



U.S. Department of Justice

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WHAT VICTIMS SHOULD KNOW PREPARING A VICTIM IMPACT STATEMENT FOR SENTENCING

The impact of a crime is unique to each victim. How a crime may affect you emotionally, financially, or physically depends on many factors. Before you begin to write a victim impact statement, or prepare a verbal statement, take time to develop your thoughts about how best to explain your personal situation to someone who may not know all the particulars of what happened to you. Your impact statement will be submitted to the court, as part of the presentence report being prepared for the U.S. District Court Judge who will impose sentence upon the defendant. In addition to the Assistant U.S. Attorney receiving your victim impact statement, a copy of it will be provided to the U.S. Probation Officer who is writing the presentence report for the judge. A copy of your victim impact statement will be shared with the defendant's attorney. Victim impact statements submitted directly to the U.S. Attorney's Office or to the U.S. Probation Office as part of the presentence report process are not posted as public documents on the court's case docketing system.

Your impact statement should be written in your own words. Explain the type and magnitude of the crime's impact on you. Be specific when describing the impact of the defendant's criminal actions. Your written statement may be as lengthy as you wish, but it should be to the point. You may hand-write or type the statement, and you may use your own format. It does not have to be submitted on the form provided to you. However, it must be signed and dated.

If financial loss was a direct or proximate result of the harm caused, state the amount of loss and describe its impact. It's helpful for the court to know if and how the financial loss has impacted or will impact your financial security given your age and life circumstances. Unless you previously submitted written documentation to support the loss amount, attach supporting documentation. If some of the loss has been recovered or reimbursed, provide that information.

A defendant has the opportunity to submit information about his or her personal history and characteristics, including information about circumstances affecting him or her that may be helpful to the judge in determining the sentence, or helpful in determining appropriate correctional treatment. It is not uncommon for a defendant's submission to the court to include a request for leniency, an explanation of what led to his or her criminal actions, or an explanation about how he or she may have changed since the crime was committed.

Submitting a victim impact statement is the crime victim's opportunity to be part of the sentencing process. If you have questions about submitting a victim impact statement, or a victim's right to be reasonably heard, call the U.S. Attorney's Office Victim Assistance Staff assigned to the case.

**Victim Assistance Staff
617-748-3100**