

# ENGAGING COMMUNITIES

# EMPOWERING VICTIMS



## Section 4. COMMUNICATING YOUR MESSAGE: Media Tips & Tools

National Crime Victims' Rights Week (NCVRW) is an opportunity to highlight challenges faced by crime victims and to emphasize the ongoing struggle to establish victims' rights. This year's theme—*Engaging Communities. Empowering Victims.*—focuses on the role communities play providing victims with the support they need to pursue justice and recovery. It also calls attention to the difficulties experienced by crime victims in underserved communities or in marginalized groups. Engaging communities and empowering victims takes resources, dedication, and persistence to establish a welcoming, compassionate, and supportive environment for all victims to share their stories. Creating a comprehensive public awareness campaign for your NCVRW outreach allows you to 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 as they recover on their terms.

### The Social 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, communicating with policy makers, and influencing coverage of the issues. Increasingly, however, to capture public attention, it is necessary to develop a social media strategy. Social media is often the cheapest, fastest, and most effective way to

reach a wide audience. It is a powerful tool. In addition to alerting traditional journalists to important stories, it is a way to engage with the public and build relationships with succinct messaging that is unfiltered by mainstream media.

### Engaging with the Media

Most reporters and producers are searching for current events or “news hooks” 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. 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. Reporters change their subject focus and outlets often, so make sure you check with the relevant news desk or outlet website for the appropriate contact.

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. This way you are both informing people and promoting the work of a reporter or outlet that may be interested in future stories.

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 and e-mail.

# Communicating Your Message

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. 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. Reporters will often ask for a local or human-interest angle. Be prepared for the following types of questions when pitching: 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? Position your organization as a resource and refer to the “Statistical Overviews” in Section 6 for data points. 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?

## Sample News Release

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 to publicize your local events. The news release announces National Crime Victims’ Rights Week, explores 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. Be sure to share your releases and media advisories with colleagues, partners, and other professionals who share your mission or have partnered with you to plan NCVRW events.

Send out your NCVRW release well in advance of your events to reporters and partner organizations. Be sure to post the release on your Facebook page and tweet about it. Use a 10-day lead time to follow up with reporters and partner organizations, find spokespeople, answer questions, and create media kits for important events. Media kits should include the organization’s contact information,

names, and e-mails for leadership or spokespeople, the mission statement or description of the organization’s work, and information about your NCVRW activities.

## 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 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 receive more attention. 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. Opinion-editorials are typically longer than letters to the editor and afford the opportunity to delve deeper into the issues. They are persuasive pieces. Research local crime coverage. Which crimes are of particular concern to your community, and how have they affected victims’ lives? Is the local juvenile justice center overloaded? Is the prevalence of sexual assaults on local campuses being addressed? Does your local women’s shelter need more community support? Do the homeless in your community have a warm place to go in the winter? Choose your topic, and scan for coverage in your newspaper or local news websites. 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 included in this section can be used as a model.

## Public Service Announcements

Many media outlets offer free airtime 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. Create your own PSA 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 relevant contact information as well as the organization's name, phone number, and website in your public service announcement. To increase the likelihood that 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 to your community. Follow-up is critical for successful placement of PSAs.

## How to Create a Social Media Campaign

Social media is increasingly important in all industries, since some audiences are difficult to reach through traditional channels and are turning to social media and online tools as their primary means of communication and acquiring information. Using social media will help you expand and reinforce your message by reaching larger audiences and including audiences such as young people that are underserved by traditional media. In addition to

now-mature tools like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and YouTube, new tools like Instagram and Vine can help you expand your message even further. Many public agencies and nonprofits have ventured into social media due to its global scope and ability to spread messages quickly. It is also a fantastic way to engage with supporters and constituents. 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 your objective. This section includes some of the basics to help you get started and guide your use of these highly effective tools.

## Sample Social Media Status Updates

This section includes sample status updates that you can post on Facebook and Twitter 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, National Crime Victims' Rights Week, or this year's theme: *Engaging Communities. Empowering Victims*. Only Facebook and Twitter samples are included; however, these can be adapted for numerous other social networks. 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 reach and community engagement. These are only starting points. Feel free to use any or all of these resources throughout the month, but also supplement them with news about your own events and observations to keep your community engaged!

## Other Outreach Tips

- Plan a comprehensive strategy that includes traditional media, social media, statements and letters by the public officials, and a series of key messages you want your audiences to receive.
- 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* as well.
- Ask 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, tweet and post Facebook updates, and include their participation in your news releases and outreach materials. Retweet and promote any good articles or segments about crime or victims' rights on social media.
- After your NCVRW events, send high-quality video, high-resolution photos or digital images to your local television stations or newspapers with your contact information. Alert them in advance that photos or video are being sent.

## 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 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 is not revealed without their consent. This section includes tips to help you navigate this process. ★



The purpose of this news release is to generate media coverage for your local National Crime Victims' Rights Week activities. The release below is designed to be customized. Edit the release to reflect issues in your community and to highlight commemoration events.

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

[Date]

## CONTACT:

[Name/Title/Agency]

[Phone number]

[E-mail]

## **[Your City/Organization] Celebrates National Crime Victims' Rights Week, April 19-25**

*[Customize sub-heading to highlight local events, activities, partnerships]*

[City/State] —Every April, the Office of Victims of Crime (OVC) helps lead communities throughout the country in their annual observances of National Crime Victims' Rights Week (NCVRW) by promoting victims' rights and honoring crime victims and those who advocate on their behalf. This year's NCVRW will be held April 19-25 and the theme *Engaging Communities. Empowering Victims.* presents the opportunity to highlight the diversity of our communities, expand partnerships to serve victims of crime, enhance efforts to meet victims where they are, and empower crime victims as they pursue justice and recovery.

The U.S. Department of Justice will kick off the week with OVC's annual National Crime Victims' Service Awards Ceremony in Washington, DC to honor outstanding individuals and programs that serve victims of crime. [Your City/County/State/Organization] will observe National Crime Victims' Rights Week with special events and programs, including [include brief descriptions of activities].

[Your City/Organization] will also commemorate the advancement of victims' rights by honoring [name, title] and [name, title], champions in advocating for expanded support and services to communities affected by crime. [Provide brief information about each honoree.]

NCVRW honors and celebrates the achievements of the past thirty years in securing rights, protections, and services for victims. The bipartisan Victims of Crime Act (VOCA), passed by Congress in 1984, created a national fund to ease victims' suffering. Financed by fines and penalties paid by offenders, the Crime Victims Fund supports victim assistance and services, such as rape crisis and domestic violence programs [customize to include local services] and victim compensation programs that pay victims' out-of-pocket expenses such as counseling, funeral expenses, and lost wages. VOCA has also pioneered support efforts for victims of once-hidden crimes such as domestic and sexual violence. Outreach is increasingly focused on previously underserved victim populations, including victims of color, religious and ethnic minorities, LGBTQ victims, and immigrant populations to name a few. Efforts are being made to ensure that all victims, regardless of their background or the crime committed against them, receive the support they deserve.

"Victim empowerment is a central tenant of our work," said Joye E. Frost, Director, Office for Victims of Crime (OVC), U.S. Department of Justice. "By engaging the entire community, we are able to maximize and leverage existing resources to better serve *all* victims of crime and provide the necessary support through their journey to healing. This year's NCVRW theme emphasizes that we all have a role to play."

OVC encourages widespread participation in the week's events and in other victim-related observances throughout the year. For additional information about the 2015 National Crime Victims' Rights Week and how to assist victims in your community, please contact [Agency/Organization] at [area code/telephone number] or visit [Agency's website] at [web address]. For additional ideas on how to support victims of crime, visit the Office for Victims of Crime website, [www.ovc.gov](http://www.ovc.gov).

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[Your organization's mission statement/boilerplate] ★

## Sample Letter to the Editor

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 cites a news item about identity theft and encourages the public to use National Crime Victims' Rights Week to raise awareness, share prevention tips, and emphasize the impact of all financial crimes.

Focus your letter on a specific crime or trend covered by the newspaper. 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 short paragraphs to support your argument, and end your letter with a concluding statement. When you submit the letter, include your contact information so that the newspaper can contact you if it decides to print your letter. If the newspaper does not publish your letter, consider submitting it to a local organization that publishes a newsletter, or you may choose to post it on your website. Also post links to the letter on your Facebook, Twitter, and other social media pages.

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### Victims of Financial Fraud Are Crime Victims Too

Financial fraud is a serious crime that costs billions of dollars and affects more than 25 million consumers annually. The insightful article from your publication on identity theft raised many issues; however it is important to acknowledge the full scope of financial fraud, which also includes mortgage and lending fraud, investment fraud, and mass marketing schemes. This type of crime receives far less attention than violent crime, but can be as devastating. As an example, elder financial exploitation dramatically increases the risk of premature death.

Financial fraud knows no boundaries and does not discriminate. Victims are young and old, rich and poor. They come from all backgrounds, ranging from infants who have never initiated a financial transaction to retired individuals at the prime of their lives. Common targets include seniors, individuals with physical impairments, victims of domestic violence, those nearing retirement, people experiencing personal hardships, and those who have already been victimized, among others.

Victims of financial fraud experience the same range of emotions as those of violent crime, including loss of trust, guilt, shame, fear, isolation, depression, and anger. Perpetrators hide in plain sight and may hold positions of trust, or they may be perfect strangers using increasingly complex and evolving methods to defraud victims. As a result, justice is sometimes difficult to achieve, leaving victims alone to rebuild their lives.

April 19-25 is National Crime Victims' Rights Week. Let's use this week to raise awareness, share prevention tips, and emphasize the far-reaching impact financial crime has on individuals. We must work together to empower victims to report financial fraud and to provide the necessary support and resources they need to move forward and rebuild their lives.

Name

Organization

City, State ★

Op-eds are a great opportunity to share an opinion with a wide audience, and they do not necessarily have to be in response to another article. Keep your submission to 800 words or less. Be concise and persuasive. This is your chance to influence opinions, affect policy, and highlight the work you or your organization is doing to support crime victims' rights.

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## Out of the Shadows

Crime victimization is not limited to one specific population, but rather it is something that transcends people of all backgrounds and identities. While crime victims have legally protected rights, many different groups face significant barriers not only in accessing the resources they need and deserve, but also in reaching out.

National Crime Victims' Rights Week (NCVRW) is a wonderful opportunity to renew our commitment to underserved crime victims, to create partnerships, and to enhance the services and offerings from local providers to ensure that *all* victims of crime receive the necessary support to address their victimization and begin the healing process on their terms. This year's NCVRW theme is *Engaging Communities. Empowering Victims*. It emphasizes that everyone in the community is an integral part of creating safe, tolerant, and welcoming environments for all individuals regardless of their gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, living and family situation, disability, immigration status, or anything else for that matter.

Underserved victim groups include homeless people, immigrants, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) victims, persons with disabilities, people of color, victims of sexual assault, runaways, and many more. Often cultural barriers, isolation, language, marginalization, racism, and many other factors create unimaginable obstacles for these populations to access the services they need. These barriers contribute to their hesitation in reporting the crimes committed against them. Unfortunately, for some communities and groups violence has become part of their normal everyday life and individuals become more accepting of its existence.

Underserved populations are also likely targets and at an increased risk for victimization. We know that marginalized populations are disproportionately affected by violence. LGBTQ people of color are more than 3 times as likely to experience injury from hate violence. Persons with disabilities experience violence at a rate twice that of persons without disabilities. Almost half of all women will experience some sort of sexual violence in their lifetime. African Americans makeup close to 13% of the population, however they represent almost half of all homicide victims. We also know that young people, runaways, and homeless people experience higher rates of violence than the general population. [*Highlight local underserved communities.*]

The high rate of victimization among these populations is made worse by the fact that they are often underserved by victim service organizations. There are a variety of factors that may prevent victims from gaining access to services that they need. For example, immigrant victims may be hesitant to approach public services due to possible inquiries of their legal status, victims of domestic violence may be afraid for their lives if they identify the abuse, and LGBTQ people may not be comfortable sharing their sexuality.

There are a myriad of reasons crime victims remain in the shadows, unwilling or afraid to come forward. We must listen to the members of these communities to find out what these underserved victims need and how we can help them find justice and healing. As we commemorate NCVRW and celebrate the achievements of the crime victims' rights movement, we also need to recognize that there is more to accomplish. We must make it a priority to ensure that all crime victims feel comfortable enough to come out from the shadows into the light and receive the respect and recognition they deserve. Together we will engage our communities to empower all victims.

Visit the online Directory of Crime Victim Services at <http://ovc.ncjrs.gov/findvictimservices> to find services in your area. The Directory includes more than 10,000 programs and is designed to help service providers and individuals locate crime victim services in the United States and around the world. ★

## 15-Second PSA

Every year, millions of people's lives are forever changed by crime. They are our families, neighbors, friends, and colleagues. April 19-25 is National Crime Victims' Rights Week, a time to reach out and help crime victims rebuild their lives. We all play a role. Find out how you can help. Call [agency name] at [phone number] or visit [www.VictimsofCrime.org](http://www.VictimsofCrime.org).

## 30-Second PSA

Every year, millions of people's lives are forever changed by crime. They are our families, neighbors, friends, and colleagues. Many will have life-changing injuries or need ongoing care and support. April 19-25 is National Crime Victims' Rights Week. We can all reach out to victims, listen to what they need, and help them rebuild their lives. We all play a role. Find out how you can help. Contact [agency name, number, URL] or visit [www.VictimsofCrime.org](http://www.VictimsofCrime.org).

## 60-Second PSA

Every year, millions of people's lives are forever changed by crime. They are our families, 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 19-25 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. We all play a role. Find out how you can help. 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 video or audio messages given to radio or television stations to broadcast at no cost to the submitting organization.

### 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 "the public interest." Most stations donate portions of their commercial time to non-commercial causes.

Find out who is in charge of selecting which PSAs will 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, inform them that you will be sending a PSA to air. Include basic information about your organization in the delivery, such as a cover letter and pamphlet. Follow up with a phone call to ask if the PSA was received and when it will be aired. *Continue to reach out to the station. Persistence is key.*

### COMMUNITY ACCESS AND PUBLIC TELEVISION

Many towns have local cable (sometimes called community access) and college stations. Locate the name of the station manager and follow the same procedure as above. Many of these stations also air community calendars with information about local events and activities. Submit yours on a regular basis.

### YOUR WEBSITE OR SOCIAL MEDIA SITES

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

Social media offers powerful tools to assist with your outreach goals. Social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, LinkedIn, and others provide powerful and extensive forums to publicize events, share information, enlist volunteers, raise funds, and instantly reach communities that share your goals and interests. More than 97 percent of nonprofits now use some form of social media, making it easier for you to reach the communities you want to engage online.

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. Nonprofits of any size or staffing situation can benefit from social engagement. 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 most important social media platforms for your campaign are available for free, though many allow you to pay for additional reach to get your message to a larger audience. As you develop your strategies and identify your communications goals, you need to keep in mind the strengths and weaknesses of different social networks, the types of audiences you will be able to reach, the investment they require (if any), 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 1.32 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](#), 64 percent of all U.S. adults are on Facebook, and 30 percent of them get news from the site.

Facebook business pages must be administered by the personal profile of a designated individual who sets up the business or "fan" page. For instructions on how to complete that process, log in and visit Facebook's [signup instructions page](#). Once you have signed up and established your URL (Uniform Resource Locator), begin posting content, 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). Post photos, videos, company content, invitations to upcoming events, and links back to your website, and tag them in relevant posts on your own page. Interacting with others will help build your own community. Also join Facebook groups that are relevant to your interests. With some Facebook 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.

Posting pictures is a powerful way to promote engagement, as pictures tend to garner more views, likes, shares, and comments than text alone. Use this to your advantage in your Facebook strategy by posting pictures of your NCVRW events or promotional photos leading up to events. Facebook also supports hashtags, which can be used to categorize content. Include [#NCVRW2015](#) after your NCVRW posts to help others stay up to date on your events!

### 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 and information. Twitter offers instant communication with an online community. Once you have [set up your](#)

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[own account](#), choose a Twitter handle (username) that other users will recognize (often the name or nickname of your organization/agency). 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, and search topics and organizations that are of interest. After you set up your account, begin following others, following their followers, retweeting their tweets, and promoting them to your audience. You will then find ways to weigh in on conversations and promote your events, projects, or policies. Learn how to use Follow Friday (#FF) lists that recommend others to follow you. You can also recruit followers by announcing on other platforms (like your Facebook page) that you have joined Twitter, and link back to your Twitter page.

Maximize your Twitter presence by staying engaged in conversations on subjects that are important to you, and by quickly responding to other users' tweets and mentions of your organization or causes. Hashtags are a useful way to become part of a conversation, so make sure to use the most applicable tags, and add [#NCVRW2015](#) to your NCVRW tweets. The most important part of a Twitter campaign is staying engaged with your followers!

## YouTube

YouTube, a video platform, is one of the world's most visited Internet sites. You will need a digital camcorder/camera, webcam, 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. If applicable, apply for a [YouTube Nonprofit Program](#) 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 success stories. Use YouTube to upload recordings of presentations you've given and share presentation slides and videos of interviews with experts or representatives from your organization who can offer subject matter expertise. Post links to these videos (or the videos themselves) on your Facebook page, and tweet about them. 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. You can also create playlists on your YouTube channel to display your favorite videos that others have posted. YouTube is an ideal way of showcasing your NCVRW events.

## Instagram

Instagram is a highly popular photo-sharing site that enables you to upload and share photos one at a time 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](#), snap photos of your NCVRW events on your mobile devices and give your followers a sneak peek before you post them on your website. Expand the audience for your photos by "[tagging](#)" them with keywords and hashtags to identify or organize them on Instagram. Be sure to add [#NCVRW2015](#) to your NCVRW posts. If someone in your organization gives an NCVRW presentation, take a photo and post it on Instagram and Facebook, and tweet about it on Twitter. It provides a great opportunity to expand your audience as well as 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

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). 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). Be sure to learn and follow LinkedIn [etiquette](#), such as always responding quickly to invitations to connect and LinkedIn's best practices for company pages. Update your profile regularly and arrange your settings so that your connections see each change.

You can also create a [LinkedIn Company Page](#) for your organization. Follow the setup wizard for creating your company profile. Be sure to include a header image and profile image for your page, and focus on keywords from your mission statement throughout your description information. Additionally, [LinkedIn Showcase pages](#) can be used to highlight specific initiatives.

LinkedIn is more of a professional network than Facebook or Twitter, and can be used to ask and answer questions of other professionals in your field. This will bring you the best engagement, and could be a useful way to share ideas about NCVRW events or programming.

## 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* shares that large nonprofits with successful social media outreach average 15 hours on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube; 5 hours on photo-sharing sites; and 10 hours on their blogs each week. Such allotments are probably unrealistic for smaller organizations, but it is still possible to launch an effective social media campaign with a much smaller staff. Social media can occupy as much time as you have to dedicate to it. Even devoting a few hours a week to Facebook and Twitter and posting several times a week will help increase connections and exposure.

You should also clarify your goals in using social media to focus your efforts and to help determine which social networks are right for you. What do you want to accomplish? What audiences are you trying to reach, and what do you want them to know? How do you want them to engage? If you want to show off images or video of your NCVRW events, and let your community know what you've been doing, then Facebook and YouTube are probably your best options. If you want to stay engaged in a real time back and forth conversation on trending issues, you should put your efforts into Facebook and Twitter. Do you want to have a Q&A with other professionals in your field? LinkedIn has you covered.

Your overall and NCVRW-related social media goals should also be specific (e.g., reach 200 local Facebook users with NCVRW messages; invite five new groups to your NCVRW

## How to Create a Social Media Campaign

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 for 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. Now you are ready!

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. Back and forth conversations and engaging with the content of your followers, rather than simply relaying information, are key to your success. This is especially true for Twitter, where experts suggest tweeting or retweeting at least 10 times for every tweet devoted strictly to your organization's goals. Actively engaging will give you better results and build a community with deeper interest in your work.

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 desire.

*Note:* The National Center for Victims of Crime invites you to share NCVRW photos and information with us, and we will happily post it to our network and retweet your messages to help get the word out about your events. We encourage you to do the same. Message content to us at <https://www.facebook.com/ncvcfan>, or email [webmaster@ncvc.org](mailto:webmaster@ncvc.org), during the month of April. If you are on Twitter, please follow us at [@CrimeVictimsOrg](https://twitter.com/CrimeVictimsOrg) and tweet using the [#NCVRW2015](#) hashtag. ★



Below are status updates to 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. We encourage you to also write your own status updates (see [sidebar](#)), especially 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, also include related photos or graphics (e.g., the 2015 NCVRW logo), as well as your fans' responses.

- This year's NCVRW theme is *Engaging Communities. Empowering Victims*. Learn more here and get involved: [www.ovc.gov/ncvrw2015](http://www.ovc.gov/ncvrw2015)
- "When we learn how to meet the needs of underserved victims, and as we help new communities understand the impact of victimization and the assistance that is available, we expand options for victims. Victims become empowered to direct their own path to becoming survivors." Get your resources to be a part of National Crime Victims' Rights Week here: [www.ovc.gov/ncvrw2015](http://www.ovc.gov/ncvrw2015)
- Victims with disabilities and victims who are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing are often disconnected from mainstream victim service providers. This week we honor leaders and service providers within these communities who have the ability to reach out to and empower those victims.
- National Crime Victims' Rights Week 2015 focuses on "*Engaging Communities. Empowering Victims*." The entire community, individually and collectively, has a role in supporting victims of crime and empowering them to direct their own recovery. [#NCVRW2015](https://twitter.com/NCVRW2015)
- Share photos and announcements about your NCVRW planning and events at [www.facebook.com/ncvcfan](https://www.facebook.com/ncvcfan). The National Center for Victims of Crime will share your posts with other advocates on Facebook and 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 19. 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/ncvrw2015](http://www.ovc.gov/ncvrw2015)
- Today marks the beginning of National Crime Victims' Rights Week! How do you plan on commemorating this week? Let us know!
- Certain communities remain outside of the network of those working to support crime victims and, as a result, too many victims are not empowered in their recovery and healing. Work with us this week to engage and empower underserved victims. [#NCVRW2015](https://twitter.com/NCVRW2015)
- 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's National Conference in Anaheim this September, a

great opportunity to learn from and network with other victim advocates.

- 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 get the resources you need for your NCVRW 2015 activities. See Section 7 for the partner list: [www.ovc.gov/ncvrw2015](http://www.ovc.gov/ncvrw2015)
- Share “*Taking Action: An Advocate's 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. [www.nsvrc.org/saam/sexual-assault-awareness-month-home](http://www.nsvrc.org/saam/sexual-assault-awareness-month-home)
- This National Crime Victims' Rights Week, we reaffirm our commitment to creating a victim service and criminal justice response that assists *all* victims of crime and to express our sincere gratitude and appreciation for those community members, victim service providers, and criminal justice professionals who are committed to improving our response to all victims of crime so that they may find relevant assistance, support, justice, and peace. [www.ovc.gov/ncvrw2015](http://www.ovc.gov/ncvrw2015)

## Twitter Status Updates

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

- National Crime Victims' Rights Week begins April 19. Visit [www.ovc.gov/ncvrw](http://www.ovc.gov/ncvrw) for information about resources and events. #NCVRW2015
- National Crime Victims' Rights Week is April 19-25, 2015. Search #NCVRW2015 to stay connected!
- Victims should be given the assistance they need to make informed decisions for their own lives! Follow #NCVRW2015 to get involved!
- Engaging Communities. Empowering Victims. Search #NCVRW2015 to learn how you can help victims of crime!
- We reaffirm our commitment to creating a victim service and criminal justice response that assists ALL victims of crime. #NCVRW2015
- National Crime Victims' Rights Week 2015 starts today! This year's theme is “Engaging Communities. Empowering Victims.” #NCVRW2015
- Visit <http://1.usa.gov/bJ3d6u> to order a copy of the #NCVRW2015 Resource Guide.
- Download the #NCVRW2015 Resource Guide free at <http://ow.ly/DZOiI> for tips on observing National Crime Victims' Rights Week.
- Free resources are available to help victims of financial fraud this #NCVRW2015. Download here: <http://ow.ly/q1NmI>
- Download free awareness posters for your #NCVRW2015 activities! <http://ow.ly/q1NrP>
- Looking for ways to get involved in #NCVRW2015? Find ways to raise awareness here: <http://ow.ly/q1NuA>

- This year, we recognize and celebrate our efforts to reach more victims by expanding partnerships to new communities. #NCVRW2015
- Get statistics and talking points for your #NCVRW2015 activities: <http://ow.ly/q1NAc>
- Do you know any victims of crime? Have you been victimized? Get helpful info from the #NCVRW2015 Resource Guide: <http://ow.ly/DZOil>
- Visit <http://ow.ly/DZOil>, Section 7, to learn more about the National Crime Victims' Rights Week Guide partners. #NCVRW2015
- Need inspiration for your #NCVRW2015 event? See Section 2 of the *NCVRW Resource Guide* for #victim centered quotes. <http://ow.ly/DZOil>
- See Section 2 of the #NCVRW2015 Resource Guide for other key events in 2015 <http://ow.ly/DZOil> and stay active in supporting victims.
- Learn how to protect yourself from fraud this #NCVRW2015 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> #NCVRW2015
- Want to network with #victim advocates? Visit [VictimsofCrime.org/training](http://VictimsofCrime.org/training) for updates on the @CrimeVictimsOrg National Conference in Anaheim.
- Use this #NCVRW2015 to learn about the power of DNA to help #victims. Visit <http://ow.ly/DZOil> or follow @DNA\_Answers.
- OVC hosts a searchable database of victims' rights laws. Learn more: <http://ow.ly/q1NM9> #NCVRW2015
- Stalking is a crime, not a joke. Get the facts: <http://ow.ly/q1NQj> @SRC\_NCVC #NCVRW2015
- OVC's TTAC offers free trainings on victim advocacy and assistance. Learn more here: <http://ow.ly/rpGhK> #NCVRW2015
- April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month! Learn more at: <http://ow.ly/rpLET> #NCVRW2015
- April is National Sexual Assault Awareness Month! Get resources for your campaign: <http://ow.ly/rpLR7> ★

## MORE TIPS FOR SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

In addition to Facebook and Twitter status updates, 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](http://www.victimsofcrime.org) 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's [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 consistently for negative or offensive posts.
- Check the Facebook pages of the *2015 NCVRW Resource Guide* Partners in Section 7 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](http://www.youtube.com).

# Advocating for Victims with the Media

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 include 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. Educate reporters on how to approach crime victims by sharing the following guidelines.<sup>1</sup>

### 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;

- 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.

### 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 and give victims permission to turn off the microphone if they want to say something they do not want included.

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<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 October 23, 2014, <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:

- *What are your goals in speaking to the media?* What purpose do you hope the interview will serve? Will it help the community learn 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?
- *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.
- *Does refusing the interview increase or decrease 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.
- *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.
- *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.
- *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 regarding:
  - » 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 to whom you might object

## Preparing Victims for the Interview

Share the following tips with victims who agree to interviews:

- Bring someone to provide support.
- Prepare for the interview by having an advocate list questions the reporter may ask and rehearsing responses.
- Refuse to answer a question by:
  - » Polite refusal: “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.
- Never speak “off the record.” Reporters may publish or broadcast anything you say.
- If you don’t know the answer to a question, simply say you don’t know. Don’t guess or speculate.

- 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.
- 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. ★

