



Good media relations require good media contacts, with an emphasis on journalists who cover issues related to crime and victimization. Members of your 2005 NCVRW Planning Committee should be asked to contribute names and contact information for journalists who have an

interest in these issues. Invite them to serve on the Planning Committee.

A great way to develop a baseline Media Directory for your jurisdiction is to enter the words “media listing” into any Internet search engine. Various resources that appear include news media contacts by geographical region, format (newspapers, radio, television and Web-based), and subject (including “crime”). A good Media Directory is the *first important step* in developing and cultivating productive relationships with the news media, and providing them with ongoing information and resources relevant to crime victims’ issues and key concerns, and current events related to crime and victimization.

Sample Press Release

This year’s NCVRW is particularly newsworthy because it commemorates the 25th anniversary of this annual observance, and provides the opportunity to reflect upon the many accomplishments of our field over the past quarter-century, as well as the challenges that still remain.

The sample press release offers a “then and now” historical perspective of the victim assistance field, including a quotation from President Ronald W. Reagan about why he instituted NCVRW as a national observance in 1981. A quotation from OVC Director John W. Gillis provides a national perspective to complement state and local efforts. Sample quotations

are also provided for designated spokespersons that can be adapted to reflect issues specific to a state or local jurisdiction.

Your 2005 NCVRW press release should be sent at *least ten days prior to NCVRW* (by April 1st). Follow-up phone calls or e-mails can help remind news media representatives about the importance and community awareness value of covering NCVRW events and activities.

Sample Public Service Announcements

The three sample public service announcements (PSAs) are designed to accommodate public service advertisement programming slots for television and radio media – 60 seconds, 30 seconds, and 15 seconds. Each PSA requires personalization that reflects the most critical issues of your state or local jurisdiction, as well as local contact information (by both telephone and Internet access).

Most television and radio stations appreciate advance submission of PSAs – at least six weeks prior to NCVRW (*or March 1, 2005*). Personal contacts for PSA submissions are *essential*. Members of your 2005 NCVRW Planning Committee can divide up different news media stations, and attempt to make personal contacts with public service or news directors at each medium, who can provide guidelines for PSA submission and their preferred format.

Many stations accept PSAs that are read on the radio or television by news anchors or other on-air personalities, while some prefer that a spokesperson from the organization or coalition submitting the PSA read it, which is taped for broadcast (this is called a “news actuality”). Personal contacts with broadcast media and appropriate follow-on calls or e-mails will help ensure that your 2005 NCVRW PSAs are aired to the widest possible broadcast audience.

Sample Opinion/Editorial Column

If you want to persuade the public about the vital importance of crime victims’ rights and services, an opinion/editorial column is an excellent venue. The sample opinion/editorial column – which includes topics

Working with the Media *(continued)*

that should be personalized to your state or jurisdiction – offers a comprehensive national perspective of the progress of crime victims’ rights and services since the inception of NCVRW in 1981. It also emphasizes the 2005 NCVRW theme, and challenges individuals and communities to reflect on crime victim services as a means of ensuring justice for victims, and for our society as a whole.

Most newspapers publish their guidelines and requirements for submitting opinion/editorial columns on their Web sites; submissions should be mailed, e-mailed or hand-delivered at least *two weeks* prior to NCVRW, with a request to publish it on a designated day (Sunday, April 10th or Monday, April 11th is best).

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

A Crime Victim’s Experience: Then and Now

When you try to imagine what crime victims experienced 25 years ago, images are conjured up of the lack of rights and services, insensitive or indifferent treatment, and efforts to seek justice that were often fruitless and frustrating. This document features a hypothetical scenario of a rape victim – culled in part from victims’ actual experiences 25 years ago – that offers a perspective of how victims were treated. This scenario can be adapted to reflect recollections about the treatment of victims in 1981, and/or incorporate the actual insights and memories of victims of various types of crime in your jurisdiction. It can be followed with a description of how the treatment of this rape victim would *differ* today in 2005.

There are many applications for this scenario. It can be utilized to offer a dramatic “then and now” comparison in the sample opinion/editorial column, or in speeches and other public presentations. The goal is to contrast the terrible plight of victims 25 years ago, as compared to today, and focus on the many improvements that have enhanced crime victims’ rights and services since the first NCVRW was declared 25 years ago.

Sample Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

(Date)

CONTACT: (Name/Title/Agency)

(A/C – Telephone)

America Celebrates the Silver Anniversary of National Crime Victims' Rights Week

“Justice Isn't Served Until Crime Victims Are”

(City/State) – Twenty-five years ago, President Ronald W. Reagan declared the first National Crime Victims' Rights Week to pay tribute to crime victims and to recognize the devastating impact of violence on individuals, communities and our nation as a whole. In proclaiming the first National Crime Victims' Rights Week in 1981 and then establishing the President's Task Force on Victims of Crime, he stated, “Our commitment to criminal justice goes far deeper than our desire to punish the guilty or to deter those considering a lawless course. Our laws represent the collective moral voice of a free society – a voice that articulates our shared beliefs about the roles of civilized behavior. Both the observance of Crime Victims' Week and the creation of this Task Force are entirely consistent with principles that lie at the heart of our nation's belief in freedom under law.”

During the week of April 10 to 16, 2005, the 25th anniversary of National Crime Victims' Rights Week will be observed across our nation by victims and survivors and the professionals and volunteers who assist them. This year's theme – “Justice Isn't Served Until Crime Victims Are” – emphasizes the importance of providing support and assistance to victims as a critical and core component of justice in America.

Since 1981, the field of victims' rights and services has contributed to many accomplishments that enhance individual and community safety. Today, there are over 10,000 justice system- and community-based programs that inform and educate victims about their rights, and provide supportive services to help them cope with the physical, emotional, financial and spiritual impact of crime. Over 32,000 laws have been passed at the state and federal levels that define and protect victims' rights, including constitutional amendments in 32 states (including yours, if applicable). Comprehensive responses and programs have also been created that ensure a sensitive and effective response to victims of domestic and international terrorism and mass violence.

In America today, victim service programs offer a wide range of services that include crisis intervention, counseling, safety planning, and advocacy throughout the criminal or juvenile justice system; and state victim compensation programs help victims recover from the many costs associated with criminal victimization.

According to John W. Gillis, Director of the Office for Victims of Crime within the Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, “justice isn't served until crime victims are.”

“Anyone who is truly concerned about justice should also be concerned that victims and survivors are treated with dignity and compassion, educated about their rights under law, and offered services to help them cope in the aftermath of crime,” Gillis explained. “Only when we consistently serve victims in our communities are we truly serving justice.”

Local (spokesperson – name, title and agency) notes that justice is continually served in (community) through victim assistance programs that identify and address the immediate-, short- and long-term needs of crime victims and survivors.

“Anyone who is victimized by crime can receive information about their rights, and the many services available to assist them,” (spokesperson) said. “If you or someone you know is a victim of crime, we can help. Or if you'd like to volunteer for victims, many opportunities are available.”

Here in (city/county/state), a number of special activities have been planned to commemorate the Silver Anniversary of National Crime Victims' Rights Week. Included are: (cite examples of special events, and attach any other relevant information to this press release).

Members of our community are encouraged to join crime victims and those who serve them in commemorating National Crime Victims' Rights Week, April 10th to 16th. For additional information about the Silver Anniversary of 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).

END

***Paving the Path to Justice* included in this Resource Guide offers a comprehensive “then and now” overview of the accomplishments of the past 25 years, which can be incorporated into your press release.**

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

Sample Public Service Announcements

60 Seconds

This week – April 10th to 16th – marks the 25th anniversary of National Crime Victims’ Rights Week. During this Silver Anniversary observance, we can all join together to honor crime victims and those who serve them. Because justice isn’t served until crime victims are.

Victims of crime in (*community/state*) are our mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers, children, friends, neighbors and co-workers. Crime affects victims in *many* ways – physically, emotionally, financially, and spiritually. When one person is affected by crime, we all feel its impact. Access to supportive services in our community, and the rights to be informed of and involved in justice proceedings, are what *justice* is all about in America. And justice isn’t served until crime victims are.

So during 2005 National Crime Victims’ Rights Week and throughout the year, remember that crime victims in (*community/state*) have rights, and a wide range of services to help them cope with the aftermath of criminal victimization. If you or someone you know is a victim of crime, *help* is available. So get help, or help out. For more information about 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

April 10th to 16th marks the 25th anniversary of National Crime Victims’ Rights Week in America.

We have the opportunity – individually and collectively – to pay tribute to *all* who been harmed by crime in our community, and to re-commit our energies to ensure that crime victims and survivors are aware of the many rights and services available to help them.

So during National Crime Victims’ Rights Week and throughout the year, remember that justice isn’t served until crime victims are. 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

Justice isn’t served until crime victims are. Being informed about and involved in justice proceedings, and having access to supportive services – that’s what *justice* is all about for crime victims. For information about crime victims’ rights and services, please call (*area code/telephone number*) or visit our Web site at (*URL*).

Sample Opinion/Editorial Column

“Justice Isn’t Served Until Crime Victims Are”

Crime in America has a devastating impact on victims and survivors, neighborhoods, and our society as a whole. Crime in America continually threatens our individual and collective sense of safety and security. And crime in America creates a universal sense of indignity through the realization that *any of us, at any time, can be victimized by violence.*

This week is the 25th anniversary of National Crime Victims’ Rights Week. It is a time to pay tribute to victims and survivors of crime and those who selflessly serve them, and to reflect upon the many accomplishments of the past quarter-century that have made victims’ rights and services a *reality* in our nation. It is a time to recognize that *justice isn’t served until crime victims are.*

In proclaiming the first National Crime Victims’ Rights Week in 1981 and then establishing the President’s Task Force on Victims of Crime, President Ronald W. Reagan stated, “Our commitment to criminal justice goes far deeper than our desire to punish the guilty or to deter those considering a lawless course. Our laws represent the collective moral voice of a free society – a voice that articulates our shared beliefs about the roles of civilized behavior. Both the observance of Crime Victims’ Week and the creation of this Task Force are entirely consistent with principles that lie at the heart of our nation’s belief in freedom under law.”

In 1981, there were few victims’ rights that offered information, protection, and assistance to those who were hurt by crime, and only one state had a “victims’ bill of rights.” Today, there are over 32,000 federal and state statutes and 32 state-level constitutional amendments that define and protect victims’ rights, and every state and the District of Columbia today have a “victims’ bill of rights.”

There was no federal funding for crime victims that supported the provision of quality victim services. Since then, the *Victims of Crime Act (VOCA)*, the *Family Violence Prevention and Services Act*, and the *Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)* have provided billions of

dollars to support a wide range of crime victim services that address victims’ needs for information, protection, counseling, and help in exercising their rights throughout the criminal and juvenile justice systems.

The handful of victim assistance programs established 25 years ago has grown to include over 10,000 community- and justice system-based programs that help victims of sexual assault, domestic violence, stalking, drunk driving, elder abuse, child abuse, hate violence, terrorism, identity theft, and survivors of homicide victims, among others, including (*describe victim services in your community*).

While these accomplishments are, indeed, impressive, there remain today many challenges to ensuring that crime victims are treated with respect, recognized as key participants within our systems of justice, and afforded services to help them in the aftermath of crime. There are *still* crime victims who are not informed of their rights, nor engaged as active participants in our justice system. There are *still* crime victims who remain unaware of a variety of supportive services that can provide help, hope and healing in the aftermath of crime. There are *still* crime victims who suffer immeasurable physical, emotional, and financial losses, who still wait and wait to receive court-ordered restitution payments from their perpetrators.

Justice isn’t served until *all* crime victims are treated with dignity and compassion by our criminal and juvenile justice systems.

Justice isn’t served until crime victims’ most basic needs are identified, and that efforts are made to meet these important needs.

Justice isn’t served until crime victims are informed of *all* their rights throughout the justice process – rights that empower them, give them important choices, and offer them opportunities to have *voices* and *choices* in their cases, and in their future.

Justice isn’t served until crime victims can be *assured* that their offenders will be held accountable for their crimes.

Sample Opinion/Editorial Column *(continued)*

Justice isn't served until we realize, as a community and as a nation founded on the principles of "equal rights for all," that violence affects us *all*, and that victims' rights represent the very foundation upon which our nation was created.

In (*community/state*), we can be "bystanders" to justice, or we can recognize that justice for one person who is hurt by crime is truly justice for us *all*. If you or someone you know is a victim of crime, you can *seek help*. If you or someone you know is concerned about

justice and safety in our community, you can *help out* by volunteering for victim assistance programs.

In (*community/state*), we serve justice by serving victims of crime. During the Silver Anniversary of National Crime Victims' Rights Week – April 10th to 16th – and throughout the year, let us remember that by helping victims of crime, we help make our neighborhoods, communities and nation stronger and safer. And that by serving crime victims, we are truly serving justice.

Provide a two-to-three sentence description of the author's (or co-authors') title(s) and agency affiliation(s) at the end of this opinion/editorial column.

A Crime Victim's Experience: Then and Now

This is a hypothetical description of a case of a rape victim in 1981, based partly on actual composite experiences of victims around that time. It is designed to highlight the "plight of the victim" as described in the purpose of establishing the President's Task Force on Victims of Crime.

This "then" perspective can be compared to a "now" perspective in 2005, based upon the victims' rights and services in your state or jurisdiction. How would she be treated today?

Your response and reflections can complement this scenario with a powerful overview of the many positive changes that have occurred to define and protect victims' rights, and to create victim assistance services, over the past 25 years that would, hopefully, dramatically change the way this victim was treated.

She was a 67-year-old grandmother of seven, recently retired from a rewarding career as a schoolteacher. Just weeks after moving to a small town where she and her husband had built a home for retirement, a 26-year-old man with a long history of assaults against women raped and beat her in her kitchen.

When the police arrived, she was intimidated by the barrage of incredible questions: "Did you know the man who attacked you?" "Did you grant him permission to come into your house?" "Were your doors locked? Your alarm set?" "Did you fight back? How hard?"

Her husband drove her to the emergency room of the hospital where, after waiting two hours, a nurse called out, "The doctor is ready to see the woman who was raped." Filled with horror and shame, she was put through an invasive examination by a young intern who neither acknowledged nor showed concern for her pain and trauma. When the intern failed to document her bruises and black eye, she suggested that he might want to note them for future reference at a trial. He chuckled, but obliged. He took her clothes, and offered none to replace them, so she wore a scratchy paper dress home, barefoot. Her horror was exacerbated when, two weeks later, she received a bill for \$975.00 for the rape examination from the hospital. No victim

compensation program existed in her state to cover this cost.

She received no crisis intervention, counseling or victim services because none existed. When she turned to her minister for support, his words of "comfort" were simply that, "It's God's will."

After countless calls to the local police, she was finally informed that a suspect had been arrested. When she correctly identified him in the police lineup, she went into shock. They offered her a glass of water to help ease her obvious trauma.

She quickly learned through the grapevine of her assailant's long history of violence against women, including rape, molestation of a minor, and several assaults on girlfriends. She was amazed to learn that all these offenses had been plea bargained to misdemeanors, and that he had not spent a day in prison but, rather, served several sentences on probation. She was even more shocked to learn that *nothing* about his criminal history would be admissible in the courtroom in her case. Around this time, she began to receive anonymous phone calls, threatening her family and her with serious harm if she testified. The police said they could not "prove" the calls came from her assailant, and offered her no options for protection.

The defendant sought a plea agreement to a misdemeanor simple assault. When she learned that the prosecutor was considering this, she was utterly horrified and extremely upset. Were it not for the intercession from a judge with whom she had gone to high school, her case would likely have been plea bargained. The defendant was charged with first-degree rape and third-degree assault.

Sixteen months later – following endless delaying tactics by the defense that were *not* preventable because she had no right to a speedy trial (although the defendant did) – the trial commenced. The defense attorney ripped her to shreds. His angle was that this case involved "consensual sex," that she "welcomed" this rapist into her home, and that her black eye and

A Crime Victim's Experience: Then and Now *(continued)*

bruises resulted simply from “rough sex” that she initiated. Her entire sexual history – much of it erroneous – was presented as “evidence” because there were no rape shield laws to prevent this.

She testified in front of a room full of gawking strangers, and then was dismissed and told “not to return until the verdict.” None of her family members were allowed to attend the trial, as the defense attorney successfully motioned that “their presence would prejudice the jury.” The news media swarmed her when she arrived and left the courtroom and camped out in her front yard when she refused to comment. Her trauma was reduced in the newspaper to a horrendous “Granny Attacked and Didn't Fight Back” headline.

The prosecutor put forth a strong case, pointing to a wealth of physical evidence that she believed, beyond a shadow of a doubt, proved forcible rape. She learned of the case's progression and status only through frequent calls to her friend and lifeline, the kind judge whom she knew from high school.

When the jury returned, she sought any indication of its verdict, but none of the jurors would meet her gaze. “Surely justice will prevail,” she thought as she grasped her husband's hand. But it didn't.

The jury of four men and eight women found the defendant “not guilty” on the charge of rape, and “guilty” on the charge of third-degree assault. Once again, he was sentenced to one year of probation, with no order of restitution or any other conditions that addressed accountability. She was not allowed to submit a victim impact statement, because that right did not exist. She was offered no input into his conditions of community supervision, because that right did not exist. She was offered no measure of protection, because that right did not exist. She received no victim compensation, because that right did not exist.

She was left with only one question: “What about my rights?” But none existed.



Paving the Path to Justice

This historical document – created specifically for the Silver Anniversary of NCVRW – offers an excellent “then and now” perspective of the scope of victims’ rights and services in 1981 when the first NCVRW was declared by President Reagan, and

describes key changes that have been made since then. Our field’s progress is documented through the establishment of new laws, policies, fair treatment standards, and programs, the creation of new funding sources for victim services, and the identification of and outreach to new victim populations that were previously underserved or unserved.

Crime Victims’ Rights in America: A Historical Overview

Over the past 40 years, there have been many significant accomplishments of our nation’s victims’ rights movement that have had a powerful impact on victims’ rights and services. This important Historical Overview offers insights into the progress that has resulted in the passage of landmark federal and state laws; the development of innovative promising practices that improve the delivery and scope of victim services; and the creation of new victim assistance strategies that expand outreach efforts to victims and survivors of crime.

The Historical Overview – which documents progress from 1965 to the present – can be utilized in efforts to maximize communications and awareness, and to enhance media outreach during NCVRW and throughout the year. States can also consider developing their own historical overview that describes state-specific achievements that have expanded and promoted victims’ rights and services.

The highlights of this document can be utilized in virtually all media relations, public and victim outreach, and community education efforts sponsored in conjunction with NCVRW to emphasize the tremendous progress of our field over the past quarter century.

The History of the Crime Victims’ Movement in the United States

This comprehensive overview is published by the Office for Victims of Crime as a component of its Oral History Project, which is co-sponsored by Justice Solutions, the National Association of Crime Victim Compensation Boards, the National Association of VOCA Assistance Administrators, and the National Organization for Victim Assistance. It offers a detailed overview of the key trends and issues that have promulgated the victim assistance field in America and beyond since its inception in 1972, and includes insights from many of the “pioneers” of the field.

A Retrospective of the 1982 President’s Task Force on Victims of Crime

Also a component of the OVC Oral History Project, this Retrospective summarizes the insights that resulted from a group interview conducted in 2003 of the surviving members of the President’s Task Force on Victims of Crime established by President Ronald Reagan. The Task Force members discuss the powerful impact of their *Final Report*, published in 1982, on the overall field of victims’ rights and services, the development of new victim assistance programs and services, and the establishment of a wide range of victims’ rights. Task Force members also discuss what they view to be the challenges that the field of victim assistance faces in the future.