

Frequent questions

If you have a question in your mind and you don't find an answer in this text, you can consult us via www.rikunet.fi.

If you have become, or if someone close to you has become a victim of crime, you can take contact with Victim Support Finland. You can discuss your experience with us in confidence and obtain information about criminal procedures and court proceedings and you can get practical help to know how to deal with other help-providers and authorities.

You can phone on our number 0203 16116 on Monday and Tuesday at 1-9 p.m. and on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday at 5-9 p.m., or you take contact directly with our nearest local office to make an appointment. You can also seek for advice by visiting our website Rikunet (www.rikunet.fi). There are also other organizations to help you: see "Useful links" or "Links" on these pages.

How to make a report of an offence?

You can go and report an offence personally at a police station and tell there what has happened. A report can be made at any police station regardless of the place where the offence was committed. A report can also be made by phone, and in some cases, on the Internet (See for further information in English http://www.poliisi.fi/poliisi/home.nsf/pages/index_eng). You can make a report of an offence even though you cannot name the suspect. You have the possibility to ask for a support person of Victim Support Finland to come and accompany you when you make a report of an offence.

Obtaining compensation often requires making a report of the offence. In law, offences have determined periods of limitation, during which the committed offence can be examined and handled in court. For the sake of your own legal protection and safety it is important to report the offence to the police as soon as possible.

Some persons are afraid that making a report of an offence can put them into a risky situation, or they do not dare to trust the police. Victim Support Finland will help and advise you when you ponder on whether to report or not the offence to the police.

What is going to happen in preliminary investigation?

Once the offence has been reported to the police, the police start examining it. They have a duty to start investigation when there is reason to suspect that an offence has been committed. Preliminary investigation is usually carried out at the police station, which is located closest to the place where the offence happened. The police collect evidence relating to the incident. It is important that you tell the police in details all that you remember of the incident. It is also important that you keep and hand over to the police all the pieces of evidence such as email or telephone messages, which deal with the case. It is recommended to ask for the contact references of the eyewitnesses immediately after the incident.

The police investigate the offence by hearing the victim, the suspect and the witnesses. The victim and the witnesses have to speak the truth; giving intentionally false information is a punishable act. The police make an investigation record to be signed by the victim. The victim can make corrections in the record before signing it, and also later, if necessary.

Do I have the right to an interpreter?

You have the right to have an interpreter at the meetings with authorities (such as police and court) whenever it is necessary for the clarification and understanding of the case. The interpreter required at the police and in court is ordered and paid by the authority concerned. Regarding other authorities, lawyers and help-organizations, interpreter's services can be utilized but, then, it is recommended to check beforehand who is going to pay the interpreter. When dealing with criminal cases, it is important to utilize professional interpreters, as it is question of the client's legal protection. Professional competence means that besides knowing the required languages the interpreter is impartial and bound to professional secrecy concerning the discussed matters.

Does becoming a victim of crime have impact on my residence permit in Finland?

Becoming a victim of crime does not directly affect your right to stay in the country. Everyone who has become a victim of crime has the right to obtain advice, help and support. To get further information about this subject you can take contact with the Ombudsman for Minorities <http://www.ofm.fi/intermin/vvt/home.nsf/pages/index3>.

Can I obtain free legal aid?

In Finland, it is possible to obtain state-funded legal aid providing that the case is handled in Finland and the victim is living in Finland. The amount of legal aid depends on the victim's income and wealth. Persons with low income or without any income obtain legal aid free of charge. Legal aid is applied for in local legal aid offices. For further information see www.oikeus.fi.

Victims of sexual or domestic violence or those of a violent crime are entitled to a cost-free lawyer who is paid for by public funds, regardless of income.

What does happen in the process of conciliation?

The process of conciliation concerning criminal issues is cost-free. Participation in the process of conciliation is always voluntary-based. The parties concerned can handle the incident and the harms caused to the victim and agree on compensations under the guidance of a conciliator. Both parties have the right to interrupt the process of conciliation at any moment. Issues to settle include, for example, assaults, damages and offences involving property. There are also crimes, which do not easily suit to the process of conciliation, for example, recurrent violence in a couple relationship and sexual crimes.

On the basis of the reached reconciliation it is possible to avoid court proceedings, or the reconciliation can be taken into consideration in the judgment either by waving or by mitigating the sentence. Reaching reconciliation does not automatically mean an alternative to handling in court – a criminal case can be handled in both instances. If you

have become a victim of crime and you consider the process of conciliation, you can take contact with the nearest office of Victim Support Finland or with the Lawyer's Telephone Advice Service (Juristin puhelinneuvonta).

What does a restraining order mean?

A restraining order aims at protecting a person's life, health, freedom and peace. Any person who has justified grounds for feeling threatened or seriously harassed by another person can petition for a restraining order. The restraining order protects the threatened person by prohibiting the person against whom the restraining order has been issued from doing certain things e.g. from approaching the protected person or his/her property, or from trying to take otherwise contact. A restraining order can be petitioned also against a member of the same family should the family member be threatening or violent. Yet it cannot be petitioned against a family member for merely reasons of disturbing behavior. The person subject to a restraining order has to leave the common residence.

You can file for a restraining order either in writing by filling a form designed for it or personally with the police or directly with a district court. When you file a petition for a restraining order you are questioned about the threat you have been subject to or you risk becoming subject to and whether there are witnesses or other evidence on the case. The case will be handled as an urgent matter, and the hearing in court will take place in 2 to 4 weeks following the filing of the petition. The restraining order enters into force at the moment when the district court informs the respondent about its decision. Violation of a restraining order is a punishable act.

For further information

[http://www.poliisi.fi/poliisi/home.nsf/ExternalFiles/englanti/\\$file/englanti.pdf](http://www.poliisi.fi/poliisi/home.nsf/ExternalFiles/englanti/$file/englanti.pdf).

How to protect my property?

It is possible to have protection against offences involving property by simple means. Pay attention to the locks of your home and car: all doors should be locked whenever you are not present. Don't attach any references about you to your keys or the lock the keys serve for. Any time you are absent, keep your dwelling like being occupied. It is not recommended to keep big amounts of money in your home or car.

Pickpockets are circulating particularly in mass events and tourist sites, and during holidays. You can protect yourself against pickpockets by keeping your wallet in a front pocket or your shoulder bag on your front side. Don't keep big amounts of money in your wallet, if it is not necessary. Learn all pin codes by heart. When you get a bankcard you get a number (cancellation number), which you have to call if your card is lost. Save that number in your telephone.

Insurances aim at compensating the consequences of an accident or an injury caused to a person or property. Keep your insurance updated.

Can an employer refuse to pay a salary during a sick leave caused by a crime?

An employer can refuse to pay a salary for the period of sickness. When the reason of incapacity is the fact of having been victim of crime, the employer is not obliged, according

to the employment contracts made in some professional areas, to pay a salary during the period of sickness. This is based on the laws, in virtue of which the party having caused damages is the first liable to pay compensations for damages. The victim of crime can claim compensations from the perpetrator of the crime or from the State Office. In some cases you can claim compensations straight from the State Office even if you had not tried to get them from the perpetrator of the crime. In the office of Victim Support Finland, you can get detailed advice also about these issues. As the compensation is paid only after the whole process of appeals has been completed, you may be obliged to wait even two years for the payment of compensation. This causes unreasonable financial difficulties to many victims of crime.

In the worst case, it can have for result that the victim omits telling the doctor the actual reason of his/her pains, because the victim wants to ensure his/her income. Yet, on the one hand, the omission to tell the doctor complicates the testifying of the crime in court proceedings, and on the other hand, the doctor cannot guide the victim to get the right support in the future.