



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.

