



COMMUNICATING YOUR MESSAGE

MEDIA TIPS + TOOLS

National Crime Victims' Rights Week (NCVRW), held April 8-14, 2018, is a time to celebrate progress in victims' rights and services as well as to recognize the challenges that crime victims still face and the ongoing struggle to uphold and deliver those rights and services. This year's theme—*Expand the Circle: Reach All Victims*—highlights how, by empowering crime victims, communities can expand opportunities for victims to report crimes, connect with services, and receive necessary support as they begin to recover.

National Crime Victims' Rights Week is an excellent time for your organization to increase its visibility in the community, promote valuable resources for victims of crime, build or activate 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 needed information on crime victims' issues, rights, and services—including those services offered by your organization.

How to Use These Resources

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, and the success of your NCVRW campaign.

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**With sample materials*

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Media Plans

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 organizations 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 takes as much (or as little) time as you have to dedicate.

» 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, national)?
- What is the best method to communicate 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 engaging 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 #NCVRW2018 in your posts.



Sample Plan 1

For those—

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

Throughout March and April—

- post on Twitter and Facebook 2-3x each week. Share OVC and other relevant organizations' posts, copy a sample status update from this guide (see pages 6-10), or craft your own content.
- if you already have an established blog, write 1 blog post about your organization's NCVRW activities.

Set Achievable Goals

Support your organizational activities with goals such as—

- gain 50 new followers.
- receive 10-20 retweets, shares, or likes per week.
- establish online connections with other organizations by liking or following their pages.

Sample Plan 2

For those—

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

Throughout March and April—

- post at least 4x on Twitter and 3x 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 6-10.
- write 1 blog post about how your organization is participating in National Crime Victims' Rights Week this year.
- write a news release about your organization's recognition of National Crime Victims' Rights Week.
- optional: Submit a letter to the editor or an op-ed to your local newspaper.

Set Achievable Goals

Support your organizational activities with goals such as—

- gain 100 new followers.
- receive 25-30 retweets, shares, or likes per week.
- have a letter to the editor or an op-ed published in the local newspaper.



Sample Plan 3

For those—

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

Throughout March and April—

- post at least 1x a day on Twitter and on 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 6–10, or craft your own NCVRW messages related to this year's theme—*Expand the Circle: Reach All Victims*.
- write 2 blog posts about National Crime Victims' Rights Week, one published the week before National Crime Victims' Rights Week about the history of the week and what your organization is doing to commemorate the week. The second, published after National Crime Victims' Rights Week, can be used to follow up 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 op-ed for print in your local newspaper each month.
- write 2+ news releases—possibilities include announcing your organization's NCVRW activities, your participation in the mayor's proclamation, and other events commemorating the week.

Set Achievable Goals

Support your organizational activities with goals such as—

- gain 200 new followers.
- receive 40–50 retweets, shares, or likes per week.
- connect with professionals and community members in a variety of ways.

The Current Media Landscape

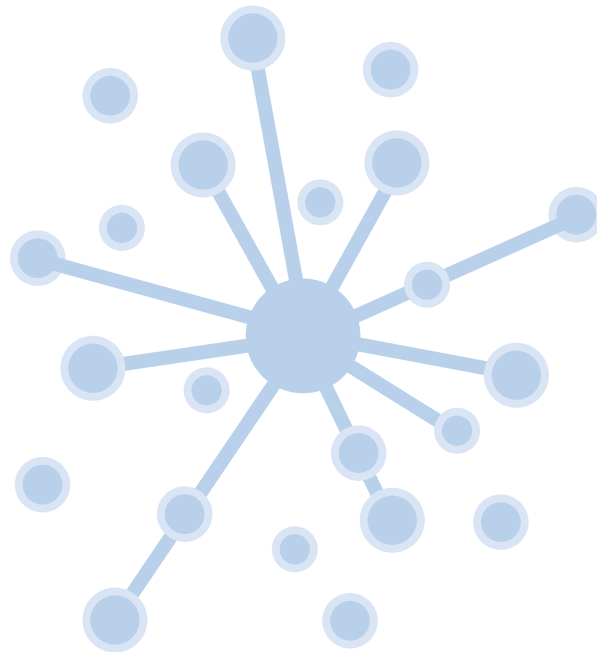
The media landscape and how we receive our news has changed over the past few decades and continues to evolve. Both social media and traditional media can be used to inform opinions about current events and causes that align with the mission of your organization. Social media is often the most efficient way to reach a wide audience and can be successful at a low cost. It allows organizations to increase dialogue with each other and with their community. Traditional media sources may be more accurate and give you the opportunity to interact with community members who have a smaller online presence.

National Crime Victims' Rights Week provides a vehicle for your organization to increase its media profile leading up to, during, and following the observance (April 8–14). The tools throughout this section are designed to help you create a comprehensive public awareness campaign for National Crime Victims' Rights Week as well as maintain an effective and constant presence throughout the year.



Social Media

Social media is often the most effective way to reach a wide audience. 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.





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 a built-in audience to promote NCVRW activities and information. Post photos, videos, organizational content, invitations to upcoming events, and links back to your website. Like and re-share posts from other organizations in your network. Or share live events in real time with the Facebook Live feature. Use the sample status updates 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.gov/ncvrw2018. Make sure to use the most applicable tags, and add #NCVRW2018 to your NCVRW posts.

» 5 Tips for an Effective Facebook Post

- Keep it short and informative; readers should not have to expand the post to read all of it.
- Include a link to a relevant article or website.
- Be timely and current.
- Post during non-peak hours for the best reach.
- Post intentionally, as part of a consistent sharing strategy.
- Include an image (images are proven to receive more engagement and are favored by Facebook's algorithm).

Sample Facebook Posts

- Today marks the beginning of National Crime Victims' Rights Week. How do you plan to commemorate this week? Let us know! #NCVRW2018
- When victims feel understood and supported, they are more likely to seek services. Expand the Circle: Reach All Victims #NCVRW2018 www.ovc.gov/ncvrw2018
- National Crime Victims' Rights Week highlights culturally competent services and justice for all. This year's theme is "Expand the Circle: Reach All Victims." Learn more at www.ovc.gov/ncvrw2018 and get involved.
- We must challenge ourselves to meet the myriad needs of our entire community. By making our services more accessible and welcoming, and by partnering with trusted community leaders and organizations, we can truly expand the circle to reach all victims. #NCVRW2018 www.ovc.gov/ncvrw2018
- Communities' investment in crime victims expands opportunities for victims to disclose their victimization, connect with services, and receive the support they need. #NCVRW2018



- We all play a role in serving victims. Our efforts cannot succeed without local law enforcement, victim advocates, prosecutors, probation and parole officers, child and family services, community leaders, community members, educators, coaches, parents, and others. #NCVRW2018
- The theme for National Crime Victims' Rights Week 2018 is "Expand the Circle: Reach All Victims," which emphasizes the importance of inclusion in victim services. #NCVRW2018
- Find ways to partner with advocates in your community by viewing past National Crime Victims' Rights Week Community Awareness Projects via the National Association for VOCA Assistance Administrators. #NCVRW2018 www.navaa.org/cap/previous.html
- National Crime Victims' Rights Week begins April 8. Visit the Office for Victims of Crime's NCVRW website for information about resources and help in planning events and activities. #NCVRW2018 www.ovc.gov/ncvrw2018
- Looking for information on victim services? Download the Help Series brochures from the Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. #NCVRW2018 www.ovc.gov/pubs/helpseries
- Visit www.victimsofcrime.org/training for training opportunities from the National Center for Victims of Crime. Learn from and network with others on a variety of crime victim topics. #NCVRW2018
- 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 #NCVRW2018
- April 8-14, 2018, is National Crime Victims' Rights Week. Find webinars on victims' rights at OVC TTAC. #NCVRW2018 www.ovcttac.gov/views/TrainingMaterials/dspWebinars.cfm

▶▶ Tech Tip

Embedding Links in Facebook

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

- Do you know what victims' rights exist in your state? Visit www.victimlaw.info today to research state, federal, or tribal law. #NCVRW2018
- Visit OVCTTAC.gov for the tools and resources you need to help build your capacity to serve victims of crime. #NCVRW2018
- Follow the National Crime Victims' Rights Week Resource Guide partners to see how organizations across the country are supporting victims. Meet the partners at www.ovc.gov/ncvrw2018 #NCVRW2018
- Learn how to help victims of financial crime with "Taking Action: An Advocate's Guide to Assisting Victims of Financial Fraud" #NCVRW2018 www.victimsofcrime.org/taking-action
- April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month! Visit our partners at HHS to learn how you can help protect children. #NCAPM2018 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 community. #SAAM www.nsvrc.org/saam





Twitter is an information-sharing network where each post, called a “tweet,” once limited to 140 characters, has now been expanded to 280. When you [set up your account](#), choose a Twitter handle (username) that other users will recognize (often the name or abbreviation of your organization). After you set up your account, begin following others, follow their followers, retweet their tweets, and promote them to your audience. 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. 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 #NCVRW2018 to your NCVRW tweets.

» 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 with sites like [TinyURL](#) or [Bitly](#), or remove “http:” and “https:” from the beginning of links, when possible.

Sample Tweets

- National Crime Victims’ Rights Week begins on April 8. Visit www.ovc.gov for information about resources and events. #NCVRW2018
- National Crime Victims’ Rights Week is April 8-14, 2018. Follow #NCVRW2018 to stay connected and download awareness posters at www.ovc.gov
- Victims should be given the assistance they need to make informed decisions for their own lives. Follow #NCVRW2018 to get involved!
- Expand the Circle: Reach All Victims. Search #NCVRW2018 to learn how you can help victims of crime.
- We must reach victims where they are—physically, culturally, emotionally—for them to trust the system. Read the proclamation for #NCVRW2018.
- This year, we reaffirm our commitment to creating a victim service and criminal justice response that assists all victims of crime. View crime victim statistics and fact sheets on www.ovc.gov #NCVRW2018
- To reach all victims, we must remove barriers to reporting, safety, and accessing services that are faced by victims. #NCVRW2018



- National Crime Victims' Rights Week 2018 starts today! This year's theme is "Expand the Circle: Reach All Victims." Download posters at www.ovc.gov to promote #NCVRW2018.
- When victims of crime receive the services and support they need, they are more likely to remain engaged in their community. #NCVRW2018
- Download the #NCVRW2018 Resource Guide free at www.ovc.gov/ncvrw2018 for tips on observing National Crime Victims' Rights Week.
- Free resources are available to help victims of financial fraud this #NCVRW2018. Download at www.victimsofcrime.org/taking-action
- Download 3 free awareness posters for your #NCVRW2018 activities! www.ovc.gov/ncvrw2018
- Looking for ways to get involved in #NCVRW2018? Find tips on raising awareness at www.ovc.gov/ncvrw2018
- April is National Sexual Assault Awareness Month. Visit www.nsvrc.org/saam or follow @NSVRC for info! #NCVRW2018
- Find talking points and fact sheets with statistics for your #NCVRW2018 activities on www.ovc.gov/ncvrw2018
- Have you or someone you know been a victim of crime? The #NCVRW2018 "Info Referral Flier" lists national resources. www.ovc.gov/ncvrw2018
- Visit www.ovc.gov/ncvrw2018 to learn more about the National Crime Victims' Rights Week Partners. #NCVRW2018
- Need inspiration for your #NCVRW2018 event? See the NCVRW Resource Guide for #victim centered quotes. www.ovc.gov/ncvrw2018
- See the #NCVRW2018 Commemorative Calendar of 2018 crime victim observances www.ovc.gov/ncvrw2018 and support victims all year.

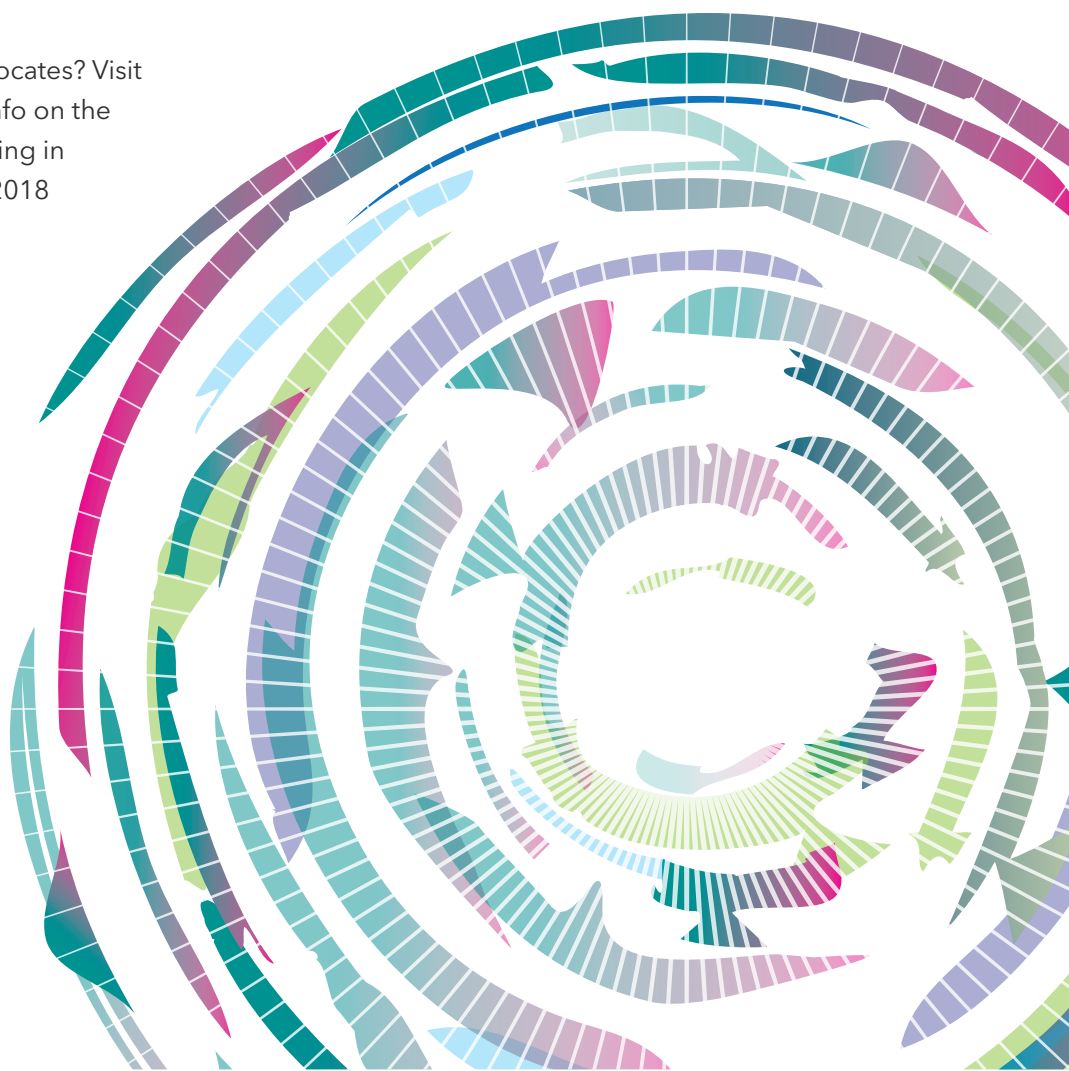
Highlighting the 2018 Crime and Victimization Fact Sheets

Craft a separate media plan using the 2018 NCVRW Resource Guide's Crime and Victimization Fact Sheets in conjunction with the Commemorative Calendar from "Developing Your Campaign," which lists notable awareness days, weeks, and months throughout the year. By pairing reliable statistics with corresponding awareness topics, you can easily create relevant content to raise awareness in your community.

For instance, during Older Americans Month in May, promote the *Crimes Against Older Adults Fact Sheet* and use its contents to inform other outreach efforts that month. Similarly, for America's Safe Schools Week in October, promote and use the *School and Campus Crimes Fact Sheets*, focusing on community schools, organizations, and facilities that interact with youth and young adults.



- Learn how to protect yourself from fraud this #NCVRW2018 and how to assist others: www.victimsofcrime.org/taking-action
- @OJPOVC offers a calendar of upcoming #victim assistance events. Learn more or add your training at ovc.ncjrs.gov/ovccalendar/about.asp #NCVRW2018
- April 8-14 is National Crime Victims' Rights Week. View OVC webinar recordings on victims' rights. www.ovcttac.gov/views/TrainingMaterials/dspWebinars.cfm#VictimsRights #NCVRW2018
- Do you know what victims' rights exist in your state? Visit www.victimlaw.info to research state, federal, or tribal law. #NCVRW2018
- Visit OVCTTAC.gov for the tools and resources you need to help build your capacity to serve victims of crime. #NCVRW2018
- Want to network with #victim advocates? Visit VictimsofCrime.org/training for info on the @CrimeVictimsOrg National Training in Orlando later this year. #NCVRW2018
- @OJPOVC hosts a searchable database of victims' rights laws. Learn more: www.victimlaw.org #NCVRW2018
- Stalking is a crime, not a joke. Get the facts: victimsofcrime.org/docs/src/stalking-fact-sheet_english.pdf #NCVRW2018
- @OJPOVC's TTAC offers free trainings on victim advocacy and assistance. Learn more here: www.ovcttac.gov #NCVRW2018
- By pooling expertise and resources we can support the healing and recovery of all crime victims and build thriving communities. Open your #NCVRW2018 activities with the proclamation on www.ovc.gov
- Scam Alert. Crooks use clever schemes to defraud millions of people every year. Read more: www.consumer.ftc.gov/scam-alerts #NCVRW2018





Consider sharing more in-depth messages with your community online through a blog. WordPress and Blogger are two excellent blogging platforms. 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 and Twitter pages.

» 5 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 your blog post to coincide with events and current news.

Ideas for Blog Posts

- Information for crime victims, e.g., crime victim compensation or victims' rights
- Details about an upcoming event or recap following the event
- Awareness days, weeks, months, e.g., World Elder Abuse Awareness Day
- Suggestions for self-care
- Personal stories (include 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



Sample **Blog Post**

We Are Here for You

Victims of all types of crime—both violent and non-violent—may experience trauma, which includes not only physical injuries, but the mental and emotional wounds caused by the victimization. Sometimes that trauma is compounded in the aftermath of a crime—in the re-telling of details to law enforcement or when encountering the perpetrator in the justice system. Just as your physical recovery can require time and professional support, so too can your emotional recovery.

Every person reacts differently to trauma based on their individual psychology, previous experiences, and history of trauma. Some crime victims experience little impact on their mental health while others develop long-term medical conditions. Your reaction has nothing to do with your personality, physical strength, or how you were raised. Left untreated, however, trauma can have serious and lasting effects. It is important to know that there are resources to support you as you recover from victimization.

According to the [National Alliance for Mental Illness](#), 1 in 5 Americans experiences mental illness each year; yet 60% of affected adults don't receive mental health services. It can be difficult to distinguish between normal thoughts, feelings, and behaviors and signs of mental illness. Common signs of mental illness include excessive worrying, fear, or sadness; extreme mood changes; avoiding friends and social activities; and an inability to carry out daily activities.

Maintaining or working toward good mental health is an important component of recovery from victimization. If you or someone you know has been the victim of a crime, *[Your organization]* is here to connect you with mental health resources.

[Provide details of services your organization offers and link to other local resources.]

Remember, we are here to serve you and help you recover in the aftermath of a crime.



YouTube

YouTube is the world's second largest search engine and the third 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 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. 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](#).

Instagram

Instagram is a photo-sharing site that allows you to upload and share images with your network. Download the app for Instagram, [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 [#NCVRW2018](#) to relevant posts. Instagram Stories is a feature that allows users to post a series of photos and videos that vanish 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, [LinkedIn Showcase pages](#) can be used to highlight specific initiatives, such as National Crime Victims' Rights Week.

Periscope

Periscope is Twitter's live-streaming public video app. Similar to Facebook Live, it allows the user to broadcast and watch live video in real time from around the world. The application has basic features, including the ability to attend meetings remotely and share events with the public. You can choose whether to keep broadcasts indefinitely or automatically expire them 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 themed artwork from the [Office for Victims of Crime](#) website, including NCVRW-specific Facebook and Twitter images.
- Post photos or videos of your organization's NCVRW planning sessions or events.
- Post photos and bios of your NCVRW event speakers on your Facebook page (in advance of the events) and promote them on Twitter and your other social media.
- Share 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 from your local newspaper or television station website.
- Pull relevant statistics from the [Crime and Victimization Fact Sheets](#) included in the NCVRW Resource Guide.
- Post links to NCVRW statements or proclamations made by local or state officials (and include brief descriptions about these statements).
- Allow other Facebook users to post stories, event reminders, pictures, and updates on your timeline by opening your Facebook settings. If you allow access, be sure to monitor your timeline frequently for negative or offensive posts.
- Check the Facebook pages of the 2018 NCVRW Resource Guide Partners and “like” or link to them.
- Ask your Facebook fans and Twitter followers to repost your status updates on their social media networks.
- Post current and recent NCVRW videos on YouTube.



Traditional Media

Traditional media reach a broad, general audience through print newspapers, online publications, 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 Crime Victims' Rights Week or throughout the year.





The purpose of a press release is to generate media coverage for your organization's participation in National Crime Victims' Rights Week 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 website, link to Facebook, and tweet 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.



Sample **Press Release**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

[Date]

[Name/Title/Agency]

CONTACT:

[Phone number]

[Email]

[Your City/Organization] Commemorates National Crime Victims' Rights Week, April 8-14

[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 8-14, 2018, 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. According to the most recent Bureau of Justice Statistics survey, victims experience more than five million violent crimes and nearly 15 million property victimizations a year.

[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 by promoting victims' rights and honoring crime victims and those who advocate on their behalf. This year's theme—*Expand the Circle: Reach All Victims*—highlights how the investment of communities in crime victims expands the opportunity for victims to disclose their victimization, connect with services, and receive the support they need. The theme also acknowledges the many barriers facing victims of crime especially those with disabilities, LGBTQ victims, older adults, speakers with limited English proficiency, American Indians and Alaska Natives, and others from historically marginalized communities.

[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, D.C., 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 OVC's website at 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 to the editor, include your contact information so that 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 source.
- Include information on where people can learn more about the issue.



Sample **Letter to the Editor**

The Word “Stalking” Should Not be Used Lightly

Romantic comedies often have story lines with similar tropes: a young man meets a young woman who initially scorns his advances. But he won't take no for an answer. When he shows up at her house or workplace uninvited, he is charming and persistent, and eventually wins her heart. While these movies may appear endearing and harmless, they portray stalking behaviors as acceptable and even necessary components of romantic relationships, and shape or reinforce dangerous cultural norms.

According to the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey, over 7.5 million people are stalked in the United States each year. Stalking behaviors can range from repeated, unwanted text messages, phone calls, and emails, to threats of physical violence, to the offender showing up uninvited at the victim's workplace, school, or home.

To outside observers, repeated text messages and phone calls may appear annoying rather than dangerous or threatening. Yet these behaviors may indicate a larger, more insidious pattern of ignoring boundaries in order to impose control that can end in fear, harm, or death. While stalking is defined as a crime under the law in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, the U.S. territories, and the federal government, it is rarely reported and seldom prosecuted.

We must change the narrative surrounding seemingly benign but unwanted behaviors, and acknowledge them for what they are: a crime. By recognizing and raising awareness of dangerous actions we can help keep victims safe and hold perpetrators accountable before they escalate to physical violence.

[Name]

[Organization]

[City, State]





Newspaper editorial pages—both in print and online—are highly popular among readers. 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, how are the universities and colleges in your area responding to sexual assault? 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 current on related events and the cultural conversation about them.
- Use plain language that can be read and understood by a wide audience.
- Keep your submission to 800 words or less.



Sample Op-Ed Column

Employers Should Empower Victims of Violence in the Workplace

Most people never anticipate being injured or killed at work due to violence. While companies generally review workplace violence and harassment policies with new employees, these policies are rarely revisited, leaving many organizations vulnerable to victimization by employees, their family or friends, and customers.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) defines workplace violence as “any act or threat of physical violence, harassment, intimidation, or other threatening or disruptive behavior that occurs at the work site.” Risk factors for violence include working with volatile and unstable people; working in an isolated location, or where alcohol is served; exchanging money with the public; and providing services and care.

However, this list does not include domestic violence. According to OSHA, 8.6 percent of workplace fatalities in 2015 were homicides. Of those, 43 percent were female employees killed by a male relative or domestic partner, while 2 percent of male employees were killed by a female relative or domestic partner. These statistics highlight the strong correlation between domestic violence and workplace violence.

Contrary to popular belief, domestic violence does not take place solely in the home. Victims of domestic violence may receive repeated text messages, emails, and phone calls throughout the day from the perpetrator. Some perpetrators may drive by the office location several times while victims are at work. Others will attempt to control victims by demanding they call in sick or quit their job. Employees may be under incredible pressure not only to perform well at their job, but also to meet the demands of a perpetrator. Should the perpetrator’s behavior escalate, both victims and their coworkers may be at increased risk for injury or death.

Research by the Society for Human Resource Management found that 65 percent of companies do not have a domestic violence policy and only 20 percent provide some type of training related to domestic violence. This gap creates uncertainty for victims who may wish to leave a violent relationship. Victims have no way of knowing if their employers will allow them to take time off for court dates or counseling, or if the employers will accommodate changes to their work schedule, phone number, or branch location. Victims may fear that even asking for these accommodations will cost them their job.

Companies can remove this employment uncertainty from the numerous barriers victims of domestic violence face. Every workplace should have a domestic violence policy that clearly states reasonable accommodations will be made and provides concrete examples, such as the ability for employees to use paid leave on short notice for reasons related to domestic violence, and protection of employees’ privacy, including their whereabouts, contact information, and status as a victim. In addition, employers should work to decrease the stigma surrounding domestic violence by providing training and distributing community resources annually to their employees. When workplaces invest in the well-being of their employees, it expands the opportunity for victims to disclose their victimization, connect with services, and receive the support they need.





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, 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 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 8–14 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 8–14 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. Show victims they are not alone. 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 8-14 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. We resolve to reach out, listen, and support them as they recover on their own terms. We commit to making our services more accessible and to building partnerships across the community so that we can truly *Expand the Circle to Reach All Victims*. This National Crime Victims' Rights Week, show victims they are not alone.* 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.



Working with the Media

National Crime Victims' Rights Week is a perfect opportunity to focus the media's attention on crime issues relevant to your local community. Use search engines to look up local crime victim stories, and note which reporters cover these stories in your area. Find their contact information and follow those reporters on social media. Also check with the news desk or outlet website for the appropriate contact.



Working with Reporters

If your agency is holding a newsworthy event, either for National Crime Victims' Rights Week or any time during the year, send out invitations and alerts via social media, contact local reporters by phone and email, and engage with reporters on their social media. 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. 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 type of crime? Position your organization as a resource and refer to the "Crime and Victimization Fact Sheets" 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?



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 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 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 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 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.

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 November 20, 2017, <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 they 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 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, 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, they will most likely comply with reasonable requests if they want your interview. 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 that a victim 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

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, is accurate, and does not put the victim under duress or at risk.

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:
 - > 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 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 follow-up interview, even if you have previously agreed to be interviewed a second time.

