



EVENT PLANNING

Introduction

An event for National Victims of Crime Awareness Week can be as large or as small as you want it to be. It does not need to be expensive, detailed or time-consuming to organize. Sometimes the most meaningful events are the simplest – what matters is the effort to build awareness of victim issues in your community. Simply by holding your event during the National Victims of Crime Awareness Week, you can take advantage of the **national event to raise interest at the local level.**

There are many options for special events and activities. Canadians celebrate in different ways that reflect the unique sense of their communities. Use this Guide to get ideas for events that your community can host, with suggested timelines, planning tools, and tips for holding a successful event.

There are limited funds to support your local event available by application through the Victims Fund administered by the Policy Centre for Victim Issues at the Department of Justice Canada. For more information on funding guidelines, deadlines and to obtain an application form please visit www.victimswweek.gc.ca.

And remember: No matter what event or activity you decide to undertake, you will have helped to raise awareness of victim issues and the National Victims of Crime Awareness Week.

Why host an event during National Victims of Crime Awareness Week?

By hosting an event or activity during National Victims of Crime Awareness Week you can accomplish one or many goals, including:

- raising the voices of victims of crime and of their families;
- raising awareness of the important role victims of crime have in the criminal justice system;
- calling attention to the services and assistance available to victims and their families in your community;
- encouraging idea-sharing and networking within your community and among victim-support services;
- celebrating and recognizing those who support victims and their families;
- recruiting volunteers;
- raising funds for victim serving organizations.

What kinds of events can you host?

First, determine your target audience – who the event or activity is aimed at. Next, decide what kind of event you want to organize and what its goals will be, based on the National Victims of Crime Awareness Week theme. You will want to match the type of event that you choose to your audience, topic and goals.

Suggested events to support victims of crime:

- Host a candlelight vigil or march. Bring the community together in a memorial vigil for victims who lost their lives, and family members of victims. Invite victims, their friends and families, the local community, dignitaries, politicians, victim service providers, and other community workers. Ask people to speak about their experiences.
- Consider holding a short multi-faith or non-denominational service with a focus on what it means to “do justice.”
- Host a flag presentation. Present your organization’s flag to the city or town, or present it (or the municipal, provincial, or Canadian flag) to families of those who have been victimized or have lost their lives to crime in the past year.
- Hold a dedication ceremony for an object or space. Create a memorial garden or plant and dedicate new trees in a public space to victims of crime. The same can be done with a park bench or local landmark. If there is a new local building going up, propose dedicating each brick on one of its walls to a victim of crime in your community.
- Have a half-staff flag-flying ceremony. On the first day of National Victims of Crime Awareness Week, or on the day of the Week’s most significant event, have your municipal government offices and local businesses fly their flags at half-staff in honour of victims.
- Hold a moment of silence in schools or workplaces.
- Set up a booth in a local mall, library or community centre where people tend to gather or pass by.

Suggested events to recognize victim-support networks:

- Host an appreciation event. Recognize individuals who support victims of crime with a pancake breakfast, potluck lunch or dinner, movie night, or local museum tour.
- Hold an awards ceremony and present awards or letters of recognition to acknowledge efforts of long-serving volunteers and staff.
- Host a training event for staff and/or volunteers.

Suggested events to raise general awareness in your community:

- Develop a city or town proclamation to officially recognize National Victims of Crime Awareness Week. Request that municipal officials formally proclaim the Week through a launch event. Invite media, local personalities and politicians, as well as the community – including victims and their families. See the sample proclamation included in this Resource Guide, as well as the sample speech that an official might use at a launch event.
- Distribute small lapel ribbons to local businesses and organizations to hand out to the community. Tie commemorative ribbons to city lampposts, flagpoles, and trees (ensuring in advance that there are no regulations against this activity).
- Initiate a symposium, conference, speaker series, panel discussion, or town hall meeting or identify existing venues for speaking, such as at Kiwanis Club or community council meetings. Ask local victim service providers and criminal justice system professionals, and well-known politicians and personalities to speak about victim issues in your community. Invite the public, as well as other victim service providers and the media. It is important that the request be sensitive to victims’ right to privacy, but some victims of crime may wish to share their story publicly.

- Have a petition blitz. Gain support for victim issues in your community or province by circulating petitions calling for improvements to legislation and to services for victims and their families.
- Organize a fundraiser for a new project. Pick a particular need for your organization or victims in your area and use the Week to promote the need for funds to support it.
- Collect used cell phones. Have local businesses assist in the collection of old cellular phones to donate to local women's or youth shelters for use as emergency help lines.
- Organize a campaign to recruit volunteers. You can encourage people to join your organization or you can ask them to help by referring victims for service and assistance and by being a source of personal support for victims of crime.
- Identify possible tie-in events, such as school, community and church fairs or conferences, and contact organizers about providing a speaker or an informational booth.
- Organize an open house and invite local personalities and politicians, as well as the general public. Held in conjunction with a speaker or workshop presentation, this can be a valuable way to demonstrate the need for victim services.
- Hold workshops. Provide free workshops for community residents addressing victim issues that are particularly important to your region.
- Conduct training during roll call. For those working within police services, a great opportunity to provide short, daily training on victim issues is during the daily roll call meeting. Deliver at least one training session focused on victim issues during National Victims of Crime Awareness Week.
- Contact a local radio or television station about setting up an interview or a panel discussion on victim issues, possibly in a call-in format. Suggest names of local victims who may wish to speak out, victim service providers, politicians, or well-known community members who could participate. (It is a good idea to contact your suggested people first).

Further Suggestions:

- Dedicate an issue of your newsletter to an individual or group or print a special edition to highlight Victim issues.
- Recognize staff or volunteers and their success stories of hard work in your weekly or monthly newsletter.
- Design t-shirts, bags, key chains or other promotional items to give away or sell.
- Ask local newspapers, television or radio stations to sponsor the Week or a specific event. Perhaps a local media personality would be willing to champion National Victims of Crime Awareness Week to help raise the profile.
- Use your local newspaper, television or radio station to share information on National Victims of Crime Awareness Week. Take part of your time with the media to thank and recognize the efforts of all those who support victims of crime: friends, family, and support workers of all kinds. (See the Media Relations module for more information.)
- See the Promote your Event section below for ideas on how to raise awareness of your event.

How to Begin Planning Your Event

Every successful event requires detailed planning and careful organization. This section offers a series of practical tips to help you plan and coordinate a focused, well-attended event. When tasks are broken down into simple steps, planning a successful event can become manageable for even the smallest community.

Establishing a Planning Committee

You should develop a planning committee, or join an existing committee to coordinate your event. It helps to compile a comprehensive list of individuals and groups who might be interested in joining you. Once you have a group of people dedicated to the success of running an event, the rest of the planning should fall into place.

Partner up!

Broad-based coalitions and events are the best way to increase public awareness. Associate with other events and appropriate initiatives in your community, city, region or province as much as possible. There are numerous ways that two initiatives can complement one another. For instance, you may be able to focus on specific areas of concern that you share with other initiatives, such as dating violence, family violence or victimization of seniors.

Don't forget local resources

Try to include victims of crime or high-profile members of the community who have been personally affected by crime by asking them for ideas on planning an event or by inviting them to participate on your organizing committee. For example, if your committee decides to develop a speakers' panel as one of its activities, ask if victims would be willing to relate their experiences. You may also contact local citizens who have written about crime and victim issues.

Tap into existing volunteer resources from community groups and organizations or religious networks. You could also contact the people who run local restorative justice, alternative justice or community justice programs in your community.

Crime often has a devastating effect on local businesses, so it is a good idea to target some recruitment efforts at the business community. Meet with members of your local Chamber of Commerce and business-improvement associations and encourage them to participate in your event. Offer to supply materials for their Web sites or newsletters, and invite them to share their perspectives on the economic impacts of crime.

Students in many provinces must perform a minimum number of hours of community service to graduate from high school. Consider recruiting students to develop, plan and organize events in their schools, or seek their input into potential community events. You could also ask them to help with the legwork involved in organizing your event.

There is a wealth of resources and volunteers in every community. The list may include such groups and community members as the following:

- Crime victims and their families.
- Representatives of the local police, and provincial and federal agencies involved in the criminal justice system.
- Local politicians.
- Victim services providers, health professionals, business and community associations.
- Church officials and their communities.
- Local community groups, organizations, and clubs.
- Restorative justice organizations or committees.
- Elementary and high schools, colleges, and universities.
- Local chapters of Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), Crime Stoppers, Neighbourhood Watch, and other groups with similar mandates.
- Correctional agencies in the area.
- Reporters and members of the news media.
- Local media outlets (television, radio, newspaper).

Go online

Online resources such as your organization's web site, other victim service providers' web sites, online news sources, blogs, message boards, and free spaces are great places to share and gather information. In order to attract attention for your events from potential participants and volunteers you can create a database as a hub of information for all those interested. Compile lists of contact information for guests, participants and news media, along with ideas for possible events, relevant Web sites and communications materials, such as pamphlets. Regularly update contact lists for all members of the media and organizing committee.

Promoting your event

Another key to a successful event is getting the word out to potentially interested parties. Here are some ideas for marketing and promoting your event:

- Display a large banner in public. Create a banner or use the one that is available in the Camera-Ready module of this Resource Guide to promote the recognition of victims and their support networks, and post it in a visible space in your community – perhaps over a busy street.
- Display posters in public areas such as in front of the local police station, in community centres, at local stores, libraries or other public places. Two poster designs are included in this Resource Guide – these can be used or adapted for use in your community.
- Create flyers for bag stuffers. Print bag and payroll envelope stuffers for local businesses to give to customers and employees about National Victims of Crime Awareness Week, other related events, and services available to victims. This can also be used to recruit volunteers.
- Create a promotional item. One community promoted their event by manufacturing placemats, which they distributed to local restaurants. The placemats contained information for adults on one side and child-friendly awareness-raising activities on the other side.
- Work with local pizzerias and other businesses to print messages related to the Week on their packaging. For example, one small community arranged to have contact information for victim services and facts about victimization printed on pizza boxes and distributed during the Week.
- Mail out or hand out flyers in your local community.
- Post information about the Week and/or your event on your Web site or contact community groups about their Web sites. Consider posting links to the National Victims of Crime Awareness Week Web site www.victimswweek.gc.ca or to provincial/territorial victim services.

See the media relations section for more ideas on how to market your event using television, radio and newspapers.

Planning your event

This planning guide offers a sample timeline for planning your National Victims of Crime Awareness Week event. It can be used for any type of event you choose. Although there are time lines associated with the tasks, it is always best to start as early as possible. Start today!

As soon as possible:

1. Establish a planning committee.
2. Identify the goal of your event (e.g. to raise awareness, to recognize victim support workers).
3. Decide who your target audience will be.
4. Decide the theme for your event.
5. Identify the resources you have available (budget, volunteers, time).
6. Look at funding available through the Victims Fund, Department of Justice Canada. Deadlines are early in the year.
7. Choose the kind of event.
8. Choose the date and time for your event. It is important to consider when your target audience would most likely be available to attend your event as this will affect the success of your activity.
9. Decide on the number of people you will invite, and determine an invitation list. This list should include special guests, speakers and the media as well as attendees.
10. Identify the location and book a facility if needed.
11. Book a caterer and decide on a menu (or assign food preparation and purchasing tasks to member(s) of your committee), if applicable.

Four weeks before:

1. Order any materials and book any audiovisual or sound equipment you might require.
2. Prepare information kits for the media and special guests. These may include, but are not limited to, a formal invitation or a letter from your organizing committee, a request for the invitee to speak or a request for media coverage, and the event's itinerary. For media kits, include logos your organization uses and short public service announcements to be used in print or on the air.
3. Print and distribute invitations, posters, flyers, pamphlets, and other promotional items.
4. Recruit volunteers to help with miscellaneous items and to ensure the event runs smoothly.

Three weeks before:

1. Follow up with speakers or local personalities to confirm participation.
2. Follow up with invitees to confirm attendance.
3. Confirm the event schedule with the organizing committee and volunteers.
4. Solicit local businesses to sponsor your event (e.g. by donating funds or prizes or by providing food for a meal). Some sponsorship items may also be used as certificates of recognition to thank speakers, outstanding victim support services workers, and community members.
5. Develop resources (e.g. a questionnaire or survey) to evaluate your event, where appropriate.

Two weeks before:

1. Confirm schedule with the facility, caterer, and any other businesses you have employed.
2. Provide speakers and participants with a final detailed itinerary.

3. Plan the physical layout for your event. Ensure the facility has whatever equipment you need to successfully host your event, such as chairs, a microphone, and a podium. If the facility cannot provide them, look into getting them from a local business or rental company.
4. Collect awards and materials that have been offered by sponsors.

One week before:

1. Confirm media attendance.
2. Assemble media kits and information packages to distribute on the day of the event.
3. Confirm all reservations, bookings, rentals, catering, etc. Be sure you have contact numbers for all of these businesses in case problems arise.
4. Delegate duties to volunteers and committee members for the day of the event.
5. Send out a media advisory to ensure that the media are aware of your event. See the Media Relations module of this Resource Guide for more support materials.

One day before:

1. Set up whatever you can for the event.
2. Confirm the duties of volunteers and committee members (what time they are to arrive, what they are to do, the responsibilities of each task, etc.).

On the day of your event:

1. Arrive early to ensure everything is set up properly, and that volunteers and committee members are prepared.
2. Greet speakers, guests, and the media. If you are not able to do this yourself, assign the task to another person, but be sure to stop by and thank them for coming.

3. Brief all speakers on the agenda and any last-minute changes.
4. Send out a press release and/or a letter to the editor to ensure that the media are aware of your event, even if they choose not to attend. See the Media Relations module of this Resource Guide for more support materials.
5. At this time, organizers may choose to hand out evaluation forms to participants in order to evaluate the success of the event and make suggestions for improvement of next year's events.

After your event:

1. Be sure to send your guests, participants, sponsors and the media a thank-you note for their contribution.
2. Meet with the organizing committee to evaluate what went well and what should be changed for next time.
3. Depending on the type and/or size of your event, you may also want to ask participants to evaluate the event. Disseminate these evaluations and make changes to the process.
4. Start planning for the next National Victims of Crime Awareness Week event.

Evaluating your event

Conduct an evaluation once your event is finished. Determine what worked and what did not. Document your findings and share them with other groups that held events. Use the findings to begin to identify strategies and plan next year's events and activities.

Final tips for a successful event:

- Start today. There is little time to spare when it comes to planning your National Victims of Crime Awareness Week event.
- Recognize your organization's limits (time, money, energy) and plan an event that works in those limits, smaller events can be just as memorable.

- Review the contents of this Resource Guide and familiarize yourself with the information, resources and ideas it provides.
- Be mindful of the feelings of victims and their friends and families. Make sure that participants feel comfortable with the events planned. Set up panels and discussion groups thoughtfully. For example, some victims may feel comfortable and confident in speaking with an offender on the same panel, while others may not. Take the time to ask for participants' input.
- Delegate. Use the strengths of your committee, staff and volunteer base to build a strong team for your event. Designate a media spokesperson, and put someone in charge of rental equipment.
- Work within your budget. Create a budget and work with it. Seek support from local businesses and consider working with other organizations on a similar event. Consider applying for funding for your event from the Victims Fund at the Department of Justice Canada.
- Ask guests to RSVP. If they don't respond, call to follow up.
- Ensure accessibility. Make sure your events are open and accessible to everyone in your community, including those with disabilities.
- Encourage participation as well as attendance. It is wonderful to have a large audience, but even better if you can get them involved in discussions, workshops, and other activities.
- Understand your audience. A group of elementary-school children will require different activities than a group of adults. Use interactive visuals with younger people, but don't forget that adults like to be engaged as well.



Adapted From:

How to organize successful events: Celebrate Canada.
Canadian Heritage (2005).

National Crime Victims' Rights Week Resource Guide, US
Office for Victims of Crime (2005).

National Crime Victims' Rights Week Resource Guide, US
Office for Victims of Crime (2006).

Planning Your NVW Event: National Volunteer Week,
Volunteer Canada (2006).

*Victim Services Week Participation Information, Planning
Tips and Other Great Event Ideas,* Victims Services:
Saskatchewan Justice (2000).

INTRODUCTION TO PROCLAMATION

How to use the sample proclamation

National Victims of Crime Awareness week has previously attracted attention of many provincial and municipal officials. Having a government official proclaim the week of April 26 to May 2, 2009 to be “(Name of province/municipality) Victims of Crime Awareness Week.” will help promote awareness and raise the profile of the Week in the community.

The sample proclamation included in this Guide focuses on this year’s theme for the event: *Supporting, Connecting, Evolving*. Adapting this sample proclamation to your specific community and reflecting local victim issues and services will help to gain attention from government officials. You can request that the proclamation be printed onto departmental or government letterhead; most jurisdictions will already have standard proclamation formatting and language.

Contact you local government offices and websites to determine the steps to request a proclamation.

Proclamations can be framed and displayed in the offices of programs and government offices that co-sponsor National Victims of Crime Awareness Week activities.

Sample Proclamation

WHEREAS, when a crime occurs, it doesn’t affect just one person, but their family members and the entire community; and

WHEREAS, crime victims and their families deserve support from their community; and

WHEREAS, many victim service providers, police officers, and professionals working in the criminal justice system provide assistance to victims of crime and their families; and

WHEREAS, crime victims need to know that they have a voice in our criminal justice system and that there are laws in place to help them; and

WHEREAS, National Victims of Crime Awareness Week, April 26 to May 2, 2009 offers an opportunity for the community to raise awareness about victim issues, and about the services and laws in place to help victims and their families; and

WHEREAS, the theme for National Victims of Crime Awareness Week – *Supporting, Connecting, Evolving* – will help to promote greater understanding of victim issues; and

WHEREAS, an increased awareness of victim issues will encourage citizens to discuss the impacts of crime and be a personal support to victims; and

WHEREAS, public demonstrations of support for victims of crime help to build a community’s capacity for compassion to assist victims and their families and the community as a whole; and

WHEREAS, addressing the victim issues requires the support and dedication of the whole community; and

WHEREAS, the support of _____ of [name of council or representative body] will encourage a greater number of citizens to participate in National Victims of Crime Awareness Week; therefore be it;

RESOLVED THAT I, _____, [title] of the [province/municipality] of _____, do hereby proclaim April 26 to May 2, 2009 as Victims of Crime Awareness Week in the [province/municipality] of _____; and

RESOLVED THAT during National Victims of Crime Awareness Week and throughout the year, [province/municipality] will recognize victims of crime and those who assist them and be it further;

RESOLVED THAT [province/municipality] will remain committed to addressing and advancing victim issues.

DRAFT VIP SPEECH

Department of Justice
National Victims of Crime Awareness Week
April 26 to May 2, 2009
Supporting, Connecting, Evolving

Good morning/afternoon.
(Welcome dignitaries, add acknowledgments for invitation to speak)

We're here today to talk about a difficult subject – the impact of crime on individuals and families.

It's a topic that most people don't want to discuss. Crime can have a devastating effect on its victims and their families. Even if we haven't been victims ourselves, sometimes just talking about what is happening to others makes us all feel more vulnerable.

And often, we also feel helpless because we don't know what we can do to help those who have been victimized.

One in four people in Canada consider themselves to be a victim of crime. And we have to keep in mind that not all crimes are reported.

(If there are local statistics or local stories, may wish to mention here, as in "I'm thinking about")

In fact, crime affects us all, even if we are not the victim. Sometimes just the fear of becoming a victim is enough to affect the way we act. It can limit our choices, if we let it – where to go, whether we walk alone, what chances we take. It can make us feel isolated, and it can affect our relationships with our families, our friends, our neighbours and our community.

This week is National Victims of Crime Awareness Week (OR National Victims of Crime Awareness Week is coming soon.) We are here to support victims of crime, to listen to them, and to learn what they need and how we can help. We are here to think about how, as a society, we care for each other when we have been hurt or wronged.

Today, we can take comfort in the fact that certain crimes such as murder and abductions of children and youth are all declining in Canada. While we must take action to ensure that this trend continues, we also need to be there for those who are hurt by the crimes that do take place.

To move forward, we need to hear the stories of people who have been victimized. We need to help them find their voice, and restore the self-confidence and sense of control that crime can take away. We can begin by acknowledging that they have a role to play in the justice system and in our communities.

Thank you.