

## Address Confidentiality Program

By: Katherine Dwyer, Associate Attorney

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### Issue

Describe the Address Confidentiality Program established in 2003 and administered by the Secretary of the State's (SOTS) office ([CGS § 54-240](#) et seq. and [Conn. Agencies Regs. § 54-240a-1](#) et seq.).

### Summary

Through the Address Confidentiality Program, a victim of family violence, injury or risk of injury to a child, sexual assault, or stalking may receive a substitute mailing address in order to keep his or her residential address confidential due to safety concerns.

Once an applicant to the program is certified by SOTS, he or she receives a substitute address. SOTS, as the participant's legal agent, receives any mail and service of process sent to that substitute address and forwards it to the participant's confidential address free-of-charge.

Participants may generally have (1) their street addresses omitted from voter registries, (2) correspondence from state agencies sent to the substitute address, and (3) their marriage records kept confidential. Participants may renew their certification every four years. SOTS may cancel a participant's certification under certain circumstances, but such participants may reapply at any time.

### Application

An adult, a guardian or conservator acting on an adult's behalf, or a parent or guardian acting on a minor's behalf may apply to participate in the program. Applications for the program must be completed in collaboration with an application assistant whom the applicant must select from a list

of entities SOTS provides ([CGS § 54-240b](#)). The application requires, among other things, a statement under penalty of false statement, with supporting documentation, that the applicant or the person on whose behalf the application is made is a victim of one of the above crimes and fears for his or her safety or his or her children's safety ([CGS § 54-240c](#)).

When SOTS certifies an applicant as a program participant, she must issue him or her a certification card that includes the participant's name and signature, a certification code, the program address and the certification expiration date (i.e., four years from the date it is issued). Participants who file certain documentation with SOTS may renew their certification for additional four-year terms ([CGS § 54-240d,-240j](#)).

## **Confidentiality**

Other than the program addresses, SOTS must generally keep participants' program-related records confidential, and may only allow them to be inspected or copied:

1. under certain circumstances if requested by a law enforcement agency or the State Elections Enforcement Commission;
2. in compliance with a court order;
3. to verify a specific participant's participation in the program, in which case SOTS may only confirm the information the requester supplies; or
4. if the participant's certification is cancelled.

SOTS must notify the participant of any disclosures related to court order or program participation verification ([CGS § 54-240m](#)).

The law specifies that no law enforcement agency or state or municipal social service agency employee and no other witness may be compelled to disclose a program participant's confidential address during discovery or testimony in a criminal or civil trial unless the court finds that nondisclosure may prejudice one of the parties to the proceeding ([CGS § 54-240n](#)).

## **Additional Protections Under the Program**

A program participant may, upon request, have:

1. the registrar of vital statistics keep his or her marriage records confidential;
2. the municipal registrar of voters exclude his or her street and house number; and

3. agencies use his or her program address for all purposes for which the agency requires or requests a residential, work, or school address.

Registrars must generally keep the respective records confidential, but may allow them to be inspected or copied (1) by a law enforcement agency that requests them, (2) in compliance with a court order, or (3) if they receive notice from SOTS that the participant's certification has been cancelled ([CGS §§ 54-240f - h](#)).

The law also permits an agency to request an exemption from using a participant's program address if doing so would prevent the agency from meeting its legal obligations even if the agency changes its internal procedures. If SOTS grants the exemption, the requesting agency may only use the confidential address to fulfill its legal obligations. It may not further disclose the address except to comply with a court order or if notified that the participant's certification was cancelled. SOTS must notify the participant prior to granting such an exemption ([CGS § 54-240i](#)).

## **Program Cancellation or Withdrawal**

SOTS may cancel a participant's certification and invalidate his or her card if:

1. the participant changes his or her name or confidential address and fails to provide SOTS with written notice within 30 days of the change;
2. mail forwarded to the participant is returned as nondeliverable;
3. the participant's certification has expired and he or she has not applied for renewal; or
4. the program application or renewal form contains false information.

SOTS must provide the participant with written notice of the cancellation, including the reason, and the participant has 30 days from the date the notice is mailed to appeal the cancellation. A participant may also withdraw from the program by providing written notice and his or her certification card to SOTS. A person whose certification is cancelled may reapply to the program at any time ([CGS § 54-240k](#)).

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