

# Every Victim Matters



## MEDIA RELATIONS

### National Victims of Crime Awareness Week

April 18 to 24, 2010

[www.victimswweek.gc.ca](http://www.victimswweek.gc.ca)

## INTRODUCTION TO WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

Knowing how to work with the media will give you an excellent tool to generate public interest in National Victims of Crime Awareness Week. Television coverage of an event or a personal interview in a newspaper, to mention just two options, can help you call attention to available services, flag volunteer opportunities, and raise awareness about the impact of crime, particularly on victims and their families.

There are two kinds of media coverage: paid and unpaid. Paid media coverage is usually known as advertising. Unpaid media coverage can take a variety of forms, such as public service announcements, letters to the editor (for newspapers, magazines or online publications), and photos, articles or features generated either by you or by a reporter.

The first step in getting media exposure is having a clear idea of your target audience so you can select the most appropriate medium. Who is your message aimed at, and which media will be most effective in reaching that audience? For example, an older audience is more likely to use traditional media (television, radio, newspapers etc.), whereas a younger audience might be reached best through the Web. A community newspaper will appeal to a different audience than a local business newspaper.

Another important consideration is having a “hook”. What will catch the attention of your audience and make them interested in your event or story? The fact that you are running your event during National Victims of Crime Awareness Week will help “sell” the story to the media. You can also make use of information from this Resource Guide’s fact sheets. Connecting your event to local accounts, issues, or statistics is likely the most important incentive for media, so you should give some thought to possible local connections. You might want to ask a local radio or television host or newspaper columnist to participate in your event as a special guest, host or moderator. You can also ask local media to sponsor your event. See the Event Planning section for more details.





## Advertising

If you have a budget, advertising can be an effective way to reach your audience. Traditional media such as television, radio, newspapers and magazines can help you produce an advertisement for broadcast or print. The cost will vary depending on such factors as the size of the media readership, what other media is available (competition), the number of times your ad appears, its size or length, and where it is placed (e.g. front page or back cover) or when it is run (during a top-rated evening show or in the middle of the afternoon). Contact the advertising department of your target media for more details.

## Media Relations/Publicity

It is possible to get significant media coverage of your event without paying for advertising.

### Public Service Announcements

Most broadcast and print media will announce upcoming community events in community calendars or bulletins free of charge. Send the details of your event to the attention of the community events calendar at local papers and radio and television stations. In addition, radio stations, local cable channels and some television stations will run public service announcements (PSAs). Several sample PSAs are included at the end of this section for you to adapt for local use.

## Letters to the Editor

Letters to the editor in newspapers and magazines can be powerful tools to raise awareness about victim issues and to promote your event at the same time. A sample letter to the editor is included in this section of the Resource Guide.

## Preparing Your Message

Getting the media to cover your event can be a bit more involved. You will need to think of a hook and prepare a few written materials in advance, such as a news release and background information about the event or victim issues that you want to highlight. The fact sheets, success stories, testimonials and sample news release included in the Resource Guide may be helpful.

You will need to identify someone in your organization as the media contact or spokesperson – someone who can promote your event and respond to inquiries from journalists and the public. This person should have a good understanding of the nature and purpose of the event and the important issues involved. Prepare some key messages in advance so the spokesperson will be sure to deliver the right message.

The spokesperson should also be prepared to answer the hard questions. A list of Questions and Answers (Q&As) can be helpful. Spend some time thinking of questions that an investigative reporter might ask and prepare answers that will help your spokesperson stay on message.



## Basic Dos and Don'ts for Media Spokespersons

- Prepare the key messages beforehand.
- Listen carefully to questions before answering.
- Emphasize key messages.
- Stick to the facts, stay on topic.
- Be driven by the message, not the questions.
- Do not speculate.
- Do not answer hypothetical questions.
- Do not feel obliged to fill “dead air” by talking needlessly.

## Getting the Message Out

Local media Web sites generally provide up to date contact information which you can use to build a good media directory that can be helpful both during the Week and throughout the year.

You should contact the assignment or news editor at community newspapers, television and radio stations at least two weeks before your event. Community television and newspapers, in particular, require plenty of prior notice to accommodate their recording and print schedules (though magazine timelines are longer). Describe your plans and explain why the event will be of interest to the media's target audience; provide the date, time, and location of the event, and say who will be participating, including special guests. Follow up your first contact by sending a small package of background information with your news release.

If media outlets do not have staff to cover your activity, offer to write an article on the event for them. Many community newspapers will accept stories or photographs of community events they cannot attend.

Remember that television tells a story through pictures. Make sure your event has plenty of photo opportunities. The more engaging the pictures, the more likely you will get coverage.

Always remind the media about your activities the day before – a media advisory sent by e-mail or fax is a good way to update them on any last-minute changes and encourage them to come out. A sample media advisory has been included in the Resource Guide to assist you.

## Additional Media Activities

Radio and television talk shows can provide an opportunity for listeners to learn about and discuss the importance of victim issues in their community. Encourage radio hosts and producers of TV news and public affairs programs to plan a special program for their audiences during National Victims of Crime Awareness Week. You should provide them with a local hook and a list of possible interviewees/panellists for the program.

## Using the Web

The Internet is an important tool in media relations. For some target audiences, the Internet may be their main source of news. Many mainstream media outlets now offer content that is available only on their Web sites, and there are numerous Web news sites, blogs and community group event listings that you may wish to take advantage of.



## Sample Media Tools

This Guide contains four sample media tools that you can tailor to reflect a local perspective on victim issues and services. The sample media advisory can be used to let the press know about the “who, what, when, and where” of your events. The sample news release can be used to convey information to the media about the purpose of the week’s activities. Public service announcements (PSAs) can be provided to local radio and television broadcasting stations. A sample letter to the editor is also included, which can be personalized for your local newspaper.

## How to use the Sample Media Advisory

This sample media advisory is designed to give media the basic “who, what, when and where” so that they can send reporters, camera crews, or photographers to cover your event. Send the advisory by fax or e-mail to local media two days to one week before your event. This information should also be included at the end of your news release or sent as a reminder to media.

## How to use the Sample News Release

The news release is a good way to give the media information about both national and local events. The sample provided offers basic information about the structure of a release, as well as quotes from the federal Ministers of Justice and Public Safety, both of whom have national responsibility for victim issues.

The news release should be tailored to highlight the key activities that will occur in your community to mark National Victims of Crime Awareness Week. Be sure to indicate your organization’s media contact or spokesperson at the bottom of the news release.

The news release may be typed on the sample letterhead included in this Resource Guide. It can then be sent by mail, fax or e-mail at least one week before your event (two weeks in the case of community newspapers and television). Your media contact or spokesperson should also make a follow-up telephone call to confirm whether someone from the media organization will be attending your event and whether they are interested in running a story – their own or one provided by you – about victim issues in your community.

## How to use the Sample Public Service Announcements

Several sample scripts for radio and television public service announcements (PSAs) are included in the lengths most media outlets use – 60 seconds, 30 seconds and 15 seconds. Each PSA can be personalized to your area and organization with contact information such as telephone numbers and Web site addresses.

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 organization’s spokesperson. Your PSA should be submitted as far as possible in advance of National Victims of Crime Awareness Week so the station can schedule it to air during the week.



When your PSAs have been aired, be sure to send a thank-you note to your media contact, emphasizing the value of their contribution to National Victims of Crime Awareness Week and to increasing public awareness about victim issues and services.

## How to Use the Sample Letter to the Editor

Letters to the editor can provide personal insights into victim issues and services. The sample provided can be used as a starting point for your own letter. You should send your letter to the editor to your local newspaper a few days in advance of National Victims of Crime Awareness Week, so you should be aware of their print schedule.

A letter to the editor can also be 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 of broadcast actualities.

When preparing a letter to the editor it is helpful to follow these tips:

- Link the letter to an issue that is currently happening in your local news. Make a connection or show how the issues have implications for the community.
- Reference the National Victims of Crime Awareness Week theme.
- Provide support for your ideas by using:
  - the statistics found in the Fact Sheets on Crime and Victimization section of this Resource Guide (along with local statistics if you have them); and
  - testimonials from victims of crime and those who work with victims, which can provide a personal perspective. Sample testimonials are also included in this Resource Guide.
- Express your ideas clearly. If you are passionate about your subject, readers will be as well.
- Mention local National Victims of Crime Awareness Week activities and encourage the community to participate.

