Make It Meaningful

Your right to be heard is a very important right and one which deserves serious consideration. Defendants have a right to make any statements they deem appropriate to the Judge prior to the imposition of the sentence. This may include a plea for leniency, an explanation as to what led to their actions or how they have changed since the crime. The defendant's attorney may also make persuasive remarks regarding sentencing. When you exercise your right to be heard at sentencing, this is an opportunity for the Judge to see the other side of the story and provides for some balance in the sentencing process. Many victims find this to be a very helpful experience. While we can't tell you what to say, please feel free to contact the Victim-Witness Staff to ask any questions.



OTHER OPTIONS:

Not everyone is comfortable with speaking in front of people, especially about something very personal and in front of the defendant. Travel and time restraints may also make it difficult for you to come and tell your story live in court. You still have the option of writing an impact letter or statement. This is another way for you to let the judge know what your concerns are and the affect of the crime on you. In most circumstances, this statement will be provided to counsel for the defendant and can become part of the permanent record. While we cannot write your statement for you, our office will assist you and help answer questions.

NEED HELP ?

There are things that the Victim-Witness Staff can do to make this process a little easier for you. If you have never been in a courtroom before, it may be helpful for you to see the room you will be in and the surroundings, as well as who will be present at the sentencing, explained to you. This can be especially helpful for a young victim. If you need other assistance to make your appearance possible, contact the Victim-Witness Staff below for assistance.

UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

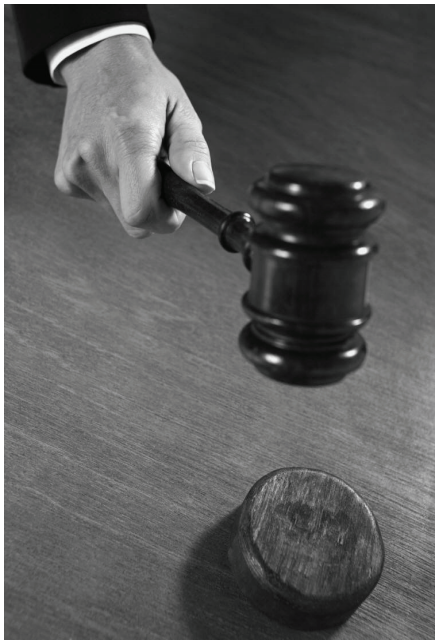
Veronica Criste, Victim Witness Coordinator
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501 Las Vegas Blvd. South, Ste 1100
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Exercising Your Right To Be Heard

UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

District of Nevada



DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

The Impact Of The Crime

The impact of a crime is different for every victim and for every crime. How it affects you and those around you is also unique. Your concerns about how the case proceeds and about the custodial status of the defendant are also going to vary depending on the circumstances surrounding your victimization. Under federal law, you have the right to be reasonably heard at any public proceedings involving release, plea or sentencing. Your purpose for addressing the Court at these different proceedings may vary, but there are certain tips that generally apply. We most commonly see victims exercising their right to be heard during sentencing, but should you choose to participate in this manner at a release or plea hearing, you may want to contact the Victim-Witness Staff and find out more information on how those hearings proceed.

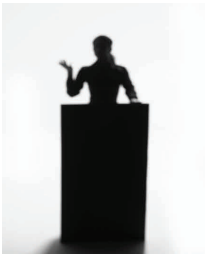


Addressing the Court

Whenever you are addressing the Court, it is important for you to remember that this is a statement to the Court. The enclosed tips are here to help you formulate your thoughts prior to addressing the Court.

Tips for Addressing the Court

- **Let someone in the prosecuting office know of your desire to speak.** They can make this process much easier for you and can make sure that the Court knows of your desire to speak.
- **Prepare what you want to say in advance.** Take some time to think about what you want to say. You can write your statement out ahead of time and read it or make notes on points you want to cover. Do what makes you most comfortable.
- **Make your comments to the point and speak clearly into the microphone.**
- **Speak in your own words.** Your statement should accurately reflect the impact of the crime on you.



- **You are addressing the Judge, not the defendant.** You should keep your eyes towards the bench and your comments should not be directed toward the defendant.
- **A brief statement about your financial losses may be beneficial to the Court.**
- **Inform the Court of any concerns you may have about your safety or retaliation.**
- **Your behavior should be appropriate to the seriousness of the proceedings.**
- **Feel free to bring a friend or family member for support.**
- **There is no dress code.** However, most people will wear a suit, dress or dress slacks. Generally, people do not wear jeans.
- **Your statements are being recorded and are part of the permanent record.** There may be others, including media, in the courtroom.
- **Do not exaggerate and *always tell the truth*.**

Questions to Consider

- The Court is interested in hearing how the crime has affected you. What are the emotional impact and physical affects of the crime? Has it affected your ability to work or to do other normal daily activities?
- How has the criminal act impacted your future, your dreams and your relationships?
- If you are speaking on behalf of a child, how has this crime changed the child's relationship with family and friends? How has it affected school performance?
- Are you or your loved ones experiencing nightmares or other symptoms of emotional stress? Have you been or will you continue to be under the care of a medical professional for treatment? If so, what kind of treatment and for how long?