

Newspaper editorial pages—both in print and online—are highly popular among readers. Opinion-editorials (op-eds) are longer than letters to the editor and afford the opportunity to delve more deeply into issues. An op-ed is your chance to influence opinions, affect policy, and highlight the work you or your organization is doing to support crime victims' rights.

One way to develop an op-ed is to research local crime coverage and important issues in your community. For example, does your community offer services for victims of human trafficking? How would a partnership between law enforcement and victim service agencies benefit your community? Use or adapt the sample op-ed on the following page or craft your own to highlight an issue local to your community.

### ***5 Elements of an Attention-Grabbing Op-Ed***

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



**Seek Justice | Ensure Victims' Rights | Inspire Hope**

## Sample Op-Ed Column

### **Crimes Against Older Adults Must Not Be Overlooked**

The U.S. Census Bureau predicts that in just 15 years, adults over age 65 will outnumber children under age 18 for the first time in U.S. history. By 2060, older adults will make up about a quarter of the U.S. population. Aging and the changes that come with it can make our seniors particularly vulnerable to crime, abuse, and neglect, but crimes against older adults are not as well studied or understood as crimes against other vulnerable groups.

These crimes need our attention. Elder abuse has been referred to as a “hidden epidemic” in the United States, with estimates that it affects 10 percent of persons age 60 and older. Elder abuse takes a heavy toll on the dignity, safety, and financial security of older adults. These crimes can lead to increased hospitalizations, anxiety, depression, and premature deaths. But without proper training, professionals working with older Americans too often miss signs of elder abuse. Studies have shown that as few as 1 in 24 cases of elder abuse are reported, and few of those are ever prosecuted.

The most likely place for older adults to experience victimization is where they live, and the perpetrator is most likely to be a family member or someone they know. Maltreatment is not always a criminal offense, but the intimate nature of many of these victimizations means that older victims are less likely to report offenses committed by someone close to them.

We can’t address these crimes effectively until the victims are more widely recognized, and until older adults receive the support they need to report crimes, seek services, and pursue justice.

All members of the community can [learn to identify possible signs of elder abuse](#), from physical injuries and bruises to unchanged bed linens and evasive staff at care facilities. The U.S. Administration on Aging has an [Eldercare Locator](#) to help older adults and their families connect with services, and its [National Center on Elder Abuse](#) offers advice and resources to professionals, advocates, and families around the Nation. The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau has an [office dedicated to helping older Americans](#), their family members, their caregivers, and the professionals who assist them identify and avoid unfair, deceptive, abusive, and discriminatory financial practices. And the Office for Victims of Crime recently launched a new [National Elder Fraud Hotline](#) for understanding elder fraud and getting help.

Locally, *[discuss local resources and/or initiatives for addressing and educating the public about crimes against older adults]*.

Learning how to recognize and respond to crimes against older adults is just the first step, but it’s one that we can all take to ensure that our community, and the Nation as a whole, is a safer and more just place for our seniors.

