

Connecticut's Address Confidentiality Program (ACP) Safe at Home

Summary

The Safe at Home Program is administered through the Office of the Secretary of the State's Office (SOTS). Safe at Home became effective January 1, 2004. Program participants are residents of the State of Connecticut who have recently relocated and whose new location is unknown to the abuser and not documented in any government/public record (DSS, DMV, Court Orders of Protection, /Municipal records – registrar of voters, marriage records, library, public school records ...).

Goal of the Safe at Home Program

To limit the ability of an abuser to locate a victim's new location through public records.

- Participants are assigned a substitute mailing address
 - Safe at Home forwards the participant mail free of charge
 - SOTS' Office serves as participant's legal agent for service of process and receipt of first class mail.
- The program prevents public access to a participant's actual address on government records.

Application

MUST be completed with an "Applicant Assistant" on forms prescribed by the SOTS. An Applicant Assistant is a trained victim services provider authorized by the SOTS to assist applicants in the completion of applications – and includes CCADV advocates from member organizations and Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence.

Eligibility

- Connecticut Resident
- Currently are or have been a victim of:
 - Family violence;
 - Sexual assault;
 - Stalking; or
 - Injury or risk of injury to a minor.
- New address not listed on any public record and not already known to the abuser.

Who can apply?

- An adult person, acting on their own behalf;
- A guardian or conservator of the person, acting on behalf of an adult person;
- A parent or guardian, acting on behalf of a minor.

Applicant Assistant

Will meet with a victim to:

- Review the features of the program;
- Determine if the prospective applicant meets the eligibility criteria;
- Assist the victim/survivor in determining if participation in the program would be a beneficial component of the victim/survivor's overall safety plan;
- Assist the applicant with completing the forms;
- Review benefits and limitations of the program;
- Forward completed application forms to the SOTS' Office;
- Answer program participant's questions that may arise during their participation in the program.
- Advocate on the participant's behalf regarding private entities accepting the program participant's substitute mailing address when requested by participant (such as utility companies, banks, credit card companies...).

After Submission of Application

The ACP office reviews the applications and then assigns the ACP substitute address, an individualized certification code and creates an ACP certification card which is sent to the participant. The certification card includes:

- The participant's name;
- A four digit certification code;
- An expiration date (four years from certification); and
- The substitute program address.

Participants are required to provide updated contact information to the ACP program such as change in name and/or address.

When the expiration date is approaching the SOTS will notify the participant of the need to file a renewal application.

Cancellation

Participation in the program may be cancelled if:

1. The participant changes their name or confidential address and fails to notify the SOTS/ACP in writing no later than 30 days after the change;
2. Mail forwarded to the participant is returned as non-deliverable;
3. The certification expires and the participant has not applied for renewal;
4. The application for program participation or renewal contains false information.

Using the Program

When a program participant presents their certification card, public agencies (state and municipal) must accept the ACP substitute address as though it is the person's actual residential address. Private companies are NOT required to accept the substitute address but they certainly can be asked to and often do.

Program participant chooses when to use the substitute address – they decide when and if they want to reveal their actual address to a government employee. When a participant chooses to reveal their actual address to a public agency, the public agency is not legally obligated to keep that information confidential.

In rare situations a public agency may petition the SOTS for an exemption to the ACP laws. Prior to granting an exemption the SOTS will notify the participant of the exemption, including the name of the agency and the reason(s) for the exemption.

The SOTS may not make any records in a program participant file, other than the program address, available for inspection or copying **except**:

1. When a written request is made by the head of law enforcement or the State Elections Enforcement Commission;
2. When directed by court order to release the information; and
3. When the program participant's certification has been cancelled.

Participation in the program is **NOT** confidential. The SOTS will respond to written requests to verify if a person is or is not a current program participant.

The Safe at Home Program is Only One Part of a Victim/Survivor's Safety Plan

Relevant Statutes

- ✓ C.G.S. Chapter 968a