

Writing a Victim Impact Statement

By Ash

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A victim impact statement (VIS) is a statement written by the victim of a crime, describing how the crime has affected their life or how it has made them feel. In most countries, the laws require a VIS to be taken into account during a person's sentencing. The VIS is your chance to have your say and to let the judge and others know how the crime has impacted your life.

Make sure that you remain in contact with those in charge of your case so that you can be aware of deadlines. If you do not submit your VIS on time, it may not be taken into account during the sentencing.

Making the choice

In most cases, you are not obligated to write a victim impact statement. The choice is entirely up to you. Many survivors like having an opportunity to tell the court how this crime has affected their life. You may not necessarily get a chance to talk about these details during a trial. Keep in mind that the accused will likely have an opportunity to read your statement, and this prospect can make some people nervous. Do not let this keep you from having your say if you decide that you would like to write a VIS.

Tips for writing

Always check with the prosecutor or your victim's advocate before beginning your VIS. The rules concerning these statements vary greatly from region to region, and it is important to ensure that you know what you can and cannot include. For example, some places allow you to include your thoughts on sentencing, while other places forbid you from talking about it. By getting these rules before you start writing, you can cut down on writing time, and help ensure that your statement is properly taken into account.

You might start by making a list of the ways that this crime has hurt you or changed your life, and then elaborate on these points. For example, if you say that your personality has changed, describe how. If you say that the attack has affected your ability to do your job, describe why

this is the case.

Some jurisdictions may have specific forms to fill out. Speak to your victim's advocate or prosecutor to find out whether there are specific questions you need to answer. For example, the Government of Ontario provides a form with three sections to fill out:

- Emotional loss
- Physical injuries or disabilities
- Financial impact

If you are provided a form to fill out, make sure that you answer all the questions and provide all of the information requested.

Focusing your statement

Remember that the victim impact statement is about YOU, and how this crime has affected YOU. Try not to focus on your perpetrator. The judge wants to know what kinds of effects the crime has had on your life, and he or she will take that into account in sentencing. The judge is not looking to hear your opinions or criticisms of the accused. As tempting as it may be to speak your mind, try to avoid letting your emotions interfere with your statement.

In addition, avoid discussing what happened during the crime. These details should have already been covered during the trial, and will no longer help your case. This is your opportunity to talk about how those details have changed your life.

More information on victim impact statements can be found here:

[National Center for Victims of Crime](#) (US)

[Courtprep](#) (Canada)

[Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime](#) (Canada)

[About Victim Personal Statements](#) (UK)

[Lawlink](#) (Australia)

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