



Traditional media publications reach a wide audience through print newspapers and online publications. They are an opportunity to draw attention to crime-related issues in your community, share information about the work of your organization, and ask for community support. The samples included can be modified for use by your organization throughout National Crime Victims' Rights Week or as a model for other activities throughout the year.

Press Release



The purpose of a press release is to generate media coverage for your organization's participation in National Crime Victims' Rights Week and involvement in other events throughout the year. Edit the sample press release to reflect issues in your community and to highlight events and commemorations.

Make sure to share the release with your contacts and local media; don't forget to post to your website, link to Facebook, and tweet. Also use this opportunity to generate exposure for your organization, to highlight issues and to position your spokesperson as an expert in the field. For best results, distribute your release at least 10 days prior to your event. Use the 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.

5 Elements of a Noteworthy Press Release

1. Craft an attention-grabbing headline.
2. Include the main point in the first paragraph.
3. Use relevant statistics.
4. Incorporate a strong quotation to engage your reader.
5. End with contact information and additional resources.

Sample **Press Release**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

[Date]

[Name/Title/Agency]

CONTACT:

[Phone number]

[E-mail]

[Your City/Organization] Commemorates National Crime Victims' Rights Week, April 2-8

[Customize sub-heading to highlight local events, activities, partnerships, or key issues]

[City/State] – [Organization Name], in commemoration of National Crime Victims' Rights Week (NCVRW), April 2-8, 2017, is hosting special events and programs *[list events and/or activities]*, to raise awareness about crime victims' issues and rights and introduce the community to the important resources and services available. Last year, over 5 million individuals were a victim of a crime, and there were nearly 15 million property victimizations (according to the 2015 National Crime Victimization Survey conducted by the Bureau of Justice Statistics).

[Your City/Organization] will commemorate the advancement of victims' rights and highlight issues surrounding victimization by holding *[insert description of event, date, time and venue]*. [Your City/Organization] is also honoring *[name, title]* and *[name, title]*, champions in advocating for expanded support and services to communities affected by crime.

The Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) of the U.S. Department of Justice leads communities throughout the country in their annual observances of National Crime Victims' Rights Week, April 2-8, by promoting victims' rights and honoring crime victims and those who advocate on their behalf. This year's theme—*Strength. Resilience. Justice.*—emphasizes the importance of multidisciplinary responses and building the capacity of individuals, service providers, and communities to respond to crime and support the ongoing healing of victims and survivors. The theme also supports OVC's *Vision 21* Initiative to encourage research, address emerging issues, and build the capacity of victim service organizations by increasing the use of technology and training.

[Include a quote from a recognized leader or official about the importance of National Crime Victims' Rights Week in your community.]

OVC and *[local organization]* encourage widespread participation in the week's events and in other victim-related observances throughout the year. The U.S. Department of Justice will host OVC's annual National Crime Victims' Service Awards Ceremony in Washington, DC, to honor outstanding individuals and programs that serve victims of crime. For additional information about this year's 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 OVC website, www.ovc.gov.

###

[Your Organization's Mission Statement/Boilerplate.] ★

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. By writing a letter to the editor, you can link National Crime Victims' Rights Week or one of your organization's programs to a current local, state, or national issue by showing why readers should care about the rights and concerns of crime victims. 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.

Consider asking local law enforcement officers or other organizations to partner with you or write their own letters to highlight the needs of crime victims and how the public can help. Letters that are endorsed by multiple community groups will receive more attention. 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, post it on your website, or share on social media.

5 Elements of an Attention-Grabbing Letter

1. Respond to an article or commentary recently published. Begin your letter by citing this article.
2. Keep it brief, no more than 250 to 300 words.
3. Include a call to action.
4. Use verified facts and reference the original source.
5. Include information on where people can learn more about the issue.

Sample Letter to the Editor

Sexual Assault Must Not Be Dismissed

One in five women will be raped in her lifetime according to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey. The prevalence of this crime, along with recent news headlines, has revealed our continued tolerance for behaviors that normalize sexual assault.

Too many people cling to outdated notions of what constitutes sexual assault and harassment, including how the victim should respond and how long it should take them to recover. These attitudes inhibit progress and can be downright dangerous. We must remove the barriers that keep many victims from achieving justice and other victims from being heard at all.

Recently, college campuses and workplaces have made advances in addressing sexual assault in those environments. However, children, elders, men, persons with disabilities, and other populations face nearly insurmountable barriers to reporting sexual assault and other forms of abuse. Often the most formidable barrier is finding someone they trust who will believe them. Many victims who report undergo further traumatization when they tell friends and family, report to law enforcement, or participate in the investigation or trial. The criminal justice system is not always a welcoming place for victims of sexual assault, causing many victims to question whether it is even worth reporting when sentencing is often not commensurate with the crime.

As a society, we must change attitudes and put an end to the persistent dismissal of sexual assault. We must provide the opportunity and environment for all victims to be heard and believed. While we cannot overcome every barrier overnight, simply believing and supporting a victim of sexual assault can lead to a path of healing and recovery. It is critical that we no longer look the other direction. We must hold perpetrators accountable, confront stereotypes, and change systems that hinder justice.

Name

Organization

City, State ★

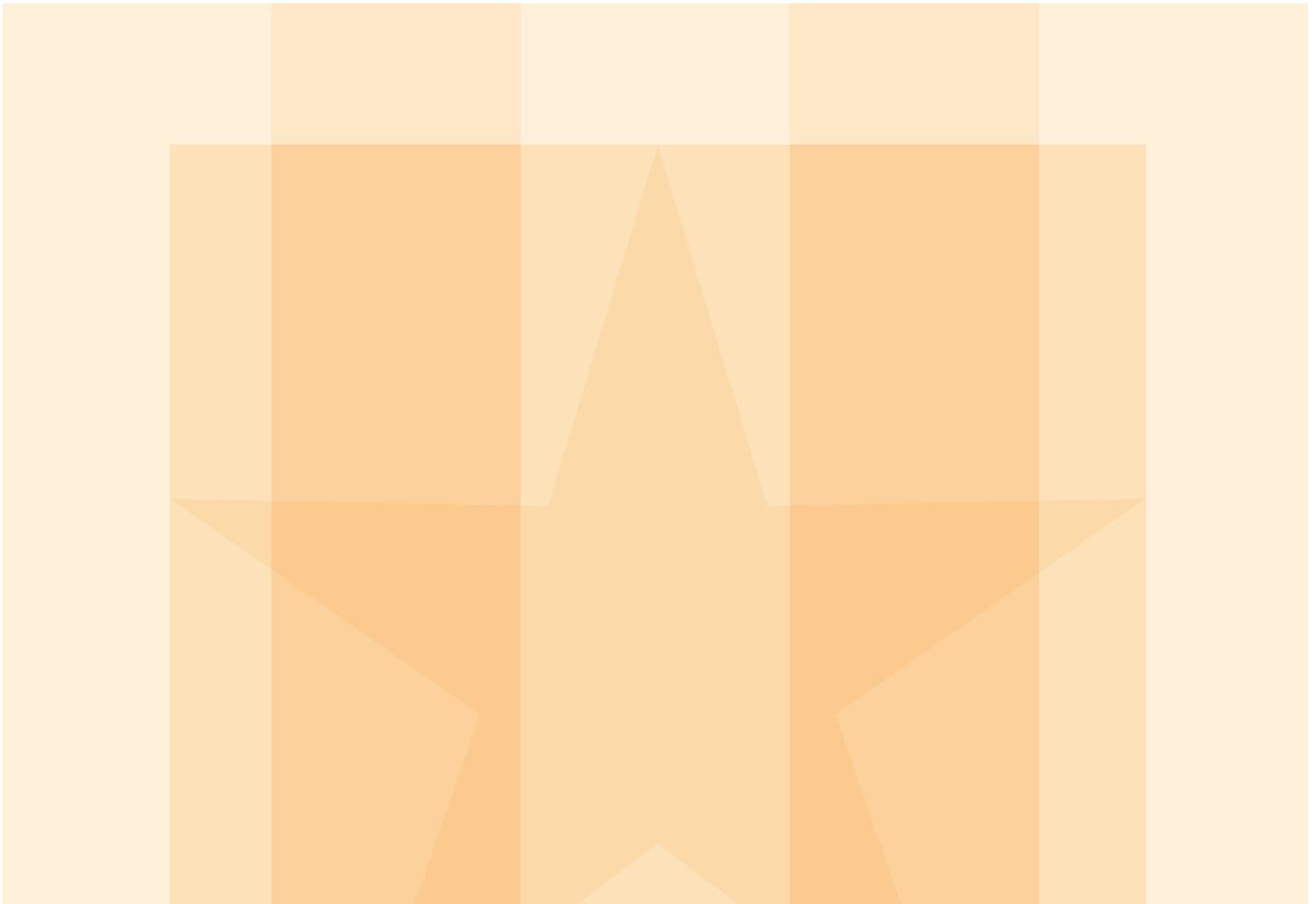
Opinion-Editorial Column



Newspaper editorial pages—both on paper and online—are highly popular among readers. Op-eds are longer than letters to the editor and afford the opportunity to delve deeper into issues. An op-ed is your chance to influence opinions, affect policy, and highlight the work you or your organization is doing to support crime victims' rights. One way to develop an op-ed is to research local crime coverage and important issues in your community. For example, how are the universities and colleges in your area responding to sexual assault? How would a partnership between law enforcement and victim services agencies benefit your community? Use or adapt the sample op-ed on the following page or craft your own to highlight an issue local to your community.

5 Elements of an Attention-Grabbing Op-Ed

1. Be persuasive.
2. Be confident. You are the expert in this field.
3. Stay current on related events and the cultural conversation about them.
4. Use plain language that can be read and understood by a wide audience.
5. Keep your submission to 800 words or less.



Accessibility Is Vital for a Strong Community

A central premise of our community is that it's open to everyone. We have the right to engage with our political structure, education system, public services, and other programs that facilitate and strengthen community life. However, individuals with disabilities often find they are cut off from these services, overlooked, or unable to access the help they need.

Reaching people with disabilities is all the more important because of the scope of those affected. The U.S. Census Bureau reports that nearly 1 in 5 adults has a physical, mental, or cognitive disability, and they are three times as likely to experience a violent crime as individuals without disabilities.

People with disabilities are at higher risk of victimization because they may be dependent on another person to meet critical needs. Caregivers—such as relatives, significant others, neighbors, or professional aids—may control access to medication, transportation, finances, or more distant loved ones. Victims may be unable to report a crime without their caregiver's assistance or they may be anxious about who will care for them if they report their caregiver's maltreatment. If they do successfully reach out for services, they may face difficulty getting the accommodations they need due to a service provider's lack of understanding or funding.

There is good news, a recent increase in federal formula funding for victim services providers, coupled with new provisions in federal regulations that govern this formula funding, encourages victim service providers to make their services more fully accessible to anyone with a disability.

For example, the new VOCA Formula Victim Assistance regulations (entitled the [Final Rule](#), available through the Office for Victims of Crime of the U.S. Department of Justice) now allow VOCA Formula sub-recipients who serve victims to make minor building adaptations to better comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Domestic violence shelters and other victim assistance programs can construct accessible bathrooms, wider doorways, and wheelchair ramps. Buildings should not hinder the ability of victims to seek the services they need to recover from crime.

The new funding regulations also cover the cost of forensic interviewing if the victim has a cognitive disability. Primarily used in child abuse or sexual assault cases, forensic interviewing methods are victim-centered, trauma-informed, and take into account varying levels of comprehension. When performed correctly, this type of interview limits retraumatization and provides the emotional support necessary for a victim to move forward.

[Discuss your organization, services, and the steps you are taking to make your services/building more accessible.]

The new VOCA funding is an unprecedented opportunity for our community to reach and serve crime victims with disabilities. By using these funds to increase equitable access to critical and appropriate services for individuals with disabilities, we will build a stronger, more resilient community. ★

Public Service Announcements (PSAs)



Broadcast media (radio and television) are required by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to serve “the public interest.” Many stations donate portions of their commercial time to non-commercial causes and air community calendars with information about local events and activities. PSAs (public service announcements) are short video or audio messages that advertise a public service or event and, as such, are broadcast for free by radio or television stations.

To get a PSA broadcast on air, contact your local radio or television stations about two months in advance to inquire about their policies on airing PSAs and their submission guidelines. 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. Be sure to include local cable (sometimes called “community access”) and college stations in your outreach.

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.

Sample 15-Second PSA

Every year, millions of Americans are affected by crime. April 2-8 is National Crime Victims’ Rights Week, a time to celebrate progress, raise awareness of victims’ rights and services, and stand with those whose lives have been forever altered.* Call [agency name] at [phone number] to learn how you or someone you know can get the help they need.

Sample 30-Second PSA

Every year, millions of Americans are affected by crime. Many will need ongoing care and resources. April 2-8 is National Crime Victims’ Rights Week, a time to celebrate progress achieved, raise awareness of victims’ rights and services, and stand with our families, neighbors, friends, and colleagues whose lives have been forever altered by crime. Be the difference. Reach out, listen, and support them as they recover on their own terms.* Call [agency name] at [phone number] to learn how you or someone you know can get the help they need.

Sample 60-Second PSA

Every year, millions of Americans are affected by crime. Many will need ongoing care and resources. April 2-8 is National Crime Victims’ Rights Week, a time to celebrate progress achieved, raise awareness of victims’ rights and services, and stand with our families, neighbors, friends, and colleagues whose lives have been forever altered by crime. Be the difference—Speak up. Listen. Empower. Respond. React. Reach out. This National Crime Victims’ Rights Week, we resolve to build stronger responses in our communities that ensure all victims are treated with compassion and respect and receive the justice they deserve. We all have a role.* Call [agency name] at [phone number] to learn how you or someone you know can get the help they need. ★

*ALTERNATE ENDING

You can also end each PSA with the following national helpline information:

Call 855-4-VICTIM or visit VictimConnect.org to learn about victims’ rights and options—confidentially and compassionately.