Victim Services Portal (VSP) – Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Introduction

This FAQ attempts to answer the most commonly asked questions about the NYS Victim Services Portal (VSP). If you have questions related to claims processing, compensation guidelines, and other services provided by the NYS Office of Victim Services (OVS), please refer to the NYS OVS FAQ. (Please note this will open in a new window. Please remember to log out if you do not plan to return to the NYS VSP.)

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Acronyms and Definitions

This section contains acronyms that will be referenced in some sections of this document as well as explains what some terms refer to on the Victim Services Portal.

VSP – Victim Services Portal

The acronym VSP will be used in this document and will be short for Victim Services Portal.

OVS – Office of Victim Services

The acronym OVS will be used in this document and will be short for Office of Victim Services.

NYS – New York State

The acronym NYS will be used in this document and will be short for New York State.

Navigation Menu (Part of Apply For Compensation)

The navigation menu is on the left side of every page of an application for compensation. It can be used to skip around different pages of an application. The available sections depend on the type of application for compensation you wish to file. Pages that are unavailable for your type of application will appear as disabled in this menu.

Sections (Part of Apply For Compensation)

This term refers to each page of an application for compensation on the Victim Services Portal (VSP). The VSP uses section names only and not the number. Each section name corresponds to their equivalent paper application numbered section. There are a total of sixteen sections. The sections are mapped as follows:
Section 1 – Victim
Section 2 – Claimant
Section 3 – Crime
Section 4 – Suspect
Section 5 – Expenses
Section 6 – Essential Personal Property
Section 7 – Lost Wages
Section 8 – Burial Expenses
Section 9 – Providers
Section 10 – Dependents
Section 11 – Counseling
Section 12 – Insurance
Section 13 – Death Benefits
Section 14 – Financial Situation
Section 15 – Private Lawyer
Section 16 – Representative

General

1. What can I do in the VSP?

You can begin entering a new application for compensation, edit an existing application for compensation, or delete an existing application for compensation in the VSP. Once your application has been submitted to OVS and you have been given a claim number, you can upload documents for your claim. Please see 'Starting or Making Changes to an Online Application for Compensation' section of this document for more information.

You can also search for a claim you submitted by clicking the 'Search For a Claim' tab available under the banner at the top of every page. After a successful search, you will be able to track the status of the claim and upload additional documentation. Please see 'Checking My Claim Status or Searching for a Claim' section of this document for more information.

2. If you make an error when entering information on a particular screen will you be alerted to your error?

Once submitted, a claim can no longer be edited within the VSP. Please contact the NYS OVS to receive help with making changes to an already submitted application.

3. How can I make changes to a claim I have already submitted?

No, error checks only occur after you submit the application. If you submit before completing the application, it will list all errors associated with the blanks in the remaining sections of the application that you have not completed yet. It is best to complete the entire application and then submit the application for error checks.

4. Will errors be identified specifically?

Yes. If errors are found, you will be returned to the first section of the application that contains errors and your cursor will automatically be placed in the field that first resulted in the error.

5. Is there some way to cancel my already submitted claim in the VSP?

The VSP does not provide a way to cancel an already submitted claim. Please contact the NYS OVS for questions regarding your claim.

6. What if you submit or upload incorrect information by mistake? Is there a way to correct errors?

You cannot change date entries already made into an existing application. However, you will have the ability to upload information forever. So, for instance, if you entered the wrong police report number, you can upload the correct police report at any time. But, for many corrections, you must call OVS and work with staff to have a change to the claim made.

7. How do we change an address on a claim?

On the OVS website, under the Guidance for Victim Service Providers box, there is a new tab for the Victim Service Portal. All necessary forms will be listed here, including the change of address form.

8. Can you submit an application without a social security number?

No. You will get an error message. However, if the victim or claimant truly does not have a social security number, you can check the box that says, I don't have one.

If you don't have a child victim's social security number, you should save the claims and then wait until you get the social security number to submit the claim. The social security number is necessary to process a claim for a victim or claimant.

If you are missing social security numbers for dependents only (not the victim or claimant), you can upload a miscellaneous document that states: social security numbers will follow; victim did not have them with him or her.

9. For physical injury claims, do you have to fill out the financial section of the application?

Yes, you have to fill it out. The amounts just have to be estimates. All zeros may be entered too.

10. Who do I contact if I encounter a problem in the VSP?

If you have a problem or have questions regarding the VSP itself or the applications within it, please search this document to help find an answer to your question. If you are unable to find an answer here, please contact the NYS OVS.

11. I accidentally deleted my application. Is there any way I can recover it?

There is no way to recover an application that a user has deleted.

12. How do I let a victim advocate take over my saved online application?

The VSP does not provide a way for an individual user's application to be assigned to a Victim Advocate Program. Please start a new application with the help of the Victim Advocate Program of your choice. Once all your data has been captured in the new application started by the victim advocate of your choice, we recommend you delete the old application under your individual account.

13. I submitted an application but did not receive a confirmation page or claim number. Was my application successfully submitted?

If you successfully submit an application, you will be taken to a confirmation page with a claim number and further instructions on submitting additional documents. If your application was not successfully submitted, it will return error messages on the sections you did not fill out as expected by the application. The sections with error messages will be in red text on the left navigation menu. Each section with error messages will have the messages displayed at the top of the page in red text.
If you were returned to the VSP Homepage, check the partial applications list to see if the application you just filled out is still there. Finally, do a claim search by the Victim's last name and social security number and check if any records are returned for the claim you just submitted. The first name is optional for a basic search. If none of the above recommendations resolve your issue(s), please fill out and submit a paper application.

14. Upon submitting the claim, do you get a claim number right away?

Yes. Once you have submitted the claim and it has passed the error checks, you will go to a confirmation screen when you will find the claim number.

15. Do you need an Authorization Page to get a claim moved out of initial status?

Yes. In order for OVS to process an application, an authorization page must be signed by the victim or claimant and submitted to OVS. Without the authorization page, the claim will be held in initial status.

16. Is there more than one way to submit the Authorization Page?

Yes, it can be signed and uploaded into the VSP. Or it can be signed and faxed or mailed in to OVS.

17. Is there a separate save button?

No. As you navigate through the claim, either by clicking NEXT, PREVIOUS, or an available selection from the navigation menu, such as Victim, Claimant, or Crime, the entries you have made will be saved.

18. Can you print an application?

No, not yet.

19. Can you take a picture of a document with your phone and then upload?

To be determined. This feature was planned for or tested.

20. Does the system permit electronic signatures?

We use the authorization (signature) page for more than just confirmation of the claimant submitting the application – we also print it out to show other involved 3rd parties that we have the authorization to obtain information about the victim/claimant. Therefore, we need a signed authorization.

21. Can an FRE Direct Reimbursement Program bill be submitted through the VSP?

No, that is still a paper process.

22. How much time do we have to complete an application before we are timed out of the VSP?

There is a 30 minute (total) for the timeout. 25 minutes and then a 5 minute pop-up warning will count down.

23. What browsers are supported by the VSP?

For the best experience with the VSP and to take advantage of all its modern features, we recommend you use Internet Explorer 9 or higher, Chrome, or Firefox. If you are using IE9 or higher, you may need to turn off compatibility mode. See the VSP User Guide for instructions on how to turn off compatibility mode in Internet Explorer version 9 or higher.

24. What if I do not wish to use one of the browsers that is supported by the VSP?

It is highly recommended that you use IE 9 or higher, Chrome or Firefox. If you use a browser that is not supported by the VSP, then the browser may not function correctly with the VSP.

25. What are the minimum and/or recommended system requirements to use the VSP?

The VSP only requires that you use the recommended browsers. The minimum and/or recommended system requirements for IE 9 or higher, Chrome, and Firefox will need to be met in order to use them and access the VSP.
IE 9 or higher system requirements can be found here.
Google Chrome system requirements can be found here.
Mozilla Firefox system requirements can be found here.
(Please note the above links will open in a new window. Please remember to log out if you do not plan to return to the VSP.)

26. Can I use a mobile or smart device to access the VSP?

This application may not be suited for mobile devices.

27. Can I still use the paper application?

If you prefer to file a paper application then you may still do so. However, the online application for compensation provides several benefits over the paper application. The online application is quicker and easier to fill out than the paper form. It also provides the ability to edit or modify existing sections without having to start a new application if you make a mistake. The online application is cost-saving and good for the environment as it requires less paper to fill out. You must only fill out either a paper application or an online application and NOT both for the same crime.

28. How can I obtain a copy of an online application for compensation that I submitted?

The VSP does not support printing of the information entered and submitted for the online application. If you need to review details of your application, please contact the NYS OVS with your claim number.

Starting or Making Changes to an Online Application for Compensation

1. How can I start a new application?

A new application can by started by clicking the "Apply for Compensation" tab available under the banner near the top of every page. The Next and Previous buttons within the compensation application will allow you to save the application and complete it at a later time.

2. How can I edit an application I started earlier?

If you have already started an application before, it will be listed on the VSP home page. You can begin working on it again by selecting "Edit Application" next to the application you wish to edit.

3. How can I delete an application I started?

If you started an application before, it will be listed on the VSP home page. You can delete an application by selecting "Edit Application" next to the application you wish to delete. This will open the application and you can delete the application by clicking the "Delete Application" button at the bottom of every page.

4. How can I go to the next section of an application or go back to an earlier section of an application?

You can move around the sections by using the NEXT and PREVIOUS buttons available at the bottom of every page. Clicking NEXT will move you to the next page and clicking PREVIOUS will move you to the previous page. Please keep in mind that moving to a section using NEXT or PREVIOUS will save data you have entered.

5. How is the navigation menu on the left used?

You may navigate by clicking an available section from the navigation menu on the left. Please keep in mind that moving to any section by clicking an available selection from the navigation menu will save your current entries.

6. Where do I select the type of application I am filing?

The type of application you are filing can be selected in the Crime section or Section 3. Please note that some sections will be disabled and the associated data cleared when selecting different types of applications.

7. I started an application some time ago and now I can no longer find it in the VSP homepage. Where did it go?

*Try searching for your claim by clicking the "Search For a Claim" tab at the top of the page. Depending on how long it has been since you last edited the application, it may have been purged from our data storage. Our policy is to not hold data for any longer than sixty days from the last date it was saved. For questions related to searching for a claim, please see "*Checking My Claim Status or Searching for a Claim*" of this document for more information.*

8. Where is the save button? How do I save the information I have entered?

The VSP does not use a "Save" button in the online application for compensation. The data is saved when you click NEXT, PREVIOUS, or an available selection from the navigation menu. (For example: Victim, Claimant, Crime, etc.).

9. Can I leave an online application unfinished and come back to it later?

Yes, but please make sure you click NEXT, PREVIOUS, or an available section from the navigation menu (for example: Victim, Claimant, Crime, etc.) before exiting or logging out. Doing so ensures that the data you entered in your current screen is saved. Once saved, it is available on the VSP home page for up to sixty days.

10. Once we start entering a claim how long do we have to continue to work on it before submitting it?

Claims that you have started will be "temporary claims" and they will be listed at the bottom of the screen of a search for your id and/or program. These claims that have yet to be submitted will be held in a temporary holding area for 60 days. After 60 days from the last update, they will be purged from the system.

11. Can a claim that hasn't been touched in 60 days and was purged be retrieved?

No, once purged, an un-submitted claim cannot be retrieved.

12. A mom and children are all victims; can you enter the information for one and then copy that data to create the other applications?

No, you must enter each application separately; there is no copy feature.

13. If you search the VSP for an old claim that is closed, find it and upload documents to it, how will OVS know that the documents are there?

If you are uploading a document to an existing claim and the claim is in closed status, please send an email to ovsintake@ovs.ny.gov to let them know. The Claims Intake Unit will then ensure that appropriate OVS staff are alerted to the existence of the new document.

Checking My Claim Status or Searching for a Claim

1. How can I check the status of a claim that I filed?

Claim statuses can be found by doing a basic claim search or an advanced claim search.

2. What is the difference between an advanced claim search and a basic claim search?

A basic claim search can be done for claims that are already linked to your account. Most applications submitted by you using the VSP will automatically be assigned to your NY.gov ID. A basic claim search requires the entry of a victim's last name and either a claim number or last four digits of a victim's social security number. To find claims that are not linked to your account, you must perform an advanced search. An advanced search requires all fields to be filled out which includes the claim number, crime date, victim's last name, victim's first name, victim's date of birth, and the victim's social security number.

3. My claim was submitted to the NYS OVS by an Advocate. Why can't I find my claim in the basic search?

The VSP links a filed claim to the original user that submitted the claim by default. In this case, the advocate that helped you file the claim has it linked to their NY.gov user ID. You must search for that claim using the advanced search option and then link the claim to your NY.gov user ID by accepting the pop-up that asks you if you want to link the claim to your NY.gov user ID. To successfully search for this claim and link it using the advanced search, you will need the claim number, crime date, victim's last name, victim's first name, victim's date of birth, and the victim's social security number. The advocate helping you should have provided you with the claim number.

4. Why can't I view ALL the details of a claim linked to my NY.gov user ID that I have submitted?

The VSP claim status system does not provide full details of a submitted application/claim. Please contact the NYS OVS with your claim number and request to have a Crime Victim Specialist contact you to discuss any details of your claim and its current status.

5. How can I find out more details about my claim status?

Additional details about your claim status can be obtained by clicking the claim status itself on the search results page. If you find this information is not sufficient and still need other details, please contact the NYS OVS with your claim number and request to have a Crime Victim Specialist contact you about your claim status.

6. My advanced search returns no results but I am positive I entered the exact information requested. What should I do?

We apologize for the inconvenience and understand your frustration. This issue can occur due to a number of reasons. Please contact the NYS OVS with your details and your claim number, if you have it. Please request that a Crime Victim Specialist contact you about your claim.

7. How soon can I expect to see my claim status update using the claim search?

The case status in the VSP is updated the same day that an OVS Crime Victim Specialist updates the case status in the OVS claims processing system so the time may vary.

8. Is the VSP only useable for claims that were submitted as an application through the portal?

No, any claim that has been submitted and has a claim number can be searched for on the VSP.

Uploading Documents for a Claim

1. How do I upload documents for my claim to the VSP?

You can upload documents by clicking "Upload" from the confirmation page with your claim number. You can also upload documents from the search results after doing a basic or advanced search. Please see "Checking My Claim Status or Searching for a Claim" section of this document for more information.
Once the "Upload" is clicked, the upload page is displayed in the current window. You will have to select the document type you are uploading from the dropdown, then click the "Browse" button. Clicking "Browse" will bring up a system window to select a file available from your computer to be uploaded. Once you have located the file, you must click "Open" in the window and you will be taken back to the Upload page. Click the Upload button to complete the process. Upon successful upload, you will get a message in red text at the top of the page that your upload was successful. To exit, click "Cancel" and you will be returned to the previous page.

2. How can I print a claimant authorization form or HIPAA form for a claim?

You can print out and sign an authorization form for a claim you already submitted by performing a successful search for a claim. You would then click the "Upload" button. In the screen that comes up, there will be instructions and a link that says "click here to print the Authorization page."
There is also a link that says "Click here to print a HIPAA form."

Clicking either link will bring up the respective PDF document in a new window. You must print the appropriate document and completely fill out any required sections. You will then need to scan the document back into your computer. Once saved successfully to a directory on your PC, you must select the appropriate document type from Document Type dropdown. You must select "Claimant Application Authorization Signature Form" or "HIPAA Form" depending on the respective document you will upload. Next click the "Browse" button to locate your scanned document on your local PC in the dialog box. Once you select the desired file, you can click "OK" on the dialog box and then click "Upload" to begin the document upload process. If your upload is successful, then you will get the message "Your upload was successful" at the top of this page.

If you encounter any issues while uploading your Claimant Application Authorization Signature Form, uploading the HIPAA form(s), do not have access to a printer, or do not have access to a scanner then please contact the NYS OVS *with your claim number for help. Please note that choosing the wrong document type for an upload will delay the processing of your claim.*

3. What is the "Document Type" dropdown used for?

This is used to select the type of document you are uploading. It puts the document you upload in a category that will make it easy to identify the part of your claim it supports. If you are unsure of the category type your document falls under, contact the NYS OVS *with your claim number.*

4. What file types are supported for upload by the VSP?

The VSP system accepts documents with the following file extensions: tif; pdf; doc; docx; xls; xlsx; bmp; gif; jpg. If you have documents that are not acceptable by VSP, please convert them to acceptable formats and then upload the converted document(s). If for any reason you cannot

convert the documents to an acceptable format or the conversion fails, print and mail the document(s) to NYS OVS.

5. How many documents can I upload at once to the VSP?

The VSP only allows the upload of one document file at a time.

6. I keep getting an error or it is taking a long time when I attempt to upload my files. What should I do?

If you get any error messages or it is taking a long time to upload files, you should mail your document(s) to NYS OVS as soon as possible to avoid any delays in processing your claim application.

7. What is the maximum size allowed for a document that is to be uploaded?

The VSP system allows a maximum upload size of 2MB (megabytes) per file. A 2 MB file can vary in the number of pages depending on the document format. A Microsoft Word document typically produces an average of 63 pages per MB. A Microsoft Excel document usually produces an average of 161 pages per MB. If your file exceeds this limit, please reduce the file size. If for any reason you cannot reduce the file size to equal or less than 2MB, please mail the document(s) to NYS OVS.

Logging in to VSP

1. How do I obtain an account to use with the VSP?

The VSP can be used with a Personal NY.gov ID. You can register for one by clicking "Don't have an Account?" at https://my.ny.gov/. If you have any issues or questions related to NY.gov IDs, please visit the NY.gov ID FAQs page at https://my.ny.gov/faqs.html.

2. I forgot my NY.gov username and/or password or have other questions related to NY.gov ID, how can I get help?

Click the "Forgot your Username or Password?" links available under the "Sign In" button on the VSP login page. If you need any help with a forgotten NY.gov ID username or password, refer to the NY.gov ID FAQs at https://my.ny.gov/faqs.html.

Using the VSP as a Victim Assistance Program (VAP) User

This section is to address any questions regarding the VSP that a VAP account holder may have. If you are a claimant and/or victim that is using an individual account to access the VSP, do not refer to this section for help with using the VSP. If you are a claimant and/or victim looking for more information about VAPs in general or to locate a VAP near you than please refer to the OVS website's Help For Crime Victims page*.*

Logging in to VSP as an Advocate

1. How do I obtain a VAP Account to use with the VSP?
   The NYS OVS will assign you a NY.gov ID once your VAP requests one for you.

2. My VAP has requested a VSP Advocate account for me. How long will it take to process the request?
   Please allow the NYS OVS 3 business days to process the request for your VSP Advocate Account.

3. How can I get help if I have not received my activation e-mail after requesting a VAP Account?
   Please ensure you have checked your Spam and Junk Mail boxes for the activation e-mail. You must also make sure that you are checking the e-mail address registered by your VAP when requesting your VSP Advocate account.

Starting or Making Changes to an Application as an Advocate

1. Can two advocates work on the same partial claim simultaneously from different computers?
   Two advocate users cannot edit the same application simultaneously. If an advocate is already in the middle of editing an application then it is locked and assigned to that advocate.

2. How can I edit a partial application that is assigned to another user or another user is working on?
   If you wish to edit an application already being modified by another user, you must click the "Edit" button from the Victim Services Portal homepage. If another user has the application open, then you will be presented with a dialogue box asking you to confirm that you want to edit this application that is already open by another user. In order to continue, you must click the "Open" button. Once you click the "Open" button, it will force the user already editing the application to end their session with the application being updated and free it up for you to begin your updates. The user already on a section of this application will be notified once they click NEXT, PREVIOUS, Submit Application, or Delete Application. Their progress on this particular section will not be saved.

3. How can I delete a claim from the system assigned to my Victim Advocate Program?
   A partial claim application can be deleted from the Victim Services Portal Advocate home page by clicking the "Edit" button next to a listed application. You will then need to click the "Delete" button available next to the "Submit" button at the bottom of any section of an application and then confirm the "Delete" action by clicking "Yes" on the popup dialogue box that appears. An already submitted application cannot be deleted from the Victim Services Portal at this time.

4. How can I tell who was the last person that was working on an application?
   The last person that the application was edited by is visible on the Victim Services Portal homepage on the column labeled "Last Modified By". This does not indicate that the user is currently in the application.

5. What if a claimant comes to a VAP for assistance, but has already filed a claim via another program. Can two VAPs work on the same claim?
   Yes, the VSP allows for this possibility. If a victim/claimant has entered a claim through another VAP, but provides you with certain identifying information, you can conduct an advanced search to find the claim. If the advanced search is successful and the claim was not previously linked to your NY.gov account or your VAP, a pop-up message asks if you would like to link the claim to your NY.gov id. If you select yes in the pop-up box, you will be permanently linked to this claim. You can then upload documents to the claim from this point on. It is important to note, however, that you must still complete a Representative Authorization (naming a specific person in your organization) form if you wish to discuss this claim with OVS.

6. Traditionally, OVS monitors have expected to see a copy of the OVS claim application in the claimant file when reviewing records during a site visit. If we enter a claim through the portal, there will be no paper application in the file. Will this result in a negative finding?
   Claimant files should include a printed and signed Authorization Page. The claim number and the date it was successfully submitted into the VSP should be recorded in the file as well.

7. Is there a way to distinguish an Emergency Award claim from a regular claim?
   The data entry and submission process are the same. However, for an Emergency Award you also need to send an email to OVSINTAKE@OVS.NY.GOV with the subject line: EA Request. The body of the email should include: the claim number you received upon successful submission of the claim application, a statement that is an emergency award request, and a list of the supporting documents you have uploaded to the claim. The Authorization Page must be uploaded. If complete, OVS' Claims Intake Unit will assign the claim to an EA Specialist right away.

8. After we have submitted a claim with the supporting documentation and the required Emergency Award email request, will we get a confirming email back telling us who the investigator is that will be working on the claim?
   No, not at this time. Only the claim status is returned to the user.

9. Will programs continue to get the roster?
   Yes.

10. How can you file a claim with the VSP while working in the field?
    You can:

    •Use a laptop;

    •Fill out a paper application and bring it back to the office and then make data entries into the VSP off of the application or

•Work with a victim over the phone and make entries into the system

11. Will the VSP immediately identify duplicate claims?
    No, the VSP will not indicate that. OVS' Claims Intake Unit will make that determination and notify you if this is a duplicate claim.

12. When you link yourself to a claim, does it unlink the original VAP?
    No, it just adds you to the claim and allows you find the claim through a basic search and upload documents to the claim. Programs can work together on claims once they are both linked to it.

13. Does linking a second VAP negate the original VAP's ability to speak to OVS about the claim?
    No. Once the second VAP has filled out a Representative Authorization (naming a specific person in your organization) form, they can speak to OVS too.

14. Is there a test VSP that we can use to familiarize ourselves with the VSP?
    No, access to the VSP is directly into the production

15. Can we print out and carry around Authorization Pages and take them with us for use?
    Yes. There will be blank authorization pages available on the Victim Service Portal tab on the Victim Assistance Program page of the OVS website.