

# Media Alert

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June 15, 2005 (updated Web addresses December 2008)

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## **Victim restitution webpage now online**

[http://www.courts.state.co.us/Self\\_Help/Restitution.cfm](http://www.courts.state.co.us/Self_Help/Restitution.cfm)

When crimes are committed, courts often enter orders requiring the offenders to pay restitution, a means by which offenders are held accountable for the financial losses they caused their victims. State law allows prosecutors to request restitution as part of the sentence for any defendant who is found guilty of a crime. Colorado is recognized for having one of the strongest statewide restitution and fine collection programs in the nation.

Restitution is generally collected from the defendant through a payment plan set up by collections investigators working in the courts and probation departments throughout the state. The General Assembly has also established mechanisms for the courts to intercept lottery winnings and most recently Colorado state income tax refunds. These allow the state to intercept winnings or refunds to repay the defendant's outstanding restitution owed to victims, as well as to enforce payment of fines, fees, costs, and/or surcharges owed to a state court. In addition to these tools, collections investigators initiate wage attachments and use a wide array of other methods to strengthen recoveries.

During the last completed fiscal year, which ended June 30, 2004, there were 16,335 cases sentenced in state courts that included orders for restitution. As of May 31, 2005, more than 40 percent of those restitution obligations were paid in full, and another 20 percent have received at least partial payments averaging \$1,210. Restitution orders can range from a few dollars to more than \$1 million. The average order is approximately \$4,100. The latest data shows that after 3-5 years 50-65 percent of the cases are paid in full, with upwards of 75-80 percent of cases receiving at least partial payments. Approximately \$22 million is expected to be recovered for victims in the current fiscal year, which ends June 30, 2005.

A webpage is now online with resources to aid victims in collecting restitution and to answer common questions. A variety of information is included, such as: how victims can request restitution; how victims can make sure the court has their current address to forward restitution payments made by defendants; what happens when a defendant fails to make a payment; how victims can opt to pursue collections on their own; how to inquire about restitution collections when defendants are incarcerated; and other resources related to victims and restitution. The webpage is located at [http://www.courts.state.co.us/Self\\_Help/Restitution.cfm](http://www.courts.state.co.us/Self_Help/Restitution.cfm). Collections data from fiscal years 2000 through 2004 are also available on the page.

*This information is provided as an e-mail service of the Colorado State Judicial Branch, Office of State Court Administrator, 1301 Pennsylvania Street, Suite 300, Denver, Colo. 80203. To discontinue this service or update your e-mail address, please respond to this message with your name, contact information and any comments.*