



# A Guide for Writing Victim Impact Statements:

For Life-Sentenced Adult Inmate Parole Consideration Hearings

## RIGHT TO ATTEND AND TESTIFY

After the offender is committed to an institution within the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR), you have the right, as a victim of crime, to attend the offender's parole hearings to give a statement (Penal Code Section 3043). This is your opportunity to tell the people making decisions about the offender who committed the crime against you how you and your loved ones have been affected by the crime. Your victim impact statement ensures that your voice is heard.

A parole hearing is a hearing to determine whether an inmate should be released on parole. Only adult inmates sentenced to life in prison with the possibility of parole receive parole hearings. An example of a life sentence with the possibility of parole is when an inmate is sentenced to serve a term of "15 years to life."

Inmates serving such sentences are automatically eligible for a parole hearing 13 months prior to their "minimum eligible parole date" or MEPD. An inmate's MEPD is the earliest possible date they can be released, based on their sentence. Just because an inmate has been scheduled for a parole hearing does not mean he or she will be released on parole. The Board of Parole Hearings (BPH) will determine whether inmates are suitable for parole. Inmates sentenced to life with the possibility of parole are not entitled to parole and can be held in prison for life.

To attend the parole hearing in person, call the Office of Victim and Survivor Rights and Services toll free at (877) 256-6877 when you receive your hearing notice.

### What is the purpose of a victim impact statement and how is it used?

Victim impact statements provide an opportunity for panel members to understand how this crime has affected you, your family, and those close to you. Many victims have found it helpful to voice how their lives have been impacted by the crime committed against them physically, financially, emotionally and even spiritually. Victims and their family members speak last at parole hearings, just before the panel deliberates. Statements usually range from 5-15 minutes in length.

Without your input many offenders may never know the true impact of their actions.

"A victim gets plugged into the system when it's convenient for the system...and forgets them when they've served their purpose. I think that a Victim Impact Statement balances the scales of justice. For once, the victim has an advocate...his/her words."  
- Victim

## What should I include in my statement?

Only you know how to best describe the effects this crime has had on you and those close to you. We realize it may be difficult to describe in words how this crime has affected you. To assist you with your thoughts and feelings, it is recommended you write an impact statement on paper.

If you would like to share the emotional and mental impact you may consider:

- How life has changed for you and those close to you.
- How your ability to relate to others has changed.
- Any counseling or other support you have obtained.
- Fees incurred for counseling or therapy for you and your family.
- Certain details of the crime and the offender's actions you want the panel to know.

If you or your family members were injured you may wish to describe:

- The specific physical injuries you or members of your family have suffered.
- How long your injuries lasted or how long you expect them to last.
- Any medical treatment you have received or expect to receive in the future and the medical expenses you have incurred.
- Your inability to work and lost wages.

### TRANSCRIPTS

Crime victims can request transcripts of Parole Suitability Hearings 30 days after the hearing date.

For more information visit:

[www.cdcr.ca.gov/BOPH/psh\\_transcript.html](http://www.cdcr.ca.gov/BOPH/psh_transcript.html)

or call

1-877-256-6877

## Do I have to make a victim impact statement?

It's your choice whether you make a victim impact statement. However, no one knows better than you how this crime has changed your life. It is very important for you to help the panel members understand all of the ways this crime has affected you and those close to you. Whether or not you choose to submit a victim impact statement is a decision made by you and your family. It is a voluntary right that you have as a victim of crime.

If you choose not to attend a hearing but would like your impact statement considered, you can mail or fax your statement to the Classification and Parole Representative (C&PR) office at the institution.

You can also submit an audio or video statement (with transcript), appear via video conference at the DA's office, or have someone speak on your behalf.

For additional information and assistance on material covered in this brochure:

**Call Toll Free 1-877-256-6877**

### Mailing Address:

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### Automated Electronic Notification:

Toll Free 1-877-411-5588  
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