>(b) “Human trafficking victim” means a person who consults a human trafficking victim advocate or a trained volunteer for the purpose of securing advice, counseling, or services concerning a need arising from an experience of human trafficking exploitation.</p>

	<p>(c) “Human trafficking victim advocate” means an employee of an anti-human trafficking organization whose primary purpose is to provide advice, counseling, or services to human trafficking victims and who complies with the training requirements under subsection (5).</p> <p>(d) “Trained volunteer” means a person who volunteers with an anti-human trafficking organization and who complies with the training requirements under subsection (5).</p>
--	--

¹ See *Office for Victims of Crime, Ethical Standards, Section I: Scope of Services*, https://www.ovc.gov/model-standards/ethical_standards_1.html.

² Additional examples of system-based advocate titles include: district attorney’s office/state attorney’s office advocates or victim-witness coordinators; law enforcement advocates; FBI victim specialists; U.S. attorney’s office victim-witness coordinators; board of parole and post-prison supervision advocates; and post-conviction advocates.

³ Examples of community-based advocates include: crisis hotline or helpline staff; rape crisis center staff; domestic violence shelter staff; campus advocates; and homicide support program staff.

⁴ See Nat’l Crime Victim Law Inst., *Refusing Discovery Requests of Privileged Materials Pretrial in Criminal Cases*, NCVLI Violence Against Women Bulletin (Nat’l Crime Victim Law Inst., Portland, Or.), June 2011, at 3 n.30 (listing victims’ constitutional and statutory rights to privacy and to dignity, respect or fairness).

⁵ See, e.g., *Whalen v. Roe*, 429 U.S. 589, 599–600 (1977) (recognizing that the United States Constitution provides a right of personal privacy, which includes an “individual interest in avoiding disclosure of personal matters”); *Roe v. Wade*, 410 U.S. 113, 152–53 (1973) (“[A] right to personal privacy . . . does exist under the Constitution.”).

⁶ There are different levels of privileges: absolute, absolute diluted and qualified. When an absolute privilege attaches, only a victim has the right to authorize disclosure of that information and the court can never order the information to be disclosed without the victim’s consent. Absolute privileges are rare, however, because privileges are seen to run contrary to the truth finding function of courts.

⁷ See, e.g., Ala. R. Evid. 503A(a)(7) (“‘Victim counselor’ means any employee or supervised volunteer of a victim counseling center or other agency, business, or organization that provides counseling to victims, who is not affiliated with a law enforcement agency or prosecutor’s office and whose duties include treating victims for any emotional or psychological condition resulting from a sexual assault or family violence.”); Alaska Stat. Ann. § 18.66.250(5)(B) (“‘[V]ictim counseling center’ means a private organization, an organization operated by or contracted by a branch of the armed forces of the United States, or a local government agency that . . . is not affiliated with a law enforcement agency or a prosecutor’s office[.]”); Haw. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 626-1, Rule 505.5(a)(6) (“A ‘victim counseling program’ is any activity of a domestic violence victims’ program or a sexual assault crisis center that has, as its primary function, the counseling and treatment of sexual assault, domestic violence, or child abuse victims and their families, and that operates independently of any law enforcement agency, prosecutor’s office, or the department of human services.”); Ind. Code Ann. § 35-37-6-5(2) (“‘[V]ictim service provider’ means a person . . . that is not affiliated with a law enforcement agency[.]”); Neb. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 29-4302(1) (“Advocate means any employee or supervised volunteer of a domestic violence and sexual assault victim assistance program or of any other agency, business, or organization that is not affiliated with a law enforcement or prosecutor’s office whose primary purpose is assisting domestic violence and sexual assault victims[.]”); N.M. Stat. Ann. § 31-25-2(E) (“‘[V]ictim counselor’ means any employee or supervised volunteer of a victim counseling center or other agency, business or organization that provides counseling to victims who is not affiliated with a law enforcement agency or the office of a district attorney[.]”).

⁸ Terms that inform the intersection of victim services and HIPAA, FERPA, FOIA, VAWA or VOCA are “informed consent” and “waiver.” “Informed consent” is defined as “1. [a] person’s agreement to allow something to happen, made with full knowledge of the risks involved and the alternatives. For the legal profession, informed consent is defined in Model Rule of Professional Conduct 1.0(e)[;] [or] 2. [a] patient’s knowing choice about a medical

treatment or procedure, made after a physician or other healthcare provider discloses whatever information a reasonably prudent provider in the medical field community would give to a patient regarding the risks involved in the proposed treatment or procedure.” *Informed consent*, Black’s Law Dictionary (8th ed. 2004). “Waiver” is defined as “[t]he voluntary relinquishment or abandonment—express or implied—of a legal right or advantage” *Waiver*, Black’s Law Dictionary (8th ed. 2004).

⁹ *School Resource Officers, School Law Enforcement Units, and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)*, https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/sites/default/files/resource_document/file/SRO_FAQs_2-5-19_0.pdf.

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² *Id.*

¹³ *Are law enforcement records considered education records?*, <https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/faq/are-law-enforcement-records-considered-education-records>.

¹⁴ *Id.*

¹⁵ *Office for Victims of Crime, Crime Victims Fund*, <https://www.ovc.gov/pubs/crimevictimsfundfs/intro.html#VictimAssist>.

¹⁶ *Id.*

¹⁷ *Id.*

¹⁸ Department of Justice Guide to the Freedom of Information Act, at 1, <https://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/oip/legacy/2014/07/23/exemption6.pdf>.

¹⁹ *Id.*

²⁰ *Ethic*, Merriam-webster.com, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ethics> (last visited July 31, 2019).

²¹ *Office for Victims of Crime, Purpose & Scope of The Standards*, https://www.ovc.gov/model-standards/purpose_and_scope.html.

²² *Id.* Each of the five sections contain ethical standards and corresponding commentaries, explaining each standard in detail. For “Scope of Services,” the ethical standards and their corresponding commentaries can be located at https://www.ovc.gov/model-standards/ethical_standards_1.html. For “Coordinating within the Community,” the ethical standards and their corresponding commentaries can be located at https://www.ovc.gov/model-standards/ethical_standards_2.html. For “Direct Services,” the ethical standards and their corresponding commentaries can be located at https://www.ovc.gov/model-standards/ethical_standards_3.html. For “Privacy, Confidentiality, Data Security and Assistive Technology,” the ethical standards and their corresponding commentaries can be located at https://www.ovc.gov/model-standards/ethical_standards_4.html. For “Administration and Evaluation,” the ethical standard and the corresponding commentary can be located at https://www.ovc.gov/model-standards/ethical_standards_5.html.

²³ *Office for Victims of Crime, Ethical Standards for Serving Victims & Survivors of Crime*, https://www.ovc.gov/model-standards/ethical_standards.html.

²⁴ For a sample law enforcement-based victim services code of ethics drafted by the International Association of Chiefs of Police, see *Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services – Template Package I: Getting Started*, https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/LEV/Publications/Template%20Package%20I_04.2021.pdf.

²⁵ See *Weatherford v. Bursey*, 429 U.S. 545, 559 (1977).

²⁶ See *United States v. Agurs*, 427 U.S. 97, 106–07 (1976).

²⁷ *Strickler v. Greene*, 527 U.S. 263, 280 (1999).

²⁸ *Id.*

²⁹ See, e.g., *Eakes v. Sexton*, 592 F. App’x 422, 429 (6th Cir. 2014) (finding that “contrary to the district court’s conclusion that the [state] prosecutor was not responsible for failing to disclose the Victim-Advocate report because the Advocate was located ‘in a separate part of the District Attorney’s office,’ the prosecutor is in fact responsible for disclosing all *Brady* information in the possession of that office, such as the Victim-Advocate report, even if the prosecutor was unaware of the evidence prior to trial”); *Commonwealth v. Liang*, 747 N.E.2d 112, 114 (Mass. 2001) (concluding that “the notes of [prosecution-based] advocates are subject to the same discovery rules as the notes of prosecutors[,]” and “[t]o the extent that the notes contain material, exculpatory information . . . or relevant ‘statements’ of a victim or witness . . . the Commonwealth must disclose such information or statements to the defendant, in accordance with due process and the rules of criminal procedure”).

³⁰ Notably, for advocates/entities that receive VOCA funding, because this disclosure is “compelled by statutory or court mandate,” it does not pursuant to statute, require a signed, written release from the victim. Nevertheless, if disclosure is required, VOCA requires that advocates make reasonable attempts to notify the victim affected by the disclosure and take whatever steps are necessary to protect their privacy and safety.

³¹ Defendant John Giglio was tried, convicted and sentenced for forgery related crimes. While Giglio’s case was pending appeal, his attorney filed a motion for a new trial, claiming that there was newly discovered evidence that the key Government witness—“the only witness linking [Giglio] with the crime”—had been promised that he would not be prosecuted in exchange for his testimony. The defense attorney’s motion was initially denied, but certiorari review was granted “to determine whether the evidence [that was] not disclosed . . . require[d] a new trial under the due process criteria of” cases, including *Brady v. Maryland*, 373 U.S. 83, 87 (1963), which “held that suppression of material evidence justifies a new trial” whether the prosecutor intended to withhold information or not. “An affidavit filed by the Government as part of its opposition to a new trial confirm[ed] [Giglio’s] claim that a promise was made to [the key Government witness]” by the former Assistant United States Attorney “that [the witness] would not be prosecuted if he cooperated with the Government.” This promise of leniency was made by the formerly assigned Assistant United States Attorney who did not handle the trial; and the Assistant United States Attorney who handled the trial was unaware of the promise. The Supreme Court held that nondisclosure of material evidence “is the responsibility of the prosecutor”—whether nondisclosure was intentional or not—and that such action is directly attributable to the Government. Addressing the topic of “turnover,” principally, the Court explained that “[t]o the extent this places a burden on the large prosecution offices, procedures and regulations can be established to carry that burden and to [e]nsure communication of all relevant information on each case to every lawyer who deals with it.” Giglio’s conviction was reversed, and the case was remanded to the lower court.

³² This section addresses subpoenas directed to system-based advocates. For information concerning community-based advocates and subpoenas, please contact NCVLI for technical assistance.

³³ Terminology for subpoenas varies from jurisdiction-to-jurisdiction. Common examples of subpoenas include: “subpoenas”; “subpoenas duces tecum”; “deposition subpoenas”; and “subpoenas ad testificandum.” See *Subpoena*, Black’s Law Dictionary (8th ed. 2004).

³⁴ See *Subpoena*, Black’s Law Dictionary (8th ed. 2004) (defining “subpoena” as “[a] writ commanding a person to appear before a court or other tribunal, subject to a penalty for failing to comply”); *subpoena duces tecum*, Black’s Law Dictionary (8th ed. 2004) (defining “subpoena duces tecum” as “[a] subpoena ordering the witness to appear and to bring specified documents, records, or things”); *deposition subpoena*, Black’s Law Dictionary (8th ed. 2004) (defining “deposition subpoena” as “1. [a] subpoena issued to summon a person to make a sworn statement in a time and place other than a trial[;] [and] 2. [i]n some jurisdictions, [this is referred to as] a subpoena duces tecum”).

³⁵ Attorney work product “is generally exempt from discovery or other compelled disclosure.” *Work product*, Black’s Law Dictionary (8th ed. 2004).

This resource was developed by the National Crime Victim Law Institute (NCVLI) under 2020-V3-GX-K001, awarded to the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) by the Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this draft publication are those of the contributors and do not necessarily represent the official position of the U.S. Department of Justice.