

Our office will discuss the process in depth with you and answer any questions you may have. After staff confirms your decision to complete the oral testimony process, we will send your request to the Hearing Examiner located in one of the Board's offices nearest your home. The Hearing Examiner's staff will contact you directly to schedule a convenient date, time, and location for your oral testimony. If you are unavailable to keep the scheduled date, you must contact the Hearing Examiner's staff to reschedule.

In-Person Victim Testimony

Face to face victim input is provided to a panel of Board Members at the Board's Central Office in Harrisburg, PA. A Board Member is an appointed position who is a decision maker in the parole process for offenders. The event will be recorded. The inmate is not present while you are providing testimony.

If you elect In-Person Victim Testimony please call our office at 1-800-563-6399 immediately to start the process for scheduling this interview. Our office will discuss the process in depth with you and answer any questions you may have. After we confirm with you your decision to complete the In-Person Victim Testimony process, we will coordinate scheduling with the Board. You will be contacted via telephone and will receive written notification providing you with the date and time of your meeting. If you are unavailable to keep the scheduled date, you must contact the OVA.

If you have special needs such as an interpreter, handicapped accessible facility, or need to communicate through TDD machine, please call the OVA at 1.800.563.6399.

What to Include in Your Testimony

What you include in your testimony is a personal choice. However, the following is a list of common issues raised by crime victims:

- The financial, emotional and physical impact that the crime had on you and your family
- Anything you would like to tell the Board about the crime
- What has been happening to you after the crime
- How your life has changed as a result of the crime
- Any issues you would like addressed if the inmate is released on parole.

Petitioning by the Victim Advocate

Act 8 - 1995 established the Office of the Victim Advocate to represent the rights and interests of crime victims before the Department of Corrections and the Board. It authorizes the Victim Advocate to petition the Board to deny parole, or set conditions of parole upon the request of the crime victim. If you are interested in having our office petition the Board on your behalf, please be sure to state that in your comments.

Confidentiality of Your Testimony

The law provides that your testimony be kept confidential and will not be released to the inmate. Only those individuals involved in the decision-making process have the authority to review your input.

Please remember that it is your responsibility to keep the OVA informed of your current address and phone number.

Office of the Victim Advocate

1101 South Front Street | Suite 5200 | Harrisburg, PA 17104
1.800.563.6399 Nationwide | 1.877.349.1064 TTY (toll free) | FAX: 717.787.0867

1920 Technology Parkway | Mechanicsburg, PA 17050
1.800.322.4472 Nationwide | 1.877.349.1064 TTY (toll free) | FAX: 717.728.0332

www.ova.state.pa.us
Email: ra-ovainfo@pa.gov

PENNSYLVANIA
Office of the Victim Advocate

Making a Statement Victim Input Into the Parole Process



*Jennifer R. Storm, Victim Advocate
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*

Making A Statement: Victim Input Into the Parole Process

The testimony you provide to the Board of Probation and Parole will be submitted through the Office of the Victim Advocate (OVA). It is the responsibility of the OVA to represent your rights and interests before the Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole and the Department of Corrections. This brochure provides you with information on the process of providing victim testimony to the Board of Probation and Parole. Your testimony is important to the Board in making decisions about the offender's release.

The Parole Decision-Making Process

Inmates serving a state sentence, in either a state correctional facility or a county facility, can be granted parole only by the Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole (Board).

Under Pennsylvania law, inmates must serve their minimum sentence before becoming eligible for parole. Parole is a privilege in Pennsylvania, not a right. The Board is the sole decision maker in the parole process. Members of the Board are appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Pennsylvania State Senate.

Since the parole decision making process is a serious one, the Board begins to collect important information on which to make their decision many months prior to the inmate's minimum sentence.

For those victims who do not want to meet the offender face-to-face, there is the option to engage in "indirect dialogue." This form of dialogue utilizes a letter exchange between the victim and the offender, using the same type or preparation as with a face-to-face meeting.

The Board reviews a variety of material including, but not limited to: treatment needs, adjustment while in prison, psychological evaluation, the offense, comments from the district attorney and the sentencing judge, prior criminal record, testimony from the victim or survivors, any other comments received and a personal interview with the inmate.

The entire Board does not meet with the inmate. Either a Board Member or a Hearing

Examiner interviews the inmate at the prison three to four months prior to the inmate's minimum sentence date. The information collected about the inmate, notes from the interview, and your comments will then be reviewed by other members of the Board to reach a final decision.

The decision making process takes approximately one to three months after the inmate is interviewed. You will be notified by the OVA of the Board's final decision.

The Board's decision may be either to refuse parole and set another date for review or to release on parole and outline conditions for supervision.

You will also be provided with information on any further or future review dates for the inmate.

QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS CALL

1.800.563.6399

717.772.3521 (TTY)

Interpreters available through Language Service Associates.

Si necesita traduccion llame a la Oficina

Para Defensa de Victimas

1.800.563.6399

About Your Testimony

Although many crime victims experience similar reactions, have similar questions and concerns, only you can provide the Board with

insight on how the crime has impacted you and your family's lives. Now is the time for you to prepare your testimony for consideration in the decision making process. The choice of which form of testimony you want to provide is a personal one.

Listed below are forms of testimony. All forms of testimony are confidential and are treated equally by the Board. If these forms of testimony are not comfortable for you, or if you would like further assistance, please contact the Office of the Victim Advocate at 1.800.563.6399.

Written Testimony

You can send written testimony directly to the OVA. It can be as long or as short as you would like. Once your written testimony is received, the OVA ensures that it is reviewed by the Board Members prior to making the decision regarding parole.

Videotaped Testimony

You can video tape your testimony and send it directly to the OVA.

Oral Testimony**

Oral Testimony is a face to face interview with you, conducted by a Hearing Examiner employed by the Board. A Hearing Examiner is a representative of the Board, trained to take your testimony. The inmate and the Board are not present while you are being interviewed. The testimony is audio recorded and transcribed, which will be reviewed by the Board.

**If you select oral testimony, please contact our office immediately at 1.800.563.6399.