

Child Victim (AZ) Who Used CCTV During a Criminal Trial

I wanted to do the closed-circuit television (CCTV) because I was scared to face my dad in court, face to face. The CCTV helped me calm down, but I was still a little bit scared to testify in court, but it helped me face my fear in court. I was able to testify much easier, and it helped me calm down almost all the way. I was glad that I was able to use the CCTV in court. I think CCTV is important because it can help kids face their fear of testifying, and they can go home more stress-free. They can go back to their lives better.

I think all kids should be able to use CCTV, more kids should be able to. It was hard to talk to my mom, the detectives, and to the prosecutors, and it would have been harder in court in front of my dad. I think that CCTV helps kids feel a little bit safer than they felt before, and help parents feel that it's a little bit safer for their kids as well. I think all kids, not just myself would find it much easier to testify in court if they can use CCTV.

Comments of the Mother of the Child Victim

My daughter, AZ, was a victim of sexual abuse from ages 7-10 years old. Her father, Jose Noe Quintanilla, was found guilty of 3 counts of object sexual penetration and one count of rape. I am writing this statement to express my gratefulness for my daughter's ability to use closed-circuit television (CCTV) while testifying during the criminal trial, and to advocate in support of more children being able to testify via CCTV in Virginia.

My daughter was traumatized from the abuse and had nightmares, flashbacks, and panic attacks and often thought about the abuse. She suffered from suicidal thoughts regularly. During the trial, and at the time she had to testify, she also lived in an intense fear her dad was going to attack her for telling the truth and did not feel safe about talking about the abuse or testifying in court.

As her mother, it pained me and has caused me great stress to see my daughter suffering, and to know it will affect her the rest of her life. My greatest concerns were AZ's future and getting her through the trial with the least amount of trauma.

My daughter was told by the prosecutor's office she needed to testify in open court. For my daughter, this meant she had to be able to be questioned like an adult about graphic and traumatizing sexual acts her father did to her in open court with her father only several yards away, and in front of others. This is a frightening situation for any child.

My daughter was later approved to testify through CCTV. Being able to testify through CCTV helped AZ get through testifying, and has kept the traumatizing impacts of the trial from being too much for her. If she had to testify in front of her father, she may have been unable to speak about the abuse in the courtroom, and would be much more traumatized. Additionally, her father became emotional during her testimony, and if she had to testify only a few yards away from him, his emotional behavior would have affected her ability to testify. Using CCTV gave my daughter the ability to stand up for herself and tell her story in a way that empowers children who have been abused.

The Virginia Victims Bill of Rights states "In recognition of the Commonwealth's concern for the victims and witnesses of crime, it is the purpose of [the Victims Bill of Rights] to ensure that the full impact of crime is brought to the attention of the courts of the Commonwealth; that crime victims and

witnesses are treated with dignity, respect and sensitivity..." (§19.2-11.01 (A)). Allowing children to use CCTV to testify helps to ensure the full impact of crimes are brought to the attention of courts. All children should have access to this victims' right if it is needed to avoid their intimidation, and unnecessary mental injury and harm. Sexual abuse is traumatizing enough, and children who experience this type of abuse can already have a hard road to recovery. All children should have access to CCTV, especially if a mental health professional says it could cause injury, instead of children having to get to the point of a severe mental condition to qualify.

Thank you for your time and consideration for amendments to the law that will allow more children to testify via CCTV in Virginia; to help children testify better to expose the full impact of crimes; and support the safety, protection, mental health, and wellbeing of all children.