HANDBOOK FOR THOSE ASSISTING INNOCENT VICTIMS OF CRIME

Wisconsin Department of Justice
Crime Victim Compensation Program
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(Revised 8/08)
INTRODUCTION

Victims of violent crimes who suffer personal injury often have significant out-of-pocket expenses through no fault of their own. Such expenses may include medical bills, lost wages, and, when the victim is killed, the family may suffer loss of support and funeral expenses.

When the Wisconsin legislature passed Chapter 949 Awards for the Victims of Crimes legislation, it declared that “the state has a moral responsibility to aid innocent victims of violent crime.” In order to comply with this moral obligation, “the state should provide sufficient assistance to victims of crime and their families in order to ease their financial burden and maintain their dignity as they go through a difficult and often traumatic period.” Therefore, the Crime Victim Compensation Program was created. It is housed in the Wisconsin Department of Justice, Office of Crime Victim Services.

Since few people are aware of Wisconsin’s Crime Victim Compensation Program and, therefore, do not know how to apply for an award after they are victimized, the legislature directed that the Department of justice actively publicize the program and promote its use. In order to further ensure that victims find out about the Crime Victim Compensation Program, when the legislature passed Chapter 950, Rights of Victims and Witnesses of Crime, it granted to victims the right to be informed of financial assistance, including information on how to apply for assistance. Victim assistance programs that receive reimbursement from the state for the costs of providing services to victims and witnesses of crime are expected to provide information about victim compensation to all potential applicants.

This booklet is designed to help Victim/Witness Assistance Program personnel and other providers aid eligible victims to apply and perfect a claim for crime victim compensation under Chapters 949 and 950, Wisconsin Statutes. Assisting victims in making a proper application for an award will help the Crime Victim Compensation Program, Wisconsin Department of Justice, to analyze process and complete claims in a timely, efficient manner.
ADVISING THE VICTIM

Advocates, including Victim/Witness people, law enforcement and providers, should assist victims by telling them about the Crime Victim Compensation Program. Victim/Witness people and law enforcement personnel must tell every victim (dependent and family in the case of the death of a victim) about crime victim compensation. One should not assume that someone else has already told them about the Program. Even if they have been previously told about compensation, the information about the Program should be provided again. All potential applicants should be given an application, an informational brochure and preferably be assisted in the completion of the application.

Advocates should not try to second-guess eligibility decisions. While it is prudent to make sure victims who are obviously ineligible know that the Program may not be able to assist them, the advocate should describe to the victim any potential problem with eligibility such as the eligibility of the crime, date crime reported/date application being filed, victim’s possible contributory conduct, child support delinquency and police/program cooperation. If the victim still wants to apply, the advocate should help the victim complete the application form and let the CVC Program staff decide the eligibility.

The advocate can serve victims best by advising them of the program, assisting in completing the application and helping assemble itemized medical bills, lost wages, etc.

Potentially eligible victims should be encouraged to apply within the one-year filing period even though they may have no out-of-pocket losses at the present time. Situations may change, e.g. restitution may not be paid, insurance limits might be reached or insurance lost, etc.

CRIME VICTIM COMPENSATION OVERVIEW

Who is eligible?

Every potentially eligible victim should be given an informational brochure and an application form for crime victim compensation. The victim need not have a social security number in order to apply to the program. The following checklist of eligibility criteria may help in determining if a victim may be eligible for an award.

The victim must:

1. suffer personal injury (see Section 949.01(5) for definition of personal injury) or death as the result of:
   a. a violent crime
b. attempting to prevent a crime  
c. attempting to apprehend a criminal  
d. attempting to aid a crime victim  
e. attempting to aid a police officer  

AND  

2. have been a victim of a crime that resulted in injury or death must be a compensable crime under Chapter 949 (see Sec. 949.03(1)(b)).  

AND  

3. be an **innocent** victim. This means that the victim can not have been injured or killed while committing a crime, or have been engaging in conduct that substantially contributed to the injuries or death.  

AND  

4. have incurred actual out-of-pocket losses, e.g. the victim must have had to spend his/her own money to pay for medical bills, etc.  

AND  

5. have exhausted all other sources of assistance. This means that the victim or the agent acting on the victim's behalf must have tried to recoup money for the victim's financial losses from other sources that include the following:  

- restitution that the court orders the defendant to pay (CVC may still pay)  
- insurance from private carriers  
- workers’ compensation  
- unemployment compensation  
- medical assistance  
- general assistance  
- public funds  
- judgement from civil action against the offender or a third party held liable for the offender’s acts  

AND  

6. have filed the application for crime victim compensation within one year of the date of the crime. The one-year limitation on filing may be waived in the interest of justice. The “in the interest of justice” waiver is at the
administrative discretion of the Department and generally used in cases of sexual assault to a child when the assault is not reported until the victim is an adult.

AND

7. have reported the crime to a law enforcement agency or child protection agency within five–days of when it happened or with five days of when the crime could reasonably have been reported.

AND

8. must have cooperated with law enforcement officials in their investigation of the crime and other legal activity.

AND

9. must have cooperated with personnel in the Department of Justice CVC Program in processing the application.

If the victim died as a result of the crime, the dependent(s) or legal representative of the victim may file an application for compensation in the victim’s name. If a family member suffers a reaction to the death of a victim, a separate form will be sent to the individual that will allow for the filing of benefits.

Who is not eligible?

In determining that a victim is not eligible for crime victim compensation, use the following checklist.

A victim is not eligible if:

1. no injuries were suffered. (Mental health issues are considered injuries for which counseling may be awarded.)

2. only property damage or theft occurred.

3. no crime occurred.

4. the crime was not reported to a law enforcement agency within five days of its occurrence or within five days of when it reasonably could have been reported. (Remember, the program will rule on this but if filed later than five
days after the crime, the applicant should include a letter stating the reason it wasn’t reported in a timely manner.)

5. the crime is not a compensable crime under Wisconsin statutes. (Keep in mind that plea agreements may be made and the crime may still be covered if all the elements are present based on the compensable crimes.)

Note: Hit and run automobile accidents are generally not compensable. If there are unusual circumstances surrounding the accident, e.g. witness statements claim offender was driving in a reckless or irresponsible manner, the victim/witness specialist should call the claims specialist and discuss the claim.

6. no claim for compensation was filed within one year of the date of the crime. The Department may waive the one-year requirement under this subsection in the interest of justice. A letter should be attached giving the reason(s) for the late filing.

7. the victim committed a crime or behaved in a manner that substantially contributed to the injuries or death.

8. the victim did not incur any compensable expenses.

9. the victim’s expenses were paid in full by another source, including:
   - restitution that the court orders the defendant to pay
   - insurance from private carriers
   - workers’ compensation
   - medical assistance
   - general assistance
   - public funds
   - judgement from civil action against defendant and third party sources held liable for the offender’s acts.

If any of these sources makes a partial payment, the Department of Justices makes an award for the difference between the victim’s expenses and the amount of the collateral source payment. (Keep in mind that these benefits could end so applying to the CVC program in case that event occurs could be beneficial if something arises in the future.)

10. the victim is certified delinquent in child support or maintenance by the
Department of Health and Family Services and doesn’t have an authorized payment agreement.

**MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS**

1. There is no provision to make awards for “pain and suffering.” The Department of Justice may only make awards for the economic losses suffered by a crime victim or dependent or family member that are listed in Chapter 949.

2. The “economic losses” incurred by a crime victim must be for a personal injury suffered as a direct result of a crime.

3. There is no requirement in the law that someone be arrested or charged with a crime in order for a victim to be eligible to apply for benefits (if the offender is unknown).

4. The crime victim need not be a resident of Wisconsin to apply for and receive benefits, but the crime must have occurred in Wisconsin.

   If the victim is a resident of Wisconsin but the crime occurred elsewhere, i.e. in another state or out of the country, and there is a compensation program for which the victim might be eligible, the victim should apply to that state or country.

   The Crime Victim Compensation Program in the Department of Justice keeps a current record state victim compensation programs in the United States. If questions arise regarding whether victims might qualify for compensation in another state, the Program can help make that determination upon request.

5. When the department denies an application, the applicant will always be sent a denial letter explaining the fact situation, the law, and the right to appeal the determination of the department. The appeal process is a Chapter 227 Administrative review. The applicant may request a contested case hearing by writing to the Department and citing the specific reason that the victim feels the Department erred in its decision (Section 949.11, WI Stats.)

6. Chapter 949, Awards for Victims of Crimes contains a “Son-of Sam
provision". That is, the offender may not profit from the resale of literary or other rights stemming from the crime. (Section 949.165, WI Stats.)

7. State or local agencies, district attorneys' offices, and law enforcement agencies must provide reports, files, and other information to the Department in order that the Department can make determinations of eligibility, (Section 949.13, WI Stats.)

8. The Department of Justice has the authority to suspend a crime victim compensation proceeding on the grounds that prosecution has commenced or is imminent. (Subsection 949.06 (4)(b), WI Stats)

9. The Department of Justice is authorized to make awards directly to the provider of a service (Section 949.07). The Department of Justice makes such payments at its discretion.

10. The Department determines attorney fees. They must be reasonable and are paid out of the award, rather than in addition to the award. Attorney fees can not exceed 10% of the amount the attorney assisted the victim in obtaining.

11. The Department has the right to sue the offender to recover money. The Department is also subrogated to the cause of the action against the offender and against one or more third parties held liable for the acts of the person responsible for the injury or death.

**VICTIMS OF DRUNK DRIVING CRASHES**

An innocent victim who is injured or killed in an accident caused by a drunk driver may qualify for a crime victim compensation award if she/he was:

1. a pedestrian,
2. in the other car,
3. a child passenger in the offender’s car,
4. an adult passenger in the offender’s car, unless
   a. the victim knew the driver was intoxicated but rode anyway, or
   b. the victim’s blood alcohol concentration was 0.08% or more (legally intoxicated)
Generally, a person who is injured or killed as a result of a motor vehicle accident is not eligible for benefits under Chapter 949, unless the injury was intentionally inflicted or the accident was caused by an intoxicated driver.

**WHAT CAN CRIME VICTIM COMPENSATION PAY?**

A compensation award of up to $40,000 may be paid for any one injury with an additional $2000 for death for eligible expenses. These include:

1. **medical expenses, including:**
   - hospital
   - surgical
   - dental
   - mental health
   - medicines (prescription drugs)
   - optometric
   - chiropractic
   - medical, dental or surgical supplies
   - crutches
   - artificial limbs (including training in their use)

2. **lost wages.** This means the actual net earnings lost by a victim during the time that she/he was unable to work because of the injury caused by the crime. A physician must certify that the victim was disabled during the period covering the claim.

3. **loss of support.** If a victim dies, individuals who are financially dependent upon the victim at the time of the death may be eligible for compensation. Claims specialists in the Department will determine loss of support awards on the basis of the victim’s net salary at the time of death. Deductions must be made for other collateral sources received as a result of the death, e.g. social security.

4. **reasonable funeral and burial expenses up to $2,000.** This can be paid in addition to the $40,000 maximum award for other compensable expenses.

5. **reasonable replacement costs of clothing and bedding held as evidence by a law enforcement agency or prosecutor, up to $300.**
6. reasonable replacement of property rendered unusable by crime lab testing, up to $200.

7. reasonable costs for securing and cleaning the crime scene, up to $1,000.

8. replacement of homemaker expenses. An award may be made for an amount sufficient to ensure that the duties and responsibilities of a homemaker are continued until the victim is able to resume the duties.

9. medical treatment and/or loss of net earnings of family members and of people who lived in the same household with homicide victims immediately prior to the death. These expenses must have been incurred as a result of their reaction to the crime.

**ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS**

The Crime Victim Compensation Program, Department of Justice, makes the decision to award or deny a claim for compensation on an individual case-by-case basis. It is important for a victim/witness assistance specialist to be honest with crime victims by advising them of potential problems and letting them decide whether or not to file an application. The following are the general guidelines that the Department applies to the “limitations on awards” section of Chapter 949.

1. The Department may not make an award unless an application is filed within one year of the date of the injury or death.

   The Department may waive the one–year requirement in the “interest of justice.” The interest of justice waiver was intended to provide the Department with the authority to make awards to child sexual assault and incest victims in those instances when the incident occurred some years prior to its being discovered. Failure to know about the one–year requirement in and of itself is not sufficient reason for the Department to waive the one–year requirement (Section 949.08 (1), WI Stats.)

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3. No award may be ordered if the victim engaged in conduct which substantially contributed to the infliction of the victim’s injury or death, or in which the victim could have reasonably foreseen could lead to injury or death. (This subsection does not apply to Good Samaritans.)

The Department, in attempting to determine if victims contributed to their injuries, considers all relevant circumstances, including any behavior of the victim that may have directly or indirectly contributed to the injury or death. Examples of contributory conduct include, but are not limited to, consent, provocation, verbal utterance, gesture, incitement, prior conduct, the voluntary use of alcohol or controlled substances, and the ability of the victim to remove him/herself from the scene of the incident (see committing a crime) (Sec. 949.08 (2)(a), Wis. Stats.)

4. No award may be awarded if the victim committed a crime which caused or contributed to the victim’s injury or death.

In attempting to determine whether the victim committed a crime, the Department will consider, among other things, whether:

   a. the victim participated in illegal narcotics and dangerous drugs transactions and abuse;

   b. the victim was creating a public disorder;

   c. the victim was frequenting or attempting to frequent a prostitute;

   d. the victim was frequenting a place where illegal gambling is conducted and drugs and/or alcohol are purchased and consumed.

Obviously if a victim committed a battery prior to being injured, that may be defined as committing a crime, (Section 949.08 (2)(b), Wis Stats.)
5. No award may be ordered if the victim has not cooperated with the appropriate law enforcement agency. The Department’s guidelines for this section of the statutes includes, but is not limited to:

a. providing a true, accurate, and complete description to the police of the crime, including the circumstances which led to the injuries.

b. describing the assailant and telling law enforcement officers the assailant’s name and whereabouts, if known.

c. reporting the incident to the law enforcement agency within a reasonable time after the incident and within the other reporting requirements of the law.

d. participating in follow-up investigative activities, if requested by the law enforcement agency. This may include viewing photographs, taking part in line-ups and other investigative procedures.

e. agreeing to sign a complaint against the offender, agreeing to appear and testify against the offender, and agreeing to assist in the prosecution of the offender at all stages. The Department may waive this provision upon a good cause shown by the victim that the failure to cooperate in the prosecution was due to a compelling health or safety reason. (Section 949.08 (2) (d), Wis. Stats.)

6. No award may be ordered if the victim has not cooperated with the Department in the administration of the program.

The victim (claimant) must respond to the Department’s requests for information relevant to the claim. A failure on the part of the victim (claimant) to respond in a timely manner, either by telephone or in writing, will result in the claim being denied.

In addition, if the victim (claimant) makes a fraudulent application, makes false statements or representations, or intentionally conceals (or fails to disclose) information affecting the amount of an award, the claim will be denied. (Section 949.17, Wis. Stats.)

7. No award may be ordered if the victim has been certified to the Department under s. 46.255 (7) as being delinquent in child support or maintenance payments.
COMPLETING THE APPLICATION

Applicants must fill out the entire application when possible. Advocates or others involved with the applicant can provide assistance if the applicant is incapable of completing it him or herself. However, the application must be signed by the victim (or applicant in the case of the victim’s death, or if the victim is a minor, the legal representative must sign.) The signature must be dated.

The person who signs the application must understand that by signing the application, he/she is certifying the following:

1. The information that is given on the application is true to the best of their knowledge.

2. The Crime Victim Compensation Program is authorized to obtain any information that it deems helpful in processing the claim. This includes:
   - all law enforcement records concerning the victim
   - physician’s records
   - hospital records
   - district attorney’s records
   - court files
   - employer’s records
   - insurance records

3. The victim understands that if he/she does not cooperate with the Crime Victim Compensation Program staff by providing all information requested that no award will be made.

HELPING THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE PROCESS A CLAIM

1. Help the victim gather and organize itemized copies of bills to send with the application to the Department of Justice. Please keep in mind that the victim must file for compensation in the state in which the crime is committed. If the victim doesn’t receive confirmation that their claim was received within about two weeks of submitting the claim, they should follow us with the CVC program as the application may have been lost in the mail.

When the victim receives the Crime Victim Compensation Fact Sheet, help the victim compile the information that has been requested.
2. In cases in which charges have been filed against a defendant and a criminal prosecution is pending, the Department of Justice will send a letter to the district Attorney’s Office asking if the prosecutor wants the Department to suspend claim processing until after the prosecution of the case has been completed. This is done because the Department realizes that if the Crime Victim Compensation Program makes a ruling against the victim, it could be detrimental to the prosecution of the case.

If the District Attorney wishes the Department to suspend proceedings, he/she must notify the Department within 20 days of receiving a letter from the program. If no such notification is received, the Department will assume that no objection is made and the claim will be processed according to normal procedures.

If a request for suspension has been made, please be sure that the Department is notified of the disposition of the case when the criminal prosecution has been completed. This is especially important if the defendant is convicted, placed on probation and restitution is ordered.

If no request for suspension is made and the Department makes an award, the District Attorney will be notified of the amount of the award. This is done in order to protect the Department of Justice’s right to be re-paid if restitution is ordered.

3. Remember that it is not necessary for a victim to live in a county with a Victim/Witness Assistance Program in order to be eligible for compensation.

4. Send the application as soon as it is completed in order to get processing started as quickly as possible. Please remember that it takes time for the Department to gather all of the necessary information.

5. **NEVER** promise victim or service providers that the Program will pay. There may be circumstances that are discovered during the Department’s processing of the claim that prohibit an award being made.

The application should be printed clearly so that it can be easily read. If there any questions about filling out the application, a call can be made to the Program at 608-264-9497. Victims may use the toll-free number at 1-800-446-6564; the toll-free number is NOT to be used by victim/witness people or other service providers.
MEDICAL TREATMENT

Section 949.06 (1) Stats. states: In accordance with this chapter, the Department shall make awards, as appropriate, for any of the following economic losses incurred as a direct result of an injury:

(a) medical treatment.

Medical treatment is defined in 949.01 (4) Stats: “Medical treatment” includes medical, surgical, dental, optometric, chiropractic, podiatric and hospital care; medicines; medical, dental and surgical supplies; crutches; artificial members; appliances and training in the use of artificial members and appliances. “Medical treatment” includes any Christian Science treatment for cure or relief from the effects of injury.

Role of the Department of Justice

In order for the Department to make an award for an economic loss for medical treatment, the Department must determine that:

1. the personal injury was incurred as a direct result of the crime,

2. the medical treatment provided to the victim relates only to the injuries sustained as a direct result of the crime, and

3. the victim has no other source to pay for the costs of medical treatment.

The Department takes the following steps to make these determinations:

1. The Department may send the victim a Physician’s Certificate and/or an informed consent for disclosure to obtain medical records from the hospital. Either of these sources will confirm that the victim was injured as a direct result of a crime.

2. The Department will request ITEMIZED copies of medical bills which show dates of service, services rendered, charges for each service, and total amount due. Itemized bills confirm that the services provided were as a direct result of the personal injury from the crime and not as a result of another injury or illness. **Balance Due statements are NOT acceptable verification.**
3. The Department will verify that the victim has no “collateral source” to pay for the cost of medical treatment by reviewing the application, interviewing the victim, and analyzing the employer’s report and medical bills. The Department will also conduct independent checks of public-funded programs to determine if the victim has received any benefits.

**Suggestions for Assisting Applicants**

1. Ask the applicant if he/she has a source to pay medical bills.

2. Advise the applicant to gather itemized bills and send them along with the application, if possible.

3. Advise the applicant that he/she may receive a Physician Certificate and/or an informed consent form. Instruct the applicant to have the forms completed as soon as possible.

4. Remind the applicant that the sooner the information is provided to the Department, the sooner a decision can be reached and an eligibility decision can be made.

5. Advise the victim that the cost of mental health counseling directly related to the crime is a reimbursable item of medical treatment but they must use a provider within their provider group and who is on the WI accepted provider list.

6. The costs of common first aid supplies and nonprescription drugs such as aspirin are not reimbursable.

7. Remind the applicant that the Department will pay the provider of the medical treatment directly. The applicant will receive a letter informing her/him of those medical expenses that the Department is going to pay.

**WORK LOSS**

Section 949.06 (1) (b) Stats. authorizes the Department to make awards for work loss incurred as a direct result of an injury.

1. If the victim was employed at the time of the injury, loss of earnings is based on the victim’s net salary at the time of the injury.
2. If the victim was not employed at the time of the injury or if, as a direct result of the injury, the victim suffered a disability causing a loss of potential earnings, the award may be upon a sufficient showing by the victim that the victim incurred an actual loss of earnings and was certified to be disabled from work by a physician. The victim must have received an offer of employment and must have been unable to begin employment as a direct result of a disability caused by the crime.

**Role of the Department of Justice**

**Victim Employed**

If the victim was employed at the time of injury, the Department must determine:

1. that the work loss was incurred as a direct result of the injury upon which the claim is based.

2. the “loss of actual earnings” (i.e. the amount of time the victim lost from work) is a direct result of the injury upon which the claim is based.

3. the net salary of the victim at the time of the crime.

In claims for compensation under Chapter 949, Stats., the Department will determine whether the applicant met the income tax filing requirements of sec. 71.10, Stats.

The Department will confirm the information provided by the victim on the application by using two forms:

1. Physician’s Certificate
2. Employer’s Certificate

After the Department receives an application, a Physician’s Certificate will be sent to the victim with instructions to mail or deliver the form to the victim’s treating physician and have the form returned to the Department. (The Department cannot always determine the primary physician at the time of the application.) The completed Physician’s Certificate will provide the following information to the Department:
1. that the injury for which the victim sought treatment was a direct result of the crime; and

2. the length of the victim’s disability from work due to the crime, including beginning and ending dates.

The Department will send an Employer’s Certificate to the employer listed by the victim on the application except in cases of sexual assault in which the victim will be contacted for permission before the form is sent. The completed certificate will confirm:

1. rate of pay of the victim at the time of injury; and
2. usual number of hours worked per week; and
3. time periods that the victim did not work.

The net salary is gross weekly wage minus FICA, state and federal taxes.

The award for lost wages will be the victim’s net salary multiplied by the amount of time lost from work as a direct result of the injury. The amount of time lost is always the lesser of the time reported by the victim on the application, the time reported by the employer, or the dates of disability reported by the primary treating physician.

The above amount is reduced by any payments received during that time period from sources listed below: worker’s compensation, unemployment compensation, private health plan, sick leave, employer’s group plan, disability pay, union or fraternal plans or any other source. A victim is required to use these available sources first. If a victim used vacation time during the disability, he/she will be reimbursed for vacation time converted to a monetary amount.

Suggestions for Assisting an Applicant

1. Ask the victim if she/he was employed at the time of the injury.

2. Assist the victim in completing the Employment Section of the application.

3. Advise the victim that the employer will be contacted (unless it is a sexual assault crime) to confirm the information provided on the application. In sexual assault case, suggest that the victim include a statement on or with
the application giving the Department permission to contact the employer and provide the name of any specific contact person.

4. If the victim has a disability statement for their employer, include a copy of it with the application form.

**Victim Unemployed**

If the victim was not employed at the time of the injury but the injury directly caused the victim to lose potential earnings, the victim may be eligible for an award.

**Promised Employment**

If the victim was about to begin employment when the injury occurred, the victim may be eligible for lost wages. The victim should attach a statement to the application listing the name and address of the employer, the type of work, the rate of pay, the number of hours per week and the anticipated date employment was to begin.
COMPENSABLE CRIMES

346.62(4) Reckless Driving
346.63(2) or (6) Operating Under Influence of Intoxicant or Other Drug
346.67(1) Duty Upon Striking (Pedestrian Only)
940.01 First-Degree Intentional Homicide
940.02 First-Degree Reckless Homicide
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940.29 Abuse of Residents of Penal Facilities
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943.03 Arson of Property Other Than Building
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943.10 Burglary
943.20 Theft
943.23 (1g) Operating Vehicle Without Owner’s Consent While Possessing Dangerous Weapon
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943.23 (1r) Violates (1g) and Cases Death of Another
943.32 Robbery
948.02 Sexual Assault of a Child
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948.20 Abandonment of a Child
948.30 Abandonment of Another’s Child; Constructive Custody
948.51 Hazing

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