

## How Advocates Can Help Victims In Court

### Find out what information a victim needs, and try to provide it.

- Translate [jargon and acronyms](#)
- Educate victims on who will be in court.. Depending on what kind of court it is, this could include: the abuser, his public defender or attorney, Assistant District Attorney (ADA), judge, deputies, bailiff, an attorney for the child, CPS/ACS representative, drug court coordinator, etc.
- If there is a Victim-Witness Liaison or [Resource Coordinator](#), make sure the victim understands her/his role and how it differs from yours.
- Find out how the judge handles her/his schedule. Prepare victims for having to wait a long time or return another day. Ask whether they want you to advocate for them with their employer, if they need time off.
- Remind victims that cell phones must be *off* in the courtroom.
- After leaving court, explain what happened, and what happens next.

### Help the victim prepare to speak clearly, be efficient, be coherent, and be presentable.

- Help victims write out ahead of time what they want to tell the court – and keep it short. Suggest focusing on the first, worst, and latest incidents. Let victims know that writing things down is mostly a way for them to prepare their thoughts ahead of time, and that the judge likely will not let them read from or consult their notes in court.
- Let victims know they can take a moment to compose themselves or request a glass of water to slow down the pace of the proceedings if they need to.
- Help victims think about what to wear to court, to create a favorable impression. Remind them that the abuser could show up in a suit and tie.

### Work with the DA's office or Resource Coordinator to ensure that victims have access to:

- Contact information for the prosecutor, including a TTY if needed.
- Information in their preferred language.
- Orientation to the criminal justice process and the prosecutor's role.
- Notification of the status of the case and of any delays in the prosecution.
- Waiting rooms that are safe, child-friendly and separated by sight and sound from the defendant, his family and friends, and the media.
- Protection and recourse if perpetrator intimidates or harasses them.

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