

Getting Your Message Out

Work with the Media

Build a Relationship with Your Local Media

We know that as one of Pennsylvania's victim service providers you are gravely concerned with the sharp funding cuts that have thwarted your program's capacity and ability to help victims cope with the aftermath of crime. However, getting others to also share this concern often requires the help of the media – one of the most effective conduits for your message.

The media can be a valuable partner in publicizing the gravity of the impact, putting pressure on federal, state and local elected officials to prioritize a funding increase, and encouraging community members to mobilize to secure stable resources for victim services.

The information below contains a few tips to help you build and sustain a positive working relationship with your local media so that you can call on them in good times (a human interest success story) and in bad (a homicide). Treat them as an ally and they are likely to respect you as a source and a resource for future stories.

Know Your Local Media

- Read the paper, watch the news, listen to the radio
- Pay attention to who's saying what, how they say it
- Learn names of reporters and their beats, obtain their contact information
- Clip and file newspaper articles
- Visit media and group Web sites to stay on top of the local market

Get Your Local Media to Know You

- Call/email to introduce yourself
- Comment on published stories
- Share your ideas
- Be available and always return calls
- Be conscious of deadlines
- Simplify your message, try to speak in sound bites
- Be scrupulous with your facts
- Be the first source reporters turn to on crime victim issues in your community
- Acknowledge when they do a good job, educate when they don't

Create a Media Response Team

Consider pulling together a team of community allies who are willing to reach out to or respond to the media on victim-related issues. Teams add credibility to your cause because they work with you, not for you. Members may include community business leaders, clergy, elected officials, prosecutors, health care practitioners, concerned citizens and academics. They can initiate or respond in a variety of ways – calling or emailing reporters, participating in media interviews, writing letters-to-the-editor or op-eds, hosting press events or standing with you at your media events.