

Creating a Victim Impact Statement

The impact of crime is different for every victim. As a victim, you have the right to be heard. Your right to be heard is very important and deserves serious consideration. Typically, victims address the court prior to sentencing. You will be notified of other times in the process in which you may address the court. Not everyone is comfortable speaking in front of people about something personal, especially in front of the defendant. Travel, work, and time constraints may also make it difficult for you to come and make a statement to the court. You have the option of writing a Victim Impact Statement or letter. In most circumstances, this statement or letter will be provided to counsel for the defendant and will become part of the permanent record. While we cannot write the letter for you, we can assist and help answer questions

Questions to Consider

- Has the crime affected your ability to work or to do other normal daily activities?
- Has the crime impacted your future, your relationships, your family, school or work performance?
- Are you or your loved ones experiencing symptoms of emotional stress? Nightmares? Are you under medical or professional care? If so, what kind of treatment and for how long?

Tips for Addressing the Court

- Prepare what you want to say in advance. Remember you are addressing the Judge, not the defendant.
- A brief statement about your financial loss is helpful.
- Inform the courts of any concerns you may have about your safety.
- Bring a friend or family member for support.

Services

The Victim Witness Assistance Program provides the following services to victims and witnesses to crime:

INFORMATION about the status of your court case.

NOTIFICATION of any court proceedings.

EXPLANATION of the criminal justice system.

ORIENTATION to the courtroom setting.

ACCOMPANIMENT to and from the courtroom.

MORAL SUPPORT in the courtroom.

ADVOCACY with any problems you may have as a result of the crime itself or court appearances.

REFERRAL to social service agencies, counselors, and others who can assist you.

EMPLOYER INTERVENTION to explain time missed from work due to required court appearances.

PRIVATE WAITING AREA prior to your court appearance.

ASSISTANCE in completing your Victim Impact Statement.

PAROLE NOTIFICATION so you can know when an inmate is expected to be released from prison if applicable.

This project is supported by a Federal VOCA Grant awarded by the Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs and administered by the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council.

Crime Victims' Compensation Program

The Georgia Crime Victims' Compensation Program can assist victims of violent crime with crime related expenses. Assistance is available in the following categories:

- Medical bills and counseling expenses.
- Lost wages, loss of support.
- Funeral expenses and crime scene clean up.

To review eligibility requirements and request an application, please contact 770-479-1488 and ask to speak with someone in the Victim Witness Assistance Program or visit:

<http://crimevictimscomp.ga.gov>

Cherokee County Area Resources

Anna Crawford Children's Center 678-504-6388

Cherokee Family Violence Center 770-479-1804

YWCA of Northwest Georgia 770-427-2902

Department of Family & Children Services

770-720-3610

Health Department 770-345-7371

United Way Helpline 211

24 Hour Crisis Numbers

Family Violence Hotline and

Emergency Shelter 770-479-1703

Sexual Assault Hotline 770-427-3390

MADD 888-833-6033

Suicide and Crisis Counseling 800-784-2433

DIAL 911 FOR ALL EMERGENCIES

Office of the District Attorney
Blue Ridge Judicial Circuit
Cherokee County, Georgia



A guide for victims and
witnesses of crime from
District Attorney

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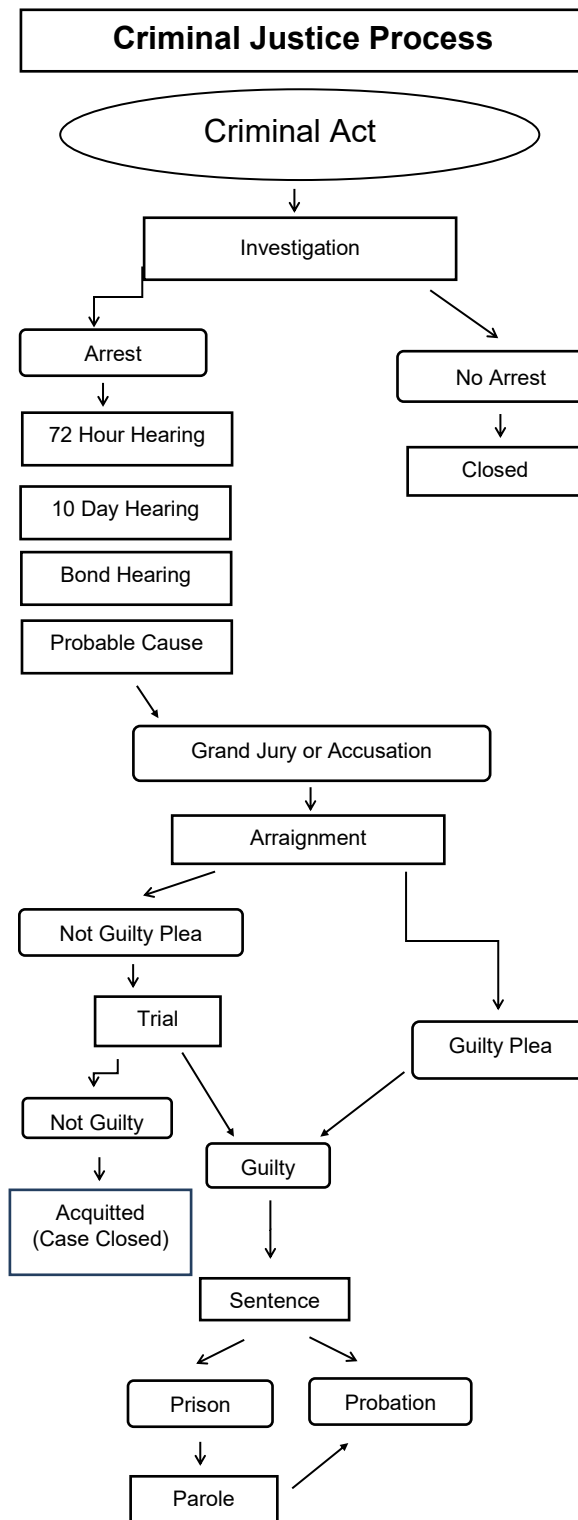
No one expects to be a victim of or a witness to crime, but it does happen. Every year many people are victimized by violent crimes. If you or someone you know is affected by crime, you may feel shocked, anger, disbelief, or shame, and may also experience feelings of helplessness or confusion.

The Victim Witness Assistance Program was established by the Office of the District Attorney to offer crime victims and witnesses support during the aftermath of a crime and guidance through the criminal justice system.

Your knowledge of a crime as a victim or witness is very important to the criminal justice system. No crime can be solved without the help of victims and witnesses.

By your willingness to get involved, you are working with other citizens, members of law enforcement, and the courts to reduce crime and ensure the safety of the entire community.

Most importantly, your cooperation and assistance could prevent others from being victimized. We look forward to working with you to ensure justice is served.



Frequent Criminal Justice Terms

Indictment: After reviewing all of the information of a criminal case, the Prosecutor determines what charges are appropriate in order to proceed with the criminal case and obtain a conviction in trial. The charges are then listed into a document called an indictment. The indictment is the charging document used to present the case to the Grand Jury. The indictment lists each offense and provides a brief explanation for each offense.

Grand Jury: The Grand Jury is a panel of citizens who review the facts of the case to determine if the case should be bound over for trial. The Grand Jury is a closed door private process and only includes the Prosecutor and one witness who present the facts of the case to the Grand Jury. If the Grand Jury determines the case meets the requirements to continue with prosecution, the indictment will be true billed and will be scheduled for an arraignment and placed on a jury trial calendar. If the Grand Jury does not consider the case worthy of continued prosecution they will return a no-bill on the case, and the case will be terminated.

Arraignment: The defendant is presented with the indictment listing the formal charges against him or her and either pleads guilty or not guilty on the face of the indictment and signs. It is typical for an offender to plead not guilty at the time of the arraignment and for the case to be bound over to the trial calendar.

Trial: After arraignment, a case will stay on a jury trial calendar until it is reached for trial. When a case is on the trial calendar, if you are a witness to the case, you will receive subpoenas for trial each month. There is a telephone number and email on the subpoena for you to place yourself on call and not appear until you have been personally contacted by a representative from the District Attorney's Office and notified this case is going to trial.

Plea/Plea Negotiation: It is typical for the Defense Attorney and Prosecutor to meet and discuss the best possible way to resolve the case without trial. Typically, the Prosecutor and Defense Attorney will review the charges and evidence in the case to work towards a sentence recommendation to give to the judge.

Crime Victims' Bill of Rights

Victims of crime in Georgia have rights!

Below are some of the rights you have as a crime victim. The entire listing can be located in O.C.G.A. 17-17-1 through 17-17-16.

- Notification of legal procedures and of victims rights.
- Notification of the defendant's arrest, release from custody*, and any court proceeding in which release is considered.
- Express opinion on disposition of accused's case.
- Have a separate victim's waiting area.
- Notice of the availability of victim compensation and community based victim service programs.
- Designate a family member to act in place of a physically disabled adult.

*To check the custody status or register for notification upon an offender's release from custody, please contact the Cherokee County Sheriff's Office VINE Program:

1-800-501-0367
 or visit www.vinelink.com

It is **YOUR RESPONSIBILITY** to inform the Office of the District Attorney of any changes in your contact information.

Please contact 770-479-1488 to provide updates.