

Resource Guide

Communicating Your Message: Media Tips & Tools



NCVRW is an excellent time for your organization to increase its visibility in the community, promote valuable resources for victims of crime, build or reactivate partnerships, and engage in a dialogue with diverse audiences. By creating a comprehensive NCVRW public awareness campaign involving social media, traditional media, and public events, you will reach colleagues, local organizations, and the wider community with important information on crime victims' issues, rights, and services—including the services offered by your organization.

This section presents sample draft text for a range of different media. Marked with symbols that represent recommended platforms for sharing, these pieces can be used as they stand or tailored to your particular audience and message. Also included are tips and tools for pitching stories, maximizing outreach efforts, increasing engagement, and advocating for victims with the media. By customizing the sample media and adapting it to fit the activities and priorities of your organization, you will increase your visibility, reach a greater audience, and increase the success of your NCVRW campaign.

Platforms for Sharing



Professional network



Facebook



Twitter



Blog

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MEDIA PLANS

Crafting an NCVRW Media Plan

A well-thought-out media plan is an effective way to share your message and increase your organization's exposure. Engaging a wide audience for your NCVRW activities can be time-consuming and may feel overwhelming for an organization with a small staff. However, an active social media presence is easy to achieve and can vastly increase your connections and reach.

You can tailor the sample media plans described here to meet the needs and capacity of your organization, and to set media and outreach goals for the entire year. It can take as much (or as little) time as you have to dedicate to it.

Considerations When Crafting a Media Plan

- Who is your audience?
- What is your message? What do you want to accomplish?
- Where do you want to engage your audience (local, state, or national level)?

- What is the best method for communicating your message? (Your mode and method should be adapted for each communication.)
- When and how often should you communicate?
- Why is this message important to your audience?

Important To Remember

- Social media is about two-way communication. To have successful engagement, consider following organizations in your network and then engage with their posts.
- Content is key. Posts should be relevant, timely, and consistent.
- Be intentional with what you share and post. Make sure your content fits into your overall messaging strategy and brand.
- Use #NCVRW2021 in your posts.



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CRAFTING AN NCVRW MEDIA PLAN

Sample Plan 1

For those—

- interested in building a stronger media presence, and
- able to dedicate a small amount of staff time (approximately 1 hour) each week.

Throughout March and April—

- post on Twitter and Facebook two or three times each week. Share posts by OVC and other relevant organizations, copy a sample post from this guide (see pages 6–9), or craft your own content.
- if you already have an established blog, write one blog post about your organization’s NCVRW activities.

Set Achievable Goals

Support your organizational activities by setting achievable, measurable goals such as—

- increasing your followers by 5 percent.
- achieving an engagement rate of 1 percent or higher. (Engagements include likes, shares, retweets, URL clicks, and any other action a user takes on your post. You can find your engagement rate in any of the social platforms’ reporting areas.)
- establishing online connections with other organizations by liking or following their pages.

Sample Plan 2

For those—

- interested in building a stronger media presence and forming relationships with local news organizations; and
- able to dedicate a moderate amount of staff time (4–8 hours each week).

Throughout March and April—

- post at least four times on Twitter and four times on Facebook each week. You can respond to another organization’s post, inform the public about your resources, post a relevant news article, or use the sample posts on pages 6–9.
- write one blog post about how your organization is participating in NCVRW this year.
- write a news release about your organization’s recognition of NCVRW.
- submit a letter to the editor or an opinion-editorial to your local newspaper.

Set Achievable Goals

Support your organizational activities by setting achievable, measurable goals such as—

- increasing your followers by 10 percent.
- achieving an engagement rate of 1 percent or higher. (Engagements include likes, shares, retweets, URL clicks, and any other action a user takes on your post. You can find your engagement rate in any of the social platforms’ reporting areas.)
- having a letter to the editor or an opinion-editorial published in the local newspaper.



Sample Plan 3

For those—

- interested in reaching a wide audience and increasing visibility, and
- able to devote significant staff time (8 or more hours each week).

Throughout March and April—

- post at least once 5–7 times per week on Twitter and Facebook. Use a variety of tactics—share others' posts, respond to other organizations, post news articles, highlight neighboring events and services, use the sample posts on pages 6–9, or craft your own NCVRW messages related to this year's theme, *Support Victims. Build Trust. Engage Communities.*
- write two blog posts about NCVRW. Publish the first one the week before NCVRW, detailing the history of the week and what your organization is doing to commemorate the week. Publish the second post after NCVRW as a followup on your organization's events and national NCVRW events, such as the U.S.

Department of Justice's National Crime Victims' Service Awards Ceremony.

- submit a letter to the editor and an opinion-editorial for print in your local newspaper each month.
- write two or more news releases. Possible topics include your participation in the mayor's proclamation, your own organization's NCVRW activities, and other events commemorating the week.

Set Achievable Goals

Support your organizational activities with achievable, measurable goals such as—

- increasing your followers by 10–20 percent.
- achieving an engagement rate of 2 percent or higher. (Engagements include likes, shares, retweets, URL clicks, and any other action a user takes on your post. You can find your engagement rate in any of the social platforms' reporting areas.)
- connecting with professionals and community members in a variety of ways.



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SOCIAL MEDIA

In addition to alerting traditional journalists to important stories, social media allows you to engage directly with the public and build relationships through succinct messaging that is unfiltered by traditional journalism outlets. The most important social media platforms for your campaign are available for free, though many allow you to pay for access to a larger audience.

TIPS FOR USING IMAGES ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Embedding Links in Facebook

The [2021 NCVRW Social Media Artwork](#) was created specifically to be used with the Facebook and Twitter platforms. OVC recommends using JPG or PNG files when posting images on social media.

Remember, there is a difference between how things will display on your personal timeline and how things will display in a user's newsfeed. Make sure that you are choosing dimensions based on where you want the majority of viewers to see your image.

Tips for Facebook Images

- Profile picture images must be at least 180 x 180 pixels. Profile pictures will be cropped to a circular shape in ads and posts, but will remain square in shape when people visit your page. Business page profile images will be cropped to fit a square.
- Cover photos (i.e., banners) must be at least 400 x 150 pixels. Anything less than that will be stretched.
- If you need to resize an image, OVC recommends that you maintain the aspect ratio of the original file.

Tips for Twitter Images

- The recommended size for profile images is 400 x 400 pixels. The largest display of your profile picture is on your homepage and can be viewed by your followers as well as individuals who stumble upon your page.
- The recommended size for header images (i.e., banners) is 1,500 x 500 pixels. Your header image is quite a bit larger than your profile photo, so make sure to save it at the highest resolution possible.
- OVC recommends that you do not enlarge any of the Twitter social media ads, as this will compromise the image quality.
- When attaching an image to a Tweet, the way the image is cropped and displayed will vary slightly depending on whether you are attaching one image, multiple images, or sharing a link. To prevent unexpected cropping, horizontally center your content so the most important elements of the image will be visible.



Many organizations already have a Facebook business or cause page. Rather than opening a new page specific to a particular topic, use these established pages with built-in audiences to promote NCVRW activities and information. Post photos, videos, organizational content, invitations to upcoming events, and links leading back to your website. Engage your audience by replying to their comments on posts and liking or sharing posts from other people and organizations in your network.

Use the Facebook Live feature to stream live events or answer questions in real time. You can also temporarily pin a post highlighting NCVRW to the top of your page to increase its visibility. Use the sample posts below or create your own to launch your NCVRW Facebook campaign. To download NCVRW theme artwork sized specifically for sharing on Facebook, visit www.ovc.ojp.gov/ncvrw2021. Be sure to use applicable hashtags, and add #NCVRW2021 to your NCVRW posts.

6 Tips for an Effective Facebook Post

- Keep your content concise; readers should be able to easily access the information they need.
- Include a link to a relevant article or website.
- Be timely.
- Post at varied times throughout your social campaign for maximum impressions.
- Post intentionally, as part of a consistent sharing strategy.
- Include an image (images receive more engagement and are favored by Facebook's algorithm).

Sample Facebook Posts

Leading up to NCVRW (posting dates: March 30–April 17, 2021)

- National Crime Victims' Rights Week will be observed April 18–24, 2021. Join us during this weeklong initiative to promote victims' rights, and honor crime victims and those who advocate on their behalf. Get started by using the 2021 NCVRW Resource Guide. #NCVRW2021 www.ovc.ojp.gov/ncvrw2021
- Curious about how you can get involved in National Crime Victims' Rights Week? Access @OJPOVC 2021 NCVRW Resource Guide to plan and promote your community events April 18–24, 2021. #NCVRW2021 www.ovc.ojp.gov/ncvrw2021
- 2021 National Crime Victims' Rights Week is April 18–24. Use the hashtag #NCVRW2021 to join the conversation and learn about available resources and community events. www.ovc.ojp.gov/ncvrw2021
- #NCVRW2021 recognizes the crime victim advocates, allied professionals, and selfless volunteers who have worked to protect victims' rights and provide critical services. This year's theme is "Support Victims. Build Trust. Engage Communities." Learn more at www.ovc.ojp.gov/ncvrw2021 to get involved.
- National Crime Victims' Rights Week begins Sunday, April 18. Visit the Office for Victims of Crime's #NCVRW2021 website for information about resources and ideas for events and activities. www.ovc.ojp.gov/ncvrw2021
- Looking to plan, promote, or locate victims' services events? Visit @OJPOVC's Events page at www.ovc.ojp.gov/events. #NCVRW2021



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- April 18–24, 2021, is National Crime Victims’ Rights Week. Find webinars to help your organization engage communities and support victims on OVC TTAC. #NCVRW2021 www.ovcttac.gov/views/TrainingMaterials/dspWebinars.cfm

During NCVRW (posting dates: April 18–24, 2021)

- Join us throughout the week as we raise awareness about victims’ rights and services. Learn how you and your community can get involved. #NCVRW2021
- It’s National Crime Victims’ Rights Week. Join the Office for Victims of Crime [tag: @OJPOVC] and communities across the country to raise awareness about victims’ rights. #NCVRW2021 www.ovc.ojp.gov/ncvrw2021
- National Crime Victims’ Rights Week is April 18–24, 2021. This year’s theme—Support Victims. Build Trust. Engage Communities.—emphasizes the importance of leveraging community support to help victims of crime. #NCVRW2021 www.ovc.ojp.gov/ncvrw2021
- It’s National Crime Victims’ Rights Week. Download this year’s theme artwork, awareness posters, web artwork, and sample proclamation to help raise awareness. #NCVRW2021 www.ovc.ojp.gov/ncvrw2021
- It’s National Crime Victims’ Rights Week. Use this year’s online Resource Guide to raise awareness about victims’ rights and services within your community. #NCVRW2021 www.ovc.ojp.gov/ncvrw2021
- Visit ovcttac.gov for the tools and resources you need to build your capacity to serve all victims of crime. #NCVRW2021

- Crime victim compensation can help reimburse victims for medical services and other costs incurred as a result of a crime. Visit the @OJPOVC Help in Your State page for contact information for your state’s crime victim compensation program: <https://ovc.ojp.gov/help-for-victims/help-in-your-state> #NCVRW2021
- Do you know what victims’ rights exist in your state? Visit <https://victimlaw.org> today to research state, federal, or tribal law. #NCVRW2021
- If you or someone you know has been a victim of elder fraud, reporting is the first step. <https://stopelderfraud.ovc.ojp.gov> #NCVRW2021
- Support is available for victims of crime. Call 855–4–VICTIM to learn about victims’ rights and options, confidentially and compassionately. <https://victimconnect.org> #NCVRW2021
- During #NCVRW2021 and throughout the year, we want to let victims of crime know that they are not alone. Find compelling artwork, awareness posters, and other resources to raise awareness about victims’ rights and services. www.ovc.ojp.gov/ncvrw2021

TECH TIP

Embedding Links in Facebook

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





Twitter is an information-sharing network where each post, or “tweet,” is limited to 280 characters. If you set up a new account, choose a Twitter handle (username) that other users will recognize (often the name or abbreviation of your organization) and an easily identifiable profile picture. To be an active Twitter user, follow other individuals and organizations, follow their followers, retweet their tweets, and promote them to your audience. Post your own tweets that link back to your website or your other social media pages and use images and graphics when possible. Create longer form messages by replying to your own tweets and creating a “thread.” Maximize your Twitter presence by staying engaged in conversations on subjects that are important to your mission, and by quickly responding to other users’ tweets and mentions of your organization or causes. Adding a hashtag groups your tweet with related posts from other users, and is a useful way to become part of a conversation. Make sure to use the most applicable tags, and add #NCVRW2021 to your NCVRW tweets.

5 Tips for Tweeting

New users of Twitter may have difficulty adhering to a character limit. Use the tips below to make your tweets more concise:

- Replace spelled out numbers (“nine”) with numerals (“9”).
- Replace “and” with “+,” “&,” or “/” when appropriate.
- Use contractions.
- Substitute long words with shorter synonyms.
- Shorten links or remove “http:” and “https:” from the beginning of links, when possible.

Sample Tweets

Leading up to NCVRW (posting dates: March 30–April 17, 2021)

- National Crime Victims’ Rights Week promotes victims’ rights, and honors crime victims and those who advocate on their behalf. Join us during this weeklong initiative from April 18–24. #NCVRW2021 #victimservices www.ovc.ojp.gov/ncvrw2021
- National Crime Victims’ Rights Week will be observed April 18–24, 2021. Use @OJPOVC 2021 NCVRW Resource Guide to plan and promote your community events. #NCVRW2021 #supportvictims www.ovc.ojp.gov/ncvrw2021
- National Crime Victims’ Rights Week is April 18–24. Use the hashtag #NCVRW2021 to join the conversation and learn about available resources and community events. #victimservices www.ovc.ojp.gov/ncvrw2021
- National Crime Victims’ Rights Week is April 18–24, 2021. Follow #NCVRW2021 to stay connected and find compelling artwork and other materials to raise awareness about crime victims rights’ and services at www.ovc.ojp.gov/ncvrw2021.
- Visit the #NCVRW2021 Resource Guide at www.ovc.ojp.gov/ncvrw2021 for tips on observing National Crime Victims’ Rights Week.
- National Crime Victims’ Rights Week begins on April 18. Visit www.ovc.ojp.gov/ncvrw2021 for information about resources and events. #NCVRW2021
- #NCVRW2021 will be commemorated April 18–24. This year’s theme—Support Victims. Build Trust. Engage Communities.—emphasizes the importance of leveraging community support to help victims of crime. www.ovc.ojp.gov/ncvrw2021



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- Engage your community to build trust and support victims of crime! Download 3 free awareness posters for your #NCVRW2021 activities at www.ovc.ojp.gov/ncvrw2021.
- Find talking points and useful promotional materials for your #NCVRW2021 activities on www.ovc.ojp.gov/ncvrw2021.
- Need inspiration for your #NCVRW2021 event? See the NCVRW Resource Guide for helpful tips on advocating for victims in the media. www.ovc.ojp.gov/ncvrw2021
- See the #NCVRW2021 Commemorative Calendar of crime victim-related observances at www.ovc.ojp.gov/ncvrw2021 to engage with your community throughout the year.
- Resources are available to help victims of elder fraud. Visit <https://stopelderfraud.ovc.ojp.gov> to learn more. #NCVRW2021
- Have you or someone you know been a victim of crime? The #NCVRW2021 Referral Flier lists national resources that can offer support. www.ovc.ojp.gov/ncvrw2021
- Learn how to report elder fraud and assist others this #NCVRW2021. <https://stopelderfraud.ovc.ojp.gov>
- Do you know what victims' rights exist in your state? Visit www.victimlaw.org to research state, federal, or tribal law. #NCVRW2021
- Visit ovcttac.gov for the tools and resources you need to help build your capacity to serve victims of crime. #NCVRW2021

During NCVRW (posting dates: April 18–24, 2021)

- #NCVRW2021 starts today! This year's theme is "Support Victims. Build Trust. Engage Communities." Discover resources at www.ovc.ojp.gov/ncvrw2021 to promote awareness.
- It's National Crime Victims' Rights Week. Join @OJPOVC in raising awareness of victims' rights. #NCVRW2021 #victimservices www.ovc.ojp.gov/ncvrw2021
- National Crime Victims' Rights Week is April 18–24, 2021. Join communities nationwide to promote crime victims' rights and services. #NCVRW2021 #victimservices www.ovc.ojp.gov/ncvrw2021
- The #NCVRW2021 theme is "Support Victims. Build Trust. Engage Communities." Access the 2021 NCVRW Resource Guide to learn more. #victimservices www.ovc.ojp.gov/ncvrw2021
- The theme for #NCVRW2021 is "Support Victims. Build Trust. Engage Communities." which emphasizes the importance of leveraging community support to help victims of crime.
- @OJPOVC hosts a searchable database of victims' rights laws. Learn more: www.victimlaw.org. #NCVRW2021
- @OJPOVC TTAC offers free trainings to help your organization engage communities and support victims. Learn more here: www.ovcttac.gov. #NCVRW2021
- By pooling expertise and resources, we can support the healing and recovery of all crime victims and build thriving communities. Open your #NCVRW2021 activities with the proclamation on www.ovc.ojp.gov/ncvrw2021.
- Support is available for victims of crime. Call 855-4-VICTIM to learn about victims' rights and options, confidentially and compassionately. <https://victimconnect.org> #NCVRW2021
- During #NCVRW2021 and throughout the year, we want to let victims of crime know that they are not alone. Find helpful tools to raise awareness about victims' rights and services. www.ovc.ojp.gov/ncvrw2021

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BLOGS

Consider sharing more in-depth messages with your community online through a blog. Post as frequently as you wish, with a goal of at least once a month. Be sure to provide a link to your blog on your Facebook, Twitter, and other social media pages.

Steps to an Engaging Blog Post

- Target your audience by using an appropriate reading level and relevant content.
- Check your facts—use only statistics that come from reliable sources, and cite them.
- State your main points in your introduction and again in the conclusion.
- Limit your post to no more than 750 words.
- Time the release of your blog post to coincide with events and current news.

Ideas for Blog Posts

- Information for crime victims, such as crime victim compensation or victims' rights.
- Details about an upcoming event or a recap following an event.
- Awareness days, weeks, and months.
- Suggestions for self-care.
- Personal stories including suggestions for self-care and how victims used local resources to assist in their recovery.
- Lists of important resources and services.
- Relevant interviews with important local officials or executives in the organization.



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Sample Blog Post

Female Genital Mutilation Is a Problem in the United States, and We Must Get Better at Addressing It

You might believe that female genital mutilation and cutting (FGM/C) only affects women and girls internationally. But hundreds of thousands of women and girls in the United States are also at risk.

Female genital mutilation and cutting is the partial or total removal of female genitalia, or other injury to female genital organs, for nonmedical reasons. FGM/C is a form of gender-based violence and, because victims are often young girls or even infants, a horrific form of child abuse.

Around 4 million girls worldwide are at risk of undergoing FGM/C every year. Most victims are younger than age 15.¹ At least 200 million women and girls alive today are survivors of FGM/C.² The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimated that in 2012, approximately 513,000 women and girls in the United States were at risk for FGM/C. This number was more than three times higher than an earlier estimate from 1990, indicating an alarming trend of more women and girls in this country at risk now than in prior decades.

The message is clear: This global public health issue is also a domestic crisis here in the United States. FGM/C is not only an abominable crime, but also an extreme form of gender discrimination and an unconscionable violation of human rights.

Addressing FGM/C in [insert name of city or state]

The medical consequences of FGM/C can be devastating. Victims can experience medical complications, including infections and infertility, as well as psychological and emotional trauma resulting in anxiety, depression, and posttraumatic stress disorder. The risk of infection means that FGM/C can also be lethal.

A major part of addressing FGM/C is supporting the organizations that are most likely to encounter victims of this crime—domestic violence and child abuse service providers, first responders, health care providers, and others in the community at large.

To ensure that FGM/C victims can access culturally specific services from providers they trust, successful community strategies include peer support groups, where victims can discuss their experiences in an environment that fosters openness and trust; and locally led focus groups asking women what they think are the best ways to address FGM/C in their communities. Equally critical is education for medical providers on the specific medical needs of FGM/C victims, such as the risk for urinary and vaginal complications, as well as potential complications during pregnancy.

¹ UNICEF, March 2019, “What is female genital mutilation? 7 questions answered,” accessed January 22, 2021, www.unicef.org/stories/what-you-need-know-about-female-genital-mutilation.

² UNICEF, February 2020, “Female genital mutilation (FGM),” accessed January 22, 2021, <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/female-genital-mutilation/>.

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[Insert information on local organizations combating FGM/C, educating communities and healthcare providers, and/or delivering culturally specific and community-based services to FGM/C victims.]

No woman or girl should be deprived of her dignity and self-worth.

To learn more about how the work of *[insert name of your organization]* intersects with the effort to end FGM/C worldwide, *[link to information and resources from your organization]*.



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OTHER SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

YouTube

YouTube is the second most-visited site on the Internet, making it a powerful platform for sharing information. To begin, set up a [YouTube channel](#) for your organization, which will then link to any Google accounts you have. Choose a name that matches your brand and post your channel URL on your website, Facebook page, and other social networking profiles. If applicable, register for a [YouTube Nonprofit Program](#) account, which gives you more features, including the ability to add clickable “asks” on top of videos and upload longer videos. Use YouTube to upload recordings of presentations and trainings from your organization, as well as highlights of your NCVRW events. Visit [OVC’s YouTube channel](#) for examples of videos to post.

Instagram

Instagram is a photo-sharing application that lets you upload and share images with your network. Download the Instagram app, [set up an 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, and be sure to add #NCVRW2021 to relevant posts. Instagram also has a “stories” feature that allows users to post a series of photos and videos that disappear after 24 hours. Instagram interfaces with Twitter, Facebook, and other platforms.

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a professional network for individuals and organizations. To create a [LinkedIn company page](#) for your organization, follow the “setup wizard” to complete a company profile. Be sure to include header and profile images, and focus on keywords from your mission

statement throughout your description. Additionally, use LinkedIn Showcase pages to highlight specific initiatives, such as NCVRW.

Periscope

[Periscope](#) is Twitter’s live-streaming public video app. Similar to Facebook Live, it allows the user to broadcast and watch live videos in real time from around the world. The application has useful features, such as the ability to attend meetings remotely and share events with the public. You can choose whether to keep broadcasts indefinitely or let them expire after 24 hours. Use Periscope to share your NCVRW events with community members who are unable to attend in person.

Additional Tips for Social Media Posts

In addition to the sample Facebook and Twitter posts listed here, use the following ideas to generate more NCVRW content for your social media sites.

- Download NCVRW Theme Artwork from the [NCVRW website](#), including NCVRW-specific Facebook and Twitter images.
- Post photos or videos of your organization’s NCVRW planning sessions or events.
- Share posters from OVC’s [gallery of awareness posters](#) on crime- and victim-related topics using your social media platforms.
- Post links to NCVRW op-eds or news releases from your local newspaper or television station’s website.
- Post links to NCVRW statements or proclamations made by local or state officials, and include brief descriptions about these statements.



- Allow other Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn users to post stories, event reminders, pictures, and updates on your timeline by opening your Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn settings. If you allow the general public to engage with your content, be sure to monitor your timeline frequently for negative or offensive posts.
- Post bios and 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 channels.
- Ask your social media followers to repost your status updates on their social media networks.
- Post current and recent NCVRW videos on YouTube.



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TRADITIONAL MEDIA

Traditional media reach a broad, general audience through print newspapers, online publications, and radio and television broadcasts. These venues provide additional opportunities to draw attention to crime-related issues in your community, share information about the work of your organization, and ask for community support. The following sample media can be modified for use by your organization during NCVRW and throughout the year.



The purpose of a press release is to generate media coverage for your organization’s participation in NCVRW and other events throughout the year. Edit the sample press release to reflect specific issues in your community and to highlight activities, events, and commemorations.

Make sure to share the release with your contacts and local media, but don’t forget to post it to your own website, link to it on Facebook, and tweet the link as well. Use this opportunity to generate exposure for your organization, highlight issues related to your mission, and 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, identify spokespeople, answer questions, and create media materials for each important event.

5 Elements of a Noteworthy Press Release

- Craft an attention-grabbing headline.
- Include the main point in the first paragraph and be sure to address who, what, when, where, and why.
- Use relevant statistics.
- Incorporate a strong quotation to engage your reader.
- Include contact information and additional resources.



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Sample Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

[Date]

[Name/Title/Organization]

CONTACT

[Phone Number]

[Email]

[Your City/Organization] Commemorates National Crime Victims' Rights Week, April 18–24, 2021

[Customize subheading to highlight local events, activities, partnerships, key issues, etc.]

[City, State] – [Organization's name], in commemoration of National Crime Victims' Rights Week (NCVRW), April 18–24, 2021, is hosting [list special events or activities] to raise awareness about crime victims' issues and rights and introduce the community to the important resources and services available.

The faces of crime victims are those of our family, friends, neighbors, and community members. According to the most recent National Crime Victimization Survey from the Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1.2 million people were victims of violent crime excluding simple assault in 2019, a significant decrease from the year before. Now is the time to redouble our efforts so that victimization continues to decline and fewer and fewer *[Americans, or residents of your city/state]* become victims of crime.

[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 for communities affected by crime.

The Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) leads communities throughout the country in their annual observances of NCVRW by promoting victims' rights and honoring crime victims and those who advocate on their behalf. This year's theme—*Support Victims. Build Trust. Engage Communities.*—celebrates the contributions that we all can make toward building trust in our community's capacity to support the healing journeys of crime victims. Trust is collective as well as individual, so we are honoring both the individual victims in our community and the groups engaged in building networks of understanding and support.

[Include a quote from a recognized leader or official in your community/organization about the importance of NCVRW in your community.]

For additional information about this year's NCVRW and how to assist victims in your own community, please contact *[organization]* at *[telephone number]* or visit *[organization]*'s website at *[web address]*. For additional ideas on how to support victims of crime, visit OVC's website at www.ovc.ojp.gov.

###

[Your organization's mission statement/boilerplate]

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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 (NCVRW). By writing a letter to the editor, you can link NCVRW 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 agencies or other organizations to partner with you, or encourage them to 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 your letter to the editor, include your contact information so the newspaper can

reach 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 it on social media.

5 Elements of an Attention-Grabbing Letter

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



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Sample Letter to the Editor

Protecting Older Adults From Fraud During the Pandemic

In the United States, about 5 million older adults are abused, neglected, or exploited each year.¹ During the pandemic, it's especially horrific that our seniors—who are already at much greater risk from the disease—have also been victims of pandemic-related fraud and exploitation. This kind of financial crime can have an effect far beyond a victim's bank balance; it is associated with a physical decline in health. A recent study of elder abuse found that victims of financial exploitation had mortality rates almost as high as those of victims of caregiver neglect.² Put simply, fraud is a serious threat to older adults' longevity and well-being.

Fraud schemes targeting older Americans are despicable crimes. Scammers have marketed fraudulent tests and exploited fear of the disease to steal information for identity theft. Stimulus check schemes and imposter contact tracers have preyed on older adults who may not have access to their usual sources of trusted information in the community.

By early 2021, over 300,000 coronavirus-related consumer complaints had been filed with the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). And we know that older adults have been hit hardest of all. Most people who reported a fraud to the FTC had lost about \$300, but adults over the age of 80—those typically least able to absorb large financial losses—lost more than twice that amount.³

There are ways to protect yourself and your loved ones. In particular, the Department of Justice (DOJ) has a [National Center for Disaster Fraud Hotline](https://www.justice.gov/ncj250001) (866-720-5721) for reporting pandemic-related fraud. Hotline staff will obtain information regarding complaints to be reviewed by law enforcement officials. Additionally, the DOJ [National Elder Fraud Hotline](https://www.justice.gov/ncj250001) (1-833-FRAUD-11), managed by the Office for Victims of Crime, provides services to all adults ages 60 and older who may be victims of financial fraud. The toll-free hotline connects victims with experienced case managers who provide personalized support, resources, and referrals to other services. They can also file reports with the Federal Bureau of Investigation or the FTC on behalf of victims.

Elder fraud schemes prey on victims' trust and ruin lives. All of us in the community have a duty to look out for and report these crimes. And we all have a voice to speak up for older victims of exploitation and financial fraud, making our elected officials aware that those most vulnerable need the community's support now more than ever. *[Insert names and contact information of local officials whom readers can contact to raise the issue of support for elder fraud victims.]*

¹ "The Elder Justice Roadmap: A Stakeholder Initiative to Respond to an Emerging Health, Justice, Financial and Social Crisis," Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, accessed January 25, 2021, https://ncea.acl.gov/NCEA/media/Publication/EJRP_Roadmap.pdf.

² Jason Burnett et al., 2016, "Five-Year All-Cause Mortality Rates Across Five Categories of Substantiated Elder Abuse Occurring in the Community," *Journal of Elder Abuse & Neglect* 28(2): 59-75, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08946566.2016.1142920>.

³ <https://public.tableau.com/profile/federal.trade.commission#!/vizhome/COVID-19andStimulusReports/Map>

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Opinion-Editorial

Newspaper editorial pages—both in print and online—are highly popular among readers. Opinion-editorials (op-eds) are longer than letters to the editor and afford the opportunity to delve more deeply 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, does your community offer services for victims of human trafficking? How would a partnership between law enforcement and victim service 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

- Be persuasive. Include the latest research and structure a logical argument or rationale.
- Be confident. You are the expert in this field.
- Stay up to date on related events and the cultural conversations about them.
- Use plain language that a wide audience can understand.
- Keep your submission to 800 words or less.



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Sample Op-Ed Column

Missing and Murdered American Indian and Alaska Native Women & Girls

On a May afternoon in 2016, Ashlynn Mike, an 11-year-old Navajo girl, accepted a car ride from a stranger. She never came home. Because of jurisdictional issues, an Amber Alert for Ashlynn wasn't issued until 8 hours after her family reported that she was missing. She was found dead the next day.

Ashley Loring Heavy Runner was last seen in June 2017 on the Blackfeet Indian reservation in Montana. Her family and friends spent a year searching for her on their own. In February 2018, about 9 months after Ashley's disappearance, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) joined the search. To this day, even with the help of the FBI, Ashley remains missing.

The stories of Ashlynn Mike and Ashley Loring Heavy Runner are not isolated incidents. They are part of a much broader trend of violence that disproportionately harms American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) women and girls. More than 80 percent of AI/AN women have experienced violence in their lifetime. More than half of AI/AN women have experienced sexual violence.¹ In 2017, homicide was the fourth-leading cause of death among AI/AN girls under the age of 20,² and in most parts of the country the rates of murder against AI/AN women have historically been three to four times higher than the rates of murder against white women.³ Moreover, this violence is not confined to tribal lands: According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 78 percent of AI/AN people live outside of AI/AN areas.⁴ All communities in *[insert name of your state]*, whether large or small, must be aware of the profound risks faced by AI/AN women here in our state, and pay greater attention to keeping Indigenous people safe.

National resources available for AI/AN people include the [Tribal Resource Tool](#), a searchable directory of services available for all AI/AN survivors of crime and abuse; the [StrongHearts Native Helpline](#) at 844-762-8483, which offers culturally appropriate support and advocacy on domestic, dating, and sexual violence; and the [National Center for Victims of Crime's VictimConnect Resource Center](#) at 855-484-2846. Another option is to contact our local tribal coalition, *[insert name and contact information of your local coalition]*, or one of *[insert name of your state]'s* domestic violence and sexual assault coalitions, such as *[insert names of local domestic violence and sexual assault coalition]*. These groups focus on coordinating victim services activities and collaborating with federal, state, and local organizations fighting violence against women and against Indigenous people.

The National Missing and Unidentified Persons System, known as NamUs, has free tools that families of missing persons can use to enter and search for case information, and connect with criminal justice professionals to assist in the search for their missing loved ones. Call their toll-free hotline at 855-626-7600, or visit their [Support for Missing Indigenous Persons Cases page](#).

Closer to home, *[list any additional local organizations and resources that work on issues surrounding missing and murdered AI/AN women]*.

As a community, our duty is to protect and support these victims and their families, and to push those in power to do the same.

¹ André B. Rosay, May 2016, *Violence Against American Indian and Alaska Native Women and Men: 2010 Findings From the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey*, Research Report, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, accessed January 22, 2021, www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/249736.pdf.

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2019, "Leading Causes of Death - Females - Non-Hispanic American Indian or Alaska Native - United States, 2017." Accessed January 22, 2021, www.cdc.gov/women/lcod/2017/nonhispanic-native/index.htm.

³ See Table 1 in Mose A. Herne, Alexandra C. Maschino, and Anita L. Graham-Phillips, 2016, "Homicide Among American Indians/Alaska Natives, 1999-2009: Implications for Public Health Interventions," *Public Health Reports* 131(4): 597-604, accessed January 22, 2021, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1177%2F0033354916662219>.

⁴ Tina Norris, Paula L. Vines, and Elizabeth M. Hoeffe, January 2012, *The American Indian and Alaska Native Population: 2010*, Census Briefs, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, accessed January 22, 2021, www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-10.pdf.

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PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS

Broadcast media (radio and television) are required by the Federal Communications Commission 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. Public service announcements, or PSAs, are short video or audio messages that advertise a public service or event and are broadcast for free by radio or television stations.

To get a PSA broadcast on the air, contact your local radio or television stations about 2 months in advance to inquire about submission guidelines and the stations’ policies on airing PSAs. 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”) stations 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 informational material. 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 18–24 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 *[organization 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 18–24 is National Crime Victims’ Rights Week, a time to celebrate the 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. You can show your support for victims by building their trust and engaging your communities in response efforts. Call *[organization 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 18–24 is National Crime Victims’ Rights Week, a time to celebrate the 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. We resolve to reach out, listen, and support them as they press forward on a path to recovery. We commit to better support victims by earning and building their trust and by engaging our communities in response efforts. This National Crime Victims’ Rights Week, show victims they are not alone. Call *[organization 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](https://www.victimconnect.org) to learn about victims’ rights and options, confidentially and compassionately.



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WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

NCVRW is a perfect opportunity to focus the media's attention on crime issues relevant to your local community. Research local crime victims' stories on the Internet and note which reporters cover these stories in your area. Find their contact information and follow those reporters on social media. Check with the news desk or outlet's website for the appropriate reporter's contact information.

Working With Reporters

If your agency is holding a newsworthy event, either for NCVRW or at another time during the year, contact local reporters by phone and email and use social media to engage with reporters and send out invitations and alerts. Briefly describe the event and offer yourself as a resource.

Reporters are on tight deadlines, so any information that you can share ahead of time is useful and appreciated. Reporters will often ask for a local or human-interest angle. Be prepared for the following types of questions when pitching your event:

- 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 type of crime? (Position your organization as a resource.)
- 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 status of the law in this area?
- Can your organization's director provide an on-the-record comment?



ADVOCATING WITH THE MEDIA

Media coverage of crime greatly influences public perceptions about victims. As reporters rush to meet deadlines, particularly in the immediate aftermath of crimes, their reporting may not reflect the desired sensitivity to traumatized victims. Because many reporters do not receive training about 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 in their stories, you 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 victims so that they feel comfortable and safe. Educate reporters on how to approach crime victims by sharing the following guidelines.¹

Asking for the Interview

- Recognize that the victim may be coping with shock and trauma.
- Approach the victim initially 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 of 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 declines, express interest in a future interview, leave a business card, or send an email 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 the victim’s space—because people experiencing 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 the victim says may be used in the story.

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

¹ Bonnie Bucqueroux and Anne Seymour, *A Guide for Journalists Who Report on Crime and Crime Victims*, (Washington, DC: Justice Solutions, 2009), 2–10, accessed January 22, 2021, www.mediacrimevictimguide.com/journalistguide.pdf.



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during the interview may step in if the reporter's questions become too invasive or difficult or if the victim becomes upset. By making the victim's 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 violate your privacy? 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, a victim advocate, a clergy member, a family member, or a 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 an 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, they will most likely comply with reasonable requests if they want your interview. You have the right to ask or express your wishes regarding—
 - o time and location of the interview;
 - o visiting the set or location before an interview;
 - o advance information about questions, the reporter's angle, or plans for using your interview;
 - o requesting that a victim advocate, lawyer, or support person be present;
 - o issues you will not discuss;
 - o requesting a specific reporter or producer;
 - o protecting your identity (through silhouettes and electronic distortion of your voice);
 - o excluding children and other family members from the interview;
 - o excluding photos and other images you find offensive; and
 - o 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 a trusted individual 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 using the following tactics:
 - o Polite refusal: “I’m sorry, but I don’t want to talk about that.”
 - o Bridging, or changing 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 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 contact management at the news outlet prior to publication or broadcast if the reporter was aggressive, insensitive, or obtained information dishonestly.
- You may refuse a followup 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 feel vulnerable and stressed. The victim, their 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.



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