

# Tips on Testifying

If you receive a subpoena, *you are required to appear in court to testify*. If you have questions about your role as a witness or if you would like a courtroom tour before trial, please contact us at (540) 507-7733.

1. **DRESS APPROPRIATELY.** The judge and/or jury will take note of how you present yourself.
2. **TELL THE TRUTH.** If you do not know or remember the answer to a question, say so.
3. **SPEAK LOUDLY AND CLEARLY.** Do not put your hands or other items in front of your face.
4. **PREPARE YOURSELF.** Victim/Witness staff can assist in answering your questions or addressing your expectations.
5. **TAKE YOUR TIME.** Think about what you're being asked before you answer the question. If you do not hear or understand a question, ask the attorney to repeat it.
6. **DO NOT:** bring cell phones to court! They are not permitted inside the courtrooms. Do not smoke, chew gum, eat, or drink inside the court house.
7. **BE PREPARED TO WAIT.** The judicial process can be long and unpredictable. Please remember that your role is an important one.

# Important Numbers

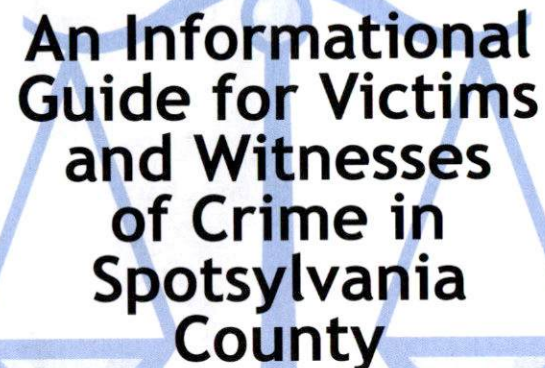
*All area codes are (540) unless noted.*

Spotsylvania Sheriff's Office:	507-7200
Fire & Rescue:	507-7900
Animal Control:	507-7450
Commonwealth's Attorney:	507-7650
Circuit Court:	507-7600
Juvenile & Domestic Relations Court:	507-7676
General District Court:	507-7680
Social Services:	507-7898
Child Protective Services:	507-7898
Domestic Violence Hotline:	373-9373
Sexual Assault Hotline:	371-1666
Community Services Board:	582-3980

**Spotsylvania Victim/Witness Assistance Program**  
9111 Courthouse Road  
P.O. Box 159  
Spotsylvania, Virginia 22553

Office Hours: 8:30 a.m. — 4:30 p.m.  
Phone: (540) 507-7733  
[vwap@spotsylvania.va.us](mailto:vwap@spotsylvania.va.us)

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## An Informational Guide for Victims and Witnesses of Crime in Spotsylvania County

**The Honorable Travis D. Bird**  
Commonwealth's Attorney  
Spotsylvania County

**Kathy Settle, Director**  
Spotsylvania Victim/Witness Assistance Program

The Spotsylvania Victim/Witness Assistance Program was established in 1996 to assist crime victims and witnesses through the judicial process. The purpose of our program is to ensure that victims and witnesses receive fair and compassionate treatment while participating in the court system. Our office is located in the Office of the Commonwealth's Attorney at the Spotsylvania Judicial Center.

### Who is a victim?

According to Virginia Code § 19.2-11.01, a "victim" is a person who suffered physical, psychological, or economic harm as a direct result of the commission of a felony or of the following misdemeanors: assault & battery, stalking, sexual battery, attempted sexual battery, or maiming or driving while intoxicated. Spouses, children, and parents/guardians of minors victimized by these offenses are also considered victims.

### What services are available?

- Notification of case status & court dates
- Explanation of court procedures
- Court accompaniment
- Explanation of and assistance with filing for protective measures
- Notification of possible plea agreement negotiations
- Information about and assistance with completing victim impact statements
- Referrals to community agencies
- Assistance with filing for Crime Victims Compensation & obtaining restitution
- Assistance in making victim and witness travel arrangements for court
- Additional services (as needed)

### Types of Criminal Charges

- **MISDEMEANOR:** A crime punishable by up to 12 months in jail and/or up to a \$2,500 fine
- **FELONY:** A crime punishable by one or more years in the state prison

### Types of Trial-Level Criminal Courts

- **General District Court:** Trial court for misdemeanors involving adults that do not have an immediate familial relationship with their victims. Also holds preliminary hearings for felony cases.
- **Juvenile & Domestic Relations Court:** Trial court for misdemeanors involving juvenile victims/defendants or those cases in which the defendants and victims have an immediate familial relationship. Also holds preliminary hearings for felony cases.
- **Circuit Court:** Trial court for felony cases.

### Types of Criminal Hearings

- **Arraignment:** A defendant's first appearance before the court. The court reads the charges, determines whether the defendant will hire a lawyer, and sets a date for preliminary hearing or trial.
- **Preliminary Hearing:** A probable cause hearing for a felony. Here, the prosecutor must show that a crime probably occurred and the defendant probably did it.
- **Indictment:** A finding by the grand jury that a crime occurred, the defendant probably committed it, and the case should be tried.
- **Trial:** A bench or jury hearing to determine the defendant's guilt or innocence.
- **Sentencing:** A post-conviction hearing where both sides may present evidence. After hearing evidence, the bench or jury determines the appropriate punishment.

## *A Message From Your Commonwealth Attorney*

As a victim or witness of crime, you likely have many questions. You may be experiencing feelings of confusion, fear, anxiety, or anger about the event itself or the judicial process. You can be assured that I, as your Commonwealth's Attorney, and my staff are committed to achieving justice in your case.

For too long, victims and witnesses felt overshadowed by the defendant. Federal and state legislation has helped to refocus the attention on victims through initiatives like the Victim's Bill of Rights, crime victim compensation funds, and Victim/Witness Programs. You are fortunate in Spotsylvania County to have a Victim/Witness Program that can advocate for you and assist you through the complex stages of the judicial process.

Our judicial system can only work with the

assistance of victims and witnesses in the prosecution of criminal cases. I want to make sure that you have a voice in the system and that your needs and concerns are addressed. Should you have questions or need assistance at any point, please contact our Victim/Witness staff at (540) 507-7733 or [vwap@spotsylvania.va.us](mailto:vwap@spotsylvania.va.us).

Thank you,  
Travis D. Bird