



COMMUNICATING YOUR MESSAGE

MEDIA TIPS + TOOLS

National Crime Victims' Rights Week (NCVRW), which takes place April 7 - 13, 2019, is a time to celebrate the progress made in victims' rights and services. It also recognizes the challenges that crime victims still face, along with the ongoing efforts to uphold and deliver those rights and services. This year's theme – *Honoring Our Past. Creating Hope for the Future.* – recognizes the contributions of past and present members of the victim services field and looks to a future of innovative and accessible services for all victims.

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.

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.

Contents

Media Plans

- Crafting an NCVRW Media Plan

Social Media

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Blogs
- Other Social Media Platforms

Traditional Media

- Press Release
- Letter to the Editor
- Opinion Editorial
- Public Service Announcements

Working with the Media

- Working with Reporters
- Advocating for Victims with the Media

Platforms for Sharing



Professional network



Facebook



Twitter



Blog

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.

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 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 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 #NCVRW2019 in your posts.



CRAFTING AN NCVRW MEDIA PLAN



Sample Plan 1

For those–

- Interested in building a stronger media presence.
- 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 OVC's and other relevant organizations' posts, copy a sample post from this guide (see pages 6–10), 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 with goals such as–

- Set a campaign goal of increasing your followers by 5 percent.
- Aim for an engagement rate goal 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.
- 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 to 8 hours) each week.

Throughout March and April–

- Post at least four times on Twitter and three 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 6–10.
- 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.
- 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–

- Set a campaign goal of increasing your followers by 10 percent.
- Aim for an engagement rate goal 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.



- 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 or more hours) each week.

Throughout March and April—

- Post at least once 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, *Honoring Our Past. Creating Hope for the Future*.
- 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 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 two or more news releases. Possibilities for topics include announcing your organization's NCVRW activities, your participation in the mayor's proclamation, and other events commemorating the week.

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 an 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 give you the opportunity to interact with community members who have a smaller online presence.

NCVRW provides a vehicle for your organization to increase its media profile leading up to, during, and following the observance (April 7-13). The tools throughout this section are designed to help you create a comprehensive public awareness campaign for NCVRW as well as maintain an effective and constant presence throughout the year.

Set Achievable Goals

Support your organizational activities with goals such as—

- Set a campaign goal of increasing your followers by 10-20 percent.
- Aim for an engagement rate goal 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.
- Connect with professionals and community members in a variety of ways.



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.





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.gov/ncvrw2019. Be sure to use applicable hashtags, and add #NCVRW2019 to your NCVRW posts.

6 Tips for an Effective Facebook Post | Sample Facebook Posts

- 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 are proven to receive more engagement and are favored by Facebook's algorithm).
- Today marks the beginning of National Crime Victims' Rights Week. How do you plan to celebrate and commemorate this week? Comment to let us know! #NCVRW2019
- We must work together to create hope for the future of crime victims' services. Our efforts cannot succeed without the contributions of local law enforcement, victim advocates, prosecutors, probation and parole officers, child and family services, community leaders and members, educators, coaches, parents, and others. #NCVRW2019
- The victims' rights movement began through a shared hope for healing, a hope for change, and a hope to be heard. The legacy of commitment and passion lives on today. We remember the movement's first leaders as we honor our past and create hope for the future. #NCVRW2019
- When victims feel understood and supported, they are more likely to seek services, which leads to a stronger and more resilient community. #NCVRW2019 www.ovc.gov/ncvrw2019



- Did you know? In 1982, President Ronald Reagan established the President's Task Force on Victims of Crime, cementing a path for progress in the victims' movement. #NCVRW2019
- Building trust and open communication between communities and the victim services professionals who serve them is the first step in working together and creating hope for the future of crime victims' rights. #NCVRW2019
- #NCVRW2019 commemorates the crime victim advocates, allied professionals, and selfless volunteers who have courageously worked toward a future of inclusive and accessible resources and services. This year's theme is "Honoring Our Past. Creating Hope for the Future." Learn more at www.ovc.gov/ncvrw2019 to get involved.
- Communities' investment in crime victims expands opportunities for victims to disclose their victimization, connect with services, and receive the support they need. #NCVRW2019
- The #NCVRW2019 theme is "Honoring Our Past. Creating Hope for the Future," reminding us of our progress and inspiring us to keep pushing forward.
- To create a future where all victims are served and their voices heard, we must continue making victims services more accessible, welcoming, and culturally sensitive. #NCVRW2019
- 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. #NCVRW2019 www.navaa.org/cap/previous.html
- National Crime Victims' Rights Week begins Sunday, April 7. Visit the Office for Victims of Crime's NCVRW website for information about resources and help for planning events and activities. #NCVRW2019 www.ovc.gov/ncvrw2019
- 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. #NCVRW2019 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. #NCVRW2019
- Looking to plan, promote, or locate victims' services events? Visit the National Calendar of Crime Victim-Assistance Related Events. <https://ovc.ncjrs.gov/ovccalendar> #NCVRW2019
- 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 #NCVRW2019
- April 7-13, 2019, is National Crime Victims' Rights Week. Find webinars on victims' rights on OVC TTAC. #NCVRW2019 www.ovcttac.gov/views/TrainingMaterials/dspWebinars.cfm
- Do you know what victims' rights exist in your state? Visit <https://victimlaw.org> today to research state, federal, or tribal law. #NCVRW2019
- Visit OVCTTAC.gov for the tools and resources you need to help build your capacity to serve all victims of crime. #NCVRW2019
- Follow the #NCVRW2019 Resource Guide partners to see how organizations across the country are supporting victims. Meet the partners at www.ovc.gov/ncvrw2019.



- Learn how to help victims of financial crime in “Taking Action: An Advocate’s Guide to Assisting Victims of Financial Fraud.” #NCVRW2019 www.victimsofcrime.org/taking-action
- April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month. Visit our partners at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to learn how you can help protect children. #NCAPM2019 #PreventionMonth www.childwelfare.gov/topics/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 #BelieveSurvivors www.nsvrc.org/saam

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. 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 #NCVRW2019 to your NCVRW tweets.

6 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.
- Create longer form messages by replying to your own tweets and creating a “thread.”

Sample Tweets

- National Crime Victims’ Rights Week begins on April 7. Visit www.ovc.gov/ncvrw2019 for information about resources and events. #NCVRW2019
- National Crime Victims’ Rights Week is April 7-13, 2019. Follow #NCVRW2019 to stay connected and download awareness posters at www.ovc.gov/ncvrw2019.
- The theme for #NCVRW2019 is “Honoring Our Past. Creating Hope for the Future.,” which reminds us of our progress and inspires us to keep pushing forward to a future of accessible services for all victims.
- Victims should be given the trauma-informed assistance they need to make informed decisions for their own lives. Follow #NCVRW2019 to get involved and find important resources.
- In 1982, President Ronald Reagan established the President’s Task Force on Victims of Crime, cementing a path for progress in the victims movement. #NCVRW2019



- Find ways to partner with advocates in your community by viewing past NCVRW Community Awareness Projects via the National Association for VOCA Assistance Administrators. www.navaa.org/cap/previous.html #NCVRW2019
- #NCVRW2019 commemorates the crime victim advocates, allied professionals, and selfless volunteers who have courageously worked toward a future of inclusive and accessible resources and services. This year's theme is "Honoring Our Past. Creating Hope for the Future." #NCRW2019
- This year, we are "Honoring Our Past. Creating Hope for the Future." Search #NCVRW2019 to learn how you can help victims of crime.
- We are hopeful for a future of new and innovative methods to reach victims in all corners of the country with specialized services. #NCVRW2019
- 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. #NCVRW2019
- This NCVRW, we think of the bravery and perseverance of those in the victim services field who created change and hope for victims of crime. #NCVRW2019
- #NCVRW2019 starts today! This year's theme is "Honoring Our Past. Creating Hope for the Future." Download posters at www.ovc.gov/ncvrw2019 to promote awareness.
- When victims of crime receive the services and support they need, they are more likely to remain engaged in their community. Together, we can support strength and resilience. #NCVRW2019
- Download the #NCVRW2019 Resource Guide free at www.ovc.gov/ncvrw2019 for tips on observing National Crime Victims' Rights Week.
- Free resources are available to help victims of financial fraud this #NCVRW2019. Download at www.victimsofcrime.org/taking-action
- Download 3 free awareness posters for your #NCVRW2019 activities! www.ovc.gov/ncvrw2019
- Looking for ways to get involved in #NCVRW2019? Find tips on raising awareness at www.ovc.gov/ncvrw2019.
- April is National Sexual Assault Awareness Month. Visit www.nsvrc.org/saam or follow @NSVRC for more information and to help spread awareness. #NCVRW2019
- Find talking points and useful promotional materials for your #NCVRW2019 activities on www.ovc.gov/ncvrw2019.
- Have you or someone you know been a victim of crime? The #NCVRW2019 Referral Flier lists national resources that can offer support. www.ovc.gov/ncvrw2019
- Visit www.ovc.gov/ncvrw2019 to learn more about the #NCVRW2019 Partners.
- Need inspiration for your #NCVRW2019 event? See the NCVRW Resource Guide for helpful tips and direction on advocating for victims in the media. www.ovc.gov/ncvrw2019
- See the #NCVRW2019 Commemorative Calendar of crime victim-related observances at www.ovc.gov/ncvrw2019 and support victims throughout the year.
- Learn how to report fraud and assist others this #NCVRW2019. www.justice.gov/fraudtaskforce/report-fraud/chart



- @OJPOVC offers a calendar of upcoming #victim assistance events. Learn more or add your events at ovc.ncjrs.gov/ovccalendar/about.asp. #NCVRW2019
- Do you know what victims' rights exist in your state? Visit www.victimlaw.org to research state, federal, or tribal law. #NCVRW2019
- Visit OVCTTAC.gov for the tools and resources you need to help build your capacity to serve victims of crime. #NCVRW2019
- Want to network with #victim advocates? Visit VictimsofCrime.org/training for info on the @CrimeVictimsOrg National Training in Denver later this year. #NCVRW2019
- @OJPOVC hosts a searchable database of victims' rights laws. Learn more: www.victimlaw.org. #NCVRW2019
- @OJPOVC's TTAC offers free trainings on victim advocacy and assistance. Learn more here: www.ovcttac.gov. #NCVRW2019
- By pooling expertise and resources, we can support the healing and recovery of all crime victims and build thriving communities. Open your #NCVRW2019 activities with the proclamation on www.ovc.gov/ncvrw2019.
- Scam alert. Crooks use clever schemes to defraud millions of people every year. Read more: www.consumer.ftc.gov/scam-alerts. #NCVRW2019





Consider sharing more in-depth messages with your community online through a blog, such as [WordPress](#) and [Blogger](#). 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.



Sample Blog Post

For Survivors, Reporting Victimization is a Complex Decision

Survivors face many barriers, resulting from both internal and external factors, when deciding whether to report their victimization. The National Crime Victimization Survey administered by the Bureau of Justice Statistics found that in 2017, only 45 percent of violent victimizations were reported to law enforcement. To understand this statistic, the context around barriers to reporting should be explored.

Some victims may not know the benefits of reporting a crime. They may think that their story feels insignificant, or they may wish to forget the incident and focus on recovery. **Every victimization is significant, as it impacts the survivor and the larger community.**

Reporting to law enforcement enables a survivor to apply for crime victim compensation, which is financial assistance that covers some expenses incurred after victimization. Survivors may also report a crime to open the possibility of achieving justice from their offenders, which can be a meaningful part of recovery.

However, the decision to report is not always easy to make. For some victims, the consequences of reporting may outweigh the benefits. They may be afraid that their offender will retaliate and commit another, more severe crime. In other cases, victims may be reliant on their offenders for financial support, caretaking, or other resources.

Some victims may not have the necessary additional support if their offenders are jailed or if protection orders are issued. To protect their own safety and well-being, these victims may choose not to report their victimizations.

Physical and logistical barriers may also prevent a victim from reporting a crime. Some survivors may lack transportation to a police station or lack access to a translator if they would like to report a crime in their preferred language.

New initiatives on the local, tribal, and national levels are working to make services more culturally appropriate for all victims and more accessible through phone apps and other emerging technology.

Reporting a personal victimization is a decision that requires consideration of numerous factors, which differ dramatically in each case of victimization. We should support victims no matter which path they choose and encourage them to recover in a way that keeps them safe and encourages resilience.

If you or someone you know has been the victim of a crime, *[organization]* is here to connect you with resources.

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



OTHER SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

YouTube

YouTube is the world's second largest search engine and 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 allows you to 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 [#NCVRW2019](#) 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 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'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.



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 NCVRW or throughout the year.



PRESS RELEASE



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.



Sample Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

[Date]

[Name/Title/Organization]

CONTACT:

[Phone Number]

[Email]

[Your City/Organization] Commemorates National Crime Victims' Rights Week, April 7-13, 2019

[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 7-13, 2019, 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' National Crime Victimization Survey, U.S. residents age 12 or older experienced 3.1 million violent victimizations and U.S. households experienced an estimated 13.3 million property crimes in 2017.

[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) 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 – *Honoring Our Past. Creating Hope for the Future.* – encourages commemoration, honor, and respect toward the crime victim advocates, allied professionals, and selfless volunteers who have courageously worked for increased rights for crime victims. The theme also invites us to look toward a future of inclusive, accessible, and innovative resources and services for survivors.

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

OVC and *[your local organizations]* encourage widespread participation in the week's events and in other victim-related observances throughout the year. OVC will host the 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 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.gov.

###

[Your organization's mission statement/boilerplate]



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 (NCVRRW). By writing a letter to the editor, you can link NCVRRW 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 source.
- Include information on where people can learn more about the issue.



Sample Letter to the Editor

Each generation looks to young people to create a brighter future that encourages safe and engaging communities. This hope begins with healthy children being supported by their families, caregivers, teachers, and community. Unfortunately, according to a 2015 National Institutes of Health publication, more than two-thirds of children 17 or younger were either victims or witnesses of violence in the last year.

There are multiple ways that children may become victims of crime, ranging from bullying and harassment at school to dating violence and sexual assault to child abuse and exposure to domestic violence. Also, while it isn't addressed as frequently, children suffer from the effects of the ongoing opioid crisis, too. This type of trauma, if left unaddressed, can have serious consequences on a child's health, ability to succeed in school, and capability to positively contribute to the community.

In a different National Institutes of Health study on violence in the United States, researchers found about 30 percent of children reported that they have been bullied in school or in their communities, and 14 percent suffered from mistreatment by a parent or caregiver at home. Roughly 11 percent of children reported exposure to more than five types of violence, and while all kinds of trauma may affect a child long-term, children who experience polyvictimization are more likely to suffer from serious, lasting effects of violence.

These are only a few ways children experience victimization in their own homes and communities.

However, there is hope. Children are resilient, and with the proper support from the adults in their communities, children can avoid lasting damage from the violence they have experienced or witnessed. Visit the [Linking Systems of Care website](#) or reach out to your local victim advocate organizations to learn how to change social norms, support child victims, and positively contribute to your community.

[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, 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.



Sample Op-Ed Column

Human Trafficking Impacts Every Community

Human trafficking frequently gains national attention when large anti-trafficking operations are reported. While these stories are important as they highlight an often hidden crime, they can give the impression that human trafficking only happens within enormous networks and in large cities.

In reality, human trafficking, a term referring to both sex trafficking and labor trafficking, can occur in any locale in the United States, ranging from populous cities to rural areas. While human trafficking can affect a large number of victims, such as at a construction site, some people may not realize that one person may be a victim of human trafficking as well, as frequently occurs in cases of domestic servitude.

Victims of human trafficking can be any age or belong to any social group, but they frequently come from more vulnerable populations, including American Indian/Alaska Native individuals, LGBTQ+ individuals, individuals with disabilities, undocumented immigrants, runaway and homeless youth, and low-income individuals.

As with all victimization, the impact of human trafficking and its accompanying trauma can have lasting effects on survivors and their communities. Traffickers use both violence and psychological manipulation to create fear in their victims.

When victims are forced to engage in illegal activities, traffickers may threaten to have them arrested if they try to escape. Some perpetrators encourage victims' drug use to create a physical dependency on their traffickers.

Frequently, survivors who escape or are rescued face serious trauma and need specialized services to recover and participate in the criminal justice process to bring their traffickers to justice. By providing trauma-informed and victim-centered services to human trafficking survivors, we can increase the support network and resilience of the entire community.

All members of any community can become informed about signs that human trafficking may be occurring and how to help victims.

On its website, the Blue Campaign by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security provides a [list of indicators](#) that a person may be a victim of trafficking. Community advocates can also research [local organizations and programs](#) that help human trafficking victims and volunteer their time. OVC also has an interactive [human trafficking services and task forces map](#), built to assist survivors and victim advocates.

Educating communities about the prevalence and warning signs of human trafficking is an important step in eradicating this illegal and damaging practice. Use materials from OVC's [Faces of Human Trafficking](#) series and be a voice for those who have been silenced.



PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS (PSAs)



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 two months in advance to inquire about submission guidelines and their 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 7-13 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 7-13 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 that they are not alone. Reach out, listen, and support them as they press forward on a path to recovery.* 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 7-13 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 press forward on a path to recovery. We commit to making our services more accessible and to building partnerships across the community so that we can truly honor the past efforts of the crime victims movement and look forward to a future of hope and resilience. 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.



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 victim 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 contact.



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.

- 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 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. 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.

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, 2018, www.mediacrimevictimguide.com/journalistguide.pdf.



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 interview.

Victim Advocacy during Interviews

With the help of victim advocates, reporters can approach the interview with sensitivity toward the victim and the understanding that he or she may be undergoing trauma associated with the crime. Advocates who are present during the interview may step in if the reporter’s questions become too invasive or difficult or if the victim seems to become 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:
 - » 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
- 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.

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

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.

