

Quick Start Guide for New Victim Assistance Coordinators

The Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) Victim Services Division (VSD) is providing this tip sheet to assist Victim Assistance Coordinators who are assisting victims with completing the Victim Impact Statement, in an effort to improve the experience for both the advocate and the victim.

1. Using either the fillable PDF or MS Word version of the Victim Impact Statement (VIS), pre-fill the VAC contact information on the cover page. Having the information typed will make it easier for the victim to read and will save you from filling it out each time.
2. In the MS Word version, there is a space on the cover page where you can add a QR code to link users to your agency's website. There are many websites that will create QR codes for free. Some examples are listed below. If you do not wish to use the space for a QR code, you may consider deleting the place holders.
 - a. Adobe Express - <https://www.adobe.com/express/feature/image/qr-code-generator>
 - b. Canva - <https://www.canva.com/qr-code-generator/>
 - c. Wix - <https://www.wix.com/tools/qr-code-generator>
3. The TDCJ VSD publishes a Victim Impact Statement that fully complies with statutory requirements and has been reviewed by a statutorily mandated VIS Revision Committee which revises the VIS form following each legislative session to ensure that the form meets current statutory mandates. For information regarding what is mandated to be included on a VIS, please see the below requirements of the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure (CCP) art 56A.151 (b-c). You may wish to mark your calendars for December 1st of each odd numbered year to remind you to download the most current version.
4. The TDCJ VSD also publishes several brochures that may assist your agency with providing your required written notifications. TDCJ VSD will send you those brochures at no cost, upon request. To place an order for publications, please visit our Integrated Victim Services System (IVSS) portal. You will be required to create a username and password, if you have not already done so, and sign in prior to placing your order. You may access the IVSS portal publications page here: <https://ivss.tdcj.texas.gov/publication-list/>
 - a. All of our brochures are also available for download in PDF format from the website.
5. District Attorneys, or a designated representative from their office, are required by CCP art 56A.160 to provide statistics regarding VISs distribution and collection. These VIS statistics are reported for each month and are due quarterly through our IVSS portal. Elevated Criminal Justice User access is required to access the reporting page. You can request this access on the portal or, if you need assistance with access, please contact the TDCJ VSD Clearinghouse staff at tdcj.clearinghouse@tdcj.texas.gov or (512) 406-5922.
 - a. To watch a recorded webinar regarding requesting IVSS Criminal Justice User access and reporting VIS Statistics, please visit <https://tdcj.adobeconnect.com/p88ix9cf12dz/>

Texas Code of Criminal Procedure Article 56A.151 (b-c):

- (b) the victim impact statement must be in a form designed to
 - (1) inform a victim, guardian of a victim, or close relative of a deceased victim with a clear statement of rights granted by Subchapter B; and
 - (2) collect the following information:
 - (A) the name of the victim of the offense or, if the victim has a legal guardian or is deceased, the name of a guardian or close relative of the victim;
 - (B) the address and telephone number of the victim, guardian, or relative through which the victim, guardian, or relative may be contacted;
 - (C) a statement of economic loss suffered by the victim, guardian, or relative as a result of the offense;
 - (D) a statement of any physical or psychological injury suffered by the victim, guardian, or relative as a result of the offense, as described by the victim, guardian, or relative or by a physician or counselor;
 - (E) a statement of any psychological services requested as a result of the offense;
 - (F) a statement of any change in the victim's, guardian's, or relative's personal welfare or familial relationship as a result of the offense;
 - (G) a statement regarding whether the victim, guardian, or relative wants to be notified of any parole hearing for the defendant;
 - (H) if the victim is a child, whether there is an existing court order granting to the defendant possession of or access to the victim; and
 - (I) any other information related to the impact of the offense on the victim, guardian, or relative, other than facts related to the commission of the offense.
- (c) The victim impact statement must include an explanation regarding the procedures by which a victim, guardian of a victim, or close relative of a deceased victim may obtain information concerning the release of the defendant from the department.