

Helpful tips when writing an Impact Statement

Focus on the impact of the crime on the victim and their loved ones, not on the offender. The offender will or has already had their "day in court." Use this opportunity to describe to the court the human impact the crime has had on the victim, the victim's family, friends, colleagues and community. In particular, make sure to describe the physical, emotional, financial, social and spiritual "costs" of the crime.

Write about all the ways this crime affected you or the victim, family members, friends and the community. The effects could be financial, emotional, physical, social or a combination. Describe the impact in detail. For example, if the crime affected you psychologically, explain specific ways. When you are describing financial impact, tell the judge about any incurred expenses, such as medical and hospital bills, loss of income and funeral expenses. Mention how physical injuries impacted you, such as not being able to do the same job or how your mobility is affected, whether you are able to live on your own and incurred pain and suffering.

Try not to rehash too many details of the crime in the Victim Impact Statement. The court will hear or has already heard that information; the judge will have a copy of the Probable Cause Statement (description of what happened). In addition, be careful about making recommendations to the judge or jury about how to sentence the offender. If the victim feels strongly about making a recommendation, keep it brief. ***Again, the focus of the Victim Impact Statement should be on the victim -- and if the statement is a moving testimony to how the crime has changed the life of the victim or the victim's loved ones, the court will hear that message loud and clear.***

Tell the judge how the crime or incident affected your future. Explain what is different for you. This could involve how physical or psychological injuries continue to impact you. Describe how your life will be without a loved one. Mention how employment may be different or limited and how financial limitations may impact your future.

Your victim impact letter becomes an official court document after it is received by the court and is a permanent addition to the defendant's criminal file. Your statement can be read by the prosecutor, the judge, the defendant, the defendant's attorney and the offender's probation officer. Prison and parole officials may read your letter in the future in the event that the defendant is sentenced to a prison term.

Do not include your address and phone number on the victim impact statement, because the offender will be able to read it.

*****At an Initial Appearance in the County Court, the Judge is not determining responsibility or guilt; this is a time set to determine if the Defendant is to be Released and what Release Conditions would need to be met. (City of Phoenix charges can be heard and resolved at the Initial Appearance)*****

Few crimes are eligible for NO BOND, these charges would include Murder, or certain Sex crimes.

Other NO BOND charges include crimes that were committed while already on release for a felony charge, or by a person believed to be in the country illegally.

Types of Releases:

- Own Recognizance (sometimes referred to as O/R) is to be released on "a promise" to appear.
- Bond Set involves depositing a sum of money, sometimes in cash or a Surety Bond (using a Bail Bond Agent).
- Supervised Release (PSA-Pretrial Services) is essentially like having a probation officer while you are still awaiting court dates. There are many different restrictions to include, but are not limited to:
 - Drug and alcohol testing
 - Electronic monitoring
 - Curfew
 - House arrest