

## Dog-bite victims entitled to compensation

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The annual costs for medical care due to dog bites exceed \$1 billion.

The good news is that Illinois has taken steps to ensure that victims of dog bites are fairly compensated for their injuries and financial losses. The law in Illinois requires that the dog owner compensate the victim for all damages caused by the bite, provided that the victim did not provoke the dog to bite.

You are entitled to compensation if you can prove the following: the identity of the owner of the dog; that the dog bit you; that you were in a public place or lawfully in a private place, which could be the property of the owner of the dog; that the bite caused you injury, suffering, loss or harm.

You must also not be subject to any of these exceptions: you were a veterinarian who was treating the dog at the time of the incident; you were committing a felony; you provoked the dog or the dog was assisting the police or the military at the time of the incident.

Your compensation can extend to more than just your medical bills. You may be able to recover money for medical treatment such as first aid, emergency room, hospital and ambulance; medical treatment for scar reduction now and in the future; psychological counseling to overcome the emotional trauma of the attack; fear of dogs; fear of being outdoors and dealing with disfigurement; loss of earnings from work or your own business; torn clothing and broken glasses; and medications.

If you have been attacked by a dog, here are your steps of action:

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Obtain immediate emergency treatment, giving the medical provider a detailed account of the attack.

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Immediately notify the police and your local animal control department of the attack and insist that a report be completed and the dog be checked for disease and whether it is vicious, to prevent injuries to others.

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Take numerous, detailed photographs (close-ups) or a video of your injuries.

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Do not discuss the dog bite attack or your medical condition with any representative of the insurance company for the dog owner, until you have consulted with an attorney.

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Contact a lawyer with experience in handling dog bite cases.

Your lawyer will investigate the specific details of your case, determine your legal course of action and protect your claim and its value and counsel you on your rights. He will negotiate your financial recovery with the sophisticated insurance carriers of the dog owners, whose job it is to pay you as little as possible - or nothing, if they can.

Then, if the insurance company is not reasonable with its settlement offer, your lawyer will file your lawsuit to obtain fair compensation for you from a court.

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