



Readers' letters and comments are often the most read sections of newspapers and news websites. They are great tools for building awareness about National Crime Victims' Rights Week (NCVRW). By writing a letter to the editor, you can link NCVRW or one of your organization's programs to a current local, state, or national issue by showing why readers should care about the rights and concerns of crime victims. Ideally, you would cite a reliable recent study, quote statistics about the crime or issue, or stress the need for more research about crimes that are often hidden or underreported.

Consider asking local law enforcement agencies or other organizations to partner with you, or encourage them to write their own letters to highlight the needs of crime victims and how the public can help. Letters that are endorsed by multiple community groups will receive more attention. When you submit your letter to the editor, include your contact information so the newspaper can reach you if it decides to print your letter. If the newspaper does not publish your letter, consider submitting it to a local organization that publishes a newsletter, post it on your website, or share it on social media.

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## 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]

