

Kern County District Attorney's Office

Victim Services Unit



Victim Impact Statement

What is a Victim Impact Statement?

As a crime victim, you have the opportunity to prepare a Victim Impact Statement to describe how this crime affected you and others close to you. This statement allows for you to write about the physical, emotional, and financial effects of this crime, as well as any other changes in your life you may have experienced. If the defendant takes a plea or is found guilty after trial, your statement will help the judge understand how this crime has affected you and those close to you.

You do not have to write a Victim Impact Statement. However, it may be helpful to the judge when he or she decides what sentence the defendant should receive and/or any expenses the defendant may have to pay you for losses you have incurred because of this crime (contact your Victim Advocate about your right to restitution). Please keep in mind that this letter will be addressed to the Judge, not the defendant.

Your statement will become an official court document after it is given to the court and will become part of the defendant's permanent file. All parties involved will be provided a copy of your statement including the Prosecutor, Judge, Probation, Defense, and prison officials.

Who can write a statement to the court?

Anyone who wishes to write a statement to the court may do so. There are usually many people in a victim's life who are also affected by the crime. However, there is a limitation on who can make a verbal statement at the sentencing. Contact your Victim Advocate to see who will be allowed to make a verbal statement to the court.

What do I include in my Victim Impact Statement?

The following suggestions are offered only as a guide. Feel free to write in your own words how this crime has affected you and those close to you. Include in your statement the following:

- the emotional impact of the crime on you and those close to you
- the physical effects of this crime
- the effects of the crime on your ability to work or do any of the things you normally do, such as going to school, running a household or any other activities you normally perform or enjoy
- how you feel about the plea bargain (if applicable)
- what you think would be an appropriate sentence in this case
- financial losses (ask your Victim Advocate about your right to restitution)
- anything else you feel the court may want to know about the case

Remember, this is your opportunity to have your voice heard.

If you would like to provide a Victim Impact Statement at the time of sentencing, need assistance with writing your statement or have any questions, please contact your Victim Advocate.