



## SECTION 4

# Communicating Your Message: *Media Tips & Tools*

National Crime Victims' Rights Week provides an opportunity to spotlight challenges faced by crime victims and to highlight the long struggle to establish victims' rights. It was with bipartisan support that Congress enacted the Victims' of Crime Act in 1984, and this year's theme—*30 Years: Restoring the Balance of Justice*—celebrates three decades of championing crime victims' compensation and supporting crime victim assistance programs around the nation. By planning a comprehensive public awareness media campaign for your NCVRW outreach, you can engage your members, local organizations, and the wider public in the important work of providing crime victims in our community with both the short- and long-term help they need.

## The New Media Landscape

Traditionally, outreach to the public and policy makers meant getting mainstream coverage from newspapers, television news, and local radio. Building relationships with the individual journalists and producers who cover crime stories for these outlets in your media market remains a critical method of educating the public and communicating with policy makers.

Increasingly, however, to capture public attention, you will also need to develop a social media strategy—which is easier than you may think. Social media can be the cheapest, fastest, and most effective method to reach a wide audience. Social media is powerful because in addition to alerting traditional journalists to important stories, it is a way to build relationships and public engagement with messages that are unfiltered by the mainstream media. (Learn more below.)

## Engaging with the Media

Most reporters and producers look for a current event or “news hook” for their stories—even if they are planning coverage ahead of time. National Crime Victims' Rights Week is a perfect opportunity to focus the media's attention on crime issues relevant to your local community.

A little basic research goes a long way. You can use online search engines to look up local crime victim stories, and note which reporters cover these stories in your area and their contact information. Your local library or its online reference service may also keep media directories and resources, but as reporters change their subject focus and outlets often, it is always good to check with the relevant news desk or outlet website.

Some reporters include their e-mail address or Twitter handle at the end of their stories. If a particular reporter or news outlet does a good piece on crime victims, send the link around via e-mail or share it on Facebook and Twitter to your members. This way you are both informing people and promoting the work of a reporter or outlet who may be interested in your stories in the future. (For more on using social media, see [“How to Create a Social Media Campaign”](#) later in this section.)

If your agency is holding a newsworthy event, either for National Crime Victims' Rights Week or any time during the year, send out social media invitations and alerts, and contact your local reporters by phone or e-mail. Briefly describe the event and offer yourself as a resource. Reporters are on tight deadlines, so anything you can give them ahead of time is useful. They will often ask for a local or human-interest angle. Questions to be prepared for include: Has a local victim triumphed over tragedy or found a way to help other victims restore their lives? Is there a victim who would be willing to share his or her story? Do you have a reliable source for up-to-date statistics on a particular kind of crime? (Refer to

the “Statistical Overviews” in Section 6 of this guide.) Have there been any other recent examples of the crime you are discussing in your area or in other communities around the country? Who could brief the reporter on the current status of the law in this area? Can your organization’s director provide an on-the-record comment? Always ask for the reporter’s deadline. For news stories you may only have a few hours to turn around a comment or other information; investigative or feature pieces may afford more time.

## Sample News Release

You can use the sample news release in this section as a guide to help write your own NCVRW release or to provide a model for colleagues to use in publicizing your local events. The news release announces National Crime Victims’ Rights Week, explains the theme, quotes the director of the U.S. Department of Justice’s Office for Victims of Crime, and encourages your local audience to contact your organization for information or to help observe the week. Be sure to share your releases and media advisories with colleagues and other professionals who share your mission or have partnered with you to plan NCVRW events.

Send out your NCVRW release *at least 10 days* before your event to reporters and partner organizations. Be sure to post the release on your Facebook page and tweet about it to your Twitter followers. You can use the 10-day lead time to follow up with reporters and partner organizations, find spokespeople, answer questions, and create media kits for each important event. The media kits should include your organization’s contact information, names and e-mails for leadership or spokespeople, your mission statement or description of your work, and information about your event.

## Public Service Announcements

Many media outlets offer free air time for public service announcements (PSAs) to publicize events of interest to the community. Radio stations, in particular, may have significant amounts of time to fill and may be receptive to

a request to air your NCVRW PSA. This section includes three sample scripts—for a 15-second, 30-second, and 60-second PSA—on National Crime Victims’ Rights Week. Also included in the accompanying Resource Guide DVD is a 60-second pre-produced television PSA intended to raise the public’s awareness of human trafficking, how anyone can be a victim, and that survivors of this crime have very diverse backgrounds and experiences. You can create your own PSA spot or work with your local stations to produce an announcement about National Crime Victims’ Rights Week and your organization’s contributions to the community. Be sure to include your organization’s name, phone number, and website in your public service announcement so that viewers and listeners can contact you. To increase the likelihood that your local media will air your PSA, contact them at least two months before National Crime Victims’ Rights Week (early February, at the latest). Talk to the producer, explain why the week is so important, and mention that you have already prepared PSAs about the week. When you send your script or PSA to your local reporters or television stations, include a cover letter with your contact information and the reasons why National Crime Victims’ Rights Week is important for your community.

## Sample Letter to the Editor

Readers’ letters and comments are often the most read sections of newspapers and news websites. They are great tools for building awareness about National Crime Victims’ Rights Week. Use the sample letter in this section for inspiration. Newspapers generally publish letters that respond to either previous or current articles or discuss news events in the community. Ideally you would be able to cite a reliable recent study, quote statistics about the crime or issue, or stress the need for more research about crimes that are often hidden or underreported. Letters that are endorsed by multiple community groups will get more attention from editors. Consider asking local law enforcement officers or other organizations to partner with you or write their own letters for National Crime Victims’ Rights Week to highlight the needs of crime victims and how the public can help.

## Sample Op-Ed Column

Newspaper editorial pages—both on paper and online—are highly popular among readers. As you research local crime coverage, think about which crimes are particularly of concern to your community and how they have affected victims' lives. Have gangs or online bullying made teenagers feel unsafe at home or at school? Have seniors been robbed or abused by people they know? Does your local Rape Crisis Center need more community support? Choose your topic, and scan for coverage in your newspaper or local news website editorials. Note the length and other guidelines for submitting an opinion editorial. You might also contact someone you know at the newspaper, explain the importance of National Crime Victims' Rights Week, and ask how to maximize the chances of having your op-ed published. The sample news release in this section can be used a model for yours.

## How to Create a Social Media Campaign

Social media is increasingly used in the communications world, and offers another method of getting your messages out to a wide variety of audiences. You may want to sign up for Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, and other such media, all of which increase your ability to reinforce your messages. Many public agencies and nonprofits have ventured into social media and are beginning to learn the benefits of crafting messages that can "go viral" with the click of a button. Reporters and the general public often head online to look for information and resources, and it's worth investing some time in learning how to effectively communicate this way. Whatever your organization's goals—building public awareness, reaching victims, attracting donors, or gaining members—social media can supplement your traditional media outreach and help you achieve them. This section includes some social media basics that will help you get started and guide your use of these highly effective tools.

## Sample Social Media Status Updates

This section includes status updates that you can post on Facebook, Twitter, or other social media during National Crime Victims' Rights Week and during the entire month of April. Each update is a brief point of information related to victimization, crime, or National Crime Victims' Rights Week. All sample Twitter updates are limited to 140 characters so you won't need to edit them before posting. You might also want to substitute status updates about your local NCVRW events and ask your followers to post them on their Facebook pages or retweet them for maximum publicity and community engagement.

## Other Outreach Tips

- Plan a comprehensive strategy that includes traditional media, social media, and statements and letters by the public officials you have asked to speak, and a series of key messages you want your audiences to understand.
- Contact editors, producers, or station managers by phone, e-mail, or mail *at least a month in advance* of National Crime Victims' Rights Week (two months for PSAs). Follow up *two weeks prior* to it as well.
- Ask your local officials to issue NCVRW proclamations, write letters to the editor and opinion editorials (op-eds), speak at your events, and mention National Crime Victims' Rights Week as they conduct their official duties. Thank them for their contributions, post Facebook updates and tweet about them, and publicize them in your news release and outreach materials. Retweet and promote on social media any good articles or segments about crime or victims' rights.
- After your NCVRW events, send high-quality video or high-resolution photos or digital images to your local television stations or newspapers (with your contact information and cell phone number, if possible, and alert them in advance that photos or video are coming).

## Advocating for Victims with the Media

Communicating your message requires working effectively with reporters while also advocating for and being sensitive to victims' needs. Reporters prioritize collecting information quickly to meet deadlines, and even those who are well meaning may not be aware of the best ways to approach crime victims. Victims who agree to speak with reporters may need information and support to handle interviewers, photographers, and camera-people. Victim advocates can play a key role in helping reporters get crucial information while ensuring victims are treated with sensitivity, and that their name, location, or other private information are not revealed without their consent. This section includes tips to help you navigate this process. +



The purpose of a news release is to generate media coverage of your local NCVRW events. The sample news release below begins by announcing a typical National Crime Victims' Rights Week opening ceremony. You can edit the headline and the first two paragraphs to feature what is happening in your area.

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

[Date]

**CONTACT:**

[Name/Title/Agency]

[Phone number]

[E-mail]

**[Your City] Celebrates 30th Anniversary of Victims of Crime Act**  
*National Crime Victims' Rights Week Celebrates Progress, Works Toward Future Goals*

[City/State] — April 6 marks the beginning of National Crime Victim's Rights Week.

*[If you are presenting awards during your ceremony:]*

[Your City] will commemorate our nation's progress in advancing victims' rights by honoring [name, title] and [name, title], champions in advocating for expanded support and services to communities affected by crime. *[Provide a paragraph about each honoree.]*

This year's theme—*30 Years: Restoring the Balance of Justice*—presents a perfect opportunity to salute [honorees] and their long-term commitment to aiding crime victims. As we celebrate three decades of defending victims' rights, we are reminded of how far we have come—and how much work is yet to be done.

Only 30 years ago, crime victims had virtually no rights and no assistance. The criminal justice system often seemed indifferent to their needs. Victims were commonly excluded from courtrooms and denied the chance to speak at sentencing. They had no access to victim compensation or services to help rebuild their lives. There were few avenues to deal with their emotional and physical wounds. Victims were on their own to recover their health, security, and dignity.

Today, the nation has made dramatic progress in securing rights, protections, and services for victims. Every state has enacted victims' rights laws and all have victim compensation programs. More than 10,000 victim service agencies now help people throughout the country. In 1984, Congress passed the bipartisan Victims of Crime Act (VOCA), which created a national fund to ease victims' suffering. Financed not by taxpayers but by fines and penalties paid by offenders, the Crime Victims Fund supports victim services, such as rape crisis and domestic violence programs and victim compensation programs that pay many of victims' out-of-pocket expenses from the crime, such as counseling, funeral expenses, and lost wages.

Victims' rights advocates have scored remarkable victories over the last 30 years. But there is still a lot of work to be done. As we move forward, we are increasingly expanding our reach to previously underserved victim populations, including victims of color, American Indians and Alaska Natives, adults molested as children, victims of elder abuse, and LGBTQ victims. Over three decades, VOCA pioneered support efforts for victims of once-hidden crimes, like domestic and sexual violence. Today, we are shining a spotlight on other abuses that have long been unreported and often not prosecuted—hate and bias crimes, bullying, and sex and labor trafficking, among others.

"Our commitment to reaching every victim of crime is stronger than ever," said Joye E. Frost, Director, Office for Victims of Crime (OVC), U.S. Department of Justice. "For 30 years, VOCA has represented hope, healing, and justice. Our message to all victims of crime is this: You are not alone."

National Crime Victims' Rights Week will be held April 6–12 in communities throughout the nation. In Washington, DC, the U.S. Department of Justice will kick off the week with OVC's annual Service Awards Ceremony to honor outstanding individuals and programs that serve victims of crime. [Your City/County/State] will observe National Crime Victims' Rights Week with special events and programs, including *[list examples and attach summary of main events]*.

OVC encourages widespread participation in the week's events and in other victim-related observances throughout the year. For additional information about 2014 National Crime Victims' Rights Week and how to help victims in your community, please contact [agency/organization] at [area code/telephone number] or visit [agency's website] at [web address]. For more ideas on how to volunteer to help crime victims, visit the Office for Victims of Crime website, [www.ovc.gov](http://www.ovc.gov). +

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[Your Organization's Mission Statement]

## 15-Second PSA

Every year, millions of people have their lives changed forever by crime. They are our family, neighbors, friends, and colleagues. April 6-12 is National Crime Victims' Rights Week, a time to reach out and help crime victims rebuild their lives. To find out what you can do, call [agency name] at [phone number] or visit [www.VictimsofCrime.org](http://www.VictimsofCrime.org).

## 30-Second PSA

Every year, millions of people have their lives changed forever by crime. They are our family, neighbors, friends, and colleagues. Many will have life-changing injuries or need ongoing care and support. We can all reach out to victims, listen to what they need, and help them rebuild their lives. To find out what you can do, contact [agency name, number, URL] or visit [www.VictimsofCrime.org](http://www.VictimsofCrime.org).

## 60-Second PSA

Every year, millions of people have their lives changed forever by crime. They are our family, neighbors, friends, and colleagues. Crime victims often struggle to work, pay bills, or support their loved ones. Many have life-changing injuries and need long-term care and support. April 6-12 is National Crime Victims' Rights Week. It's a time we can all reach out to crime victims, listen to what they need, and help them rebuild their lives. To find out what you can do, call [agency name, number, URL] or visit [www.VictimsofCrime.org](http://www.VictimsofCrime.org).

### WHAT ARE PSAS AND HOW DO I USE THEM?

PSAs (public service announcements) are short messages given to radio or television stations to broadcast at no cost to the organization that submits them. They may be produced on film, videotape, DVD, CD, or audiotape, or as a computer file.

### HOW DO I GET THEM TO AIR?

First, contact your local radio or television stations to inquire about their policies on airing PSAs and their submission guidelines. Broadcast media (radio and television) are required by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to serve "in the public interest." Most stations donate about a third of their commercial spots to non-commercial causes; in other words, if a station has 18 minutes of commercials in a given hour, six of those minutes will probably be devoted to PSAs.

Also ask who is in charge of selecting which PSAs are run. This person could be the:

- public affairs director
- traffic director
- program director
- promotions manager, or
- station manager.

Once you've made contact with the stations, let them know you will be sending a PSA to air. Include information about your organization in the delivery, such as a cover letter and pamphlet. Follow up five days later with a phone call to ask if the PSA was received and when it will be aired. *Continue to follow up on bi-weekly basis if you have trouble reaching the station manager. Persistence is key.*

### COMMUNITY ACCESS AND PUBLIC TELEVISION

Many towns have local cable (sometimes called community access) and college stations. Locate the name of station manager and follow the same procedure as above.

### YOUR WEBSITE OR SOCIAL MEDIA SITES

You also may upload the PSAs to your website, Facebook, or YouTube, and use additional outreach efforts (e.g., press release, social networking status updates) to drive viewers to your site.

Newspapers often print letters in response to previous news items or opinion pieces. By writing a letter to the editor, you can link National Crime Victims' Rights Week to a current local, state, or national issue to show why readers should care about the rights and concerns of crime victims. The following sample letter cites a news item about elder abuse, and discusses both the hidden nature of this crime and the devastating effect on victims. It calls for the public to take the opportunity this National Crime Victims' Rights Week to reach out to their neighbors and connect with older people in their community.

You may focus your letter on a specific crime or trend covered by the newspaper, or you might ask a local criminal justice official, such as your district attorney or state attorney general, to write a letter explaining the importance of National Crime Victims' Rights Week from his or her perspective.

Before writing your letter, check your newspaper's submission guidelines. Letters to the editor should be brief—no more than 250 to 300 words. Begin by citing the article to which you are responding, and then state your main point. Write two or three brief paragraphs to support your argument, and end your letter with a concluding statement. When you submit the letter, include your full contact information (name, address, e-mail address, and phone numbers) so that the newspaper can contact you if it decides to print your letter. If the newspaper does not publish your letter, you might submit it to a local organization that publishes a newsletter, or you may choose to post it on your website. You may also post links to the letter on your Facebook, Twitter, and other social media pages.

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## Shining a Light on the Hidden Crime of Elder Abuse

As America ages, we are only beginning to grapple with the challenges posed by crimes against older people.

Your important article "Elderly Abuse — Around the Corner, Across the Street" (3/18/14) should stand as a timely warning to all of us about what is a largely hidden problem.

Readers would have been shocked and moved by the story of the home-bound Etta—who was rarely visited by her family. She came to rely on a new friend to drive her to appointments, pay bills, and buy groceries—only for it to be discovered months later that this "friend" had been forging checks and stealing jewelry. Worse, Etta was found confined to a chair, malnourished, with the electricity cut off, the telephone disconnected, and her blood pressure dangerously low.

This may be an extreme case, but it is important to understand that it is not uncommon, and that elder abuse can take many forms. Older people within a wide age range (from the 60s to over 90s) of all income levels and social situations are vulnerable. Abuse occurs in the home, in assisted living facilities, and in the wider community. As in Etta's story, this abuse most often happens at the hands of trusted people, such as friends and caregivers. But the emerging research suggests that elders are most likely to be abused by their own family members, including partners, spouses, children, and grandchildren.

As well as physical and mental abuse, older people can be particularly targeted for financial fraud. It is not just those over 75 like Etta, who we might expect could have challenges with decreased mental, physical, and mobility capacity, who are at risk. Older adults on the brink of retirement with money to invest and those perceived to have resources to exploit are also prime targets.

April 6-12 is National Crime Victims' Rights Week. It is an opportunity for all of us to do what we can to ensure the older people in our neighborhoods, and in our own families, are safe from neglect and exploitation. It can be as easy as dropping by once a week, listening to their concerns, and helping out where you can. It only takes a few minutes, but it could mean the world to them. +

*[Your name]*

*[Your Organization]*

*[Your City, State]*

## Young People and the Cycle of Violence

Daniella is afraid every morning she takes the school bus. The 12-year-old tries to keep to herself, but the bullies always find her. She takes days off school when she can't face the taunts, the slaps, the hair-pulling, or the negative comments posted to her Facebook page, and now her grades are slipping.

Michael tries to protect his mom when his father hits her, but he knows that when his parents think he is asleep, the shouting and hitting will start up again. He wonders if it is his fault. He considers running away from home, but that would mean leaving his little sister behind.

Tina and her friends take the long way home from middle school, because it is not safe to cut through the park anymore. Last month, a man offered one of her friends a cigarette and then took her inside his car. In the same week, a teenager from the local high school was shot near the library, and now everyone is afraid to walk that way too.

These are not isolated stories. More than half of America's children and teens are in some way exposed to violence in their homes, schools, and neighborhoods every year, according to a 2009 U.S. Department of Justice study. Many are victims of violence themselves, but many more will witness violent crimes or share the trauma when their families, school friends, or neighborhoods are targets of violence and abuse. Unfortunately, many of these young people will experience violence from multiple sources, compounding the trauma and its effects.

The consequences of this kind of exposure can be difficult to measure, but the harm is real.

We know that children and teens exposed to violence are more likely to experience anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress. They are more likely to abuse drugs and alcohol. They are also more likely to fail school, be absent from school, and experience learning difficulties. These children are also more likely to enter into, and stay in, abusive relationships, and they are also at higher risk of going on to commit crimes themselves.

This cycle of violence and harm has ripple effects throughout communities. Children exposed to violence develop an insecure view of the world around them. They often feel unsafe. When they encounter future problems, they may not trust that their parents, teachers, or police can protect or help them.

Our understanding of the effect of violence on children and teens is growing. With this knowledge, we need to raise awareness of the consequences of children growing up in fear, and develop networks of services and interventions aimed at promoting safe communities.

At-risk families need access to counseling and support services to help them support their children and break the cycle of violence and fear. It is critical for communities to also actively support teachers, law enforcement, and victim service providers with the funding and training they need to support and protect children in their daily work.

As a community we must take care of our children. We can publicize the National Child Abuse Hotline (1-800-4-A-CHILD) and encourage people to report suspected abuse of children.

A good place to start for all of us is by listening to young people and being engaged in their lives. We can be watchful of the common warning signs of a child affected by crime—such as changes in sleeping and eating habits, withdrawing from friends or adults, school absenteeism, and unexplained fearfulness.

Children need to know that the violence they have experienced is not their fault. They need to stay connected with safe environments provided by schools, sporting groups, and afterschool pursuits—places we should ensure are free of violence and fear.

This week (April 6-12) is National Crime Victims' Rights Week, a time where communities come together with vigils and events in support of victims of crime.

It is time to forge a new commitment to protecting children and reducing their exposure to violence of all kinds. The consequences of not addressing the violence children experience are serious. But the rewards—happy, secure youth and safe, thriving communities—are enormous and long-lasting.

If you're interested in learning more about the effects of violence on children, the U.S. Department of Justice has produced a video series *Through Our Eyes: Children, Violence, and Trauma*, available at [www.ovc.gov/pubs/ThroughOurEyes/index.html](http://www.ovc.gov/pubs/ThroughOurEyes/index.html). They have also launched the Defending Childhood initiative to address the exposure of America's children to violence as victims and as witnesses. For more information on this initiative, visit [www.justice.gov/defendingchildhood/index.html](http://www.justice.gov/defendingchildhood/index.html). +

Social media offers powerful tools to assist with all your outreach goals. You can use Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, WordPress or Blogger, LinkedIn, and several other social media forums to publicize events, share information, enlist volunteers, raise funds, and instantly reach communities that share your goals and interests. More than 97% of nonprofits now use some form of social media, making it easier for you to reach the communities you want to engage online.

Your social media strategies for National Crime Victims' Rights Week will depend on your organization's overall communications goals, the platforms you now use, your staff's knowledge, and the amount of time and resources you are able to invest in building and maintaining your online presence. Your campaign should use social media to complement rather than replace your website and traditional media outreach. You don't want to miss the advantages offered by these great tools to enhance your NCVRW outreach.

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## Social Media Platforms

The building blocks of your campaign are the social media platforms now available for free or for modest fees. As you develop your strategies and identify your communications goals, you need to know the key facts about various social media, the investment they require, and the capabilities they offer to your organization. Among the most important tools are:

### Facebook

Whatever your goals or your desired audience, you have a great chance of reaching them on Facebook. Because Facebook claims to have more than 1.11 billion active users, you may want to start with this tool, especially if you have time to maintain only one social media platform. According to the [Pew Research Center](#), more than 50 percent of all U.S. adults are on Facebook; another study by [Comscore](#) shows that in 2011 users spent 1 of every 8 online minutes sharing content and making contacts on the site.

Facebook business pages must be linked to the personal profile of a designated individual who sets up the business or "fan" page. For instructions on how to complete that process, visit Facebook's [signup instructions page](#). Once you have signed up and established your URL (Uniform Resource Locator), you can begin posting content you want to share, visiting the Facebook pages of organizations in your field, "liking" them, and perhaps sending messages or (where allowed) posting on their Facebook pages and those of their

fans (people who "like" them). You can post photos, videos, company content, invitations to upcoming events, and links back to your website. You can also join groups that are relevant to your strongest interests. To build your Facebook community, reach out to organizations and groups you want to engage with, post on their Facebook pages if allowed, or send them messages. With some groups, you may need to send e-mails to invite them to "like" your Facebook page and become one of your fans. The resulting dialogue will help support and shape your Facebook strategy.

### Twitter

Twitter is a "microblog," an information-sharing network made up of 140-character messages called tweets. It's an easy way to send and receive links to the latest news related to subjects you care about. Twitter offers instant communication with an online community. Once you have [set up your own account](#), you should choose a Twitter handle (username) that other "Tweeps" (Twitter peeps) will recognize (often the name or nickname for your business). You can then use Twitter to establish instant connections with others in your industry or field of interest, and follow a steady stream of ideas, content, links, and resources.

Because Twitter users see themselves as a support network, it is particularly important to begin using the platform by following others and observing what they have to say. It is useful to search for the name of your organization to see what is being said about you, and search topics

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and organizations that interest you. After you set up your account, you can begin following others, following their followers, retweeting their tweets, and promoting them to your audience. You will then find ways to weigh in on a conversation and promote your event, project, or policy. Learn how to use Follow Friday (#FF) lists that recommend others to follow you, and recruit others by posting on other platforms (like your Facebook page) that you have joined Twitter, and link back to your Twitter page. Once people start following you, you can ask to be retweeted and include in your retweet request links to your website and other social media. Be sure to respond immediately to others' tweets and mentions of your organization. You will then be on your way to promoting your organization's goals.

## YouTube

YouTube, a video platform, is one of the world's most visited sites on the Internet. You will need a digital camcorder, webcam, or digital camera or cell phone with video capacity, as well as someone who knows how to use those tools. To begin, set up a [YouTube channel](#) for your organization, which will be linked with any other Google accounts you have. Choose a name that matches your brand, and post your channel URL on your Facebook page and other social network profiles. You can also apply for a nonprofit-specific YouTube account, which gives you more features, such as the ability to add clickable "asks" on top of videos and upload longer videos.

If you decide to use YouTube, you might begin by posting a video about your work, featuring your staff and your success stories. You can use YouTube to upload recordings of presentations you've given, share slides from presentations, and share videos of interviews with experts or with those from your organization who can offer tips in your subject matter expertise. Post links to these videos (or the videos themselves) on your Facebook page, and tweet about them. You can engage with the YouTube community by leaving comments and even uploading video responses to the videos of other organizations. Before, during, and after National

Crime Victims' Rights Week, YouTube users post great videos on crime victims' rights, which you can re-post and share throughout all of your social media networks.

## Instagram

Instagram is a highly popular photo-sharing site that enables you to upload and share photos with your online network. Unlike photo archiving sites like [Flickr](#) and [Picasa](#), Instagram allows users to apply filters and other effects to give their photos special vibrancy or an aged, vintage look. Once you have set up an [Instagram account](#), you can snap photos of your NCVRW events on your mobile devices and give your followers a sneak peek before you post them on your website. You can expand the audience for your photos by "[tagging](#)" them with keywords to identify or organize them on Instagram. If someone in your organization gives an NCVRW presentation, you can take a photo and post it on Instagram and Facebook, and tweet about it on Twitter. You will have the opportunity to expand your audience and your NCVRW publicity.

## WordPress or Blogger

If you are interested in sharing more in-depth communications with your community, you may want to consider starting a blog (or weblog). [WordPress](#) and [Blogger](#) are two excellent platforms to host your blog. To maintain the interest of your audience, post at least once or twice a week, and be sure to link to your blog from your Facebook and Twitter pages, and vice versa. If you don't have time for a blog, you can always post statements and information on your website, particularly during National Crime Victims' Rights Week.

## LinkedIn

You can use LinkedIn, an online professional network, to connect with any of its 259 million members. LinkedIn offers organizations, as well as individuals, the opportunity to set

up profiles and network with others, share information, ask questions, participate in discussions, and promote events and causes. LinkedIn users build a presence by inviting others to join their networks and also by joining LinkedIn groups (such as LinkedIn’s “Social Media for Nonprofits” group). First, visit [LinkedIn](#), click on “Companies,” select “Add Company,” and then follow the setup wizard for creating your company profile. Focus on keywords from your mission statement and whatever data you want to include. Then you can search the site for other professionals and organizations in your field, invite them to connect with you, follow them, send messages, ask questions, and join groups (searchable by name and subject area). Begin by sharing information and asking questions; be sure to learn and follow LinkedIn [etiquette](#), such as always responding quickly to invitations to connect. You can update your profile regularly and arrange your settings so that your connections see each change. After several months on LinkedIn, you will be ready to share information and invite others to your NCVRW events.

## Making a Plan

Before diving into social media, meet with your staff to develop a *realistic* social media plan. You may be surprised to learn how much time is required to launch and sustain a robust social media presence. [Social Media for Social Good: A How-to Guide for Nonprofits!](#) says that large nonprofits with successful social media outreach average 15 hours on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube; 5 hours on photograph sites; and 10 hours on their blogs each week. Although such allotments are probably unrealistic for smaller organizations, you should plan to devote at least two hours a week to Facebook, for example, if you choose that medium, and post at least twice a week.

You should also clarify your goals in using social media. What do you want to accomplish? What audiences are you trying to reach, and what do you want them to know or do? Your overall and NCVRW social media goals should be specific (e.g., reach 200 local Facebook users with NCVRW messages, invite five new groups to your NCVRW events).

Aim to make your goals measurable, achievable, important to your organization, and time-limited. For example, in a period of two months, you would like to gain 200 local Facebook fans for your organization and sign them up to send someone to an NCVRW event. Think about how you will follow up with these fans throughout the year. Then choose the social media tool that will best suit your goals, assign appropriate staff members to manage these media, and create a balanced [social media policy](#) for your organization. Then you can jump in!

If you decide to use social media, you should remember that these tools are two-way communications vehicles for sharing information and supporting users—not a one-way bulletin board to promote your organization. On Twitter, in particular, experts suggest tweeting or retweeting at least 10 times for every tweet devoted strictly to your organization’s goals. Also, the quality of the content you post is the key to your success. Organizations with successful social media campaigns focus on providing content that is new and of value to their visitors. By posting excellent content, sharing generously, and responding quickly on all your platforms, you will build the community and the reputation you want to achieve.

*Note:* The National Center for Victims of Crime invites you to post NCVRW photos and information on our NCVRW Facebook wall, [www.facebook.com/NCVRW](http://www.facebook.com/NCVRW), during April 2014. If you are on Twitter, please follow us at [@CrimeVictimsOrg](https://twitter.com/CrimeVictimsOrg) and tweet using the #2014NCVRW hashtag. We are happy to retweet your messages and share information about your events or other outreach, and we encourage you to do the same. +

# SAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA STATUS UPDATES

Below are status updates that you can post on Facebook and Twitter in the lead up to and during National Crime Victims' Rights Week. The Twitter updates are all 140 characters or fewer, and ready to use. You may use these items on any date you choose, and you can also write your own status updates (see [sidebar](#)), particularly to alert your audience about your local events.

## Facebook Status Updates

Below is a list of status updates to use as Facebook posts. In your posts, you can also include related photos or graphics (e.g., the 2014 NCVRW logo), as well as your fans' responses.

- This year marks 30 years of VOCA's role in rebuilding the lives of crime victims. Visit OVC to learn more about this law and how it helps restore the balance of justice. [www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/about/victimsfund.html](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/about/victimsfund.html)
- Share photos and announcements about your NCVRW planning and events at [www.facebook.com/ncvcfan](http://www.facebook.com/ncvcfan). The National Center for Victims of Crime will share your posts with other advocates on Facebook and their other social media outreach throughout April.
- See past National Crime Victims' Rights Week Community Awareness Projects via the National Association for VOCA Assistance Administrators and find ways to network with advocates in your community. [www.navaa.org/cap/previous.html](http://www.navaa.org/cap/previous.html)
- National Crime Victims' Rights Week begins April 6. Visit the Office for Victims of Crime National Crime Victims' Rights Week website for information about resources and help in planning events and activities. [www.ovc.gov/ncvrw2014](http://www.ovc.gov/ncvrw2014)
- Today marks the beginning of National Crime Victims' Rights Week! Please share with victim advocates you know and let us know what events you're planning.
- Looking for information about victims of assault, domestic violence, stalking, child abuse, sexual assault, and other crimes? Download the Help Series brochures from the Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. [www.ovc.gov/pubs/helpseries/index.html](http://www.ovc.gov/pubs/helpseries/index.html)

- How have you used the theme video from National Crime Victims' Rights Week? Tell us in the comments and share your activities with other activists.
- Visit [www.victimsofcrime.org/training](http://www.victimsofcrime.org/training) for updates about the National Center for Victims of Crime National Conference in Miami this September, a great opportunity to learn from and network with other victim advocates.

### TIP: EMBEDDING LINKS IN FACEBOOK

To embed a link in your Facebook status, copy the URL into the status field and wait momentarily until Facebook generates a thumbnail and page description. Then delete the URL text you copied, enter the rest of your status text, and post.

- Visit the National Association of Crime Victim Compensation Boards for information on crime victim compensation in your state: [www.nacvcb.org/index.asp?sid=6](http://www.nacvcb.org/index.asp?sid=6)
- Follow the National Crime Victims' Rights Week Resource Guide Partners to learn about the activities of other victim advocates and to get the resources you need for your NCVRW 2014 activities. See Section 7 of the resource guide for the partner list: [www.ovc.gov/ncvrw2014](http://www.ovc.gov/ncvrw2014)
- Share "Taking Action: the Advocates Guide for Assisting Victims of Financial Fraud" with your followers and spread the word about the dangers of fraud this National Crime Victims' Rights Week. [www.victimsofcrime.org/taking-action](http://www.victimsofcrime.org/taking-action)

- April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month! Visit our partners at HHS to get informed and learn how you can help protect kids. <https://www.childwelfare.gov/preventing/preventionmonth>
- April is National Sexual Assault Awareness Month! Find out how to support victims of sexual assault in our schools, college campuses, workplaces, and the wider community. <http://www.nsvrc.org/saam/sexual-assault-awareness-month-home>

## Twitter Status Updates

Below is a list of suggested tweets for you to share with your followers:

- National Crime Victims' Rights Week begins April 6. Visit [www.ovc.gov](http://www.ovc.gov) for information about resources and events. #NCVRW2014
- National Crime Victims' Rights Week is April 6-12, 2014. Search #NCVRW2014 to stay connected!
- National Crime Victims' Rights Week 2014 starts today! We celebrate 30 Years: Restoring the Balance of Justice #NCVRW2014
- This year we celebrate 30 years of advancing victims' rights through VOCA. Learn more: <http://ow.ly/q1P4p> #NCVRW2014
- Visit <http://1.usa.gov/bj3d6u> to order a copy of the #NCVRW2014 resource guide.
- Download the #NCVRW2014 resource guide free at <http://ow.ly/q1N9L> for tips on observing National Crime Victims' Rights Week
- Free resources are available to help victims of financial fraud this #NCVRW2014. Download here: <http://ow.ly/q1NmI>
- Download free awareness posters for your #NCVRW2014 activities! <http://ow.ly/q1NrP>
- Looking for ways to get involved in #NCVRW2014? Find ways to raise awareness here: <http://ow.ly/q1NuA>
- April is National Sexual Assault Awareness Month. Visit <http://ow.ly/q1Nxx> or follow @NSVRC for info! #NCVRW2014
- Get statistics and talking points for your #NCVRW2014 activities: <http://ow.ly/q1NAc>
- Do you know any victims of crime? Have you been victimized? Get helpful info from the #NCVRW2014 resource guide: <http://ow.ly/q1N9L>
- Visit <http://ow.ly/q1N9L> Section 7 to learn more about the National Crime Victims' Rights Week guide partners #NCVRW2014
- Need inspiration for your #NCVRW2014 event? See Section 2 of the NCVRW Resource Guide for #victim centered quotes <http://ow.ly/q1N9L>
- See Section 2 of the #NCVRW2014 Resource Guide for other key events in 2014 <http://ow.ly/q1N9L> and stay active in supporting victims
- Learn how to protect yourself from fraud this #NCVRW2014 and how to assist others: <http://ow.ly/q1NmI>
- OVC offers a calendar of upcoming #victim assistance events. Learn more or add your training at <http://ow.ly/q1NDo> #NCVRW2014
- Want to network with #victim advocates? Visit [VictimsofCrime.org/training](http://VictimsofCrime.org/training) for updates on the @CrimeVictimsOrg National Conference in Miami
- Use this #NCVRW2014 to learn about the power of DNA to help #victims. Visit <http://ow.ly/q1NlL> or follow @DNA\_Answers
- OVC hosts a searchable database of victims' rights laws. Learn more: <http://ow.ly/q1NM9> #NCVRW2014

- Stalking is a crime, not a joke. Get the facts: <http://ow.ly/q1NQj> @SRC\_NCVC #NCVRW2014
- Learn from #victim assistance professionals: presentations are available from @CrimeVictimsOrg's 2013 conference. <http://ow.ly/q1NSq>
- OVC's TTAC offers free trainings on victim advocacy and assistance. Learn more here: <http://ow.ly/rpGhK> #NCVRW2014
- April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month! Learn more at: <http://ow.ly/rpLET> #NCVRW2014
- April is National Sexual Assault Awareness Month! Get resources for your campaign: <http://ow.ly/rpLR7>
- April 7-11 is National Youth Violence Prevention Week. Learn how to engage your community: <http://ow.ly/rpMKA> #NCVRW2014
- More than half our kids are exposed to violence every year #NCVRW2014 <http://ow.ly/rpNtS>
- Are the older people in your neighborhood safe? We can all do more to prevent #ElderAbuse #NCVRW2014
- Across America men, women, and children are trafficked for their labor. Find out more: <http://ow.ly/rpOvn> #NCVRW2014 +

## MORE TIPS FOR SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

In addition to Facebook and Twitter status updates, you can use the following ideas to generate more NCVRW posts on your social media sites.

- Download NCVRW theme artwork from the Resource Guide CD-ROM or the [Office for Victims of Crime](#) website, including NCVRW-specific Facebook cover and profile images.
- Post photos or videos of your organization's NCVRW planning or events.
- Post photos of your NCVRW event speakers on your Facebook page (in advance of the events), and promote them on Twitter and your other social media.
- [Download the app](#) for Instagram, a photo-editing platform for iPhone or Android users that converts your photos to clear, small images and allows you to add filters to those images. Instagram interfaces with Twitter, Facebook, and other platforms.
- Upload posters from the Office for Victims of Crime [gallery of awareness posters](#) on crime- and victim-related topics to your social media platforms.
- Post links to NCVRW op-eds or news releases in your local newspaper or television station website.
- Post links to the NCVRW statements or proclamations of your local or state officials (and include brief blurbs about these statements).
- Allow other Facebook users to post stories, event reminders, pictures, and updates on your wall. [Change your Facebook settings to "open settings," and be sure to monitor your wall every day for negative or offensive posts.]
- Check the Facebook pages of the 2014 NCVRW Resource Guide Partners (see "Additional Resources" in Section 7 of the NCVRW Resource Guide) and "like" these partners or link to them.
- Ask your Facebook fans and Twitter followers to post your status updates on their social media networks.
- Post current and recent NCVRW videos from [YouTube](#).

Media coverage of crime greatly influences public perceptions about victims. Particularly in the immediate aftermath of crimes, as reporters rush to meet deadlines, their reporting may not reflect the desired sensitivity to traumatized victims. Because many television and print reporters do not receive training in how to interact with victims, you have an opportunity to help them approach crime stories with sensitivity. As a victim advocate who understands the perspective of victims and knows what reporters need to write their stories, you can play a key role in advocating for victim-sensitive coverage of crime.

## Tips for Reporters

In writing news stories about crime, reporters have the difficult task of seeking interviews from victims and conducting those interviews in an ethical manner when victims agree to speak. Advocates can help reporters prepare to speak with victims by offering suggestions about how to approach the victim so that he or she feels comfortable and safe. If reporters are open to some tips for approaching crime victims, you can share the following guidelines<sup>1</sup> about how reporters can handle interviews.

- Give the victim a reason to speak with you by explaining the purpose of the story, the fact that it will be published, and why the victim's participation is important;
- Tell the victim how much time you need and observe that time limit;
- Courteously accept the victim's refusal if he or she is unwilling to be interviewed;
- If the victim says no, express interest in a future interview, leave a business card or send an e-mail with your contact information, and ask for the names of others who may be willing to speak.

## Asking for the Interview

- Recognize that the victim may be coping with shock and trauma;
- Approach the victim without equipment—notebooks, tape recorders, cameras, and lights—and try to make a human connection;
- Introduce yourself as a reporter, give the victim your name and title, and briefly explain what you hope to achieve with your story;
- Express concern for the victim by saying “I am sorry for what happened to you” or “I am sorry for your loss”;
- Ask victims how they would prefer to be addressed, and observe that preference in all your questions;

## Logistics and Other Considerations

- Make the victim comfortable—offer a chair or suggest a comfortable, safe place to talk;
- Respect victims' space—because people in trauma often do not want to be touched, hand the microphone to the victim and explain how to adjust it;
- Ask permission to record the interview;
- Clarify ground rules—explain that anything victims say may be used in the interview; give victims permission to turn off the microphone if they want to say something they do not want included.

<sup>1</sup> Bonnie Bucqueroux and Anne Seymour, *A Guide for Journalists Who Report on Crime and Crime Victims*, (Washington, DC: Justice Solutions, 2009), 2-10, accessed November 8, 2013, <http://www.mediacrimevictimguide.com/journalistguide.pdf>.

## Victim Advocacy during Interviews

With the help of victim advocates, reporters can approach the interview with sensitivity toward the victim and the understanding that he or she may be undergoing trauma associated with the crime. Advocates who are present during the interview can step in if the reporter's questions become too pointed or difficult or if the victim seems to be getting upset. By making victims' needs a priority, advocates can keep the interview on track and encourage the reporter to do so as well.

## Tips for Victims

Advocating for victims with the media also includes helping victims decide whether to accept interviews, how to minimize invasions of their privacy, and how to exercise their rights and options in dealing with reporters. Advocates can also help victims anticipate questions and prepare how to answer them.

## Before the Interview

By giving victims the following checklist of questions and walking through it with them, you can help victims decide whether to participate in an interview:

1. *What are your goals in speaking to the media?* What purpose do you hope the interview will serve? Will it help the community know more about your loved one or understand the impact of crime on victims? Are you willing to answer questions from reporters who might not understand your pain or your point of view?
2. *Would the interview invade your privacy?* If you are still struggling with the emotional, physical, or financial impact of the crime, would speaking to a reporter disturb you or make you feel violated? You may want to discuss the pros and cons with a victim advocate before making your decision.
3. *Does refusing the interview increase your control over what is published about the crime?* Denying an interview will not prevent publicity about your case. If the story is newsworthy, the media will publish the story with or without interviewing you. Also, an interview may provide you with an opportunity to offer your perspective on the crime.
4. *Would you prefer that someone else speak for you?* If you would rather not be interviewed, you may ask someone else—an attorney, victim advocate, clergy member, another family member, or friend—to represent you in media interviews. That person can also release written statements on your behalf or accompany you to interviews if you decide to accept them.
5. *Would granting an interview affect the investigation or prosecution of the crime?* Giving an interview may compromise the investigation or prosecution of a crime. You may want to speak with an advocate or attorney before deciding to grant an interview.
6. *Do you want to set conditions for the interview?* Although reporters and producers may not agree to the conditions you suggest, if they want your interview they will most likely comply with reasonable requests. You have the right to ask or express your wishes about:
  - » Time and location of the interview
  - » Visiting the set or location before an interview
  - » Advance information about questions, the reporter's angle, or plans for using your interview
  - » Requesting a victim's advocate, lawyer, or support person be present
  - » Issues you will not discuss
  - » Requesting a specific reporter or producer
  - » Protecting your identity (through silhouettes and electronic distortion of your voice)
  - » Excluding children and other family members from the interview
  - » Excluding photos and other images you find offensive

- » Excluding offenders or other participants you might object to.

## Preparing Victims for the Interview

You can share the following tips with victims who decide to agree to interviews:

1. You may bring someone to provide support.
2. You may prepare for the interview by having an advocate list questions the reporter may ask and rehearsing responses.
3. You may refuse to answer a question by:
  - » Polite refusal: Saying, “I’m sorry, but I don’t want to talk about that.”
  - » Bridging: Change the subject to what YOU want to talk about. Answer by saying, “what is really important about that issue is...” and then talk about what you think the audience should know.
4. Never speak “off the record.” Reporters may publish or broadcast anything you say.
5. If you don’t know the answer to a question, simply say you don’t know. Don’t guess or speculate.
6. You may request a correction if the article that is published is inaccurate or you are quoted out of context. Newspapers and other outlets may publish corrections and television news may correct serious errors (although the option to do so is theirs). You can also complain to management at the news outlet prior to publication or broadcast if the reporter was aggressive, insensitive, or obtained information dishonestly.
7. You may refuse a follow-up interview, even if you have previously agreed to be interviewed a second time.

Victim advocates can play a key role in mediating between reporters and victims, especially when victims are feeling vulnerable and under stress. The victim, his or her family, and the wider community have an important interest in ensuring that media coverage is sensitive, accurate, and does not put the victim under duress or at risk. +

