

Working With The Media

Your local library is likely to have extensive reference resources to help you develop or enhance a directory of broadcast, print and web-based media for your jurisdiction. In addition, YAHOO offers an excellent service that lists general and specialized media according to region and/or state. It is available on the web at: http://dir.yahoo.com/News_and_Media/By_Region/.

The sample camera-ready NCVRW letterhead should be utilized to print all resources from this section.

SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE

Once victim service providers have completed their plans to commemorate NCVRW, it is helpful to send a general press release to local print, broadcast and web-based media that highlights key activities they will sponsor. The sample press release, which includes a national perspective and a quotation from the Director of the Office for Victims of Crime, can be easily personalized with state or local jurisdiction information.

SAMPLE PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS

One of the best ways to promote victims' rights and services is through the broadcasting of public service announcements (PSAs). The three sample PSAs can be utilized for either radio or television stations. Each PSA should be personalized to include contact information for local victim services, along with any relevant data that accurately reflect crime and victimization in the area in which the PSAs are broadcast. Victim advocates should contact local radio and television stations at least six weeks prior to NCVRW, and ask to speak to the public service director. S/he can provide guidelines about whether the station accepts PSAs and the preferred format. While some stations simply accept PSA scripts that are read by on-air personalities, others ask that the scripts be read by a representative from the organization that submits them. Be sure to understand and follow any guidelines that radio and television stations provide.

SAMPLE OPINION/EDITORIAL COLUMN

Opinion/editorial columns can be a powerful tool to help people in your jurisdiction understand the impact of crime on victims and communities, and the range of rights and services available to assist victims. The sample opinion/editorial column should be personalized and expanded to reflect information pertinent to the community in which it will be published, such as current crime statistics, personal victims' vignettes and information about victims' rights and services. The column can also be edited and submitted to local radio and/or television stations as an actuality, which is a 60-second statement of opinion that is usually read on air by the author. Victim service providers should consider submitting the opinion/editorial column or radio/television actuality from a local NCVRW Planning Committee or coalition.

Sample Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
(Date)

CONTACT: (Name/Title/Agency)
(A/C-Telephone)

“Victims’ Rights: Fulfill the Promise”
America Commemorates the 23rd Anniversary of
National Crime Victims’ Rights Week

(City/State) – During the week of April 6th through the 12th, 2003, crime victims, service providers, criminal and juvenile justice and allied professionals, and community volunteers will join together across America to commemorate the 23rd anniversary of National Crime Victims’ Rights Week. This year’s theme, “Victims’ Rights: Fulfill the Promise,” emphasizes America’s promise to victims to treat them with dignity and compassion; to help identify and meet their most important needs; and to provide them with information about their statutory and constitutional rights, as well as advocacy to help them implement their rights.

This year also marks the 20th anniversary of the national leadership on victims’ issues provided through the Office of Victims of Crime (OVC). Founded in 1983 by the U.S. Department of Justice and placed within the Office of Justice Programs to implement the recommendations of President Reagan’s 1982 *President’s Task Force on Victims of Crime*, OVC provides leadership, support and funding to community- and system-based agencies and organizations that provide victim assistance.

Since 1972, the victims’ rights discipline has strived to place crime victims’ concerns and issues on the forefront of America’s public policy agenda. Over 32,000 laws have been passed at the federal, state and local levels that promote victims’ rights and services, including constitutional amendments in 33 states (*including yours, if applicable*). And today, there are 10,000 community- and justice system-based organizations that provide help and hope to victims of crime.

According to (*spokesperson*), America’s “promise” to victims cannot be kept without a recognition that when crime affects *one* person, it affects us *all*.

“The domino effect of criminal victimization is tremendous,” (*spokesperson*) said. “The physical, emotional, and financial devastation a victim suffers has repercussions that touch us all – in our homes, our neighborhoods, our schools, in our workplaces and beyond.”

– more –

2003 National Crime Victims' Rights Week

Press Release

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“Our promise to victims – of support and services to help them in the aftermath of crime – requires the commitment and compassion of *anyone* to whom a victim might turn for help,” (*spokesperson*) concluded.

Here in (*city/county/state*), a number of activities have been planned to recognize victims of crime and those who serve them during National Crime Victims' Rights Week. Included are: (*cite examples of special events, and attach any relevant summaries to this press release*).

John W. Gillis, Director of the Office for Victims of Crime within the U.S. Department of Justice, encourages *all* people in America who are concerned with community safety to consider what *they* can do to “fulfill the promise” to victims of crime.

“An act of kindness, no matter how small, can make a world of difference to a victim of crime,” Gillis explained. “By reaching out to a victim in need of support, every person in our great nation can ‘fulfill the promise’ of treating victims with respect, identifying and meeting their needs, and helping them seek justice.

“For twenty years, the Office for Victims of Crime has provided leadership and support to America’s victims’ rights movement. During National Crime Victims’ Rights Week and throughout the year, I ask that each of us do what we can to reach out to *any* victim who needs help,” he concluded.

Members of our community are encouraged to join together during 2003 National Crime Victims’ Rights Week, and honor not only victims of crime, but also those who bring honor to victims on a daily basis. For additional information about 2003 National Crime Victims’ Rights Week, please contact (*name*), (*title*), at (*agency/organization*) at (*area code/telephone number*), or visit (*name of agency’s*) web site at (*web site address*).

END

Type your press release *double-spaced* on the *sample letterhead* included in this Resource Guide. If your press release is more than one page, type “ – more – ” in the bottom right corner of the front page, and *paper clip* the second page to the first page. Add the title and date of the press release, plus “Page Two”, in the top left corner of the second page.

Sample Public Service Announcements

: 60 SECONDS

Crime in *(city/county/state)* hurts people – our families, our friends, our neighbors. Crime hurts our community, causing us too often to live in fear. And crime hurts our economy, resulting in significant financial losses to individuals, schools, businesses, and countless others.

April 6th through the 12th is National Crime Victims' Rights Week. This week and throughout the year, *(city/county/state)* programs that help victims recover in the aftermath of crime and seek justice are committed to fulfilling an important promise: that crime victims will be treated with compassion and dignity; that they will receive help in securing their rights under law; and that services will be provided to offer them help and hope.

If you or someone you know is a victim of crime, please call *(name of agency)* at *(area code/telephone number)* for information and assistance, or visit our web site at *(web site address)*.

: 30 SECONDS

April 6th through the 12th is National Crime Victims' Rights Week. Far too many people in *(city/state/county)* have been victims of crime. But if you or someone you know has been victimized, our *(community/state)* offers programs to help you cope with the financial, emotional and physical losses, and to help you understand your rights under the law. Please call *(name of agency)* at *(area code/telephone number)* for information and assistance, or visit our web site at *(web site address)*.

: 15 SECONDS

If you or someone you know has been hurt by crime, services are available to help you cope with financial, emotional and physical losses. Please call *(name of agency)* at *(area code/telephone number)* for information and assistance, or visit our web site at *(web site address)*.

Sample Opinion/Editorial Column

Victims' Rights: Fulfill the Promise

For over thirty years, our nation has witnessed both a growing awareness of the plight of crime victims and the birth of a profession dedicated to serving crime victims within community-based organizations and the criminal and juvenile justice systems. Across the United States, the past three decades have seen enormous strides in establishing basic rights for crime victims concerning the emotional, physical, and financial needs they experience in the aftermath of crime.

April 6th to 12th is National Crime Victims' Rights Week, a commemorative week for crime victims and those who serve them, first instituted by President Reagan and this year marking its 23rd anniversary. Each year a theme is selected to highlight some aspect of the ongoing struggle for better services and assistance for victims of crime; this year the theme is "Victims' Rights: Fulfill the Promise."

What is our "promise" to crime victims? And how have we fulfilled, or *not* fulfilled, that promise? When the first community-based service programs for crime victims began in the early 1970s, few people were conscious of the plight of crime victims. In the United States, where the U.S. Constitution reigns as the law of the land, we are all familiar with the legal protections accorded the accused – the rights to be informed of their rights; to counsel; to face their accusers; and of course, "innocent until proven guilty." But few people, save those with direct experience, were even faintly aware in those early days of the dearth of protection, services, information, and basic respect accorded to those individuals who were victims of criminal conduct.

The promise dreamed and vigorously pursued by the early pioneers of victim services, and carried out by literally thousands of nameless volunteers and professionals since then, is that victims of crime be accorded the same rights, information, and *legal protections* that are constitutionally *guaranteed* to offenders: the promise that victims be treated with the same dignity and respect that we accord to offenders. While not yet fully realized, this promise has seen remarkable progress and achievement over the years.

Today, all states and U.S. Territories have enacted victims' rights statutes that guarantee a range of rights to crime victims, including the rights: to receive information about their rights; of notification about the offender's status and location; to reasonable protection; to submit a victim impact statement detailing the various effects of the crime upon the victim; to restitution from the offender; and, in the case of violent crimes, to be eligible to receive compensation from state victim compensation funds. In addition, 33 states have enacted victims' rights constitutional amendments that strengthen crime victims' rights within the legal system.

A vast network of community-based and system-based professionals and organizations in every state has developed from virtually nothing more than a handful of individuals who dreamed that the promise of equal protection and assistance for crime victims was something that *could and should* be fulfilled. The burgeoning profession of victim assistance in this country has been built upon years of selfless service by countless individuals, paid and volunteer, who steadfastly and resolutely put one foot in front of the other in a sometimes slow but always steady pursuit of the fulfillment of that promise.

Today there are over 32,000 federal and state laws on the books that define and protect victims' rights, as well as over 10,000 community-based and criminal and juvenile justice system-based organizations dedicated to crime victim assistance.

We have come a long way in fulfilling the promise of guaranteeing the legal rights and comprehensive services that should be afforded every victim of crime. But there is still much that can be done. While both the states and the federal government have done much to guarantee victims' rights and services within our systems of justice, there can be no true guarantee of equal protection until it is provided by the U.S. Constitution. A crime victims' amendment to our Constitution is pending in Congress, and its passage and ratification would be a landmark in the struggle for comprehensive protection for victims of crime.

Another challenge that many states are grappling with is the frequency with which statutorily-guaranteed victims' rights are *not* enforced, through simple oversight or even ignorance of their existence by public officials charged with their enforcement. Many states have taken bold and dynamic steps to confront this situation and are working "outside the box" to fashion remedies, including the drafting of implementation legislation, streamlining of existing victims' rights laws, and even restructuring and consolidating statewide victims' services and agencies.

The promise that so many heroic individuals nationwide have been working to fulfill for so long is a noble one that harkens back to the very premises that our country was founded upon: the right to be free and to be treated equally under the law. Crime victims should have these rights; they should not have to fight and endlessly plead with and remind those in positions of power that these rights, in some cases *are*, and in other cases *should be*, theirs.

Our country, and thousands of individuals and families, suffered an unprecedented and horrific loss on September 11, 2001. But it was also a wake-up call to the utter devastation of victimization and its impact on individuals, communities, and our nation as a whole. And it was a demonstration of what this country can accomplish when we pull together to assist those among us who have been victimized by the evil deeds of others.

National Crime Victims' Rights Week is a time for us to reflect upon the direction we are headed, as individuals and as a nation, to assist those who are victimized by crime. It is a good time to take a good, hard look at the promise we owe crime victims and what *more* we can do to fulfill that promise.

Provide a two-to-three sentence description of the author's (or collaborators') title, agency, and relevant role at the end of this opinion/editorial column.