



## VICTIM IMPACT STATEMENTS

The Constitution of the State of Connecticut affords crime victims with specific rights to participate throughout the criminal justice process. Among the rights of crime victims is the right to make a statement to the court at sentencing.

### What is the purpose of a victim impact statement?

The purpose of the statement is to inform the court how the crime has impacted your life and the life of your family, emotionally, physically and financially.

This statement provides input to the court as the court determines the appropriate sentence to impose on the defendant. A victim impact statement submitted to the court will become a part of the court record and the defendant's permanent file. Therefore, the statement is available to the judge, prosecutor, defense attorney, defendant, the Department of Correction, the Office of Adult Probation and the Board of Pardons and Paroles.

A victim impact statement should contain information regarding:

- The crime committed against you and the impact on you and your loved ones.
- Any concerns you have about your safety or the safety of your family.
- Any financial losses you have suffered because of the crime.
- Changes in your life because of crime; and
- Your opinion as to the appropriate sentence, treatment and services and supervision of the defendant.

Submitting a victim impact statement does not negate your right to address the court in person. If you need assistance in the preparation of your victim impact statement, contact your Victim Services Advocate at the court.

### Preparing your victim impact statement

Writing a victim impact statement can be hard and stressful. It may be tough to explain how the crime has affected you and your family. Take your time, even if it takes a few days or weeks to

finish. Here are some tips to help you think about what to say in your statement. Answer only the questions that matter to you and add any extra information you think the court should know.

If you would like to share photographs or a video presentation during the sentencing hearing as part of your victim impact statement, be sure to inform the state's attorney's office, your victim services advocate and/or the court to ensure the proper equipment is available in court at the time of the sentencing.

There is no specified limit on how long your statement can be, however, to be most effective, you should try to keep your statement focused on the impact of the crime and appropriate sentence of the defendant. If you are submitting a victim impact statement AND you plan to address the court in person during the sentencing hearing, you may choose to read your statement, speak from your heart or have another person deliver your statement on your behalf. It is your choice and your right as a crime victim.

While addressing the court in person, take your time. If you are overcome by emotion, take a breath. Speak directly to the court, not the defendant. Your input is important to the court so that the court can appropriately sentence the defendant and hold the defendant accountable for the harm caused to you and your family.

#### **Emotional Impact:**

- How has the crime affected your daily life and those close to you?
- How has the crime affected your feelings about your future and those close to you?
- How has the crime affected the way you interact with other people?
- Has the crime caused you to seek counseling or other support?
- How has the crime affected your feelings of safety and security?

#### **Physical Impact:**

- Describe the physical injuries you sustained because of the crime?
- How long did your injuries last or are expected to last?
- What medical treatment have you received or are expected to receive?
- How have your injuries affected your daily life?
- What barriers do you face because of your injuries?

#### **Financial Impact:**

- Did you lose time at work because of the crime?
- Did you have property damage because of the crime?
- Do you have medical expenses that were not covered by insurance because of the crime?
- Did you have property stolen that was not returned to you?
- Did you have any other expenses that resulted from the crime?
  - Were there costs associated with the crime scene clean up?
  - Did you purchase a home security system because of the crime?

- Did you have to relocate because of the crime?
- Did you have expenses to repair your credit?

Crime victims may apply to the [Office of Victim Services \(OVS\)](#) for reimbursement for certain expenses related to the crime. The Victim Compensation Program covers medical/dental expenses; funeral expenses; loss of support in homicide cases; lost wages resulting from injury; crime scene clean-up; and counseling services. Reimbursement for the above expenses is limited and may begin AFTER all other collateral sources have been exhausted. If you were reimbursed for the above expenses through the victim compensation program, you CANNOT seek restitution from the defendant for those same expenses.

Restitution CANNOT be ordered for mental anguish or pain and suffering. You CANNOT seek restitution from the defendant for expenses you are also seeking by the filing of a civil lawsuit or small claims action.

If you are seeking restitution from the defendant, you are required to provide documentation to substantiate your loss. Examples of documentation include:

- Receipts
- Appraisals
- Photographs of stolen items
- Estimates for repair
- Denial Statement by insurance company
- Insurance deductible statement

### **Sentencing:**

It is important for you to understand the consequences applicable to the defendant. Whether the defendant is accepting a plea agreement or has been convicted after a trial, you will need to know the following so that you can give your opinion regarding an appropriate sentence:

- What charges has the defendant been convicted of?
- What is the maximum incarceration exposure to the defendant?
- Will the defendant be eligible for early release?
- What is the state's attorney/prosecutor's sentence recommendation?
- Will the defendant pay any other fines/fees?

Once you understand the sentencing boundaries, consider the following:

- Do you feel a period of incarceration is appropriate?
- Do you feel the defendant should be supervised after his/her release from incarceration?
- What conditions of supervision do you feel are appropriate?
  - Community service requirement
  - Maintain full-time employment or attend school

- Mental health evaluation/counseling/treatment
- Substance abuse evaluation/counseling/treatment
- Anger management
- Letter of apology
- An order of no-contact
- Restitution for out-of-pocket expenses related to the crime
- Request a Written Order of Restitution (when no supervision is ordered)
- Request a Standing Criminal Protective Order (domestic violence, harassment, sexual assault and stalking cases)

Each individual statement is unique and enables victims to share the emotional, physical, and financial impact they have experienced. The judge takes these statements into consideration during sentencing.

### Submitting your Victim Impact Statement

- Include your name, the case name (State vs. Defendant), date, and court location.
- Submit copies of your statement to the victim advocate assisting you and the state attorney/prosecutor handling the case.
- For questions or more information, please contact the Office of the Victim Advocate (OVA).

State of Connecticut  
Office of The Victim Advocate  
505 Hudson Street • Hartford, CT 06106  
Phone: 860-550-6632 • Fax: 860-560-7065 • [www.ct.gov/ova](http://www.ct.gov/ova)