



## VICTIM IMPACT STATEMENT

A victim impact statement is a written or oral statement presented to the court at the defendant's sentencing. Victims or survivors have a legal right to inform the judge about how the crime has affected their lives and can ask that a defendant receive a particular sentence. For many people, standing in front of a courtroom reading a statement is an intimidating task. Our victim advocates, deputy district attorneys, your friends, and your family will be with you, supporting you. You will not be alone.

### WHAT TO INCLUDE IN A VICTIM IMPACT STATEMENT

As you are preparing your impact statement, you will want to ensure it contains the following elements:

- The physical and emotional impact the crime had on you and your family.
- The psychological effects on you and your family.
- The financial burden or hardship you and your family have endured.
- The explanation of medical and psychological treatment you needed because of the crime.
- The importance of restitution.
- Your opinion or suggestion on the sentence given.

No two victim impact statements are the same. You are not required to follow a particular format; however, using the key points listed above will help deliver a solid message to the defendant and the court.

### WHAT NOT TO INCLUDE IN A STATEMENT

As much as it will feel good to write vindictive words or speak what your heart feels in court, a calm, determined, practical and direct victim impact statement will have a more significant effect on all who read and listen.

Do not include derogatory or foul language in your statement, or hopes for harm to come to the defendant or his family, in life or prison.

Keep the focus on the impact to you and your family, not his or her (the defendant).

### WRITE IT TO THE JUDGE

Remember, you are reading this statement to the judge. Therefore, it must be respectful, understandable, and relatable to him or her sitting on the bench. Do not write the statement as if you are speaking to the defendant. For example:

#### WRONG:

You took away my belief that people are good.

#### CORRECT:

The defendant took away my belief that people are good.

### READING YOUR STATEMENT

Though we can give you several tips and you can rehearse many times, as humans, we can be easily overcome with emotion at critical times in our lives. With that being said, please try to remember these two vital points:

- Stay focused on reading to the judge, tuning everything out.
- Speak with confidence and clarity.

If you do not feel you can read the statement, speak with your victim advocate, who can help you find an alternative.

### NEED HELP WRITING THE STATEMENT?

A statement is most effective when coming from those directly affected by the actions of the defendant. This can be a difficult task, and we understand the emotional toll it can have on someone. Please reach out to your victim advocate who will help you write the statement. Some times, taking your thoughts and putting pen to paper is a tough thing to do. We'll help you through it.