

Gary Farha

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Victim Witness Program

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VICTIM STATEMENT SUGGESTIONS

Throughout the criminal justice process, the court does not hear from the crime victim(s) unless they are subpoenaed to testify. Even if testimony is provided, the court may not fully understand how the crime has affected the victim(s). That is why the Victim Impact Statement is so important. It provides the victim of a violent crime with a voice to let the court know in their own words, how the defendant's actions affected him or her and continue to affect him or her. The Victim Impact Statement can be a powerful and an affective tool. It can give the victim(s) a step towards their healing journey.

The following are suggestions for your consideration as you prepare your Victim Impact Statement for the Court. These are only suggestions; only you can best describe what effects this violent crime has had on your life. You may find it helpful to organize your thoughts into categories such as those listed below. You may write a narrative, including the categories that apply to you.

At the sentencing hearing you can read your statement out loud or have it read silently by the Judge. It can also be read out loud by someone else of your choosing. A copy of the statement will be provided to the defense attorney and the defendant. Another copy will be included in the court record. How your statement will be presented is a question that you can discuss with the Assistant State's Attorney or the Victim Witness Coordinator.

PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS VS: _____

COURT DOCKET # _____

SENTENCING DATE: _____

NAME OF VICTIM: _____

PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN BY: _____

Writing a Victim Impact Statement and submitting it to the Court lets you:

- Tell the Judge what hardships and life changes this crime has caused you and your immediate loved ones.
- Inform the defendant what life changes his or her actions have caused for you & your family.
- Have an opportunity to be heard without being cross examined by the defense attorney.

Spend some time thinking about what you want to say; it may be difficult for you to sort out your thoughts. Remember, your statement can lose the impact with too many details. You will never be able to tell all that you have gone through, so focus on key experiences.

Categories of life changes to consider:

Physical Injuries – If you received any injuries, either major or minor, describe them briefly along with any treatment that you received. Also include the length of treatment and any long lasting physical changes.

Counseling – Many people who are violent crime victims participate in counseling. Share general information about the care, what type of counseling, and your length of involvement. If you are still in counseling, state that as well. It is not necessary for you to reveal personal information about yourself. If your family members underwent counseling as well, it is appropriate to mention that.

Emotional Effects – These might include nightmares, flashbacks, inability to sleep or eat, generalized fear and anxiety, intense anger, and depression.

Changes in Daily Activity – These may include inability to concentrate at work or school or changes in family relationships. It may also be a change in daily routine. Please use specific examples. If you have moved into a new residence because of this crime, please explain why.

Financial Losses – Please include general medical expenses and/or property loss totals, and references to lost wages, in relation to the crime. This is not the place to ask the court to order restitution for your losses, but it does help to demonstrate another way the crime has impacted your life. Pain and suffering compensation cannot be sought in a criminal case. You may seek private legal counsel for this type of compensation if you choose.

You need to sign the document so the Court knows this statement is from you. We included one page for the Victim Impact Statement however, you may attach additional pages if needed. A copy of your statement will be given to the defense attorney, but he or she does not have the right to question you.

If you have Questions as you work on your statement, please feel free to call Trisha Hubbard at 217-277-2225 or email thubbard@co.adams.il.us for assistance.

