

**The Florida Senate**  
**BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

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Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Criminal Justice

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BILL: SB 1012

INTRODUCER: Senator Burgess and others

SUBJECT: Victims of Crimes

DATE: January 24, 2022

REVISED: \_\_\_\_\_

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Stokes	Jones	CJ	<b>Favorable</b>
2.	_____	_____	JU	_____
3.	_____	_____	RC	_____

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**I. Summary:**

SB 1012 amends s. 960.001, F.S., to provide that, in addition to other specified information, victims must be informed of their right to employ private counsel consistent with the constitutional rights of the accused. Additionally, this bill encourages the Florida Bar to develop a registry of attorneys who are willing to serve on a pro bono basis as advocates for crime victims.

The bill does not appear to require law enforcement agencies to incur any additional costs. See Section V. Fiscal Impact Statement.

This bill is effective July 1, 2022.

**II. Present Situation:**

**Victim Rights**

Victims of crime in Florida are guaranteed certain rights that are provided in the Florida Constitution as well as in the Florida Statutes. In 2018, Florida voters passed Marsy's Law, an amendment to the Florida Constitution, to expand victim's rights.<sup>1</sup>

***Florida Constitution***

Marsy's Law provides that every victim, beginning at the time of his or her victimization, has the right to:

- Due process and to be treated with fairness and respect for the victim's dignity.
- Be free from intimidation, harassment, and abuse.

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<sup>1</sup> Section 16 (b), Art. 1, Fla. Const.

- Within the judicial process, to be reasonably protected from the accused and any person acting on behalf of the accused.<sup>2</sup>
- Have the safety and welfare of the victim and the victim's family considered when setting bail, including setting pretrial release conditions that protect the safety and welfare of the victim and the victim's family.
- 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.
- The prompt return of the victim's property when no longer needed as evidence.
- Full and timely restitution in every case and from each convicted offender for all losses suffered, both directly and indirectly, by the victim as a result of the criminal conduct.
- Proceedings free from unreasonable delay, and to a prompt and final conclusion of the case and any related postjudgment proceedings.<sup>3,4</sup>

Additionally, Marsy's law provides that, upon request, victims have the right to:

- Reasonable, accurate, and timely notice of, and to be present at, all public proceedings involving the criminal conduct, including, but not limited to, trial, plea, sentencing, or adjudication, even if the victim will be a witness at the proceeding. A victim must also be provided reasonable, accurate, and timely notice of any release or escape of the offender and any proceeding during which a right of the victim is implicated.
- Be heard in any public proceeding involving pretrial or other release from any form of legal constraint, plea, sentencing, adjudication, or parole, and any proceeding during which a right of the victim is implicated.
- Confer with the prosecuting attorney concerning any plea agreements, participation in pretrial diversion programs, release, restitution, sentencing, or any other disposition of the case.
- Provide information regarding the impact of the offender's conduct on the victim and the victim's family to the individual responsible for conducting any presentence investigation or compiling any presentence investigation report, and to have any such information considered in any sentencing recommendations submitted to the court.
- Receive a copy of any presentence report, and any other report or record relevant to the exercise of a victim's right, except for such portions made confidential or exempt by law.

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<sup>2</sup> This does not create a special relationship between the crime victim and any law enforcement agency or office absent a special relationship or duty as defined by Florida Law. FL Const. Art. 1, s. 16 (b)(3).

<sup>3</sup> Section 16 (b)(10), Art. 1, Fla. Const., provides that the state attorney may file in a good faith demand for a speedy trial and the trial court must hold a calendar call, with notice, within 15 days of the filing demand, to schedule a trial to commence on a date at least 5 days but no more than 60 days after the date of the calendar call unless the trial judge enters an order with specific findings of fact justifying a trial date more than 60 days after the calendar call. Additionally, all state-level appeals and collateral attacks on any judgment must be complete within 2 years from the date of appeal in non-capital cases and within 5 years from the date of appeal in capital cases, unless a court enters an order with specific finding as to why the court was unable to comply with this requirement and the circumstances causing the delay. Each year, the chief judge of any district court of appeal or the chief justice of the Supreme Court must report on a case by case basis to the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President of the Senate all cases where the court entered an order regarding inability to comply with this requirement. The Legislature may enact legislation to implement this requirement.

<sup>4</sup> Section 16 (b), Art. 1, Fla. Const.

- Be informed of the conviction, sentence, adjudication, place and time of incarceration, or other disposition of the convicted offender, any scheduled release date of the offender, and the release of or the escape of the offender from custody.
- Be informed of all postconviction processes and procedures, to participate in such processes and procedures, to provide information to the release authority to be considered before any release decision is made, and to be notified of any release decision regarding the offender. The parole or early release authority must extend the right to be heard to any person harmed by the offender.
- Be informed of clemency and expunction procedures, to provide information to the governor, the court, any clemency board, and other authority in these procedures, and to have the information considered before a clemency or expunction decision is made; and to be notified of such decision in advance of any release of the offender.<sup>5</sup>

Additionally, victims have a constitutional right to be informed of these rights, and to be informed that they may seek the advice of an attorney with respect to their rights. This information must be made available to the general public and provided to all crime victims in the form of a card or by other means intended to effectively advise the victim of their rights.<sup>6</sup>

### *Florida Statutes*

Section 960.001, F.S., provides certain agencies<sup>7</sup> within the criminal justice system must develop and implement guidelines for the use of their agencies, which are consistent with s. 16(b), Art. 1, Fla. Const., and achieve the following objectives by providing:

- A victim's rights information card or brochure.<sup>8</sup>
- Information concerning services available to victims of adult and juvenile crimes, including:
  - The availability of crime victim compensation, if applicable;
  - Crisis intervention services, supportive or bereavement counseling, social service support referrals, and community-based victim treatment programs;
  - The role of the victim in the criminal or juvenile justice process, including what the victim may expect from the system as well as what the system expects from the victim;
  - The stages in the criminal or juvenile justice process which are of significance to the victim and the manner in which information about such stages can be obtained;
  - The right of a victim who is not incarcerated, or the victim's representative, to be informed, to be present and to be heard when relevant, at all crucial stages;
  - The right of an incarcerated victim to be informed and submit written statements at all crucial stages; and
  - The right of a victim to a prompt and timely disposition of the case.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Section 16 (b)(6), Art. 1, Fla. Const.

<sup>6</sup> Section 16 (b)(11), Art. 1, Fla. Const.

<sup>7</sup> Section 960.001(1), F.S., provides that the Department of Legal Affairs, the state attorneys, the Department of Corrections, the Department of Juvenile Justice, the Florida Commission on Offender Review, the State Courts Administrator and circuit court administrators, the FDLE, and every sheriff's department, police department, or other law enforcement agency as defined in s. 943.10(4), F.S., must develop such guidelines.

<sup>8</sup> Section 960.001(1)(o), F.S., provides that a victim of a crime must be provided with a victim's rights information card or brochure containing essential information concerning the rights of a victim and services available to a victim as required by state law.

<sup>9</sup> Section 960.001(1)(a)1.-7., F.S.

- Information regarding the “victim notification card,”<sup>10</sup> for purposes of notifying a victim or other appropriate contact.
- Consultation with the victim or guardian, or family of the victim.
- Information concerning victim or witness protection.
- Presence of a victim advocate during discovery deposition, or a forensic medical exam. The victim of a sexual offense must be advised of his or her right to have the courtroom cleared of certain persons when testifying.
- Local witness coordination services.
- Notification regarding judicial proceedings, the rights to be present, submit an impact statement, and of any scheduling changes.
- General victim assistance.
- Notification that the victim may request the offender attend a different school, if the victim attends the same school as the offender.
- Information concerning the release or escape of an offender.
- Notification of the rights to request restitution, and return of the victim’s property.
- Notification to a victim’s employer or creditor that the victim is needed in the prosecution of the case, or has been subjected to financial strain because of the case.
- Victim assistance education and training.
- Crime prevention programs.
- Prohibition of a government official asking or requiring a victim of a sexual offense submit to a polygraph examination or other truth-telling device.<sup>11</sup>

### **The Florida Bar**

The Florida Bar (Bar) is the organization of all lawyers who are licensed by the Supreme Court of Florida to practice law in the state. The Supreme Court of Florida has exclusive and ultimate authority to regulate the admission of persons to the practice of law and the discipline of those persons. The Court does this through both the Bar, and the Florida Board of Bar Examiners. The Bar, nor the Florida Board of Bar Examiners are supported by state tax dollars.<sup>12</sup>

The Bar’s core functions are to prosecute unethical lawyers, administer a client protection fund to cover certain financial losses a client may suffer due to misappropriation by a lawyer, administer a substance abuse program, and provide continuing education services for lawyers.<sup>13</sup> The Bar operates a general lawyer referral service, as well as a referral service providing legal advice for low fees in the areas of disability and elder law.<sup>14</sup> The Bar does not appear to maintain a statewide registry of attorneys that provide pro bono legal services.

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<sup>10</sup> Section 960.001(1)(b), F.S., provides the notification card must contain at minimum, the name, address, and phone number of the victim, or when appropriate, the next of kin or other designated contact, and any relevant identification or case numbers assigned to the case. The victim, next of kin, or other designated contact must be given an opportunity to complete such card, however he or she may choose not to complete it.

<sup>11</sup> Section 960.001(1)(a)-(u), F.S.

<sup>12</sup> The Florida Bar, *Frequently Asked Questions*, <https://www.floridabar.org/about/faq/> (last visited January 19, 2022).

<sup>13</sup> *Id.*

<sup>14</sup> The Florida Bar, *What We Do*, <https://www.floridabar.org/about/faq/what-we-do/#Findingyoulawyer> (last visited January 19, 2022).

**III. Effect of Proposed Changes:**

This bill amends s. 960.001, F.S., to provide that, in addition to other specified information, victims must be informed of their right to employ private counsel consistent with the constitutional rights of the accused. Additionally, this bill encourages The Florida Bar to develop a registry of attorneys who are willing to serve on a pro bono basis as advocates for crime victims.

This bill is effective July 1, 2022.

**IV. Constitutional Issues:****A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:**

None.

**B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:**

None.

**C. Trust Funds Restrictions:**

None.

**D. State Tax or Fee Increases:**

None.

**E. Other Constitutional Issues:**

None identified.

**V. Fiscal Impact Statement:****A. Tax/Fee Issues:**

None.

**B. Private Sector Impact:**

None.

**C. Government Sector Impact:**

The Florida Constitution has required a crime victim to be notified of his or her right to retain private counsel since the amendment to article I, section 16 went into effect on January 8, 2019. Since the bill codifies an existing constitutional requirement, law enforcement agencies already providing such information should not incur any additional costs in updating victim information materials.

**VI. Technical Deficiencies:**

None.

**VII. Related Issues:**

None.

**VIII. Statutes Affected:**

This bill substantially amends section 960.001 of the Florida Statutes.

**IX. Additional Information:**

**A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Changes:**

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

None.

**B. Amendments:**

None.