United States Department of Justice

INFORMATION FOR WITNESSES

United States Attorney
Northern District of Florida

INTRODUCTION

Victims of crime and others who have knowledge about court matters are often required to testify at a trial or other court proceedings. The federal justice system cannot function without the participation of witnesses. Complete cooperation and truthful testimony of all witnesses are essential to the determination of the facts of the case. The United States Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Florida would like to thank you for your cooperation and service as a witness.

As a witness, you may have questions regarding your involvement in the case for which you have been subpoenaed. The case agent or the Assistant United States Attorney assigned to the case will be able to answer many of these questions.

You may also have questions regarding witness fees, transportation, directions to the courthouse, and other relevant details pertaining to your service as a witness. The Victim Witness Coordinator at the U.S. Attorney's Office is available to assist you with these questions. The name and number of the Victim Witness Coordinator is listed in the back of this brochure.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

☞ ***Will I be compensated for the time spent as a witness?***
You will receive $40.00 for each day you are required to be in court or attend a pretrial interview, including travel days. You may also be entitled to other compensation as detailed on the *Witness Instructions and Information Sheet*, Form OBD-2, which is attached to your subpoena. Upon completion of your testimony, you will complete and sign a witness voucher which will detail the fees and compensation due to you.

☞ ***How long will I be in court?***
Due to unforeseen circumstances which may occur in court cases, it is impossible to predict how long you will be needed. Please be flexible. There is a good possibility that you will have to wait a number of hours before you are called to testify. You may bring reading materials (**no newspapers**) or something else to occupy your time while you wait.

☞ ***What should I do with my children?***
Try to find a relative, friend, or neighbor to care for your children while you are in court. In some instances, child care expenses may be reimbursed. Contact the Victim Witness Coordinator **prior to incurring these expenses** for further guidance and information.

☞ ***What will happen if I fail to appear?***
You may be cited and arrested for contempt of court.

☞ ***Where do I go?***
Your subpoena indicates when, where, and in what courtroom the proceedings will take place. However, prior to the scheduled court date, if you have not been contacted by someone in the U.S. Attorney's Office, you should call the contact name listed on your subpoena to receive updated information concerning the court proceedings and/or maps to the courthouse. You may call collect.

☞ ***Can I watch the court proceedings prior to my testimony?***
In most court proceedings, witnesses are not allowed in the courtroom until they are called to testify. You will be directed to a witness waiting room and someone will call you into the courtroom when it is your turn to testify. You should not leave the courthouse until you have been excused by the Court and/or attorneys in this case.

☞ ***What if I am contacted by the opposing counsel?***
You have the right to decide whether you want to discuss the case with the opposing counsel. You can decline to speak to anyone prior to testifying. However, you will be required to **truthfully** answer any questions asked of you in court, as well as at any time you are questioned by the parties of this case. If anyone approaches you concerning this case, do not be afraid to ask for identification.

☞ ***How do I dress for my court appearance?***
A neat, clean, conservative appearance is very important for court (no hats, shorts, etc). Dress in the same manner as you would for an important business meeting or public gathering (i.e., church). Never chew gum while on the witness stand.

☞ ***What about my employer and/or school officials?***
Employers cannot retaliate against you because of your absence while attending court proceedings. If requested, the U.S. Attorney's Office can contact your employer or school officials on your behalf to explain your responsibility as a subpoenaed witness.

☞ ***What if I am threatened due to my cooperation in this case?***
Threatening or intimidating a witness is a federal crime which is taken very seriously. In emergency situations, **dial 911** right away. In any case, contact the case agent, Assistant U.S. Attorney, and/or the Victim Witness Coordinator to report any harassment or threats.

☞ ***Who can I contact if I have other questions or concerns?***
The Victim Witness Coordinator will be glad to assist in any way.

GENERAL INFORMATION

- Cell phones, computers, pagers, and other electronic devices are not allowed in the courtroom area. Please leave them at home. Otherwise, the Court Security will hold onto them while you testify.
- Food or drink is not allowed in the courtroom area.
- If you have a medical condition or have special needs, please advise our office prior to your testimony so we can make every effort to accommodate your needs.
- Inform our office of any scheduling conflicts during the week of your testimony, including changes in your phone numbers.
- Please review all relevant documents before testifying or discussing the case with prosecutors prior to trial.
- During the course of the proceeding, jurors may be present in the same public areas as you. If you recognize a juror, do not speak to the juror and avoid close encounters (i.e., sharing an elevator).
- Once the proceedings begin, do not discuss the case with anyone except the attorneys for either party. This prohibition also includes discussion of the case with fellow witnesses.
- Be polite and deferential in court. Avoid losing your temper.
- Listen closely and carefully to the questions asked of you. Never answer a question that you do not understand. Do not be embarrassed to ask for questions to be repeated.
- During interviews and your testimony, never allow anyone to put words in your mouth. Always tell your own story.
- Speak loudly and clearly and try to be heard by the farthest juror. Remember that your words are being recorded, so avoid making gestures or nodding your head.
- During questioning, one of the attorneys in the courtroom may object to a particular question. If this happens, do not answer the question until the Court has ruled on the objection. If you become confused, the Judge or questioner will instruct you.
- Above all else, **ALWAYS TELL THE TRUTH**, whether or not you think it will help or hurt either party.

United States District Court
for the Northern District of Florida

Tallahassee Division
United States Courthouse
111 North Adams Street
Tallahassee, FL 32301

Pensacola Division
United States Courthouse
1 North Palafox Street
Pensacola, FL 32501

Panama City Division
United States Courthouse
20 West Government Street
Panama City, FL 32401

Gainesville Division
United States Courthouse
401 South East 1st Avenue
Gainesville, FL 32601

(Maps to the courthouses are available upon request)

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for the Northern District of Florida

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Gainesville, Florida 32601-3330
(352) 378-0996

30 West Government Street
Panama City, FL 32401
(850) 785-3495

Assistant U.S. Attorney's Name

Victim-Witness Coordinator's Name