

ERIC R. LINHARDT, DISTRICT ATTORNEY VICTIM/WITNESS HANDBOOK

FROM THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY

The District Attorney's Office is committed to helping victims of crime and vigorously protecting their rights. Our Victim Witness Assistance Program's mission is to alleviate the trauma and devastating effects of crime on the lives of victims and their families. Our Victim Advocates guide victims through the court process, help victims receive restitution, provide crisis intervention and provide referrals to counseling and community services.

We developed this brochure to help victims understand their rights and to familiarize victims and witnesses with the criminal justice process. It is intended to lessen confusion, reduce frustration and help victims and witnesses understand their role in this system.

If my office can be of assistance to you in any way, you should not hesitate to contact us; We are here to help.

Eric R. Linhardt
District Attorney

A Note to Victims and Witnesses...

It's unfortunate that you have been victimized by the actions of an offender. We are sorry for this intrusion on your life, but we will work to make your part in this process as stress-free as possible.

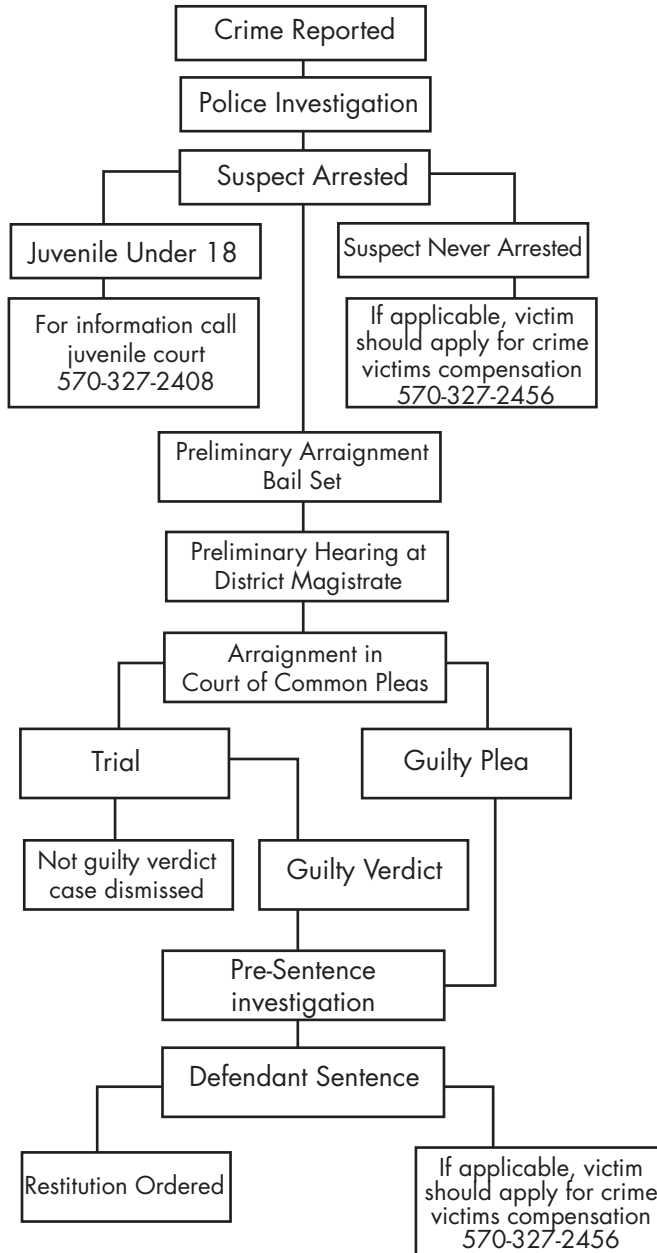
As a victim of crime, you have certain rights and we will work to protect those rights and deliver services that are meaningful in this often-times confusing process. The Victim/Witness Coordinator is there as a liaison to the legal system and I am available to answer your questions and provide general support throughout this process. Although our office does not collect restitution, we can assist you with any of those issues as well.

Thank you for your efforts in helping to bring justice to Lycoming County.

Troy D. Sellers
Victim/Witness Coordinator

PROCESS OF A CRIMINAL CASE

CASE PROCEDURE



VICTIMS RIGHTS

The Crime Victims Act states that if you are a victim of crime in Pennsylvania, you have certain rights:

Victims of all crimes have the right:

- To be notified of basic information on available services;
- To be notified of certain significant actions within the criminal and juvenile justice systems pertaining to your case, including the granting or denial of bail, to an adult offender, the detention or release of a juvenile, the filing of a petition alleging delinquency, and the escape and subsequent apprehension of an adult prior to trial or a juvenile prior to adjudication;
- To be accompanied to criminal and juvenile proceedings by a family member, a victim advocate or other support person;
- To give prior comment on the sentencing decision regarding an adult offender or the disposition of a delinquent child and upon request, to receive help in preparing oral and written victim impact statements that will be considered by the courts;
- To collect restitution and to receive assistance with applying for crime victims compensation;
- To be notified of an adult offender's transfer from a state prison to a mental health facility and the discharge, transfer or escape of the adult offender from that facility;
- To receive immediate notice of the release of an adult offender on bail who is incarcerated in a local prison for a violation of a Protection From Abuse (PFA) order or for a personal injury crime committed against the victim protected by the PFA;
- To have property returned that was seized as evidence but is no longer needed for prosecution; and
- To have notice and to provide prior comment on a judicial recommendation that the defendant participate in a motivational boot camp.

Victims of personal injury crimes have the additional right:

- To receive notice of the arrest of a suspect or the filing or forwarding of a complaint relating to the crime, including notification in 24 hours or less of a complaint alleging delinquency of a juvenile;
- Upon request, to receive notice when an adult offender is released from incarceration at sentencing;
- To receive notice of the opportunity to give prior comment on and receive post-sentencing decisions involving a release from a state prison, such as a work release, furlough or parole;
- To receive notice of and provide prior comment on recommendations sought by the Department of Corrections that offenders participate in a motivational boot camp.

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- To receive notice of the release of an adult offender from a local correctional facility including work release, furlough, parole, release from a boot camp or community treatment center placement and, upon request of the victim, to receive prior notice of the release of the juvenile offender from residential placement, a shelter or detention;
 - To receive immediate notice of the escape of an adult offender and subsequent apprehension;
 - Upon request, to receive notice of the filing, hearing or disposition of appeals; and
 - To receive notice of the commitment to a mental health institution from a state or local correctional institution.

Victims of juvenile crime have the additional rights:

- To receive prior notice of delinquency hearings and notification of hearings about transfer of the juvenile to and from criminal proceedings; and
- To receive notice of the details of the final disposition of the juvenile's case.

Victims of personal injury/burglary crimes have the additional right:

- To give prior comment on the potential reduction or dropping of charges or any changes of a plea in a criminal or delinquency proceeding, diversion of a case, including an informal adjustment or consent decree.

Victims of personal injury juvenile crime have the additional right, upon their request:

- To receive notice prior of the release of a juvenile from residential placement, a shelter facility, or a detention center;
- To have the opportunity to submit a written objection prior to the transfer or release from a placement facility of a juvenile who has been adjudicated delinquent when such action is contrary to a previous court order or placement plan approved at a disposition review hearing;
- To be given immediate notice of the juvenile's escape from residential placement, a shelter facility or a detention center and subsequent apprehension;
- To submit written, and oral testimony at a disposition review hearing; and
- To receive notice of the court's termination of supervision of the juvenile.

For additional information on the rights listed above, or if you have any questions, please contact the Victim/Witness Coordinator

VICTIMS' RESPONSIBILITIES

In order for you to receive information and/or notice concerning your case, you must provide a valid address and telephone number to the requesting agency. You're also responsible for providing timely notice of any changes in that information. ***The information you provide is confidential and may not be disclosed to any person other than a representative of a law enforcement agency, prosecutor's office or corrections agency without your written prior consent.*** The victim's responsibility falls to the parent or legal guardian for child victims and to a surviving family member in the case of a homicide.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VICTIMS

If you're a victim of domestic violence, you have the right to go to court and file a petition requesting a Protection From Abuse (PFA) order which could include the following:

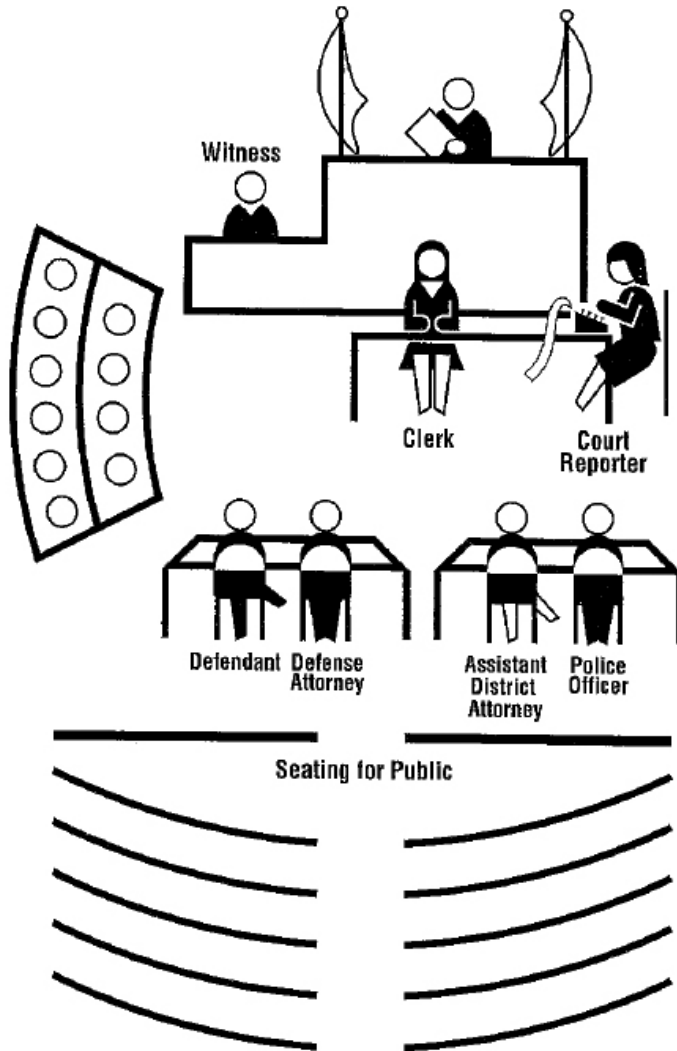
- 1) An order restraining the abuser from further acts of abuse;
- 2) An order telling the abuser to leave your household;
- 3) An order keeping the abuser from entering your residence, school, business or place of employment;
- 4) An order giving you or the other parent temporary custody of or temporary visitation with your child or children;
- 5) An order telling the abuser to pay support to you and the minor children if the abuser has a legal obligation to do so;
- 6) An order telling the abuser to stop stalking or harassing you or other designated persons;
- 7) An order telling the abuser to give up any weapons used during the active abuse; and
- 8) An order telling the abuser to pay reasonable losses suffered as a result of the abuse.

For more information contact:

**Wise Options, 815 W. Fourth St., Williamsport, PA 17701
Phone: 1-800-326-8483 or 570-323-8167**

COURT ROOM

VICTIM BILL OF RIGHTS



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

WHAT IS EXPECTED OF ME AS A VICTIM OR WITNESS OF A CRIME? You are expected to report the crime to your local Police Department and to testify as to what happened. The police will take your statement and file a complaint. A **COMPLAINT** is a statement of facts about an alleged crime which, when filed in court, formally charges a person. An **ARREST WARRANT** or a **SUMMONS** to appear is then issued by the District Justice. An arrest warrant is an order signed by a judge authorizing the police to arrest a person believed to have committed a crime. A summons is mailed to the accused and directs them to appear for a Preliminary Hearing.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE SUSPECT IS ARRESTED? The person accused of the crime is now called the **DEFENDANT**. The defendant will make his/her first appearance before a local District Justice soon after the arrest at a **PRELIMINARY ARRAIGNMENT**. This appearance is for the purpose of setting bail, furnishing the defendant with a copy of the complaint, advising him of his right to legal counsel, and setting the date for the Preliminary Hearing. Your appearance is not required at the Preliminary Arraignment.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF BAIL? **BAIL** is used to insure the defendant's appearance in court. All defendants, except those charged with an offense punishable by death, are entitled by law to reasonable bail prior to trial. The seriousness of the crime charged is only one of the factors the judge considers in setting bail. He must also consider the status of the defendant-employment, family, age, residence and any other factors relevant to whether the defendant is likely to flee the jurisdiction. The defendant will be released when he, or someone on his behalf, posts money, property or bond for bail. If a defendant later fails to appear at a scheduled court meeting, a **BENCH WARRANT** will be issued for his arrest, and he will be brought before a judge.

WHAT IF I'M THREATENED BY THE DEFENDANT OR HIS FRIENDS? Most witnesses never have this problem; however, if the defendant or anyone else attempts to intimidate you, notify your local police department immediately and call the Victim/Witness Coordinator in the District Attorney's Office (570-327-2456). Criminal charges may be brought against the person making the threat, and if the defendant threatens you, his bail may be revoked.

WHAT IS THE PRELIMINARY HEARING? It is a scheduled court proceeding with the testimony under oath, where the District Justice, the defendant, the defendant’s attorney, the prosecutor from the Office of the District Attorney, the police officer in charge of the case, and you the victim or witness – are present. The hearing is held at the District Justice’s office in the area where the crime occurred. The purpose of a Preliminary Hearing is to establish that there is enough evidence to hold the case for trial (**A PRIMA FACIE CASE**). The burden of proof lies with the prosecution to show that a crime has been committed, and that there is reason to believe the defendant committed the crime. If you are called to testify, the Office of District Attorney will want you to sit in the witness chair and answer the questions about who you are and what you know about the case. Usually, the defendant offers no defense at this time. However, you will be cross-examined by the defendant’s attorney. If a prima facie case is shown, the District Justice will rule that the defendant shall go to trial in the courthouse. The defendant can waive (not demand) the Preliminary Hearing and proceed immediately to the trial, in which case you will not have to testify at the Preliminary Hearing. You will receive notice when the case is scheduled for trial.

DO I NEED TO GET AN ATTORNEY TO REPRESENT ME? No, the **ASSISTANT DISTRICT ATTORNEY** will handle the prosecution of your case. He/she is an attorney who represents the interests of the people in Lycoming County. He/she will work with you, the police and the other witnesses to prepare and prosecute your case. The Assistant District Attorney is paid by the County, so you are not required to pay legal fees.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I CHANGE MY MIND AND DON’T WISH TO PROSECUTE? The whole community has a stake in prosecuting wrongdoers. The complaint is now the Commonwealth’s Case, and it is not in your power to “drop charges.” If you’re experiencing anxiety about testifying, please discuss your concerns with the District Attorney’s Victim/Witness Coordinator (570-327-2461), who will try to help with problems, doubts or questions you may be having. If you have received a subpoena, you must appear in court. Failure to do so could result in being held in contempt of court.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS (cont.)

WHAT IF THE DEFENSE ATTORNEY CONTACTS ME ABOUT THE CASE? Before speaking to anyone about the case, you should ask to see the person's identification. You are under no obligation to talk to anyone. You have the right to refuse to discuss the case with the defense attorney; you may speak with him if you wish, or you may agree to speak with him only in the presence of your Assistant District Attorney. You should refer all contacts to the Office of District Attorney.

WHAT IF I MOVE BEFORE THE TRIAL? Please notify the trial clerk (570-327-2456) immediately and provide your new address and telephone number.

HOW DO I GET MY PROPERTY RETURNED? If you're a victim of a crime, the police department may be holding your property as evidence. In some cases, it can be photographed and returned to you by the police. The Assistant District Attorney may ask you to bring that property to court with you for use later in the trial. Some items must be held as evidence for the trial and it may take some time before they can be returned. Contact the Victim/Witness Coordinator (570-327-2461) if you have any questions.

BEFORE THE SCHEDULED TRIAL, WHAT CAN I EXPECT AS A VICTIM OR WITNESS? About a week before the scheduled trial, you will receive a subpoena in the mail. A subpoena is not a request; it is a court order demanding that you must be present at the time and place stated unless otherwise directed by the Office of District Attorney. If for some reason you cannot appear (such as hospitalization), you must call the Office of District Attorney immediately at 570-327-2456 and ask for the trial clerk. Due to the large volume of cases now flooding our Courts and the impossibility of determining in advance how long a given case will take, we cannot predict with certainty how long your presence will be necessary or at what time or specific date you will be needed. This means that your subpoena is valid for the entire trial term mentioned. You will be called to court only if and when your appearance is necessary.

For this reason, we have set up a witness information number, 1-800-205-8919 or 570-320-2155 (**CODA-PHONE**), which you should call after 5:30 PM on the day before you are scheduled to testify. Based upon the most recent information, a tape recording at this number will inform you if the case is scheduled for the next day, but you must call again each night until your case is finished. Your case will be identified in the tape recording on the basis of the defendant's name, which

appears on the subpoena. **OUT-OF-TOWN WITNESSES** are asked to call the office upon receipt of the subpoena and leave us a telephone number where you can be reached. We will then call you when you are needed to appear.

WHAT HAPPENS ON THE DAY OF THE TRIAL? Four things can happen to a case when it reaches the court room on the morning of the trial: A) There may be a **TRIAL** and your testimony will be required. B) The defendant may **PLEAD GUILTY**, thus making a trial and your appearance unnecessary. C) The case may be **CONTINUED** or postponed to another day. D) The defendant may fail to appear and a **BENCH WARRANT** will be issued for his arrest. When the defendant is apprehended the case will be assigned a new trial date, and you will be notified. If you have been placed on call, you will receive a telephone call from the Office of District Attorney advising you that you are needed to appear. Please allow yourself enough time to get to the Courthouse. Upon your arrival, please check in at the Office of District Attorney on the fourth floor. If the message on the **CODA-PHONE** directs you to call the office at a certain time, you will be notified of the status of the case when you call.

WHAT CAN I EXPECT IN THE COURTROOM? In a trial, the Assistant District Attorney has the burden of proving the defendant's guilt beyond a reasonable doubt. The defendant chooses whether a judge or jury will decide the verdict. Once you get into Court and are called as a witness, you will be placed under oath to swear to tell the truth. The District Attorney who calls on you to testify will question you about who you are and what you know about the case. After his/her questions are completed, the defense attorney will have the right to ask you questions about the same facts. You may feel during this questioning that your personal motives are being doubted. This is not the purpose; rather, it is to ensure that all sides of the case are heard. If you're concerned about testifying, call the Victim/Witness Coordinator.

MAY MY FRIENDS AND FAMILY BE IN THE COURTROOM WHILE I TESTIFY? Your friends and family may be in the courtroom while you testify provided that they, themselves, will not be called as witnesses. If they have been subpoenaed, they will be asked to wait outside the courtroom (**SEQUESTERED**) while you give your testimony. Witnesses are not permitted in the courtroom while others are testifying because the court wants to hear what each witness remembers about the crime. The court wants to know what you remember, and asking you to remain outside the courtroom is the best way to guarantee this.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS (cont.)

WILL I BE PAID FOR MY TIME AS A WITNESS? Within 4 to 6 weeks, you will receive a nominal witness fee plus mileage in the mail.

WHEN WILL THE DEFENDANT BE SENTENCED? If the defendant is found guilty, the judge will set a date for sentencing. The judge may direct that the Adult Probation Department conduct a **PRE-SENTENCE INVESTIGATION** of the defendant's background and the circumstances of the crime. They then provide the judge with a **PRE-SENTENCE REPORT** and a recommended sentence. If you're the victim of a crime, you have a right to let the sentencing judge know how the crime has affected you physically, psychologically and financially. Members of your family may also comment on how the crime has affected them. You may be contacted by the Probation Officer who is preparing the report, and you should make these facts known to him/her. In addition, you may be present in the courtroom on the day of sentencing, and you may address the judge directly if you wish. Although your presence is not required at sentencing, you're encouraged to attend because it can sometimes make a difference in the length of the sentence handed down. If you would like notice of the sentencing date, please contact the Victim/Witness Coordinator (570-327-2461).

WHAT IF I HAVE A PROBLEM WITH PARKING OR TRANSPORTATION? If you are subpoenaed as a victim or a witness and have no transportation to get to court, call the Trial Clerk in the Office of District Attorney (570-327-2456) to arrange for transportation to or from court proceedings. Parking is offered free of charge to victims and witnesses in the parking deck at 115 W. Third St. (one block west of the Courthouse). Bring your parking ticket to the Office of District Attorney for validation.

COURTHOUSE ORIENTATION

Courtrooms 1, 2, 3 and 4 are located on the second floor. Courtroom 5 is located on the fourth floor.

Vending machines are located in the basement across from the elevators.

Cell phones are no longer permitted in the Courthouse.

Restrooms are located on all floors.

RESTITUTION

As part of the defendant’s sentence, the judge may order restitution to be paid to the victim for losses occurring because of a crime. It is important for all out-of-pocket expenses for stolen or damaged property or for medical expenses be submitted to your insurance company first. A restitution form will be sent to you near the time of the preliminary hearing. If you do not receive a restitution form, you should contact the Victim/Witness Coordinator. The restitution form and supporting documentation must be returned by the due date on the form and before the defendant is sentenced.

One-half of the defendant’s payments on costs, fines and restitution will be applied to restitution to the victim until all restitution has been paid. If the defendant does not comply with the order of the court and pay restitution, he/she will be ordered to appear before the judge to explain the lack of compliance with the court order. If at anytime you have questions about restitution, please call the Victim/Witness Coordinator.

CRIME VICTIMS COMPENSATION

A fund is available through the state called Crime Victims’ Compensation that may provide reimbursement for victim’s out-of-pocket medical expenses, counseling expenses, lost wages, or funeral and burial expenses. In order to file a claim for the Crime Victims’ Compensation, you must meet the following criteria:

- You must have reported the incident to the appropriate police agency within 72 hours of the crime and you must have fully cooperated with them in their investigation.
- You must have filed a claim within two years after the crime or no later than two years after the death of the victim as a result of the crime or the discovery and identification of the body of a homicide victim. If the victim is a child, filing may be extended until the victim is 23 years of age provided that the victim was under 18 years of age at the time of the occurrence; and the offender is a parent, the paramour of a parent, an individual residing in the household or a person responsible for the victim’s welfare. If the victim is a child, and is filing only for counseling expenses, the filing time may be extended, regardless of the offender’s identity. *(The filing time for child victims can be extended beyond 23 years of age, depending on the statute of limitations period.)*

RESTITUTION (cont.)

The victim did not provoke the incident and was not engaged in illegal activity.

“You must have a minimum of \$100 in uninsured, outstanding expenses.
There are no minimum requirements if you are over the age of 60.

VICTIM IMPACT STATEMENT

As the victim of a crime in the state of Pennsylvania, you have a right to submit comment to the court prior to the sentencing via a Victim Impact Statement. This statement is your opportunity to explain to the court how this crime has affected you physically, psychologically, emotionally and economically. The statement shall be considered by the judge when determining the defendant's sentence.

The Victim Impact Statement will be sent to you after the formal court arraignment of the defendant and should be returned as soon as possible to the Victim/Witness Coordinator. If you need help in filling out the form or have questions concerning the statement, please call the Victim/Witness Coordinator.

OFFENDER RELEASE

The Pennsylvania Crime Victims Bill of Rights provides crime victims (or their family) with an opportunity to participate in the post-sentencing process for those defendants sentenced to a term of state prison incarceration. Upon request, the Victim/Witness Coordinator will provide to the victim the registration brochure developed by the Department of Corrections and the Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole. When the registration is returned to the PBPP, the victim will be notified of the decisions of the DOC and the PBPP concerning the defendant, such as parole, pardon, home furloughs, or community corrections placement.

The victim's comments can be oral or written and may include the physical, financial and emotional impact of the crime on you and your family, the anticipated risk of continued physical, financial and emotional impact, the advisability of release and conditions of release, and other issues of concern to the victim.

SUGGESTIONS FOR TESTIFYING

The following suggestions are offered to assist in becoming a more effective witness.

1. **TELL THE TRUTH.** This is the most important point of all. Even a so-called “white lie” can completely discredit a witness and significantly weaken the entire case. You’re sworn to tell the truth, and it is a crime to lie under oath. If you tell the truth, accurately and without exaggeration, you have nothing to fear on cross-examination.
2. **DRESS NEATLY.** A neat appearance and proper dress in court are important. Bring your subpoena with you.
3. **BE PREPARED.** Before you testify, don’t try to memorize what you’re going to say, but try to picture the scene, the people involved, the objects there, the distances between objects and people, and what happened. If you review the facts in your own mind, it will be easier to recall the events when you’re asked about them. If you are going to testify concerning records, become familiar with them. You should know what they contain and be able to refer to them easily.
4. **BE SERIOUS IN THE COURTROOM.** Avoid laughing or talking in the courtroom. Smoking and chewing gum are not permitted in the courtroom. While taking the oath, stand upright, pay attention and say “I do” clearly. Always address the judge as “Your Honor”.
5. **LISTEN CAREFULLY TO ALL QUESTIONS.** If you do not understand the question, ask that it be explained or repeated. Never answer a question that you do not fully understand or before you have thought your answer through.
6. **ANSWER DIRECTLY AND SIMPLY.** Answer “yes” or “no” to only the question asked then stop. Do not volunteer additional information. Stop instantly when the judge interrupts you when the other attorney objects to what you say. Do not try to sneak in an answer.
7. **TAKE YOUR TIME AND DO NOT GUESS.** Give the question as much thought as you need to understand it and give your answer. Do not give your opinion, and avoid saying “I think” or “I believe”. There’s nothing wrong with saying “I don’t know.”
8. **SPEAK LOUDLY AND CLEARLY.** Always speak slowly, clearly and loudly enough so that all jurors and the judge can hear you. Do not nod your head indicating “yes” or “no”; avoid using street language or slang.
9. **DO NOT EXAGGERATE.** Be wary of overboard generalizations that you may have to retract. Be particularly careful in responding to a question which begins, “Wouldn’t you agree that...?” Statements like “Nothing else happened” are dangerous; after more thought or another question you may remember something else. Instead, say “That’s all I recall.”

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10. **IF YOUR ANSWER WAS WRONG OR UNCLEAR, CORRECT IT AT ONCE.** It's better to correct a mistake yourself than to have the opposing attorney discover an error in your testimony. If you realize you have answered incorrectly, say "May I correct something I said earlier?"
 11. **REMAIN CALM AND COURTEOUS.** Even if the attorney questioning you seems rude or makes you angry, remember to stay calm and don't lose your temper. Never argue with the attorneys or the judge. Don't appear arrogant or respond with "smart aleck" remarks; it may diminish the impact of your testimony.
 12. **YOU MUST ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS.** You cannot refuse to answer a question. Do not ask the judge if you must answer a question. If it is an improper question, the Assistant District Attorney will object.
 13. **FREELY ADMIT YOUR CONVERSATIONS WITH OTHERS ABOUT THE CASE.** If the defense attorney asks you if you have talked to anyone about the case, tell the truth. It is perfectly proper to talk to the Assistant District Attorney before you are called to testify. You most likely spoke to a police officer about the case also. Don't be evasive; answer frankly if you have talked to others about the case.
 14. **BE YOURSELF AND TRY NOT TO BE NERVOUS.** Don't be afraid to look the judge or jury in the eye and tell your story. Remember, no one knows better than you do what happened. Jurors are also people and are naturally sympathetic to the witness and want to hear what he/she has to say.
 15. **DON'T BE AFRAID TO CRY.** If you're the victim of a particularly violent crime, having to recount what happened may bring back frightening memories. Especially if you're an emotional person, you may feel an uncontrollable urge to cry. Crying is a natural reaction which should not concern or embarrass you. The judge and jurors understand the trauma you have been through.
 16. **AVOID JURORS DURING RECESS.** Under no circumstances should you approach a juror even on a matter which doesn't concern the trial. Avoid laughing or talking about the case in the courthouse, at lunch, or anywhere that you may be overheard.
 17. **DO NOT DISCUSS YOUR TESTIMONY.** After you have testified, leave the witness stand with confidence, knowing that you have presented the truth to the best of your ability. You're encouraged to remain in the courtroom for the remainder of the trial, since this shows the jury that you are interested in the outcome of the case. Do not discuss your testimony with other witnesses who have not yet testified; to do so could violate a court order and damage the case.

ASSISTING AGENCIES

Victim/Witness Assistance Program:

Information on victims' rights and services in the criminal justice system in the community; information on case status; and assistance with filing an application for restitution with the Victims Compensation Assistance Program

Agency: Lycoming County Office of District Attorney

48 West Third St., Williamsport, PA 17701

Phone: 570-327-2456

Juvenile Court Victim/Witness Assistance Program:

Information on victims' rights and services in the juvenile justice system and in the community

Agency: Lycoming County Office of District Attorney

48 West Third St., Williamsport, PA 17701

Phone: 570-327-2456

Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Services:

Legal advocacy, counseling, shelter for adults and children

815 West Fourth St., Williamsport, PA 17701

Hotline numbers: 1-800-326-8483 or 570-323-8167

Drunk Driving Services:

Information on counseling, advocacy, and services for victims of DUI crashes

Agency: Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD)

PA Chapter, 2323 Patton Road, Harrisburg, PA 17112

Phone: 717-657-3911

E-mail: www.maddpa.org

Child Abuse Services:

Counseling, information, and referral services for abused and neglected children

Agency: Lycoming County Children and Youth

200 East St., Williamsport, PA 17701

Hotline number: 570-326-7895 / answered 24 hours

Elder Abuse Services:

Counseling, shelter, protective services for victims age 60 and over

Agency: Bi-County Office of Aging

2138 Lincoln St., Williamsport, PA 17701

Hotline number: 1-800-332-8555 or 570-323-3096

Code of Ethics

The Lycoming County Victim/Witness Services Program staff is guided by the principles of the commitment to service, the dignity and worth of the person, integrity, confidence, social justice, confidentiality, self-determination and respect for the importance of human relationships.

We are committed to ensuring that persons victimized by the actions of an offender be afforded the right to choose their level of participation in the criminal justice system, to the extent possible.

Confidentiality Policy

The Lycoming County Victim/Witness Services Program staff shall protect the confidentiality of all information obtained in the course of professional service, except when disclosure is necessary by policy of the Office of District Attorney and/or to prevent serious and imminent harm to the Victim or Witness or other identifiable person or when laws require disclosure without a Victim's or Witness's consent.

Crime Victim Grievance

If the Victim feels that unlawful or inappropriate action has occurred, he or she may contact the Victim/Witness Coordinator and request a complaint form which should be completed and returned to the Coordinator. If a Victim/Witness complaint remains unresolved to the satisfaction of the Victim, the Victim has a right to contact the Victims' Services Division of the Office of the Victim Advocate for further assistance and advocacy.

Dealing With The Media

Lycoming County Victim/Witness Services provides guidelines and suggestions to Victims who have been approached by or desire to have contact with the media.

