

crime victims' rights:
**FAIRNESS.
DIGNITY.
RESPECT.**

Most people know someone who has been the victim of a crime. Yet few people know that victims have rights and why these rights matter to everyone. The history of victims' rights in our nation is a quest for *fairness,*

dignity, and respect for those harmed by crime. During National Crime Victims' Rights Week (NCVRW), we narrate the story of that quest, explain its importance to all citizens, and assess our nation's progress in honoring these ideals.

To share that story with the broadest possible audience, you need to build a relationship with the media. Your goal is to become a partner and trusted resource for reporters, not only during National Crime Victims' Rights Week but also throughout the year. To begin preparing for the 2010 NCVRW observance, you might reflect on this year's theme—***Crime Victims' Rights: Fairness. Dignity. Respect.***—and on what happens when communities fall short of these ideals. Then research—online and perhaps in your own agency's files—national crime trends and their effects in your community. When you reach out to reporters or they contact you, you will have the insight and information they need.

Getting to Know Reporters

The best way to approach your media outreach is to find out who covers crime in your community. You can regularly scan your local newspapers, listen to radio news and talk programs, and watch local television and cable programming on crime-related issues. Make a list of reporters who cover those issues, and update that list frequently. (See "Media Lists" below for more ideas.) When reporters do a good job on topics you care about, call or e-mail to compliment them and offer yourself as a resource for future features or articles. Offer to meet with them. If reporters take you up on your offer, be sure to return their calls promptly and be ready with the facts and perspectives that you can uniquely provide.

Media Lists

In addition to the names you gather from your own media monitoring, you can use the following resources to develop a media list:

- **Internet Search Engines:** Enter the names of your local newspapers and television stations into your favorite search engines. Once you reach the Web sites of these media, you're likely to find the names of reporters, assignment editors, and producers, and contact information for key staff members. You might also find reporters' blogs, which could reveal victim-related issues that particularly interest them.
- **Social Media:** Do you (or does your organization) have a profile on Twitter, Facebook, MySpace, or LinkedIn? Use these social networking sites to track issues and follow reporters and other media representatives who share your interests. Join "interest groups" on these sites to boost your knowledge about issues that engage "influencers"—experts and community members who help shape public opinion about the news. Use these sites to publicize your own NCVRW events, or simply post comments on other relevant sites or blogs to build awareness about National Crime Victims' Rights Week. (See box on page 3 for more information on Social Media.)
- **Yellow and White Pages:** Despite the rising influence of the Internet, people still rely on the phone book. Search your local pages under "newspapers," "television," or "radio" to find the names of media outlets. List the most important programs on each of these media, and track the crime-related issues that appear on these programs.
- **Libraries:** Check out media directories in your local library reference section. Many libraries maintain current catalogs (often too expensive for local organizations to own) that have up-to-date information about local reporters and producers who might be interested in crime-related issues. If your library has a free telephone reference service, you might be able to find the information you need without leaving your desk.

Working with the Media

Sample News Release

The 2010 NCVRW Resource Guide offers a sample news release focused on this year's theme—**Crime Victims' Rights: Fairness. Dignity. Respect.** Building on last year's Victims of Crime Act anniversary theme, the sample release recalls the progress made by the victims' movement. It summons the nation to advance victims' rights, rooted in the 2010 theme ideals. The 2010 theme celebrates decades of progress for victims' rights and urges vigilance to foster future gains.

To inform local media about the theme and to ensure they have complete information on local NCVRW events, consider submitting a one-page media advisory that lists every activity, with dates, times, locations, sponsors, organizer contact information, and other key information. (See "Other Resources" below for more guidance on media advisories.) Your media advisory should include information on events for specific communities (neighborhoods or ethnic communities) and age groups (seniors or children). You can also contact organizations serving these specific groups and suggest that they publicize NCVRW events through their bulletin boards, newsletters, and listservs.

Make sure to send out your NCVRW news release **at least 10 days before your event.** Then you can follow up by phone or e-mail to confirm that the media received your announcement, answer questions, and encourage coverage of your event.

Public Service Announcements and Other Media Resources

Public service announcements (PSAs), brief on-air messages you can use to raise awareness about National Crime Victims' Rights Week, are available in this section of the Resource Guide. Choose from three sample scripts (15-second, 30-second, and 60-second) that you can produce with your local television or radio station or use as "live-copy" scripts for announcers to read on the air. You can customize these scripts by adding your organization's name, phone number, and Web site and e-mail addresses so that listeners and viewers know how to reach you if they would like more information on victims' rights or services.

The hard-copy version of the Resource Guide also includes a DVD with several media clips to support your PSA efforts: a 15-second audio clip of a police officer reading part of the Miranda Warning (a radio station can use this to

produce one of the announcements provided as samples on page 5); a fully produced 30-second radio PSA with a national tag; a broadcast quality 30-second television PSA with a national tag; a copy of the same television PSA that can be customized with a local tag with your organization's contact information; and a six-minute theme video that can be played in its entirety or in segments on air as B-roll when the media cover stories on victims of crime. (See page 5 for more information, including scripts for both the sample radio and television PSAs.)

Make sure to call the public service departments at your local television and radio stations **at least two months** before National Crime Victims' Rights Week to share information about the national and local observances and find out if these media are willing to air your message. Ask for information about deadlines and other PSA requirements, and then follow up by sending them your script or completed PSA, along with a cover letter explaining the purpose of National Crime Victims' Rights Week and urging them to air your announcement.

Sample Op-ed Column

By publishing an opinion piece (op-ed) in your local newspaper or civic organization newsletter, you can encourage thousands of readers to support National Crime Victims' Rights Week and its goals. Your NCVRW op-ed might begin with a local story that shows the importance of treating victims of crime with fairness, dignity, and respect. Perhaps a coordinated community response team helped reduce domestic violence, or a trusted team of school resource officers helped lower the influence of gangs at a nearby high school. Choose stories that help readers identify with victims and their concerns. By showing how victims' rights help individuals and boost public safety, you can deepen your community's engagement with National Crime Victims' Rights Week.

Other Resources

Fact Sheets: The Resource Guide is packed with information on the history of the victims' rights movement, crime statistics, crime trends, and other issues that interest reporters and community leaders preparing for NCVRW events. Boost your chances of getting publicity by assembling fact sheets to include in press kits or for other outreach activities. You can prepare these resources well in advance of National

Crime Victims' Rights Week to provide immediate information to anyone who asks for it.

Media Advisories: You can easily assemble media advisories, one-page notices to news organizations and other interested parties, about NCVRW events. Simply copy the sample news release format but label the document "media advisory" rather than "news release." Then use the first paragraph from the news release, followed by the "who," "what," "where," "when," and "why" of the event. Send the advisory to your local media and other contacts, and follow up with calls to reporters who might be interested in attending and writing about the event. You can also list your event in the "day book" of national news wire services, such as Reuters or the Associated Press, if they have bureaus in your city. Day-book information is available on the Web sites of these organizations.

Other Media Strategies

- Call, e-mail, or write producers, editors, public service directors, or station managers **two months in advance** of National Crime Victims' Rights Week.
- Suggest victimization issues your local media might want to explore during National Crime Victims' Rights Week.
- Immediately after your NCVRW events, send high-quality video or high-resolution photos or digital images to your local television stations or newspapers. Media will often use these resources, even if they do not send reporters to cover specific events. Include a short description of the event, the name of everyone in the photo, and contact information for someone who can answer the media's questions.
- Organize a speakers' bureau. Many organizations maintain speakers' bureaus to represent the organization and serve as experts at local events. These same speakers can respond to NCVRW media requests and expand your community outreach throughout the year.
- Involve local officials by asking them to issue an NCVRW proclamation or speak at your event, and then publicize their participation in your news release and outreach materials. (See page 8 of Section 2 for a sample proclamation.)

Social Media: Start an Online Conversation about National Crime Victims' Rights Week

More and more organizations are using social media—the fastest-growing set of Internet tools—to share information and opinions, track trends, and have ongoing conversations with agencies and individuals across the globe. They connect through social networking sites, including Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn, Twitter—online communities where friends and colleagues can exchange ideas and solutions to common challenges. Organizations also use social media tools like blogs (Web logs), podcasts (audio or video broadcasts for MP3 players), YouTube videos, and image-posting sites, such as Flickr, to involve stakeholders in developing and implementing new policies, outreach activities, and special projects. Social media can strengthen cross-cultural communication and engage diverse groups of individuals whom it would be too costly to reach via traditional outreach efforts. So, take the plunge and set up a blog, host podcasts, or create a social networking profile. Social media can be used to build your own Web presence and connect with others who are interested in "Crime Victims' Rights: Fairness. Dignity. Respect."

SAMPLE NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

[Date]

CONTACT: [Name/Title/Agency]

[Phone Number]

[E-mail]

[YOUR CITY] PROMOTES FAIRNESS, DIGNITY, RESPECT FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME DURING 2010 NATIONAL CRIME VICTIMS' RIGHTS WEEK

[City, State]—This week, April 18 – 24, communities throughout the nation will rally to honor and support victims of crime. With the theme, *Crime Victims' Rights: Fairness. Dignity. Respect.*, 2010 National Crime Victims' Rights Week will recall the ideals that inspired the decades-long struggle of the victims' rights movement and challenge all Americans to honor victims' rights.

Only a few decades ago, unfairness, indignities, and disrespect confronted many victims of crime. *Victims of Crime in America*, the 1984 report of the President's Task Force on Victims of Crime, described a "hellish" justice system, focused on offenders and indifferent to victims' needs. A victim disabled by a crime cashed in his life insurance to pay for heat and food. A sexual assault victim faced taunts and jeers from her attacker when she was forced to sit beside him in a courthouse hallway before the trial. Then she was excluded from the trial. At that time, victims' only "right," declared one expert, was "to remain silent" in the face of such inequities.¹

In the 25 years since *Victims of Crime in America* was published, a grassroots movement began to combat such unfairness and launched decades of progress for victims of crime. As of 2010, every state has passed victims' rights laws, and 32 states have constitutional victims' rights amendments. All states have victim compensation funds, and more than 10,000 victim assistance programs exist throughout the country. Such changes have made victims participants, rather than bystanders, in the criminal justice system.

Yet much work remains. Victims' rights are not always enforced. Some victims receive no notice when a trial is scheduled or an offender released. Some courts deny victims' right to be heard at sentencing or to be present at trials, or they fail to order restitution or issue protection orders to keep victims safe. Some victims never learn about victim compensation or receive victim services, an increasing reality during our current economic downturn. Such failures block victims' access to their rights.

"The ideals we celebrate this week give hope to all Americans," said Joye E. Frost, acting director of the Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. "When a victim reports a crime because an officer treats her fairly, it enhances the safety of an entire community. When a court hears an impact statement or issues an order of restitution, victims learn the power of fairness, dignity, and respect. Yet when our nation falls short of these ideals, we fail victims and dishonor the progress we mark this week."

The Office for Victims of Crime will launch National Crime Victims' Rights Week in Washington, DC, with its annual National Candlelight Observance Ceremony on April 15, and its Awards Ceremony, April 16, to honor extraordinary individuals and programs that provide services to victims of crime. [City/county/state] will commemorate National Crime Victims' Rights Week with special events and programs [from (date) to (date)]. Among these activities are [list examples and attach a summary of main events to the news release].

Community members are encouraged to join in the week's activities and get involved in helping victims of crime. For additional information about National Crime Victims' Rights Week and ideas on how to serve victims in your community, please contact [agency/organization] at [area code/telephone number] or visit [agency's] Web site at [Web site address]. For more ideas on how to volunteer, visit the Office for Victims of Crime Web site, www.crimevictims.gov.

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Type your news release, double spaced, on the sample letterhead included in this Resource Guide. Distribute the release to your local media outlets at least 10 days before the event.

¹ National Victims' Constitutional Amendment Network, Victims' Rights Education Project Talking Point Kit, 30, <http://www.nvcap.org/vrep/NVCANVREPTalkingPoints.pdf> (accessed August 18, 2009).

15-Second PSA

Voiceover: *You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say can and will be used against you in a court of law.*

Announcer Script: Did you know that **crime victims have rights, too?** To find out more about victims' rights, contact [your agency's information], or visit www.ncvc.org.

30-Second PSA

Voiceover: *You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say can and will be used against you in a court of law.*

Announcer Script: Did you know that **crime victims have rights, too?** They have the right to victim compensation and many other legal rights. Above all, they have the right to *fairness, dignity, and respect*. This is National Crime Victims' Rights Week. To find out more about victims' rights, contact [your agency's information], or visit www.ncvc.org.

60-Second PSA

Voiceover: *You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say can and will be used against you in a court of law.*

Announcer Script: Did you know that **crime victims have rights, too?** Victims have the right to be heard at sentencing, to be notified if an offender is released, and to apply for compensation if harmed by a violent crime. They have the right to information and help. In many states, victims have the right to be present in court and to receive restitution—payments from offenders to repair the damage caused by the crime. Above all, victims have the right to *fairness, dignity, and respect*. This is National Crime Victims' Rights Week. To find out more about victims' rights, contact [your agency's information], or visit www.ncvc.org.

NEW! Expanded Media Resources on This Year's DVD

The *2010 NCVRW Resource Guide* features a DVD with many more media resources that you can use during National Crime Victims' Rights Week and throughout the year to support your public education and outreach activities. To get started, just insert the DVD into a player to see the wide assortment of media clips available to you. After the disclaimer language and Department of Justice seals, you will see the following contents on a menu page:

- *"2010 NCVRW Theme Video" (6 minutes)*
 - › Closed captioned
 - › Open captioned
- *PSA for TV (30 seconds)*
 - › Closed captioned with national tag
 - › Open captioned with national tag
 - › Closed captioned with space for local tag
 - › Data file for broadcast conversion
- *PSA Elements for Radio*
 - › Reading of Miranda Warning (15 seconds)
 - › Audio PSA with national tag (30 seconds)

Broadcast Quality TV PSA

This year's 30-second television public service announcement is a call to action to "be the one" to help children in your community who are exposed to violence. Ask your local TV stations to air this important message; the PSA provides space for a local tag (your agency's contact information).

"Be the One" Audio Track

Adult (VoiceOver): Children are exposed to violence every day in their homes, schools, and communities.

Child #1 (VO): Be the one to ask...

Child #2 (VO): to listen...

Child #3 (VO): to believe...

Child #4 (VO): to care.

Adult (VO): Be the one to help a child who has been hurt by crime.

Child #1 (VO): If you know a young person who may need help, be the one to take the first step.

Adult (VO): Learn how. Contact us.

HOW TO WRITE AN OP-ED

Newspapers need a constant flow of timely, thoughtful opinion pieces on current topics. A convincing National Crime Victims' Rights Week op-ed published in your local newspaper or community newsletter can educate thousands or even millions of readers about fairness, dignity, and respect for victims of crime.

What Is an Op-Ed?

Op-eds are short, persuasive pieces with a unique perspective on a topic of current interest. They encourage readers to adopt the writer's perspective and sometimes to support a course of action. Your National Crime Victims' Rights Week op-ed, by invoking the universal desire for *fairness, dignity, and respect*, can show why principled treatment of victims advances both our nation's values and the safety of your community.

Choosing an Approach

Your goal is to show why *fairness, dignity, and respect* to crime victims matter to everyone. Op-eds usually start with a line, often the beginning of an anecdote, that grabs readers' attention and makes them want to read the rest of the article. The main point (e.g., "fairness, dignity, and respect for victims bring justice to life") appears in the first paragraph, followed by arguments (in descending order of importance) to support your point of view. You can then make your case by using several examples, such as a prosecutor consulting with a victim or a victim making an impact statement at sentencing, to show why fairness to victims increases public safety and respect for the law.

Another approach is to pose a provocative question in the title or opening paragraph—such as "Why Care about Fairness to Crime Victims?" Then tell an uplifting story about a local victim who was treated fairly and with dignity and respect by the criminal justice system. You might describe how a coordinated community response team saved a domestic violence or stalking victim's life. Or how a child sexual abuse victim, championed by a caring teacher and a victim advocate, found the strength to report the crime years later and build a strong, flourishing life. By answering your own question with a compelling story, you can build support for fairness to victims of crime.

Researching Your Op-Ed

Before you decide on a topic, check your local newspapers and television news (or your own organization's case files) for recent stories that reflect local crime trends. Look for cases in which fair treatment of victims helped the community. Did a stalking victim, in an impact statement, praise law enforcement for taking his case seriously? Did an assault victim tell a newspaper that justice was served in his case? Did authorities believe a child abuse victim's disclosures and intervene to save her life? You can use actual cases (or fictionalized accounts of real events) to show why *fairness, dignity, and respect* for crime victims foster cooperation with authorities to hold offenders responsible for their crimes.

Writing Your Op-Ed

- Start with a memorable opening.
 - › **Example:** "After 35 years of representing clients,' the famous attorney told the court, 'I stand before you as the victim of a Ponzi scheme!'"
- State the position you are taking in your op-ed.
 - › **Example:** "Showing fairness, dignity, and respect to crime victims strengthens public safety and respect for the law."
- Link your op-ed to National Crime Victims' Rights Week
 - › **Example:** "April 18–24 is National Crime Victims' Rights Week, a time to celebrate fairness, dignity, and respect for victims of crime."
- Show your readers why they should care.
 - › **Example:** "The ordinary Americans defrauded by Bernard Madoff never dreamed their trusted broker would steal everything they had."
- Support your main idea with two or three points.
 - › **Examples:**
 - Giving victims prior notice when offenders leave prison helps keep the community safe.
 - Respectful responses to identity theft victims help defend society against the crime.
 - Protecting the dignity of sexual assault victims encourages their cooperation with authorities.

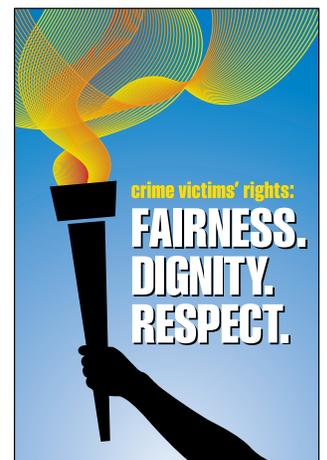
- Back up your statements with facts, statistics, and quotations.
 - › **Examples:**
 - Thirty-two states have constitutional amendments to ensure victims' rights.
 - "The killing of Bonnie Garland, first by Richard Herrin and then again by a legal and cultural process, which seemed to forget that she had ever existed, endangers us all."²
 - The terms fairness, dignity, and respect appear in more than one-half of victims' rights amendments to state constitutions.
 - "To blame victims for crime is like analyzing the cause of World War II and asking, 'What was Pearl Harbor doing in the Pacific, anyway?'"³
- End by restating the NCVRW theme:
 - › **Example:** "This year's theme—'Crime Victims' Rights: Fairness. Dignity. Respect.'—reaffirms ideals that protect us all.

Style Tips

- Limit your op-ed to 750 words. (Check with your local newspaper on length requirements.)
- Write in an informal, conversational tone.
- Use short words, sentences, and paragraphs.
- Choose active verbs (e.g., "respect builds cooperation," as opposed to "cooperation is built by respect").
- Avoid clichés (e.g., "beat around the bush" or "low man on the totem pole") and jargon (e.g., "VIN" for vehicle identification number).

How to Get Your Op-Ed Published

- Choose local publications that are likely to accept your submission.
- Check your newspaper's guidelines on space limits, deadlines, and other requirements (usually available on the publication's Web site).
- Find out how to submit the document: mail, e-mail, or fax.
- If you e-mail your op-ed, paste it into the body of the e-mail. Do not send it as an attachment. Media outlets often use spam filters to block e-mails with attachments.
- Include your name, address, title, e-mail address, and phone numbers.



² Willard Gaylin, *The Killing of Bonnie Garland: A Question of Justice*, (New York: Penguin Books, 1995).

³ President's Task Force on Victims of Crime, *Final Report*, (Washington, DC: Author, 1982), 2.

WHY FAIRNESS TO CRIME VICTIMS MATTERS TO EVERYONE
2010 NATIONAL CRIME VICTIMS' RIGHTS WEEK

Last year in a Maryland courtroom, three elderly widows described crimes that had shattered their lives. The man about to be sentenced had hogtied, gagged, and terrorized the women while ransacking their homes for jewelry and cash. The women were presenting victim impact statements, their right under Maryland law, for the judge to consider at sentencing. After sentencing, they praised the detectives who had worked the case for 13 months and the officers and prosecutors who treated them with “great respect.” The victims left the courtroom feeling fairly treated and that justice had been served. [You can substitute a similar story that occurred in your own community.]

Yet how many criminal cases end so satisfactorily? How many victims in our nation know and exercise their rights? How many feel they have been included in the criminal justice process, respectfully treated, and fairly heard? As the nation begins National Crime Victims' Rights Week, we might ask why fairness, dignity, and respect for crime victims should matter to every American.

Imagine that you are a victim of a brutal assault. Two strangers accost you on the street outside your house, steal your wallet, beat you mercilessly, and threaten to kill you if you report the crime. You report the crime and tell the police officer about the threat against your life. The robbers are arrested and arraigned, but you have no opportunity to tell the judge that the robbers promised to kill you. The judge releases the robbers on bail without a protective order prohibiting any contact with you.

Or suppose your daughter, a college freshman, becomes the victim of a drug-assisted sexual assault. While attending a party with roommates, she accepts a drink from one of the hosts. She wakes up the next morning, bruised and dazed, in a strange dorm room with her torn clothes scattered on the floor. She reports the crime to campus police, who imply she had been drinking heavily, question her account of the events, and discourage her from filing a report. Humiliated by the crime and the officers' assault on her dignity, she returns to her room, confides in no one, and decides not to file a report of the crime.

Finally, imagine that your sister is killed by a drunk driver as she crosses the street. In a later meeting with your family, the prosecutor cites the driver's past DWI convictions, vows to prosecute him to the fullest extent of the law, and promises to honor your right to confer with his office regularly throughout the case. You call the prosecutor several times to ask for updates, but he does not return your calls. A few months later, you read in the newspaper that the charges have been reduced and the parties have entered into a plea bargain: the offender will serve six months in prison and six months of community service for his crime. Despondent over the prosecutor's failure to consult you about the plea bargain, you conclude that justice has been denied to your sister and your family.

The likely impact of these three cases should concern every American. As these victims share their frustrations with others, criminal justice authorities lose respect and community support. Fewer victims may decide to come forward, so fewer crimes are solved and prosecuted, leaving criminals to perpetrate again. Failures to ensure fairness, dignity, and respect to crime victims harm everyone.

The outcome of the Maryland case and thousands like it throughout our nation, however, represent the hope and progress National Crime Victims' Rights Week seeks to promote. When victims know and assert their rights—grounded in fairness, dignity, and respect—we advance public safety and our nation's highest ideals.