

**Aggravated Strangulation
(Obstructing Breathing)
Penal Law § 121.13-a
(Committed on or after June 12, 2020)**

The (specify) count is Aggravated Strangulation.

Under our law, a person is guilty of aggravated strangulation when, being a police officer or a peace officer,¹ he or she, with intent to impede the normal breathing or circulation of the blood of another person,

Select appropriate alternative(s):

applies pressure on the throat or neck of such person [or]
blocks the nose or mouth of such person.

and thereby causes serious physical injury or death to another person.

The following terms used in that definition have a special meaning:

Note: If in issue, select the appropriate definition of “police officer” set forth in CPL 1.20(34); or, as the case may be, the definition of “peace officer” set forth in CPL 2.10.

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

SERIOUS PHYSICAL INJURY means physical injury which creates a substantial risk of death, or which causes death or serious and protracted disfigurement, protracted impairment

¹ At this point, the definition continues: “commits the crime of criminal obstruction of breathing or blood circulation.” This charge substitutes the definition of that crime.

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.

of health or protracted loss or impairment of the function of any bodily organ.³

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, each of the following four elements:

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

Select appropriate alternative(s):
applied pressure on the throat or neck [and/or]
blocked the nose or mouth of (specify);

2. That the defendant did so with the intent to impede the normal breathing or circulation of the blood of (specify);

3. That the defendant did thereby cause

Select appropriate alternative:
serious physical injury to (specify)
the death of (specify); and

4. That the defendant was then a [police officer / peace officer].

[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 each 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 any one or more of those elements, you must find the defendant not guilty of this crime.

³ Penal Law § 10.10(10).

[NOTE: If the affirmative defense of Penal Law § 121.14 applies, omit the final two paragraphs of the above charge, and substitute the following: ⁴

If you find that the People have not proven beyond a reasonable doubt any one or more 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 each of those elements, you must consider an affirmative defense the defendant has raised. Remember, if you have already found the defendant not guilty of Aggravated Strangulation you will not consider the affirmative defense.

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

⁴ 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.

reasonable doubt the elements of Aggravated Strangulation, 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 Aggravated Strangulation.