

It Is Your Right...

As the crime victim or family member you have the right to attend the sentencing and address the court through a victim impact statement, once the defendant is convicted.

What is a Victim Impact Statement?

Victim impact statements are voluntary written or oral information from crime victims, in their own words, about how a crime has affected them. Your impact statement may be read aloud to the court or a copy may be given to the Judge for review. Remember, the offender will read your impact statement at the time of sentencing. Do not include anything you do not want the offender to know.

The Purpose

The purpose of victim impact statements is to allow crime victims, during the decision-making process on sentencing or parole, to describe to the court or parole board the impact of the crime. A Judge may use information from these statements to help determine an offender's sentence.

Parent/Caregiver

This is your child's chance to express to the Judge how he/she feels about what happened. Sometimes feelings are hard to put into words. Your child may feel more comfortable writing a poem or drawing a picture to help the Judge understand how they feel.

What information should I include in my impact statement?

As you are preparing your impact statement, you may consider using the following questions to guide you. Remember that writing about your feelings may be very painful, so be sure to pace yourself and don't feel that you need to have it "perfect".

- How did the crime affect you and your family?
- What was the emotional impact of the crime on you and your family?
- How has the crime impacted your relationships, your ability to work, function and relate to others?
- What was the financial impact on you and your family?
- Do you have any recommendations to the court about disposition (sentencing) of this case?
- Is there anything else you would like to tell the court?

DO

- Direct your statement to the Judge. Be truthful and respectful.
- Do write out your statement in advance. Presenting a statement is emotional. You may think you know what you want to say but when the time comes, your emotions could take over and your train of thought is lost.
- Do write simply and descriptively. Your goal is to help the court understand the impact the crime has had on you.
- Do sign your victim impact statement and if your statement is handwritten it should be legible for the court to read.

DON'T

- Don't use unsuitable language. This can diminish the effectiveness of your statement.
- Don't get descriptive about any harm you may want to see inflicted on the defendant.
- Don't vent your anger toward the court or the offender. Your goal is to express your hurt and pain, not to blame.

