

USEFUL INFORMATION FOR DEALING WITH A CRIMINAL PROCESS

If you are a victim of a crime or violence and will be involved in a criminal process as a result, you may need to prepare yourself accordingly. Legal proceedings can be stressful and challenging. This document provides some advice to help you get ready.

WHAT TO DO BEFORE ATTENDING A LEGAL PROCEEDING

- Identify one or more trustworthy individuals as your support network during the period when the legal proceedings take place. They can provide the assistance and support you need during these moments. If possible, you may have them accompany you to the proceedings (though this might not be allowed in some instances).
- Download a playlist of calm and relaxing music on your phone for the moments before and after the proceedings.
- Practice relaxation breathing exercises that you can use during the proceedings.
 - For example, try the square breathing technique: inhale deeply while counting to 4, hold your breath for a count of 4, exhale while counting to 4, then count to 4 again before starting a new breath.
- Since using your phone might be restricted during the proceedings, print some photos of yourself and/or your loved ones during happy moments, so you can look at them during difficult times in the proceedings if it helps you.
- Seek information or guidance from a victim support organization about what to expect during the upcoming proceeding (within the unpredictability of legal proceedings):
 - What is the current stage of the legal process?
 - Who will be present in the courtroom?
 - Who will be questioning you?
 - What are your rights?

PRECAUTIONS ON THE DAY OF THE LEGAL PROCEEDING

- Bring water and some candies with you.
- Carry tissues with you.
- Choose to wear comfortable clothes and bring an extra layer (like a sweater or jacket) in case the courtroom is cold.
- Prepare a notebook or notepad to jot down any questions directed at you or to take notes on any doubts you might need to clarify later with your lawyer or victim support officer accompanying you during the proceeding.
- You might consider bringing a stress ball to keep your hands occupied.
- Avoid discussing the contents of the legal proceedings in public spaces, such as elevators, public restrooms, cafeterias, etc.

SUPPORT AVAILABLE FROM APAV

The Portuguese Association for Victim Support (APAV) provides specialized services for various violent situations, offering support to all individuals affected by a crime.

At APAV, you can find practical, emotional, psychological, legal, and social support, all of which is free and confidential, for as long as you need it – whether it's a one-time intervention or long-term assistance.

The support provided by APAV may include psychological intervention, clarification of legal issues, assistance with formulating requests or other documents, facilitation of communication with other entities and services, such as judicial authorities or embassies, as well as accompanying victims during the legal proceedings they need to participate in.

To access this support, you can call the Victim Support Helpline toll-free at 116 006 or visit one of APAV's local support services, whose contact information and locations can be found online: apav.pt/contactos.

It's important to consult and familiarize yourself with the website infovitimas.pt, where you can find more information about the rights of crime victims.

