

Criminal Obstruction of Breathing or Blood Circulation
Penal Law § 121.11
(Committed on or after Nov. 11, 2010)

The (specify) count is Criminal Obstruction of Breathing or Blood Circulation

Under our law, a person is guilty of Criminal Obstruction of Breathing or Blood Circulation when, with intent to impede the normal breathing or circulation of the blood of another person, he or she

Select appropriate alternative(s)¹:

applies pressure on the throat or neck of such person [or]

blocks the nose or mouth of such person.

The term “intent” used in that definition has its own special meaning:

INTENT means conscious objective or purpose. Thus, a person acts with the intent to impede the normal breathing or circulation of the blood of another person when his or her conscious objective or purpose is to do so.²

In order for you to find the defendant guilty of this crime, the People are required to prove, from all the evidence in the case, beyond a reasonable doubt, both of the following two elements:

1. That on or about (date) , in the county of (county) , the defendant, (defendant's name),

Select appropriate alternative(s):

¹ In November 2020, the references to “Select appropriate alternative” was amended to read “Select appropriate alternative(s).”

² See Penal Law § 15.05(1). If necessary, an expanded definition of “intent” is available in the section on Instructions of General Applicability under Culpable Mental States.

applied pressure on the throat or neck of (specify)
[and/or]

blocked the nose or mouth of (specify); and

2. That the defendant did so with the intent to impede the normal breathing or circulation of the blood of such person.

[NOTE: If the affirmative defense of Penal Law § 121.14 does not apply conclude as follows:

If you find that the People have proven beyond a reasonable doubt both of those elements, you must find the defendant guilty of this crime.

If you find that the People have not proven beyond a reasonable doubt either one or both of those elements, you must find the defendant not guilty of this crime.

[NOTE: If the affirmative defense of Penal Law § 121.14 applies, omit the final two paragraphs of the above charge, and substitute the following:³

If you find that the People have not proven beyond a reasonable doubt either one or both of those elements, you must find the defendant not guilty of this crime.

If you find that the People have proven beyond a reasonable doubt both of those elements, you must consider an affirmative defense the defendant has raised. Remember, if you have already found the defendant not guilty of Criminal Obstruction of Breathing or Blood Circulation you will not consider the affirmative defense.

³ The justification defense for a duly licensed physician, or a person acting under a physician's direction, as set forth in PL § 35.10(5), may also be applicable. If so, the jury should be charged accordingly.

Under our law, it is an affirmative defense to a prosecution for this crime that the defendant performed such conduct for a valid medical or dental purpose.

Under our law, the defendant has the burden of proving an affirmative defense by a preponderance of the evidence.

In determining whether the defendant has proven the affirmative defense by a preponderance of the evidence, you may consider the evidence presented by the People or by the defendant.

A preponderance of the evidence means the greater part of the believable and reliable evidence, not in terms of the number of witnesses or the length of time taken to present the evidence, but in terms of its quality and the weight and the convincing effect it has. For the affirmative defense to be proved by a preponderance of the evidence, the evidence that supports the affirmative defense must be of such convincing quality as to outweigh any evidence to the contrary.

If you find that the defendant has not proven the affirmative defense by a preponderance of the evidence, then, based upon your initial determination that the People have proven beyond a reasonable doubt the elements of Criminal Obstruction of Breathing or Blood Circulation, you must find the defendant guilty of that crime.

If you find that the defendant has proven the affirmative defense by a preponderance of the evidence, then you must find the defendant not guilty of Criminal Obstruction of Breathing or Blood Circulation.