

Tips For Observing Proceedings

The Victim/Witness Legal Assistant in the District Attorney's office prosecuting your case can help prepare you for the courtroom. The following are some general guidelines that you may find helpful in the courtroom:

- Maintain a serious and dignified manner in and around the courthouse and throughout the trial. Dress appropriately.
- Do not discuss the case in the halls, restrooms, or anywhere that an ally of the defense or a juror may overhear. Most district attorney's offices have a special waiting area for victims and witnesses. Check with the Victim/Witness Legal Assistant for location and information.
- Never speak to a judge or juror unless you are in the courtroom and testifying under oath – or unless the judge specifically asks you a question in the courtroom. If you contact a judge or juror in the hall, elevator, or during a recess or lunch break, do not speak to them.
- You may see the defendant, for the first time since the crime, in the courtroom. Try to prepare yourself for the emotional impact of this encounter. It may upset you to hear the defendant say "not guilty." Sometimes these are the first words that victims have heard the defendant speak.
- Prepare yourself to hear upsetting and graphic testimony.
- If you are the family or loved one of someone who was murdered, you may hear horrifying details of the crime for the first time. Ask the District Attorney to fully review the details of your loved one's death before the trial.
- If you find yourself becoming extremely upset during the trial, quietly leave the courtroom.
- If you have any questions or concerns during the trial, write them down and give them to the district attorney or Victim/Witness Legal Assistant. Don't interrupt or whisper during the trial.
- If the press is covering the trial, you may be approached and questioned by reporters. It would be best if you refrained from answering any questions or making any comments until after the trial is over. Be polite and refer them to the District Attorney.
- Prepare yourself to hear the verdict, which could be a highly emotional time for you and your family.