



## Court Advocacy Tip Sheet #2

### 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 offender, the public defender or private defense 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 offender 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.
- 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, defendant's family and friends, and the media.
- Protection and recourse if the offender intimidates or harasses them.

This project was supported by Grant No. 2008-WE-AX-0023 awarded by the Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Dept. of Justice. The opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women.