

Attending and Testifying in Court

Victims, families, friends, and **the public may** attend court proceedings to watch legal arguments, testimony, and court rulings.

To comply with court etiquette please:

- Dress neatly.
- Do not wear or display buttons or other items identifying the victim.
- Leave drinks, food and gum outside the courtroom.
- Stand when instructed to do so by the bailiff or judge.
- Refrain from talking inside the courtroom.
- Do not speak near a member of the jury or attempt to talk to or communicate with jurors.
- When the verdict is being read, refrain from any verbal outbursts or other disruptive reactions. The judge may exclude from the courtroom persons who cause a disturbance.
- Avoid confrontations and attempts to communicate with the defendant and his/her family.
- Promptly notify police and court officials of threats, intimidating behavior or attempts to dissuade a victim or his/her family from taking part in proceedings. In criminal homicide cases, graphic photos of the victim may be presented as evidence.
- Certain family members may consider leaving the courtroom before the presentation of this evidence.

When called to testify in Court by either the prosecutor or defense attorney:

- Always tell the truth.
- Listen carefully and answer only the question asked; answer “yes” or “no” if the question calls for it; and do not volunteer additional information.
- Ask that the question be repeated if it is confusing or not understood; and not guess if he/she does not know the answer.
- Be patient and courteous answering attorneys’ questions – both attorneys are allowed to question witnesses.
- Ask to review his/her prior statements related to the case – such as statements to police – before taking the stand; be prepared to answer questions about them.
- Wait until the judge tells him/her to answer the question when an attorney objects to a question.
- Speak loudly and clearly.