COVID-19 - Based on local health conditions and recommended CDC guidelines, local chief and presiding judges may exercise their discretion in determining whether precautionary measures should be utilized to ensure the health and safety of those in the courtroom or court facility. To find out current COVID restrictions for the court of the county in which you are interested, contact the county's circuit clerk's office.

Dress appropriately and act courteously. Court rules specify that witnesses shall be properly attired. Dress comfortably, but conservatively. T-shirts, jeans, and shorts are NOT preferred.

Prepare. Call the day before to check on the status of the court hearing. Refresh your memory so you can avoid confusion. Before testifying, picture the scene, the objects there, the persons there, and what occurred. If you are asked a question pertaining to distance or time and your answer is an estimate, be sure to say that it is an estimate.

Be prepared for extended wait times. Bring something to keep yourself busy.

Be attentive. If you appear bored or indifferent, the judge or jury may tend to disregard your testimony.

Speak distinctly and loud enough for the judge and jury to hear. Everyone in the courtroom must be able to hear what you have to say. An inaudible voice or mumbling detracts from your testimony and may give the impression that you are not certain of what you are saying. When speaking, look at the jury and do not use vulgar language. Also....

- **Take your time to THINK before you speak and always SPEAK THE TRUTH.**
- **Answer all questions directly and verbally.**
- **Answer the question asked - then stop. Do not volunteer information.**
- **Do not try to answer a question you do not understand - ask that it be explained.**
- **If you do not remember or you do not know the answer to a question, say so.**
- **If part of a question is correct and part is wrong, say so.**

Don't exaggerate or try to slant your testimony. Make your testimony as objective as possible.   Also, it is okay to correct the prosecutor, the defense attorney, or the Judge if they do not get the information correct. You may say something like, 'No, I did not say that.'

Be helpful, not funny. A trial is a serious matter with freedom at stake. The court wants the facts, not comedy.

Control your temper. Losing your temper reduces your credibility as a witness. Remember to stay calm and in control - even if the attorney seems rude or makes you angry. Do not argue with the defense attorney or allow him/her to make you angry. And remember, just because the defense attorney says something, doesn't mean it's true.

COURTROOM BEHAVIOR
- Be respectful to the Judge and Bailiff in the courtroom.
- Be quiet in the courtroom. In order to avoid provoking one another, refrain any verbal or visual contact with the defendant, his/her attorney, and the defendant's family - even if it's initiated by them. Victim rights laws state that a 'secure waiting area' must be provided for the victim by the court. **Be sure to use it - you don't know what may happen if you don't.**
- Keep your hands to yourself. Tempers can flare in the courtroom, however, any perceived contact with officials, the defendant, or the defendant's family can result in unpleasant repercussions (charges or jail).
- Upon leaving the courtroom, remain seated until you get direction from the prosecutor or victim advocate.
  TO HELP APPEASE YOUR NERVOUSNESS IF YOU MUST TESTIFY
- Ask the prosecutor or victim advocate to see the courtroom and sit in the witness chair.
- Speak into the microphone so you can hear what it sounds like.
- If there's no microphone, say a few words so that you know to what extent you will have to project your voice.
- Inquire who will be in the courtroom (judge, court reporter, clerk, bailiff, prosecutor, victim advocate, defense attorney, witnesses, defendant), and where everyone will be seated.
- Ask the victim advocate to accompany you in the courtroom and during your testimony.