

The involvement and support of the news media are essential to the overall success of your victim outreach and public awareness activities during NCVRW. The media can help you highlight the personal experiences of crime victims, services available to assist them, volunteer opportunities, and the many victims' rights that offer involvement, protection, and a voice in our systems of justice.

If you do not have a comprehensive list of key media contacts in your jurisdiction, consider these tips for building a good media directory that can be used not only during NCVRW, but throughout the year:

Ask your NCVRW Planning Committee members to provide you with contact information for journalists with whom they have worked in the past. Merge all contacts into a "master list" and make it available to all Planning Committee members.

Assign different Planning Committee members a few news media outlets to read, watch and listen to for six weeks prior to March 2006—including newspapers, radio, network and cable television, and the Internet. Ask them to document a list of reporters who do a good job of covering crime and victimization. A volunteer can send a brief note or e-mail to such journalists complimenting their news coverage, and then include them on your master media list.

You can compile a basic media list by simply entering the words "media listing" into any Internet search engine. Different media outlets will be highlighted, usually by the type of medium (print, broadcast and/or Web-based), as well as by geographical regions. A volunteer can document key contact information and, time permitting, make calls to each medium to ask, "Who is the best contact for stories involving crime and victimization?"

Print, broadcast and Web-based media may all take an interest in 2006 NCVRW activities if they receive timely, well-written information that they consider *newsworthy*. The three sample documents in this section are designed to be personalized in order to offer a national,

state and local perspective of crime victims' rights and services, and to highlight this year's theme, "Victims' Rights: Strength in Unity."

Sample Press Release

The sample 500-word press release gives you the opportunity to provide the news media with general information about your NCVRW activities. It offers a national perspective with a quotation from OVC Director John W. Gillis, and information about OVC's 4th National Candlelight Observance and Awards Ceremony to be held in Washington, DC, the week before NCVRW. A brief explanation of the NCVRW theme is also offered, and can be adapted to reflect the theme's meaning to your community or state.

The press release should also be personalized to highlight the key activities that will be sponsored in your community to commemorate NCVRW. It is helpful to attach a one-page summary of such activities that includes: type of activity; date; time; location; sponsors; a brief description of the event; and contact information.

Your 2006 NCVRW press release should be sent via mail or e-mail *at least ten days prior* to April 23rd. Volunteers can make the important follow-up telephone calls to offer additional information, and/or confirm media participation.

Sample Public Service Announcements

Three sample scripts for radio/television public service announcements (PSAs) are included, in the lengths preferred by most media outlets—60 seconds, 30 seconds and 15 seconds. Each PSA requires personalization to your jurisdiction, including contact information for the sponsoring agency or organization (name or organization, telephone number, and/or Web URL).



Working with the Media (continued)

Two of the PSAs (60 seconds and 30 seconds) require the recording of different voices in the opening to represent different types of crime victims (these can be adapted to accurately reflect the most prevalent types of victimization in your community).

PSAs can be submitted as scripts for on-air personalities to read, or you can ask the television or radio station to audiotape or videotape your preferred spokesperson(s).

Your PSAs are more likely to receive airtime if you invest time in advance preparation. Here are some helpful tips:

- Your PSA should be submitted *at least six weeks in advance* of NCVRW (by Friday, March 10, 2006).
- Personal contacts with the public service or news directors of local television and radio stations are essential. You can provide them with a brief overview of NCVRW, its goal and theme, and collaborative efforts to commemorate this week in your community.
- If your PSAs are specific to NCVRW, ask that they be aired during the week of April 23rd to 29th, 2006. Otherwise, offer a specific time period for broadcast.
- When your PSAs receive airtime, it's a good idea to send a thank you note to your news media contact that emphasizes the value of their contribution to NCVRW and to increasing victim and public awareness about crime victims' rights and services.

Sample Opinion/Editorial Column

Opinion/editorial columns offer one of the best venues for providing a “personalized pitch” about crime victims’ rights, needs and services. Most newspapers include columns from national, state and local perspectives. Your opinion/editorial column for NCVRW can reflect all three perspectives for maximum impact.

The “Tips for Writing an Opinion/Editorial Column” provides suggestions on what to include in your opinion/editorial to help increase the chances of getting it published. Also, the sample opinion/editorial column offers an example of one that was published.

In addition, the opinion/editorial columns can be easily adapted as a taped “actuality” for radio or television. Actualities are 60-second editorial statements read by the author and taped for public broadcast on television or radio. Your local television and radio stations can provide guidelines about the format and acceptance of broadcast actualities.

SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

(Date)

CONTACT:

(Name/Title/Agency)

(A/C – Telephone)

(Your City) Joins National Commemoration of 2006 National Crime Victims' Rights Week
Victims' Rights: Strength in Unity

(City/State) – During the week of April 23rd to 29th, 2006, crime victims and survivors and those who serve them will join together across America to promote victims' rights and services, and to educate our communities about the devastating impact of crime on victims, neighborhoods, schools and our nation as a whole. The theme of 2006 National Crime Victims' Rights Week—"Victims' Rights: Strength in Unity"—pays tribute to crime victims and survivors who, for many decades, have joined together in mutual support and advocacy to promote victims' rights and services. It also recognizes the ongoing efforts of countless victim service providers, justice professionals, and allied professionals and volunteers who selflessly dedicate their lives to helping victims of crime.

For decades, crime victims and those who serve them have joined forces to ensure that all victims are aware of their rights, and have access to the many community- and justice system-based services that can help them in the aftermath of crime. There are many programs in our community that provide victims with crisis intervention, counseling, support, safety planning, and advocacy throughout criminal and juvenile justice processes; and our state's victim compensation program helps victims recover from the many costs associated with criminal victimization.

According to John W. Gillis, Director of the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) within the Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, "the victims services field has gained strength by having a unified vision, a unified voice, and unified policies and practices to promote justice and healing for crime victims."

"By 'putting victims first,' our community recognizes that crime victims are *integral* to criminal, tribal, military and juvenile justice processes," Gillis said. "And by speaking out and sharing the 'power of their personal stories,' crime victims help us recognize the *hurt* and *harm* that victims endure."

OVC will be "kicking off" 2006 National Crime Victims' Rights Week in Washington, D.C. with its 4th Annual National Candlelight Observance on Thursday, April 20th, and its Awards Ceremony on Friday, April 21st.

Here in (city/county/state), there are many special events to commemorate 2006 National Crime Victims' Rights Week. Included are: (cite examples of special events, and attach a summary of key activities to this press release).

Members of our community are encouraged to promote "Victims' Rights: Strength in Unity" by joining crime victims and survivors, victim advocates, justice professionals and many others during National Crime Victims' Rights Week, April 23rd to 29th. For additional information about 2006 National Crime Victims' Rights Week, crime victim assistance, or volunteer opportunities, please contact (agency/organization) at (area code/telephone number), or visit (name of agency's) Web site at (Web site address). For information about national resources available to help crime victims, please visit the Web site developed by the Office for Victims of Crime at www.crimevictims.gov.

END

Type your press release double-spaced on the sample letterhead included in this Resource Guide.

SAMPLE PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS

60 Seconds

(DIFFERENT VOICES) – “I am a victim of violence.” “My parents were killed in a drunk driving crash.” “I am a survivor of rape.” “My husband beat me and my children for years.” “My only daughter was murdered.” “My five-year-old son was molested by a serial pedophile.”

(ANNOUNCER) – These are the voices of victims of crime in our community. This week is National Crime Victims’ Rights Week—a time for all of us to reflect upon the devastating impact that crime in America has on individuals, families, communities, and our nation as a whole. While nobody *expects* to be a victim of crime, it’s likely that each of us will experience the hurt that crime causes, either personally or through a crime committed against someone we know.

The theme of 2006 National Crime Victims’ Rights Week—“Victims’ Rights: Strength in Unity”—speaks to the *strength* we gain in our collective efforts to fight crime and support victims and survivors, and the *unity* we share in our concerned commitment about crime and victimization in America. When *one* person is affected by crime, we *all* feel its impact. Access to supportive services in our community, and victims’ rights to be engaged in justice proceedings, are what *victim justice* is all about in America. And victim justice can only be achieved through *strength in unity*.

So during 2006 National Crime Victims’ Rights Week and throughout the year, it’s important to realize that victims of crime in (*community/state*) have many rights within the criminal and juvenile justice systems, and many services that can help them cope with the aftermath of crime. If you or someone you know is a victim of crime, *help* and *hope* are available. If you or someone you know is hurt by crime, you can visit the Web site developed by the Office for Victims of Crime within the U.S. Department of Justice at www.crimevictims.gov. For more information about crime victims’ rights and services in (*community/state*) or to volunteer for victims of crime, please call (*area code/telephone number*) or visit our Web site at (*URL*).

30 Seconds

(DIFFERENT VOICES) – “I am a victim of violence.” “My parents were killed in a drunk driving crash.” “I am a survivor of rape.” “My husband beat me and my children for years.” “My only daughter was murdered.” “My five-year-old son was molested by a serial pedophile.”

(ANNOUNCER) – These are the voices of victims of crime in our community. These are our family members and friends, neighbors and co-workers. These are the people we recognize and honor this week during National Crime Victims’ Rights Week. During this special week, we have the opportunity to put *unity* into the *community* of people who recognize crime victims’ needs, and work together to meet their needs and help ensure that their rights are enforced.

So during National Crime Victims’ Rights Week and throughout the year, remember that there is *strength in unity* and, only *together*, can we fight crime and help victims and survivors. You can get help, or help out. For more information about victims’ rights and services in (*community/state*) or to volunteer to help victims of crime, please call (*area code/telephone number*) or visit our Web site at (*URL*).

15 Seconds

This is National Crime Victims’ Rights Week. If you are a victim of crime, help is available. If you’d like to volunteer to help victims, opportunities are available. For more information about crime victims’ rights and services in (*community/state*) or to volunteer to help victims of crime, please call (*area code/telephone number*) or visit our Web site at (*URL*).

Tips for Writing A Sample Opinion/Editorial Column

An opinion/editorial column is one of the most effective ways to educate your community about crime victims' rights and services. It gives you the opportunity to comment on timely issues affecting your community and state, and to inform the public about how victim assistance programs can help solve such issues.

This guidance for writing an opinion/editorial column is provided to assist you in developing a persuasive statement to bring attention to your issue. It is helpful to contact or visit the Web site of the news medium to which you are submitting the column for specific guidelines about submission requirements and publication of opinion/editorial columns.

To help increase the chances of getting your column published, consider the following tips:

- Link your column to an issue that is currently happening in your local or state news. Important pending victims' rights legislation, a key court or case law decision, challenges to funding for victim services, issues regarding the implementation of victims' rights in your community, and new, innovative services that make a difference in victims' lives are among the key issues that can be incorporated in the opinion/editorial column.
- Reference the NCVRW theme, "Victims' Rights: Strength in Unity," which offers an excellent opportunity for a "call for action" to solicit support and involvement of community members and policy makers. Sample language:
 - This is National Crime Victims' Rights Week, a time for us—as individuals, as a community, and as a nation—to join together and recognize the hurt and harm that victims endure in the aftermath of crime. We can embody the theme of this special commemorative week—"Victims' Rights: Strength in Unity"—by standing *together* in the fight *against* crime and *for* crime victims' rights and services.
- Emphasize the pervasive nature of crime and victimization in homes, schools, businesses and communities, and how it might affect people who read the column. For national statistics, refer to the 21 statistical overviews included in the Statistical Overview and Resources section of the Resource Guide, or personalize the column with local statistics. Sample national statistics:
 - Each and every day in America, 45 people are murdered;¹ 46 people are killed by drunk drivers;² 575 women and men are raped;³ 12,249 people are assaulted;⁴ 1,612 women are battered by an intimate partner;⁵ 2,482 children are abused or neglected;⁶ 3,775 people are stalked;⁷ 9,391 homes are burglarized;⁸ and over 25,000 people become victims of identify theft.⁹
- Express your opinion clearly and forcefully. If you feel passionate about the subject you are addressing, the readers will as well.
- Offer strong support for the opinion you are expressing through:
 - Personal testimonials from crime victims and survivors (in the past, entire published columns have been written around *one* victim's experience).
 - Quotations from justice professionals, victim advocates and community leaders.
 - Personal testimony from experts on the subject(s) you are addressing.
- Infuse your personal experiences and personality into the column. Once readers have read it, they should have an idea of who you are and what you believe in.
- Tie the opinion/editorial column into local Victims' Rights Week activities and encourage the community to participate.

Tips for Writing A Sample Opinion/Editorial Column (continued)

- Begin and end with a flourish. Your column should “grab” readers at the beginning, and leave them with an inspiring thought at its conclusion. Sample language that ties in the theme—“Victims’ Rights: Strength in Unity”:

- America is a nation of caring and compassion, as evidenced within the last year by our outpouring of support to our international neighbors in Southeast Asia following the devastating tsunami, and to our own neighbors in the south following the horrific hurricanes, Katrina, Rita and Wilma. It is this sense of unity in community that makes our nation great, and that epitomizes our collective strength that can benefit victims of crime each and every day. *(If your community specifically responded to these events, mention those efforts and encourage a similar response to crime victims in your community.)*

Please also use information contained throughout the Resource Guide, including statistical information, landmarks in victims’ rights, and language from the sample speech.

¹ Federal Bureau of Investigation. October 2004. *Crime in the United States, 2003*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice.

² National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. August 2005. *2004 Traffic Safety Annual Assessment-Early Results*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Transportation.

³ Catalano, Shannan M. September 2005. *Criminal Victimization, 2004*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Rennison, Callie. February 2003. *Intimate Partner Violence, 1993-2001*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics.

⁶ Children’s Bureau. Administration for Children and Families. 2005. *Child Maltreatment 2003*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

⁷ Tjaden, Patricia and Nancy Theonnes. April 1998. *Stalking in America: Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice.

⁸ See note 3 above.

⁹ Council of Better Business Bureaus, Inc. January 2005. *New Research Shows That Identity Theft Is More Prevalent Offline with Paper than Online*. Arlington, VA: Council of Better Business Bureaus, Inc.

SAMPLE OPINION/EDITORIAL COLUMN

Copyright 2005 St. Louis Post-Dispatch, Inc.
St. Louis Post-Dispatch (Missouri)
September 6, 2005 Tuesday FIVE STAR LATE LIFT EDITION

SECTION: EDITORIAL; Pg. B7

LENGTH: 697 words

HEADLINE: Pointing out problems isn't enough Dealing with rape requires community-wide partnerships and an unwavering focus on the victims.

BYLINE: By KATHLEEN HANRAHAN

BODY:

There's no way around it: Rape is everyone's worst nightmare. The U.S. Department of Justice's National Crime Victimization Survey reports that one of every six American women has been the victim of an attempted or completed rape in her lifetime.

When you know the victims' names and stories, sexual violence is even harder to accept. As difficult as it is to comprehend the reality of sexual assault in our community, it is much more difficult to say, "It was my sister, my friend or my neighbor who was raped."

In the wake of last week's Post-Dispatch four-part series titled "What Rape?," it's important that our community remain focused on the real story: the victims. At the YWCA's St. Louis Regional Sexual Assault Center, we work with rape victims every day providing advocacy, support and resources. The St. Louis Police Department's sex crimes unit is one of our strongest allies, using its expertise to meet the needs of rape victims in our community.

Our experience is that the city of St. Louis is a community where victims of rape can feel safe in reporting their crime and can know that they will receive the help and support they need.

Community response to rape victims goes far beyond the reporting of the crime, the arrest or the trial. In our metropolitan area, long-standing partnerships are committed to dealing effectively with the nightmare of sexual violence. Only through the conscious collaboration and diligence of health care professionals, police officers, prosecutors and victims'-service providers—working together and sharing expertise—can we improve our service to victims.

Sexual violence is an extraordinarily complicated crime, involving many more issues than the way statistics are reported or categorized. Are there problems? Absolutely.

Those of us working directly with victims resolve problems every day, and we know that issues don't just arise in one area or with one organization.

The most effective approach requires all of us who work in the field to ensure there is adequate training, staff and resources, and always—always—to stay focused on the real issue: the victim.

Sexual violence isn't a numbers game. It is a personal trauma that evokes painful memories each time we talk about it. It's about people like Denise, a 34-year-old businesswoman who has panic attacks on cold snowy nights; or Marion, who is 72 and never thought she'd be raped in her own home; or Lisa, who was raped by her uncle and told by her family that "we don't talk about things like that" and countless college students who have left school because they couldn't deal with the memories of rape. Victims' stories are endless, and their nightmares are real.

Those of us who deal with victims on a daily basis must be vigilant in our efforts to improve our response to victims and to create a safe environment for reporting rape and holding perpetrators accountable. We all must be part of the solution.

Get to know your victims'-service agencies and support them. Ask your local school about its sexual assault risk-reduction programs. Ask your health care provider and local hospital about training for professionals who respond to victims. Support your police department and local prosecutors in their efforts to broaden their expertise and resources to deal with sexual violence.

In the St. Louis area, help can be just a phone call away. The YWCA's St. Louis Regional Sexual Assault Center provides 24-hour crisis intervention at area hospitals, follow-up, case management and therapy for all victims of sexual violence and their families, all at no charge. If you know someone who is dealing with the trauma of rape or sexual assault, tell them call the crisis line at 314-531-RAPE (7273) or the center at 314-726-6665.

We must do more than identify problems. We have to stay focused on the real issue in these crimes: the victims.

—
Kathleen Hanrahan is director of the YWCA's St. Louis Regional Sexual Assault Center, which is based in Clayton.

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