

## WRITING A VICTIM IMPACT STATEMENT

The Victim Impact Statement is presented after a defendant has pled guilty or has been found guilty of a crime at trial and the case has moved to the sentencing phase. A Victim Impact Statement is your opportunity to address the Judge and describe to him or her how the crime has impacted your life. This statement is one of the most effective means of communicating the voice of the victim in the criminal justice process. It can also be a step in your healing process. Many victims and their families have found this to be an empowering experience.

Only you know best how to describe the effects the crime had on you and those close to you. While it may be difficult to put into words the impact the crime has had on you, it may be helpful to organize your statement by the emotional, physical and financial effects as it applies to your situation. The following are some ideas to get you started:

*If you would like to describe the **emotional** impact of this crime to the Judge, you may want to consider:*

- ❖ Has the crime affected your lifestyle or those close to you?
- ❖ What are some of the feelings you have been experienced?
- ❖ Have your feelings about yourself or your life changed since the crime?
- ❖ Has your ability to relate to others changed?
- ❖ Do you avoid going to certain places or have you stopped doing things you enjoyed?
- ❖ Have you had to consult with a professional counselor/therapist as a result of the crime?

*If you or your family members were injured, you may wish to tell the Judge about the **physical** impact of this crime:*

- ❖ Describe the physical injuries you or your family members suffered.
- ❖ Describe how long these injuries lasted or how long they are expected to last.
- ❖ Describe any medical treatment you have received or expect to receive in the future.
- ❖ Describe how these injuries have changed or affected your lifestyle.

*If you suffered **financial** loss as a result of the crime, you may wish to:*

- ❖ Discuss how this crime has affected your ability to earn a living.
- ❖ Describe examples of expenses you have paid or owe including medical bills or supplies; eyeglasses or hearing aid replacement or repair; funeral expenses; lost, stolen or damaged property; the repair or replacement of door locks and security devices; counseling/therapy expenses; and lost wages from work.

Once your letter has been submitted in writing, you may decide whether to read it aloud in Court, have someone read it aloud for you or submit it in writing only. The Office of Victim Witness Advocacy can assist you with submitting your statement and can review your letter. In addition, an Advocate is also available to answer any questions you may have and can provide you with the name of the presiding Judge, the defendant's name and the prosecutor file number to be included in your statement.

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