WORKING WITH THE MEDIA: A GUIDE FOR CANADIAN VICTIM SERVICE PROVIDERS

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PURPOSE OF THE MEDIA GUIDE

This guide is divided into two parts. Part I is focused on the media and its potential impact on victims of crime, including how the media reports crime, issues of concern to victims and how victim service providers may be able to help. It cautions the reader about the potential negative implications of interacting with the media, as well as highlighting some of the benefits for individual victims and agencies. Simply put, there are both positives and negatives that victims and service providers must consider before establishing contact with media sources, whether it is a one-time interview or longer-term media strategy. Part II is geared to the service provider, and focuses on your agency and how you can work with the media to raise awareness of your services, general victimization issues and/or the profile of your organization. While service providers may not always like the way the media work or agree with how they report on crime or victim issues, the media can be instrumental in increasing the profile of your organization; helping to educate the public about victimization issues; making sure victims know about you when and if they need help or to raise funds.

This guide is meant to provide general information and advice. Your agency likely has specific policies and guidelines about which employees may deal with the media (if at all) and how to approach privacy/ethical concerns that may arise. This guide is not intended to replace any of your organization's internal policies.

The privacy of a victim and your professional and legal responsibilities to them must be the number one consideration of any victim service provider or victim-serving agency. We must not do any harm. This guide is meant to accompany an agency's guidelines, and act as a general information tool to assist service providers in your dealings with the victims and the media.

PART I

INTRODUCTION

The media is a powerful tool that can make someone famous on one day and destroy their reputation the next. It can make people care about an issue, influence how people think about a problem, and impact how the government does, or does not, deal with those issues and problems.

Crime coverage has always been given heavy consideration in the media. The common saying, "if it bleeds, it leads", applies directly to the attention that is given to crime, particularly violent crime. In fact, the crimes that the media covers are often the least common types of crimes committed, such as homicide, and because of this the media can give the public a distorted view of the real picture of crime in Canada. Victim availability to comment on a story also influences the media's ability to cover crime and violence. For example, it is very rare that a victim of domestic violence is willing to speak to the media, due to the dynamics of the relationship they have with their abuser. Likewise, there are publication bans that prohibit victims of sexualized violence from speaking to the media.

Covering crime means covering victims, often directly or indirectly. How the media covers crime can impact crime victims. What the media says, how the media says it, and if the media says anything can all have a positive or negative impact on victims and their families, and their experience of the criminal justice process.

Reporters and journalists are rarely experts in criminal justice. Often, they are covering a variety of issues and may not know very much about any of them. This gives experts, like victim service providers, an opportunity to educate members of the media, but it may also increase the likelihood that myths and misconceptions about victims and victimization can be reported as fact.

Benefits of media coverage

There are several benefits to society that occur when the media provides responsible coverage of crime and victims. The media can :

- Educate the public about victimization issues;
- Present the facts of a criminal case;
- Provide information about trends in crime and victimization, nature and frequency of crime, etc;
- Provide information about new types of crime, for example, Internet crimes, that the public should be aware of;
- Provide coverage of government legislation, policy development or initiatives that deal with crime and/or victims;
- Help shape public opinion about important issues, such as funding for victim support programs, victims' rights, etc.;
- Explain the impact of crime victims and their families, which may assist people in dealing with victims they may know;

- Provide an outlet for victims and their families to tell their own story;
- Provide accurate information about confusing subjects, such as the criminal justice system, the parole system, etc;
- Quash rumours and eliminate fear;
- Provide safety and prevention information; and
- Raise awareness about victim support groups and programs – this can benefit groups that rely on private funding and also victims who may be in need of assistance.

Victims may be approached by media in the immediate aftermath of a crime, during criminal proceedings such as trials or parole hearings, at anniversaries, while the media is covering a story on a similar crime, or when the government introduces a legislative initiative. Victims, especially in the immediate aftermath of the crime, may not know what their rights or what they can or cannot ask of the media. A lot of people feel obliged to answer when a microphone is put in their face and a question is asked.

As a victim services provider, you may be called upon to answer questions from victims about the media and asked to support victims in their interaction with the media. Members of the media may also call upon you to help find a victim who is willing to tell his or her story. You may be interviewed about your service, issues related to victims in general or a specific case. The media can be an important partner for victim services agencies, in helping to convey the needs and messages of victims. If they call, you may have to balance a victim's privacy and well-being, the importance of educating the public about victim issues and helping the media portray victims in an appropriate way, despite how you may feel about how they have historically portrayed victims and their concerns. To do that, you must understand how the media works and how victims and the media interact.

UNDERSTANDING HOW THE MEDIA REPORTS CRIME

The media, both in the mainstream and alternative sources, such as social media and weblogs, play a large role in how members of society are informed of events that may affect them directly or indirectly. Mass media has arguably become the main source of news, entertainment, recreation, and product information in the western world. For many people, the media informs them about events that affect their lives.

As a victim service worker who may be called upon to work with victims who are dealing with the media, or who may be called upon to work with the media directly, it is important to understand how the media works. While it can perform an important public service, media outlets are, first and foremost, a business. In the current global financial crisis, news media is a struggling business.

There are different types of media and coverage:

- National media - Does not generally cover individual crime stories unless there is some unique or sensational aspect to it. A high-profile homicide case, like the Robert Pickton case, may garner national attention because it involved a serial killer, a large number of victims, allegations of police negligence, etc. The case of the alleged gang rape of a young woman in British Columbia at a party in which pictures were taken and posted on a social networking site also garnered lots of national

media attention because of the number of alleged assailants and the involvement of photos being put on the Internet. When a case does spark national interest, the media intensity rises. Radio talk shows may begin discussing the underlying issues and television documentary shows may do stories on similar cases. This may or may not directly involve the victim, but its impact can be serious, especially if the coverage causes people to talk about the victims without all the facts, or a distorted view of the facts. National media also covers crime issues more generally, for example, if parliament is considering a justice related bill, national reporters may want to find victims who can speak to the issue (for example, a new law on street racing);

- Local media - Cover most of the crime stories in a specific geographic area, usually a city or county. They often provide the most in depth coverage of crime that occurs, as well as limited coverage of items from the national media. Due to their focus on events, victim service workers will likely be in touch with local media more frequently than national media.
- Web-based media – Weblogs, online sharing and social media websites are growing at a rapid pace. Many newspapers put their entire papers online and also do special stories that only appear online. The fact that information can be instantly published and broadly distributed has dramatically increased the speed at which news travels – instead of waiting for tomorrow's newspaper, stories can be posted online in minutes or faster. In fact, news has become instantaneous and this was seen most recently in the Russell Williams' sentencing hearing where reporters were tweeting details live from the courtroom and publishing information on their online blogs. Also, of concern from a victim service point of view is the posting of anonymous comments or remarks attached to online articles that can be hurtful to victims because they are uninformed or mean spirited.
- Hard news – Is current news items that are covered as they are happening, or shortly after they have occurred. Hard news is time sensitive and delivered in a manner that suggests that the public needs to know about it when it is most current. The story may not be news in a day or so. A serious crime, an arrest or a verdict in a high-profile case are all examples of hard news.
- Soft news – Often includes human interest stories that are not time sensitive. They may be features, follow-ups or more in-depth looks at hard news stories. An in-depth story about a victim or his/her family may be an example of soft news.
- Columns/Editorials – Unlike journalists, columnists and editorialists produce columns and editorials that are not free from bias and they do not just report facts. Their work goes beyond a presentation of information and facts to give their personal opinions. If an offender was given a sentence that was perceived as too lenient, a columnist might write a column complaining about judges.

The Internet and the 24-hour news cycle have had big impacts on the way stories are reported and how quickly reporters must file their stories. Newspapers no longer have to wait for deadlines for the morning paper – they all have websites and stories can go up on the paper's website as soon as they are done. Fewer and fewer people are getting their news from newspapers because it is all available online. People now have access to a wider range of news beyond the traditional news sources.

Twenty-four hour television news networks, like CBC and CTV, require a lot more news than the traditional newscasts that followed the noon, 6:00 and 11:00pm schedule. These networks are constantly reporting so they report on many issues of interest, need updates to ongoing stories faster, and to fill a lot of airtime when there may not be new developments.

Many media organizations now face declining revenues and changing demands. They are working with fewer resources and personnel which impact their ability to report the news. Often we see smaller media

outlets being purchased by big companies, meaning there is less competition in the news business. Daily newspapers are depending on news services because they have fewer reporters. This means there are fewer voices in the media in general as the various outlets all report on the same stories, and in some cases, even all report the same stories.

According to the Canadian Newspaper Association, there are 95 daily newspapers in Canada; most of which are under group ownership and only four of which are privately owned. Given the power of the media to sway public opinion and influence government policy, this is important to know. The choice of what stories get told and do not get told determines whose voices are heard and whose matter. The intensity of media coverage shapes public opinion, as is evidenced by the public outcry that occurred when it recently became known that Graham James had received a pardon, or that Clifford Olson was still receiving his pension benefits.

Complexity of what is covered or not

What crimes the media choose to cover and how they cover those crimes can influence the public's perception of crime, including their belief about the amount of crime that occurs in neighbourhoods and cities. Editors and assignment editors make complex decisions about what crime stories they will cover (or not) and what the headline will be. Journalists and reporters, in partnership with their assignment desks and producers decide what information about those crimes they will include or leave out, what experts they may go to for input, what quotes from that expert they will include, and where in the story these facts and quotes appear. Other media managers decide what priority the piece will take within the newspaper or news broadcast. The process by which the mass media decides how they will or will not report about crime is very complex.

Focus of media on crime

Crime stories constitute the fourth largest category of stories for newspapers and television after sports, general interest and business which is an over-representation of the actual amount of crime occurring. Research suggests that over 50% of crime stories in a sample of Canadian newspapers dealt with offences involving violence but offences involving violence represent less than 6% of reported offences. This is likely a significant factor in the public belief that crime is on the rise. For example, Canada fortunately has a relatively low homicide rate. Every year, approximately, 600 Canadians are murdered and because murder remains a relatively rare event in our society, most of these murders will garner some media attention. So while homicide makes up less than 1% of crimes committed in Canada, it garners a significant amount of media coverage of crime.

The media is most likely to focus on stories that highlight the unique, the sensational, the extreme, and those that have the potential to impact the greatest number of people. For crime-related stories, the media are most likely to focus on events that have occurred multiple times, for example a number of assaults or break-ins that are centred in a small geographic area, or those that are very unlikely to occur. Homicides committed by young offenders are often front page news and may cause people to believe that youth violence is at significant levels, despite being incredibly rare. The reason they are so newsworthy

is because they are so rare – they shock us, are unique and because of that, may dominate headlines for days and weeks, thereby giving the public a distorted view of how common these crimes are.

The media does not just decide what stories get that kind of attention, but what stories do not get that kind of attention. The murder of a homeless man is not likely to get as much media attention as the murder of a teenage girl from a middle class family. The media can focus on a story, thereby making it headline news, or ignore a different story, and the public will never know.

While focusing on the sensational and most violent crimes, it may seem the media ignores the more common types of crime that are more likely to affect individual readers or viewers, such as single instances of auto theft or break and enter. The media also rarely covers sexual assault and partner assault cases, which are largely crimes that impact women and children and are the focus of many victim service provision agencies in Canada. These serious crimes against women and children often remain hidden from law enforcement, which influences media coverage because they tend to cover crimes that come to the attention of the formal criminal justice system.

Stranger crimes get more coverage

The media also tends to focus on crimes committed by strangers rather than the more common crimes which are committed by someone known to the victim. The abduction of a child by a stranger will garner far more attention than the abduction of a child by a parent. The sexual assault of a woman in her home by someone who broke in will be more newsworthy than a woman who is assaulted in her home by her husband. While this may be explained by the fact that a single case of domestic assault is unlikely to have wide impact on the community, it also hides these crimes and creates the impression that these cases are not reported to the police or prosecuted, which may discourage other victims from seeing the merit in reporting their abuse.

This kind of coverage may give people a false sense of security. As parents, we tell our children to be wary of strangers, or to not to walk alone at night, but few of us are educated about the real dangers. The reality that victim service providers are well aware of is that people are more likely to be assaulted by someone they know and that we are at greater risk of violence in our own homes. The media's focus on stranger crimes asserts the myth that many people have that if they avoid certain situations or doing what the victims did, they will be safe.

The "ideal" victim

Some media coverage reinforces the notion of the good or ideal victim, one who is more innocent than others. A woman who was sitting in her home at night watching television when the offender broke in would appear to be the "good or ideal" victim over the woman who invited the offender into her home, or met him while out at a bar.

Those who are ideal victims include children, some women and the elderly. Young men, the homeless, those with drug problems, sex workers, etc., may find it much more difficult to achieve legitimate

victim status. In this sense, there is the danger of creating a hierarchy of victimization. Race, social class and status also play a role, and whether or not it is done intentionally, it is perpetuated by the media. Whether we agree or disagree with how the media chooses to report crimes and the impact it has on victims, as victim service providers, we have a role to assist victims dealing with the media and a unique opportunity to educate the media and the public about crime, victims and the impacts of reporting.

Service providers must also remember that the purpose of the media is to provide the public with the information they want about their community. The way an issue is framed by the media can lead the public to make judgments about some victims being more innocent or ideal than others. For example, the public will view a youth injured due to gang activity and violence very differently than an elderly person who is swarmed and robbed.

VICTIMS AND THE MEDIA

Timely and sensitive coverage of victims' cases can be helpful, particularly in emergency situations where the public needs to be made aware of the abduction of a missing child or needs information on emergency crisis services after a disaster. Coverage of specific cases and emerging crimes, such as Internet crimes against children, can contribute to positive changes in public policy. Media coverage can also change public attitudes about the crimes such as impaired driving and sexual assault.

The media can help humanize a victim and their experiences when the criminal justice system is so focused on the offender and the crime. It can help someone tell their story of resilience and hope. It may provide an avenue for a family to talk about their loved one who was killed, or give someone a platform to advocate for social change or justice reforms. More than anything perhaps, reporters want to speak to the person harmed because it is their goal to tell stories about people, to humanize them. Victim service providers can help support victims who are emotionally ready to do so in speaking out so that their stories will be told accurately in the media.

Negative aspects of media coverage on victims

There can be several negative aspects of the media coverage of crime and victims. Inaccurate information can shape public opinion and government policies. For example, obsessive coverage of violence of young people as offenders downplays the fact that they are the group most likely to experience victimization. Many people believe that women are most likely to be murdered, but it is men who make up 75% of homicide victims in Canada each year.

Media coverage can re-victimize victims, especially if overly sensational or inaccurate. It can reinforce misconceptions and myths about crime victims. By focusing on the sensational, high-profile crimes, coverage ignores other victims who may also want/need to tell their stories, but are denied because their stories are less compelling.

Loss of control

One of the struggles for crime victims to deal with in the aftermath of a crime is the loss of control. This can be seen in all types of violent crime, for example, when an offender breaks into a home, when a life is threatened or when someone is injured by an impaired driver. If the victim reports the crime, the criminal justice system takes over and the victim has little control over that process or its outcome.

The media controls what crimes are reported and what is said about those crimes and victims, especially if the victim chooses not go on record about their case. This is yet another aspect of their victimization that many victims have little control over. They do not have a choice if their face is on the front page of the paper (with exceptions related to publication bans which will be addressed later), whether their home will be on the evening news or whether radio talk show hosts will talk about them. If they do chose to participate in the process and are interviewed by members of the media, they cannot control how much of their interview will be printed in the newspaper, what the headline of the story will be, or how a television interview will be edited to be part of a narrative the reporter already had in mind. There may be cases where the victim can set terms in an exclusive interview, controlling the location/length/questions answered in an interview, but they will not have approval over what is ultimately published.

Possible negative impacts to consider

The manner in which a story is presented in the media or the fact that a crime is not covered at all can unintentionally inflict secondary victimization upon crime victims or survivors by exacerbating victims' feelings of violation, disorientation, and loss of control. Some may feel humiliated by the community knowing what has happened to them, or made to feel insignificant by the lack of coverage. Some other concerns victims express about the media include :

- Interviews at inappropriate times. Media interest is at its highest level (for example, immediately after a crime, during the trial, etc.) at times when victims may feel numb, confused or most vulnerable;
- Filming and photographing scenes with bodies and body bags;
- Searching for the negatives about the victim;
- Intimating that the victim contributed to his or her victimization;
- Printing a victim's name or address;
- Printing things said about the victim during the court process that a family may not believe is accurate;
- Publishing of photos. Victims may have their photos taken at the scene of a crime, a funeral or a courthouse without their knowledge. The media does not need permission to use these photos. Victims may feel this is an invasion of their privacy but the media may feel the image is dramatic and humanizes their story;
- Aggressive or insensitive reporters or journalists may impact a victim's ability to grieve with dignity and their personal safety.
- Inappropriately delving into the victim's past.

Some victims may feel their privacy is being violated, not understanding that the information is available in the public domain, allowing the media to freely report it. While most provinces have a Victims' Bill of Rights and one of the identified issues is the protection of the victim's privacy, the legislation is focused on actors in the criminal justice system, not private individuals or private entities.

Gaps in coverage

Due to the choices media managers make about which crimes to report or not, their interaction with victims is limited to certain crimes and certain types of victims. Victims also make choices to guard their privacy (which is absolutely their right), thus the media only has access to certain types of victims. Official crime statistics in Canada consistently show that less than half of all victims of crime, including victims of violent crime, report their victimization to the police. It is therefore unlikely that the media will interact with certain types of victims, particularly sexual assault victims, domestic violence victims, victims of simple assaults and victims of property crimes whose crimes often do not come to the attention of the police/courts.

Crimes that are reported but are unlikely to garner any media attention include break and enter, theft, common assault, etc. These crimes make up the majority of crimes reported to the police in Canada, yet unless the crime has some kind of unusual element to it (for example, fraud cases which involve large amounts of money, break and enter that involved violence to a family, etc.), the media is not likely to interact with victims of these offences.

The geographic location will also play a role in the amount of coverage that a crime receives. Dwindling media resources make it virtually impossible for all crimes to be covered, especially if they occur in remote or rural locations. Many media outlets do not have the resources to have reporters travelling great distances to cover crimes. They are far more likely to cover similar events in urban centres.

Of the small number of victims that are therefore available and of interest to the media, many choose not to speak to the media. This further limits the coverage of events, leading to gaps in the reporting of some events, and others being disregarded completely by the media.

Victims/survivors react differently

Media involvement can impact different victims in different ways. While Canada is fortunate to experience relatively few homicides, most cases do receive some level of media coverage because they are rare events. In some cases, certain victims will get more coverage than others, generally because the case is more shocking or sensational. The media will pick and choose which victims get the most coverage and the most sympathetic coverage depending on characteristics of the victim, of the crime and of the offender. The abduction and murder of an attractive young girl by a paroled sex offender will get front page coverage at the time it occurs, during the trial, during the parole hearings, etc., but the stabbing of a young man by another man may get very little coverage.

For families, this is not easy to understand. They may, if the coverage is vast, feel violated by the endless coverage and rehashing of the details of their child's murder and intrusions into their privacy. In cases where there is limited or no coverage, families may wonder why their loved one was not important to garner more public interest and sympathy.

Intensity of media coverage

The media can be a concern for all crime victims, but the high-profile nature of terrorist attacks or other extreme forms of victimization can increase the impact on victims. Intense and prolonged media exposure and the visual replaying of the traumatic event or attack make re-traumatization a concern as victims are routinely exposed to traumatic stressors. The fear that many victims feel in the aftermath of an event may be reinforced by excessive media coverage, which the terrorists rely on. Intense media coverage can maintain the terror long after the event itself.

Reporting all the facts

The media may report facts about a case or about a crime that the victim and/or his/her family are unaware of. A news story may describe a sexual assault and report details that the victim's parents were not aware of because the victim had not wanted them to know. Members of a family of a murder victim may hear about how their loved one died from the news media, not from the authorities. Service providers should note that coverage of a crime, even years later, can have a devastating impact on certain family members while others from within the same family want or seek the coverage. For example, the daughter of a woman murdered fifteen years ago by her partner discovered how her mother was killed when the killer came up for parole. Other members of the family had not told her the details because she was too young at the time. When the offender became eligible for parole, he was required to speak in great detail about the offence and a member of the media reported it. While the murder victim's sister wanted the media coverage for public safety reasons, the young woman whose mother was murdered became the subject of teasing and bullying in her high school because her secret was out.

Sexual assault

News coverage involving sexual assault cases may be among the most difficult for victims. Although society has come a long way in how it perceives sexual assault, many myths about sexual assault are still widely believed in society. For example:

- Most women are sexually assaulted by strangers;
- The extent of a woman's resistance should be the major factor in determining if a sexual assault has occurred;
- Women may be partly responsible for the assault if she is out alone at night, is drunk or dressed provocatively; and
- Women lie about being sexually assaulted.

When myths about crime are perpetuated in the media, it can have traumatic consequences on victims and their surviving family members, as well as impact negatively on a victim's efforts to reconstruct his or her life following a crime. Even when myths are not explicitly stated, language is important. If the reporter writes or states, "The complainant was walking home alone at night from a bar" or "the complainant could not recall some details because she was intoxicated." Arguably, the reporter may be presenting the facts (as presented in court) but the implication, which may be unintentional, is that if she had taken a taxi or had not been drinking, she would not have been sexually assaulted.

The danger of some reporting is that it may blame the victim for his or her own victimization. The sexual assault victim who was intoxicated may feel blamed for her victimization instead of what happened being seen solely as the responsibility of the offender who abused someone who unable to consent. The parents of a young person who was involved in the sex trade may feel that the public thinks their child deserved it, or was less important than the middle class schoolgirl who was assaulted the week before.

Innocence

Some victims are seen as more innocent than others. Victims of terrorism, for example, are rarely blamed for their victimization. The victims of September 11th, 2001, were simply going about their regular daily routines like going to work when they were killed. The nature of terrorist attacks is to attack innocent people. Children are also often seen as innocent, although the nature of the crimes against them can often be minimized by offenders and the media.

Children

Crimes involving photos taken of children being sexually assaulted are often referred to as kiddie porn or child porn by the media, neither of which reflects the significant harm done to the victims. In 2007, in a special report entitled Reinforcing the International Fight Against Child Pornography, prepared by the G8 Justice and Home Affairs Ministers noted that the term child pornography "does not appropriately or adequately describe the severe abuse and exploitation of children that is involved in these visual representations." The term "pornography,", as is used in the Criminal Code is commonly understood to be associated with depictions of sexual activity between consenting individuals. Children cannot consent to sexual relations.

Cultural considerations

Although there has been very limited research on the impact of media coverage on crime victims from different cultures, issues such as privacy and traditions may be relevant. When a crime occurs, some victims want complete privacy while others are comfortable talking about their victimization and want their loved one honoured and to have the crime reported to their community. Cultural heritage and traditions may play a role in the decisions a victim makes. Some victims might never consider speaking to the media due to a strong mistrust, based solely on tradition. In other cultures, it is not acceptable to seek comfort, help grieving or dealing with victimization outside of the family unit. Also, crime may bring shame to a family within their own cultural community and thus individuals/families may not want any of their extended family or neighbours to learn about it. Women in some cultures may be blamed if they are sexually assaulted. Others still may be made to feel insignificant if their victimization is not shared with the community.

Victims/survivors are a diverse group who will all respond and react differently to media coverage based on their unique world view. For example, a First Nations mother whose brother molested her two young

daughters may be upset that the media revealed his name in the coverage (thereby indirectly revealing the identity of her daughters), but at the same time want him to get help and not go to prison.

Coverage of minorities

Victim services professionals should recognize that societal biases are sometimes reflected in news reporting. The length of news copy and scope of broadcast coverage tend to vary based upon the victim's race, where they live, socioeconomic status, and other factors that have nothing to do with the crime committed against them . It is also important to note that historically, Canadian newspapers have few visible minorities working for them.

Data from research conducted in 1993 reveals that in 41 daily newsrooms surveyed across Canada, there are 2,620 professional journalists (supervisors, reporters, photographers, artists and copy editors). Only 67 are nonwhite. That's 2.6 per cent, or five times less than the percentage of non-whites in the Canadian population. Just four native Canadian journalists and 16 blacks work in those newsrooms (Miller, 1994).

Fairness is essential in the depiction of minorities or others who do not hold positions of power or wealth in society. When the personnel employed by newspapers do not reflect the diversity of society, the danger arises that certain groups may be stereotyped or ignored completely.

According to the Media Awareness Network, news coverage of Native people seems to centre on political and constitutional issues, forest fires, poverty and substance or sexual abuse. In a 2000 study by York University professors Frances Henry and Carol Tator, journalistic bias in Aboriginal-related reporting was documented in relation to the Jack Ramsay case. A former RCMP officer and Reform Party MP, Ramsay was accused and convicted of the attempted sexual assault in 1969 of a 13-year-old Aboriginal girl. Henry and Tator's research revealed that media articles focused overwhelmingly on the girl's alcoholic and abusive parents, her impoverished childhood, and her own bouts with alcohol and drugs. By contrast, the review of Ramsay was more sympathetic. It focused on his career, his service to the community, and his supportive family. Henry and Tator contend that such biased coverage served to enlist support for Ramsay, and to minimize the charges against him (Media Awareness Network, 2010: p.1). Service workers who are assisting and supporting Aboriginal victims and survivors should be very aware of the possibility of media coverage that lacks sensitive or respectful coverage of Aboriginal victimization.

Supporting victims from different cultural backgrounds

Victim-serving agencies must endeavor to provide culturally sensitive assistance and support to survivors. There may be agencies within your community where your staff can access cultural sensitivity training because it is not always possible to hire additional staff to reflect the diversity of your community. It is also important to speak to all clients about the possibility of media coverage if you suspect there will be interest in the case. You should seek and respect their wishes but also try to sensitively explain to them why the media may (or may not) be interested; what they can expect; how they should deal with the media even if they do not wish to cooperate, etc. The more information you can provide, especially if the information is not necessarily positive, the better prepared the victim will be.

Social media – positive or negative?

Social media in all its forms are becoming more widely used by both victims and service providers in getting messages about crime and victimization out to the general public. There are many potential negatives of social media that victims of crime and service providers should be wary of.

- Loss of privacy - once victims of crime put their personal information onto the Internet it is forever in the public domain and can be used and accessed by anyone.
- Victims should refrain from making public comments on personal sites about a case before or during a trial and especially where a publication ban exists.
- The Internet turns every person into a news publisher. These individuals don't necessarily adhere to the standards and training of professional journalists.
- Opinion is prevalent on the web – not necessarily the truth.
- Harmful posts and videos can be placed on the Internet at any time.
- People tend to believe what is posted on the Internet, never mind the source or reliability.
- Falsehoods can be made about both victims and offenders.
- Victims can learn devastating things about their loved ones or others who have been similarly victimized.
- Both victims and service providers can be misquoted and misrepresented.
- Many sites have millions/billions of members and they rely on self-policing to keep the site relatively free of illegal or improper postings. Objectionable material is relatively easy to find and can take some amount of time to get addressed by site administrators.

While there are many negatives associated with the internet and social media, it can also be a positive outlet for victims and survivors, as well as for victim-serving agencies. More and more, crime victims are turning to social media to get their stories out to the public and to keep them in the public eye. They use personal websites, blogs, and social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter to garner support for their causes and to advocate for change to the criminal justice system. Others victims use social media to search for an answer to a mystery such as who killed their loved one or to find missing loved ones. Service providers are using the internet and social media as a tool to increase awareness of victims' issues and to promote their work.

HIGH PROFILE CASES

High-profile cases are among the most difficult for both victims/survivors and for service providers. These are the cases that attract a lot of media attention, often because of the unique or bizarre nature of the crime, the victim(s) or the offender(s). A case can be high-profile within a particular community, to the entire country or even internationally. Sometimes it is difficult to distinguish how one case becomes so high-profile while another, equally tragic case, does not. The Natalee Holloway case is a good example. Ms. Holloway, a US citizen, disappeared while on a trip to Aruba and to date, her body has not been found. Her case became an international story and reporters from around the world reported on the case for months. Every development in the case was reported on. At the same time there were other cases of Americans who went missing while visiting other countries and their cases did not receive near the same level of attention. Every year thousands of American teenagers go missing in the US and their cases get little media attention.

The media obsession with Ms. Holloway's disappearance cannot be attributed to any one thing. She was a white, attractive, female who came from a middle class family. Her body was never found. Her parents actively pursued media to increase the chances that people would call in tips and they would find out what happened to her. The person suspected of killing her is a judge's son. Yet, none of this adequately explains the media's obsession with her case, other than the parents' openness encouraged the media to talk to them and report on the case.

Ultimately, the case was made high-profile at the choice of the media. High-profile cases in Canada include the murders committed by Clifford Olson, Marc Lépine, Paul Bernardo, Robert Pickton, and most recently, Russell Williams. Each of these cases included multiple victims, but there are other killers who have murdered more than one person who do not garner the same attention. Another common factor is that none of the killers knew their victims. Stranger crimes are more likely to be high-profile than cases involving victims and offenders who know each other.

These are some factors that may elevate a case to high-profile status:

- The victim is an attractive, white, middle class female;
- The offender is a "regular" guy; not someone who people would suspect could commit this kind of crime;
- There are multiple victims;
- The violence was excessive; of a sexual nature;
- The offender was a stranger to the victim;
- The victim was missing for a while before being found; and
- The offender or the victim, or someone closely associated with them, are previously known in the media.

Cases involving children are often high-profile cases but again, crimes committed against children by strangers are more likely to be high-profile cases than those committed by family members. When a child is abducted by a stranger, the media interest is intense. The period that immediately follows the abduction is often characterized by intense media attention. This is essential because police need the public's help to find the missing child. Stranger abductions impact people immediately. It is something that every parent fears happening, even though the odds are extremely low. These stories invoke feelings in the readers, listeners and viewers – fear for the abducted child and for our own, anger at the perpetrator, anger at a perceived lenient justice system, etc. The public tends to empathize and follow these stories and the media responds to that interest.

Arguably, the media also fuels the public's interest because the 24-hour news cycles demand news even when there may not be any new developments in the case. To feed this demand, members of the media will often look back on other, similar high-profile cases, or bring in experts to comment on similar crimes. They run stories about how to protect your children. All of this feeds into the public's perception that these crimes are more common than they actually are.

For the victim or the victim's family, the media attention may be both a blessing and a curse. In the beginning, if the victim is missing, families want media attention as it may increase the chances that their loved one will be found. If the victim is found, dead or alive, the family may want their privacy back but the media may not be ready to stop reporting. The case may still be news – a suspect may be arrested, there may be court dates, the person's past criminal history may be another angle, etc.

Regular media attention can be stressful enough for a family wanting their privacy but the intensity of a high-profile case that may have national appeal can be overwhelming. More so than in regular or lower profile cases, the media examines every angle in more detail than they normally would because they need to find something new to say when there might be little new happening. This might mean a closer look at the victim and his/her actions – in Natalee Holloway's case, her alleged partying past came to light. Her mother, who admittedly courted the media's attention in hopes of finding out what happened to her daughter, became an issue because she always seemed to be on the news. Her motives were questioned, as were her parenting decisions and family relationships.

For some victims, the media spotlight may be concerning or upsetting, but for others, it may be appealing. Media spotlight, when the coverage is favourable, is hard to resist – it makes one feel important, validated, and respected. In high-profile cases, victims or family members who make themselves available can become "celebrities". There is a danger to this. Whether it is fair or not, people will question a victim's motives for always appearing in the media. Even if the person's motives are good – to speak for their loved one, to raise awareness about an issue, to educate the public – people will wonder why and they will assign motives. The media's reporting may be seen as favourable one day, but then become negative the next. This is due in part to their presentation of all facts of the case as it progresses, including those that may be seen as negative by this victim.

From a victim service point of view, there may be little you can do to control the media or its intensity. You can provide support to the victim or his/her family, guidance and advice and when appropriate, and sometimes provide protection from the media (for example, during hearings) when needed. Appointing a family spokesperson is a key way that most members of the family can be shielded from unwanted attention.

If you have a good relationship with journalists covering the story, you may be able to educate them about the impact the intense coverage is having on the victim and their family, but it is unlikely that this will have much impact. Unless all the media outlets scaled back their coverage, one newspaper or TV station is unlikely to do so. In fact, you may give the journalist his next story or column. The media may examine its own coverage of these kinds of stories, while covering these stories, but this is one more way of filling the 24-hour news cycle.

PUBLICATION BANS

A publication ban is a tool available to a court intended to protect the identity of complainants and witnesses in court proceedings from being published in print or being broadcast on television, film, or radio. Section 486 of the *Criminal Code* governs publication bans and the failure to obey a publication ban is an offence punishable on summary conviction.

One of the principles of our justice system is openness and as a result, most criminal proceedings take place in open court where the names of witnesses, victims and accused persons are made public. Exceptions can however, be made in certain circumstances. A publication ban may enable victims and witnesses to participate in the justice system without suffering adverse consequences.

The Criminal Code (Section 486. (1)) says a judge may make an order to protect the identity of any victim or witness, or any information that could disclose his or her identity, if the judge is satisfied that the order is "necessary for the proper administration of justice." In the case of sexual offences, the Code (Section 486 (1.1)) says a judge must order a publication ban to protect the identity of all victims of sexual offences and witnesses of sexual offences who are less than 18 years old. In these cases, the judge tells the victim, witness or Crown prosecutor that they may make a request for this protection. If a request is made, the judge must order a publication ban.

Regardless of the offence, publication bans will protect the identity of young people who are victims or witnesses, both in adult and youth court.

If a victim is worried about being embarrassed by testifying, he/she is not likely to be granted a publication ban. In order to impose a ban, the judge must consider:

- the right of the accused person to a fair and public hearing;
- whether there is a real and substantial risk that the victim or witness would suffer significant harm if his or her identity were to be disclosed;
- the availability of effective alternatives to protect the identity of the victim or witness; and
- the impact of the proposed order on the freedom of expression of those affected by it.

The judge may hold a hearing to consider the request for the publication ban. At the hearing, the victim or witness has an opportunity to say why the order is necessary for him or her. The Crown prosecutor, the accused, the media or other parties who are affected by the order may also speak.

If a judge makes a publication ban on the victim's identity, the media will not be able to report the name of the victim or any information that could identify the victim. The media may also be prohibited from reporting on the identity of the accused if his/her identity could identify the victim. For example, if the accused is the victim's father, then the media may not report his identity either. If the victim later decides that he or she no longer wants the publication ban to continue, he or she must apply to the court for an order terminating it. There are no strict guidelines as to what is deemed to be identifying information, and this can cause victims distress when there is reporting that they see as leading to their identification, but the judge and reporters do not see that.

One of the reasons for publication bans of the identities of sexual assault victims was the high levels of under-reporting of this crime. Sexual assault is a highly under-reported crime in Canada and as many as 90% of victims of sexual violence do not report to police according to the results from several General Social Surveys on victimization. One of the common reasons victims give for not reporting is that they did not want anyone to know. The victim's extreme violation of personal privacy is likely an important consideration in their decision not to report.

The National Women's Study presented in Rape in America: A Report to the Nation found half of rape victims (50 percent) would be "a lot more likely to report" to police if there was a law prohibiting the news media from disclosing their name and address and almost 9 out of 10 women (86 percent) felt victims would be "less likely" to report rapes if they felt their names would be disclosed by the news media.

Judges may also impose publication bans on evidence at bail hearings or preliminary hearings if he/she believes it is necessary to ensure the accused has a fair trial. If the judge believes the evidence could impact on the public's perception of the crime, he/she may place a publication ban on the evidence. The accused has a right to be presumed innocent and if the evidence may impact the potential jury's ability to do so, a publication ban may help ensure an accused person's Charter rights are protected. These issues are complex and may require service providers to spend significant time explaining and demystifying publication bans.

THE ROLE OF VICTIM SERVICE PROVIDERS

Victim service providers can support victims of crime in a number of ways. They may serve as a "go-between or facilitator" for a reporter and a victim or help protect or shield victims from the media during trials or hearings. Victim advocates can help victims establish the parameters and conditions under which interviews will take place, assist the victim in preparing a statement, including reviewing the facts that can and cannot be released to the public, calm their fears, and be present when the actual interview is conducted. This support can help minimize the invasion of privacy felt by the victim, educate victims about their rights when dealing with the media and provide support to victims in their decision to work with the media. At the same time, service providers can help members of the media access victims who want to tell their story.

As a victim service provider, you will be guided by your own agency's policies and procedures with respect to dealing with or speaking to the media, but this section can be used as a guide to accompany those policies. You can expect to receive calls from reporters who want to speak to a specific victim or who want to speak with the victim of a certain type of crime, preferably a "fresh face" or someone who has not been in the media before. Reporters often have a deadline and will want to speak to the survivor very quickly.

Keep in mind that reporters and journalists may be uncomfortable dealing with victims, even if they do not show it. Few people want to ask a grieving mother how she is feeling or approach someone after a traumatic event. Some may mask their insecurity or awkwardness with aggressive behaviour and thereby appear insensitive. As a service provider, you can help the journalist deal with victims in a more sensitive way.

Language

As a service provider, you are in a unique situation to educate the media about victims and how media coverage impacts victims which can make reporting more sensitive. Reporters do not intentionally try to insult or re-victimize crime victims, but may do so because so because of lack of knowledge. Most reporters and journalists are compassionate people who do not want to cause further harm. Language and the choice of words are important. For example, the use of the term accident can be offensive to victims of impaired drivers. It is not an accident if the offender chooses to drive after consuming alcohol, so the language used to report the crime should reflect what occurred, including descriptions like crash or manslaughter. A reporter must also be cautious of using language that implies that the accused is guilty of the crime before a conviction is entered. This may be hurtful to the victims.

Language is a significant issue. It can reinforce myths and stereotypes about victims, particularly sexual assault victims. As mentioned previously, terms like "hooker" and "kiddie porn" are dehumanizing and minimize the seriousness of crimes. Constant referrals to the victims of Robert Pickton as drug-addicted prostitutes or hookers insulted their families who loved them and valued them even though they struggled with some serious issues.

The representation of certain populations of victims by the media can also impact people's understanding of the crime and its impact. Following the release of the Cornwall Inquiry report in December of 2009, reporter Barbara Kay, in an article for the National Post, criticized the media's coverage of the report's release because "even though all the victims relating to the 114 charges laid in Project Truth were boys and men, and even though in his 75-minute verbal statement Justice Glaude referenced "males" or "men" as those abused seventeen times, almost all references in all media were to "victims," "the vulnerable," "young people," "children" and "youths." The CBC referenced "men" as offenders, the abused only as "victims." This coverage reinforces the myth that boys and men cannot be victims of sexualized violence in our society when official statistics show that 1 in 6 males are victims.

Support for victims prior to their interaction with the media

One of the key roles a service provider may be able to assist victims with is the decision to interact with the media at all. Important considerations may include: the victim's safety, level of stress and trauma and any possible negative impacts of giving an interview before proceeding or going on the record . For some victims, it will be an easy decision because they want to remain private, do not want to discuss the case or maybe they are simply shy. If a victim is struggling with the decision, they may ask you for advice. Obviously, subject to court orders, the decision is the victim's but you can answer questions they may have and provide them with information that may help them decide one way or the other. Service providers should always respect the decision the victims make whether you agree or not. Making such decisions can significantly empower victims.

Most people have never dealt with the media before and crime victims may not understand that the media is not necessarily going to tell the story they want. First and foremost, victims must understand that speaking to the media is their choice and if they do not feel comfortable, they can say no.

It is important to highlight for victims that once they say yes to participating in a story or giving an interview, they relinquish control. They do not control what is written, what the headlines are, what comments of theirs will be used or aired or how the information is presented. Unfortunately, this is also true if they retain their privacy and do not speak to the media.

Victim service providers can offer basic tips to victims to help them prepare for media interviews. The following suggestions (from A News Media Guide for Victim Service Providers, 2009) can be augmented with tips based on their past personal experiences and knowledge of the specific news medium or reporter involved:

- Relax and be yourself. Your level of personal comfort will improve your interview experience.
- Be sincere and honest. Your personal credibility is your most important asset!

- Know what you want to say. Be prepared with two or three key points you want to make and find a way to make them early in the interview. For example: "The one thing I really want to say is. . .," or "My most important message is. . ." Return to those messages and repeat them in different forms whenever you can.
- Speak slowly and clearly. Think about the question, then think about your answer.
- Keep your answers brief and succinct. You can follow a brief answer with more details, but make sure the most important information is conveyed first, simply and to the point. Consider preparing pithy quotes in advance.
- Once you make your point, stop talking. Don't worry about silence. It is not your job to fill it. Talking beyond your stopping point makes it harder to edit your quotes. It is also when many people say things they wish they hadn't.
- Send your messages. You can reinforce your key points by repeating them.
- Listen to the entire question before answering it. Take the time needed to formulate your response. In broadcast interviews, overlapping your answer with the interviewer's question can make it difficult for editors.
- Make sure you know what is being asked. If you don't understand a question, ask for clarification.
- Refuse politely. If an interviewer's question makes you feel uncomfortable, simply say, "I'm not comfortable answering that question."
- Don't overextend. If you don't know the answer to a question, simply say so. If you feel you can't respond, give a brief reason, such as, "I'll be able to answer that once the jury reaches its verdict."
- Never say, "No comment." You can say, "I'm unable to answer that question at this time" or "I don't have enough information to fully address your question."
- Avoid going "off the record." Simply assume that everything you say is "on the record" and speak accordingly.
- Don't interrupt the interviewer or other guests. Likewise, if you feel you are being interrupted, you can say, "If it's okay, I'd like to finish what I was saying."
- Speak plainly. Avoid any jargon or acronyms that may be confusing to readers, listeners, or viewers.
- Avoid distractions. Do not use hand gestures that may block your face or expressions that detract from the content of the interview. Don't wear jangly or shiny jewelry to broadcast interviews or anything else that might make noise that microphones might pick up. Avoid tapping your fingers or your feet.
- Correct errors or misperceptions. If inaccurate information is presented in the course of an interview, present the facts to correct it in a positive manner.
- Avoid fatigue. If you need to take a break (except during live interviews), ask for one.
- Don't feel guilty about being human. Always remember that what happened to you was bad and is possibly distressing to you. It's okay to show emotions during an interview.
- Emphasize your story. Remember that you are speaking for yourself. It's important to avoid making generalizations that appear to represent all victims.

Support for victims during media interaction

If a victim/survivor has decided to do an interview or cooperate with the media, you may be able to provide valuable assistance. Some of the things you may do include:

- Act as an intermediary between the reporter and a victim. You can help victims set parameters and

conditions under which the interview will take place.
- Limit the media's exposure to the victim if this is what the victim wants.
- Assist the victim in preparing a statement. If there is a trial or publication ban, it is important that the victim understand what they can and cannot say.

If a victim chooses to speak to the media, reinforce how they can assert some control over their interaction. It is okay for a victim to :

- Select a spokesperson or advocate to speak on their behalf;
- Select the time and location for media interviews;
- Request a specific reporter;
- Refuse an interview with a specific reporter;
- Say "no" to an interview even though they have previously granted interviews;
- Release a written statement through a spokesperson in lieu of an interview;
- Refrain from answering questions they feel are inappropriate;
- Avoid a news conference and speak to only one reporter at a time;
- Demand a correction when inaccurate information is reported;
- Ask that offensive photographs or visuals be omitted from airing or publication;
- Give a television interview with their image blurred or a newspaper interview without having their picture taken.

Support for victims after media interaction

Victims may decide to speak out for several reasons, but once the story is printed or aired, they may have several different reactions:

- Satisfaction- The victim/survivor(s) is satisfied with the story the journalist did and glad they made the choice to participate. Even so, one interview with a journalist may lead to requests from other journalists now that the individual is perceived as being willing to speak to the media. If this is the case, remind the victim that they can say yes or no to any request. Victims are not bound to continue to speak out or to be available to the media in the near future or on a longer-term basis. The decision always remains with the victim.
- Regret – The victim/survivor(s) may regret their decision to have cooperated with the media, either because the story was not presented in a way the victim agreed with or because they simply regret sharing their pain publicly. It may also upset other members of the family where they wish the victim would not be vocal or where there are multiple victims.
- Unintended consequences arise – It is always a possibility that unintended consequences arise for the victim/survivor or other family members. In some cases, media coverage can reveal details that may not have been disclosed at a trial or after a plea agreement which can be very upsetting to family who were not aware.

Service providers should know that if the victim feels that the story contained false information or took the victim's words out of context, he/she can file a formal complaint against a reporter with the media outlet.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

While criminal justice system officials like police and Crown Attorneys are bound by strict legal, ethical and professional guidelines, the mass media is not. Professional journalists are bound by the rules of their employers and court orders, but unless it involves criminal behaviour there are few rules by which the media is limited.

Ethics for media

The Canadian Association of Journalists (CAJ) has developed a Statement of Principles and Ethical Guidelines which was passed in 2002. The Statement places priority on freedom of speech and the role it provides in a democratic society. The following excerpts are taken from the website of the CAJ. The Preamble highlights the "duty to seek and report the truth as we understand it, defend free speech and the right to equal treatment under law, capture the diversity of human experience, speak for the voiceless and encourage civic debate to build our communities and serve the public interest." Specifically, principles such as freedom of speech, fairness and diversity are emphasized, as is the right to privacy. "...People also have a right to privacy and those accused of crimes have a right to a fair trial. There are inevitable conflicts between the right to privacy, the public good and the public's right to be informed. Each situation should be judged in the light of common sense, humanity and the public's rights to know."

More specifically, when it comes to privacy, the CAJ believes "Individuals have a right to privacy except when that right is superceded by the public good. CAJ says members should "not harass or manipulate people who are thrust into the spotlight because they are victims of crime or are associated with a tragedy."

When reporting about crime and victimization, victim advocates in Canada have long called upon the mass media to do so in a particularly respectful and compassionate manner. Minimizing harm should be the focus of reporting although it cannot be eliminated completely. Bob Steele, of the Poytner Institute in Florida, is a leader in promoting ethics in journalism. He states, "Asking victims to share their stories, especially if it is soon after their victimization, will almost always take a toll." Steele argues the benefit to the victim and the public may outweigh the damage. He places the burden upon the journalist to do all he/she can to avoid causing victims undue pain.

Ethical considerations for victim service providers

For service providers, most ethical questions should be determined by the policies and procedures of your organization, and any applicable privacy laws. In some cases, service providers are simply not permitted to speak to the media about clients. Psychologists, victim compensation staff, court-based victim-witness assistance staff and police-based crisis staff, for example, are generally not permitted to speak to the media (although there may be managers available to speak in a more general way about victim related issues). Community agencies may be more active in supporting victims in their dealings with the media and speaking to the media on behalf of victims. Groups that do advocacy work on behalf of victims may be very pro-active in working with the media.

Service providers must always follow the guidelines of their agency. In addition, the following tips may be of assistance to you if and when you interact with the media regarding a client (as opposed to general victim issues); facilitate interaction between a victim and the media or speak on behalf of a client:

- The victim's best interest must always be your priority;
- You should support the victim's choices;
- Privacy and confidentiality can only be waived by the victim and should be done in writing;
- Only provide contact information to a media contact if you have the express consent of the victim – it is preferable to provide the reporter's contact information to the victim;
- Speak with the victim in advance to ensure you do not provide any more personal information than they have agreed to after being given time to consider the implications;
- If you are not comfortable answering a question, tell the reporter you cannot answer that question until you have spoken to your client. If the interview is live, say you do not know the answer to that question or do not have that information or you are not able to share that information and if possible, stress a point you made earlier or that is particularly important to the client. For example, if the reporter asks if it is true that the victim was drunk at the time of the incident, you may say, "I am not sure how that is relevant to their victimization" or "Those are issues that will be discussed at trial so I cannot speak to them at this time, but I can tell you this incident has had a tremendous impact on my client's well-being."

Risks of speaking to the media

For some victims, the trauma of victimization can be compounded by speaking publicly about their experiences in the aftermath of a crime and it is important for all service providers to consider this. It takes time to cope with the shock and trauma of being victimized and to participate in criminal investigations and justice processes. The detrimental mental health consequences of victimization are well documented. Media coverage in the wake of a crime can result in a "secondary victimization" that may exacerbate victims' trauma and cause unnecessary additional harm. The shame that some victims feel, as well as the blame they sometimes feel from others, can be increased by untimely, inappropriate, or intrusive reporting .

Other risks:

- Victims may also feel a tremendous let down when the media goes away. In the immediate aftermath of the crime, the media are constantly present and the victim's story may be in the headlines. Eventually other news begins to take precedence and victims may feel abandoned and alone.
- It can take an emotional toll on victims to be called upon over and over by the media at sensitive and stressful times, such as when the trial begins, at sentencing, on anniversaries or at parole hearings for the offender. Other family members may not be supportive of their efforts to keep the story in the news.

- In some cases, victims are very private and do not wish to speak with the media at all, but they simply cannot escape the coverage of their case because it is so high-profile (for example, coverage of the murder of Jane Creba in Toronto on Boxing Day in 2005).
- A lack of media for victims who want more attention but who do not fit the media's definition of the "ideal" victim, for example, there tends to be more media when a young, pretty white girl goes missing than when a non-white, boy goes missing.

PART II

HOW TO INTERACT WITH THE MEDIA

While journalists may be educated in their field, they cannot be experts in every issue and they may be called upon to report on very different issues in a matter of days. They may ask questions that a victim service provider, who is an expert in their field, may find obvious or trivial. The odds are if the reporter does not know the answer, their readers or viewers do not know the answer either.

There are generally two kinds of media: paid media and earned media. Paid media is exactly as it seems. Purchasing a full page advertisement in a newspaper is an example of paid media. Earned media is news coverage. When the media goes to an agency for a comment or opinion or to cover a new program, it is earned media. Earned media is generally taken more seriously because an individual or agency did not have to pay for it, which anyone who has money could do, but instead they worked for the attention or they were recognized as an expert by the journalist.

Understand how journalists work and their needs

Professional journalists strive to get the details of their stories accurate, but the speed at which the news has to be reported nowadays increases the chances of mistakes and limits the time the reporter has to fact check a story and get context. At the same time, while more and more people get the news from the internet, traditional media organizations are facing serious staffing problems so fewer reporters are being asked to do more and more. This impacts the number of stories that are covered, how far a reporter can travel to cover a story and how in depth the coverage of each story can be.

It can be frustrating for service providers when a reporter calls and they want a quote immediately. Sometimes it is not always possible to drop everything and get back to them in time, or you really cannot comment unless you know more about the particular story. When possible, service providers should try to be available to the media (within reason) because if a chance is missed, they might find another expert or source the next time they need help. Reporters tend to call back the organization that was helpful.

This does not mean you have to give a comment immediately. Ask the reporter to give you the background of the story and as much information as he/she can and then arrange to call him/her back. This gives you a chance to collect your thoughts, consult with your colleagues, do any quick research you may need to do and think about what it is you want to say; what message you want to give. If you simply cannot get back to the reporter in time, it is always a good idea to follow up and explain why you did not call back. They will understand and will appreciate the call back. This will increase the chance they will call the next time and helps to maintain the positive relationship you have.

If the issue is not something you are qualified to speak about or you are not able to comment on, you should try to recommend someone else that the reporter can speak to. If, for example, you work in a sexual assault centre and a reporter calls and asks about child abuse, you can recommend the reporter

call one of your community partners that works with abused children or an academic you know who has done research in the field.

Last minute calls from reporters wanting to speak to any victim in the next thirty minutes can be even more frustrating. Hopefully, if you build a relationship with the journalist, he/she will know how difficult this is for you, both practically and ethically. If not, the journalist may not have any idea how difficult it is to find a victim to speak out or how you reluctant you may be to risk re-victimizing a victim.

The media often wants to avoid going to the same victims for comments and they want different perspectives, making the request even more challenging. As frustrating as this can be, where possible and appropriate (keeping in mind the need to protect victims, be ethical, etc.), try to help out when you can. When it is not possible or simply not appropriate, you should follow-up with the journalist and explain why.

Be careful not to judge the media's preference for speaking to victims directly or their insistence to have different victims. Reporters want the human touch, the context, the experience and the credibility that only the victim of that crime can provide and this is why they often do not want to speak to a representative or service provider. The victim/survivor makes stories more compelling and it affects their readers, listeners and viewers more. Keep in mind that the media also need victims who fit the story – for example, a man speaking about the impact of sexual assault of a female or a woman speaking about the abuse of boys may not be effective.

While the media can be demanding at times and their requests may seem unreasonable (for example, "I need a strong, articulate sexual assault victim who has never spoken publicly in 2 hours"), if you have a good, pre-existing relationship with the reporter, he/she will understand if you are unable to help this time. It might be wise to develop a contact list in advance, of clients who are willing to speak to the media on particular issues.

Tips for doing interviews

Your agency's strategy will likely differ depending on the type of interview, for example, a live radio or TV interview is different than a phone interview with a print reporter. An hour-long call-in radio show is different than a 30-second clip for the evening news. Here are some general tips to consider:

- Anticipate questions you may receive and prepare possible answers;
- Pre-plan – know what your message is and repeat it often;
- Keep your answers brief; do not ramble;
- Know your subject matter; know more about it than the person interviewing you;
- Keep answers simple – you will not be able to impart all of your expertise on the topic so keep your points simple so people can understand;
- Do not use acronyms or complex legal terms (without explaining them);
- Be honest. If you are not sure, do not guess;
- If the question is confusing, frame it before answering it (for example, "So if I understand you correctly, you want to know…") or for clarification;

- Remain calm; relax; and
- Remember that time passes quickly...a 15-minute interview may sound like a long time to be on television, but the interviewer has to introduce you, thank you and will talk her/himself in addition to asking you questions...so your actual speaking time flies by. This is why it is important to know your message.

Being proactive with the media

Whatever one thinks of the mass media and the stories they do or do not cover, they can be a powerful ally for an organization that needs to raise awareness of its services or needs to raise awareness about an issue. The media is often the only option unless the agency has the resources to fund expensive advertising.

It does take some time and effort to build positive relationships with a few key reporters, but the rewards can be large for an agency. Most newspapers and media outlets have reporters who focus on specific issues, like municipal politics. Find the journalists in your area that most often report on crime, policing or court cases and get to know them.

Helpful approaches to build relationships:

- Reach out – send an email to a key reporter about a concerning issue or story idea. You will be increasing the odds that when the journalist needs to someone from the victim service community to comment on a story, they will contact your agency. A journalist is more likely to call someone they know than someone they do not. This increases the profile and legitimacy of your agency.
- Help to increase your profile - Unless your agency has the resources to pay for advertising or hire a firm or person to take care of media, there are few better ways to get your message out and raise the profile of your agency. It does take some work but it is very cost effective.
- Increase trust - When you know a journalist, you will have more faith in him/her when you do provide a comment, pitch a story or refer to a victim.
- Educate - When you have a good relationship with journalists who regularly report on crime matters, you can educate them about specific issues and help them understand the justice system from the victim's perspective, which may influence their reporting.
- Involve – There is no better way to build a relationship with reporters and get them interested in your cause than by inviting them to be involved in events that you hold, be it a charity event, workshop, vigil... Invite them to host, emcee or attend as a VIP.

Even if you pitch a story that is not necessary hard news, in that it has to be told right now, it may be something the journalist will keep in the back of his or her mind for a slow news day. Your annual report, which may show a rise in the number of cases the agency assisted, or a new program you are starting may be of interest to the journalist. If you have an upcoming fundraiser, a good profile on the organization in advance of the event can help.

Before making contact, know what your purpose is. Do you want raise public awareness about an issue or get people to attend a community event or encourage people to write letters to politicians? This will help you craft your message before you speak to the journalist. Depending on the answer, your pitch will be different and you should be up front about what your purpose is.

How to suggest a story

If you want the media to cover a new program you have started or to report on some interesting research that you have just published, you can do a news release or news conference to announce it. Or, you may seek out a journalist that you have worked with in the past and give him/her a "scoop."

Either way, you need to understand what the media looks for in a story:

- Is it relevant? – does it impact people's lives, is it something people are or will talk about, etc.? Relevancy may be different for local and national media outlets. For example, city council issues are very relevant for local papers but not necessarily for national papers.
- Is it something new? – to a certain extent, it is not news if it is not new. An old story may be important again if something new has happened, such as a parole hearing for a case that happened ten years ago. There has to be a change or a new development or something unique. This is why much of the crime that occurs in society is not reported – it happens all the time and there is little "new" about it.
- Is it a story that will sustain the public's interest for a period of time? - This will usually be a story that is complex or interesting enough that more stories or news will continue to be generated beyond the original story. It requires new development or new angles and these are often the kinds of stories that journalists love because they get to investigate as opposed to just report.
- Is it interesting? – some of the things that get the most media coverage have none of the previous criteria but are covered anyway. Stories about actors going to jail or having affairs are routinely covered by mainstream media, not just entertainment media. This may not be an encouraging trend and there are limited opportunities to capture this kind of attention unless your agency or cause has the support of a well-known personality.
- Is it compelling? – news has to be compelling and in the media's mind. Conflict is important. The media like to have good guys and bad guys. Victims are good; criminals are bad. This simple narrative can often be seen in the strategies of politicians when they introduce law and order measures to target criminals and support victims;
- Simplicity is important – most news stories can only cover a part of a bigger story. If you have ever sat in court watching a trial, you may not recognize the case if you were to read about it the next day. The most important parts of the case may not be covered but the more interesting parts will be. Complex legal arguments may be summarized in a paragraph. If you are ever asked to do an interview for television, plan out of a couple of short sentences that sum up your point in an interesting way because seconds may be all you have to make your case;

As an agency that may be looking for news coverage, these are all essential questions to ask about your story or issue. You may pitch a story based solely on your issue or your program but you should also watch for opportunities to capitalize on other stories. If, for the example, the government announces some research or introduces legislation on a specific crime, you may be able to contact a reporter or issue a news release about an aspect of your work that relates to the government's initiative.

Follow-up

If the journalist did a good job on a story you suggested or with a victim you worked with, or just one that you heard or read, send a quick email saying so. Tell him/her what you liked and if there was an aspect you disagreed with or you were concerned about, respectfully point that out as well and perhaps offer to provide some additional information. Reporters are not experts in the field like you are so they will make mistakes and their work if often changed by editors. Most reporters would appreciate feedback, especially from someone they know and trust.

Here are some general tips from journalists about dealing with the media:

- You may get one chance to win over a reporter – make it count.
- Few journalists have time to chase people.
- Be efficient in your communication; do not flood them or nag them; do not leave multiple phone calls or repeatedly send long emails.
- It is helpful if the victim/advocate can provide any relevant documents, statistics, reports, etc.
- Do not expect control over a story or expect the reporter to be is on their "side".
- The easier you can make it for journalists, the more likely they are to call again.
- Do not be too discouraged if a journalist passes on a specific story...it may be a busy news day or that story may not be right for that editor at that time.
- When possible, relate an event or report to a real person.
- Do not call right before deadline with a story idea.
- Do not call with a story idea every day or week.
- If you invite a journalist to an event, touch base with them a couple of days beforehand to ensure that they remember and have all the details.

MEDIA TOOLS

The following are examples of tools you can use to attract media attention for your agency, for victim issues specifically or in general:

- News/media releases;
- News conferences/media events;
- Letters to the editor;
- Op-eds;
- Blogs and other social media;
- Meetings with editorial boards;
- Public service announcements.

News release

A news release is a short, one page (two pages maximum) description of the news you want the media to cover. It can be the release of a report, the start of a new project, the results of research, etc.

Journalists or editors see many releases everyday and have to decide which ones they will cover. Here are some tips to ensure your news releases get attention:

- Make sure the release has an interesting title and first paragraph that will catch the attention of the editor;
- It should be informative – answer who, what, where, why and when;
- The release should be short and to the point so that it can be read quickly;
- Use active, definitive language as opposed to passive, tentative language;
- Include a quote from your spokesperson that a print journalist could take directly from the release for a news story;
- Write the release like a news story – use the third person, not the first person, make it factual, emphasize the elements that a journalist would include in his/her story.

Here are practical tips for preparing the release:

- The release should be printed on your letter head;
- Send it out a couple of days in advance (if possible) and then early in the morning (before 9:00am) on the day of, so assignment editors see if before they decide what everyone will be working on;
- Avoid issuing the release on a day when something else big is happening, such as a contentious city council meeting;
- You can pay to have a news release sent out on the "wire" but this can be very expensive depending on whether you want it sent regionally or internationally and in both official languages. If you have a list of local journalists or outlets, it may be cheaper to fax or email the release;
- Follow-up the release with phone calls to the assignment editors or reporters that you have relationships with. Even if they are not able to cover the story, they may try to make sure another reporter will.

News releases should be used sparingly and reserved for the kind of story you want various media outlets to cover (as opposed to a human interest story you want a specific journalist to report on). The opening paragraph is the most important part of the release next to the title. If the journalist is not interested after reading this paragraph, he/she may not read any further. Include the most important facts. For example, a new report done by the Victim Office confirms what victim service providers have been saying for years: victims of crime are not reporting their victimization to the police. While many say that the crime was not serious enough, the report raises disturbing questions about why victims of serious crimes, such as sexual assault, are not calling the police.

The second paragraph should contain more context and detail about the story, in this case the report. Some statistics, trends and numbers will give the journalist some background information. Focus on the most interesting or surprising facts.

The third paragraph should contain a quote from your spokesperson (or this can go earlier). The quote should be a paragraph on its own. Again, this quote should be something the journalist can use in his or her story. It should be a strong statement. Jon Smith, the Executive Director of the Victim Office, said, "Insert short, relevant quote."

The last paragraph should summarize the issue and/or provide specifics about an event (if there is one) or how to get a copy of a report (if there is one). Ideally, the 4th paragraph is the last one although that may not always be possible. You should avoid putting too much information in the release.

The following example of a news release may help service providers with the format and content of their own:

SAMPLE NEWS RELEASE

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
Date: April 16, 2008
Contact: Heidi Illingworth, Executive Director, Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime
Phone: 613-233-7614 or 613-762-9499

VICTIMS TO ASK PUBLIC SAFETY MINISTER TO END LEGISLATED TWO-YEAR PAROLE REVIEW FOR MURDERERS

Ottawa – The Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime (CRCVC) will join the families of murder victims today in calling for the end of the legislated two-year parole review for killers when a petition is tabled in the House of Commons. Ms. Terri Prioriello and John, Sally and Carolyn Gardner will also meet with Public Safety Minister Stockwell Day at 12:10 pm, to ask the government to amend the Criminal Code of Canada and Corrections and Conditional Release Act, to stipulate that convicted murderers should only have parole hearings every five years after reaching their parole eligibility dates. Sheryl Gardner was a 20-year-old aspiring model working in Toronto when Ralph Ernest Power, then 28, ended her life. Power impersonated a telephone repairman and arrived at Gardner's apartment to fix her phone. Once inside he hit Gardner with a hammer and, when she began convulsing, he hit her 15 more times, bludgeoning her to death. Days later, Power attacked another woman who escaped. When he was arrested, police found files on 15 other women he had been stalking. At the time of the killing he was on parole for an arson sentence. He was convicted in 1981 for Sheryl's murder.

In 1982, David Dobson sexually assaulted, tortured and brutally murdered 16-year old Darlene (Dolly) Prioriello. After the murder, he taunted detectives and called the victim's family. In a letter to the police, Dobson vowed to kill again on the anniversary of Darlene's murder. Dobson tried to plead guilty to second-degree murder, but the Crown rejected his attempts and pushed for a first-degree murder conviction. On April 11, 1983, Dobson was convicted of first-degree murder and sentenced to life imprisonment without parole for 25 years.

Both Ralph Power and David Dobson have reached their Full Parole eligibility dates. The victims' families feel overwhelmed with anxiety and horror knowing that they will face the burden of a hearing every two years, regardless of whether the offender has made positive progress or not.
A petition has been circulated across Canada and gathered almost 5000 signatures. Mr. Gord Brown, MP for Leeds-Grenville, will present the signed petitions in the House of Commons today, which falls in the middle of National Victims of Crime Awareness Week.

Following their meeting with Minister Day, the families will meet with Mr. Steve Sullivan, Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime, to express their anguish and ask him to consider making a recommendation to government to end the legislated two-year parole review for killers.

For more information, please contact Heidi Illingworth at 613-233-7614 or 613-762-9499.
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News conferences

A news conference is an event intended to attract significant media to report on your story, report, etc. News conferences should be used even more sparingly than news releases. News conferences, like news releases, should be about hard news. The story must be timely and interesting to a wide audience.

The event should include a spokesperson for your agency and other experts who can offer different perspectives. In the story above, you may have the Executive Director, the author of the report and a recognized academic. Avoid having too many spokespeople as it may dilute your specific message. Choosing the right people allows you to focus the message and ensure the journalists focus on what you think it the most important.

Remarks should be short and focused. This allows more time for the reporters to ask questions. Television journalists may also want to do interviews with a spokesperson after the event.

You should give each reporter a media package with a copy of the news release, bios of the speakers, information about your agency and a copy of the report, fact sheets or backgrounder as appropriate.

Location is critical. Some cities have official news conference facilities that are free for agencies to use. Or, if there is a location that relates to your announcement, then you may hold it there. For example, if you are announcing a new centre for children, then it makes sense to have it there. Normally, you will have to do it indoors. If you can arrange to work with a politician, you may be able to use facilities in the legislature or city hall. This makes it easy for journalists as they can often watch the event from their offices.

The news conference should be held in the late morning (to give assignment editors time to assign a reporter and let him/her get to your event) or early afternoon (to allow a reporter time to prepare the story and get comments from others without rushing to meet the deadline). Fridays should be avoided.

You should send a media advisory out several days before the event and be sure to follow up with a call or email the day before or morning of the event.

Make sure to monitor the media to see how much media you received, the kinds of media you received (for example, print, TV, radio), whether the coverage reflected your intended message, etc. While other events occurring in your community at the same time will impact the coverage, analysis will help you identify what worked well and/or did not work well. It will also help you decide if this kind of event is worth your time and effort in the future.

News conferences take time to organize and plan. You have to arrange schedules, pre-plan to make sure (as best you can) nothing else it happening on that day, arrange for a room that is equipped with microphones, etc. Here is a quick to do list:

- Pick a date for the event;
- Choose a venue;
- Arrange for speakers;
- Prepare a media release;
- Send out media advisory several days before the event;
- Prepare a media package;
- Make calls or send email day before or morning of the event;
- Send out media release the morning of the event;
- Monitor the media;

Letters to the editor

Letters to the editor are a very easy, low-cost way of getting your message into the newspaper. They will not have the same effect as a front page news story but can be effective.

A letter to the editor is usually done in response to a story that has appeared in the news paper. Your letter may support the article or the issue that was raised in the article or it may be critical of the story. If you are critical, be balanced, objective and factual. If you are too critical, the paper may not use your letter.

You should not write too many letters to the editor as they will not print letters from the same person too often. Letters to the editor are usually short; some newspaper may have rules on submissions.

The following is an example of a Letter to the Editor, written by Heidi Illingworth, Executive Director of the Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime, which ran in the Toronto Star in June 2008:

Dear Editor:

We believe the "Crime and Punishment" series has failed to highlight the impact of serious violent crime on innocent Canadians. In 2003, crime in Canada cost an estimated $70 billion, a majority of which, $47 billion or 67%, was borne by the victims. Victim costs include the value of damaged or stolen property, pain and suffering, loss of income and productivity, and health services.

Working with families impacted by homicide and other serious, violent crimes on a daily basis, the Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime sees the clear need to reduce violent victimization in Canada. We strongly support crime prevention strategies and social development programs.

That being said, it is also our strong belief that public safety must be the main focus of the Canadian criminal justice system. We cannot continue to allow a small number of repeat, violent and dangerous offenders to cause such a disproportionate amount of crime and harm.

In responding to crime, we feel the government focus must be: enforcement, prevention and treatment. There is and will always be a need for prisons and incarceration, especially for serious, violent offenders. For those offenders deemed an acceptable risk to return to the community; we support treatment, training and ongoing support to make their reintegration successful.

Our Centre will continue to support legislation like the Tackling Violent Crime Act because it is a piece of legislation that may help to keep a few more persistent offenders who are dangerous off the streets. The safety of the public must come first. We will also continue to advocate for bringing a better balance to the justice system; one that better recognizes the harm done to victims, as well as holding offenders accountable for their actions.

Op-eds

Op-ed stands for "opposite the editorial." It is basically an essay in which you state your opinion on a given subject. Consider yourself a guest columnist for the newspaper. You do not have to be objective in this piece but your intention should be to argue a certain position to readers.

Op-eds are a little more labour intensive than letters to the editor and can be very effective. They give you agency credibility and it allows you do deliver your message without it being filtered by a reporter. Op-eds may be very timely when a government has made an announcement that you have an informed opinion on or some research has been released that you can give more in-depth perspective than the media coverage has provided.

You should contact the opinion page editor before preparing the piece to make sure they are interested. This may save you some work if they are not able to use it or interested. This is like pitching a story – you will need to explain who you are (unless you already have a relationship), why your perspective is important, what you can add to the public's understanding of this issue, etc.

An op-ed is like a combination of a news story and an essay. You want to make sure people actually read it so the title has to be catchy enough to attract their attention. Your first paragraph is the most important because most people will decide if they are going to read on after reading the first paragraph. It can be effective to begin with a provocative or controversial statement or a question that relates to the news item that you are writing about. "Does the government care about victims?" or "Why has the government neglected victims?" or "City council cares more about potholes than sexual assault victims."

An op-ed it different from a letter to the editor because you are an expert on the topic. Anyone can write a letter to the editor and newspapers like it when their readers share their views. An op-ed is done by someone with specific knowledge so you should feel free to share that knowledge. Concrete examples are effective and research and/or statistics help support your arguments.

Most importantly, your op-ed must be well written. You may have the best arguments in the world but if you cannot communicate them in an effective and interesting way, no editor will use your piece. Op-eds are usually between 600 and 800 words but you should check with the editor of the paper you are submitting it to.

Once the op-ed has run, you should email it to your contacts in radio or TV media. They may be interested in doing follow-up interviews on your piece. Radio talk shows are a good opportunities for these kind of interviews. They have to fill hours of air time everyday and get people to call in and respond. A strong, clear position on an issue (for or against) that people care about is the kind of thing that makes people pick up the phone and call the radio host.

The following is an example of an op-ed, written by Steve Sullivan, which ran in the Hill Times in July 2010:

TRAFFICKING VICTIMS NEED PRIME MINISTER'S LEADERSHIP

The Prime Minister's maternal health initiative has not been without controversy, but he managed to shine the spotlight on an important problem. And because of him, Canadians are talking about something most probably had not thought about before. In spite of the lingering questions, he raised awareness of the issue and kudos to him for that.

There are other issues that could benefit from his attention, like human trafficking. Three years ago, Parliament called upon the federal government to develop a national strategy to combat human trafficking, but Canada still does not have a plan. Reports of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women and Justice and Human Rights made important recommendations on the need for the federal government to help develop and implement rehabilitative programs for victims of this hideous form of sexual exploitation. And still there is no plan.

A recent UN Report said that criminal groups make billions of dollars every year trafficking over 2 million people, the majority of whom are women and girls subjected to rape, violence, imprisonment and other forms of abuse. Women are trafficked into Canada from Asian countries and the former Soviet Union. Once they get here, their travel documents are taken. Every aspect of their lives is controlled. They are far away from their families and they do not speak the language. Their lives do not belong to them.

To their credit, the Conservative Government created special temporary residency permits for victims of trafficking that provide legal immigration status to victims, allowing them access to health-care benefits and trauma counselling and the ability to apply for a work permit. Yet there have been cases of children, suspected of being trafficking victims, being locked up in Immigration Detention Centres because there was no other place for them to go.

This is not just an international problem – Canadian victims are trafficked within Canada from city to city every day. A new RCMP report calls these the forgotten children and outlines how they are being exploited within and across provincial borders. Young Aboriginal girls are particularly vulnerable to this kind of exploitation.

And while we may not see young men as victims of this kind of exploitation, they are. Research done by Dr. Sue Mcintyre suggests that young males get into the sex trade at a younger age than girls and stay in the trade longer than girls.

While the Government has been largely absent on this issue, MPs have been busy, most notable, Tory MP Joy Smith. She introduced a bill to increase penalties for trafficking of children and because of her commitment and passion, it became law last week. Congratulations to Smith for her dedication, but tougher sentences won't mean much if Canada doesn't get its act together to develop a national strategy to coordinate law enforcement efforts. The US State Department Trafficking in Persons 2010 Report called upon Canada to "strengthen coordination among national and provincial governments on law enforcement and victim services."

There are champions doing great work across the country. Honouring the Spirit of Our Little Sisters is a safe house in Winnipeg for Aboriginal girls who are at risk of sexual exploitation, but they only have 6 beds. The Toronto Police Service has created a Special Victims Unit that focuses on violence against sex trade workers, but it may be the only one of its kind in Canada. Peel Regional Police launched a program designed to help sex trafficking victims escape their exploiters for good.

Whether it is a woman brought into Canada from the former Soviet Union and locked in a hotel room forced to service man after man, or a young Aboriginal girl who falls for the charms of a young man who turns out to be a pimp or a teenage boy who exchanges sex for a hot meal and a safe place to sleep, we cannot turn our backs any longer. This is not about consent. This is not about choice. It is sexual exploitation and it must stop.

It's too easy for us to ignore these victims. We feel secure because we don't see our children in them. Be careful about thinking there are not kids from "good" homes living this life. These kids don't run to the streets…they are too often running from an abusive home.

And does it matter anyway? They're kids; they're victims. Whether from a foreign land, a northern reserve or the house down the block, they are victims of the worst kind of exploitation imaginable. If they do not fit our image of what a "victim" looks like, that's our problem, not theirs.

The Prime Minister committed over a billion dollars to the maternal health initiative in a time of economic uncertainty and staggering deficits. He used Canada's reputation in the world to get other countries to commit billions more.

Canada needs a national strategy to find, support and heal these women and children. It will cost money but we cannot afford to ignore them any longer.

All that is required it your attention and leadership, Mr. Harper.

Blogs/Facebook/Twitter/Newsletters/Websites

The Internet has revolutionized how the media reports the news. Newspapers no longer wait for the morning edition – they can post stories on their websites at any time of the day. People can watch news on television. Reporters may "tweet" live from trials or public hearings.

The internet has also increased the ordinary person's ability to post "news" or opinions on blogs or Facebook pages or through Twitter. Organizational newsletters, which used to be very time consuming and expensive to print off and mail can now be sent out to thousands of people through email. While a comprehensive review of each one of these tools is beyond this guide, we will look at the potential benefits of each:

- Blogs - are weblogs and can be like your own personal op-ed page. They are very easy to set up and design. You may use them to post articles you or your agency have written, responses to news stories or opinion pieces. You may post as often as you like. People can subscribe to your blog (for free);
- Facebook – Billions of people around the world are on Facebook and more and more agencies/organizations are setting up their own pages. Accounts are easy to set up and can contain information about your agency. People can join your agency's group or "like" you and recommend your page to others. There are serious privacy concerns with Facebook (personal information should be guarded) and having a page where you allow people to post comments can be cumbersome to manage. FB pages are less "news" and more about profile;
- Twitter – like Facebook, Twitter was originally used mainly by individuals to keep friends/followers updated about what they were doing throughout the day. Agencies now "Tweet" about what they are doing or about an important news event that have just taken place. Tweets are short – less than 140 characters and people have to "follow you" to read your Tweets. It is free to open an account and when an issue is very popular it can be tracked through trending (people re-tweet other people's comments). Twitter can be linked to an agency's Facebook account which makes it more efficient to manage both mediums;
- Websites – almost every agency has a webpage now that has information about its organization. The Internet is an easy way for people to find out about services. Most websites have basic information about the agency, such as mandate, services, contact information, etc. Some websites have information about victim issues including any publications the agency has or speeches staff have given;
- Newsletters – in the age of the Internet, electronic newsletters are easy to send out to thousands of people at the same time. E-newsletters are great ways of keeping people informed about the work your agency is doing, about important research that is being done, interesting cases or news stories, legislative action by government, etc.

All of these new tools can be effective but they require people to register or to know about you. Word of mouth is very important and people who are not online will not be able to access these methods of communication.

Meetings with editorial boards

Meetings with editorial boards can be an effective way to raise awareness about your agency, the issues you are working on or an important initiative you are working on. If you are able to set it up, you are able to meet with several key people at your local newspaper including the editors and some reporters. This helps you develop personal relationships and provide detailed background information on issues that reactive story focused interviews do not. These meetings can raise your credibility and increase the chances that you will be looked upon as an expert in the field.

You can request an editorial board meeting at any time but you should have something relevant or timely to talk about. If you work with children, and there have been lots of articles about child abuse, you may be able to provide context and background information to the paper. If you work with a crisis hotline and there have been lots of high-profile suicides in your area, it is a good opportunity to raise awareness about your services and to provide tips to families and loved ones who may be concerned about members of their families.

You should avoid approaching the editorial board if your agency has been criticized or you are defending a position. Editorial meetings should be proactive opportunities to enhance your profile, not to complain about negative media attention.

To inquire about a meeting, you should contact the paper's editorial page editor and request a meeting. You should tell them why you want to meet, what issues you want to discuss and how long you would like to meet for, including the time your presentation will take. Before making contact, you should do some research (if you have not already) about how the paper has covered your work or your issues in the recent past.

While you want this to be a positive experience, you should expect that you will be asked difficult and challenging questions. The paper is not your personal advertisement – they will challenge any positions you take, play devil's advocate, present opinions of others in your field who may disagree with you. These are all the things that reporters do on a regular basis and you should not take them as a bad sign, but you should be prepared. How you answer these questions will impact the coverage you receive. If you appear too defensive or cannot answer the questions, they will know it.

Public Service Announcements

Public Service Announcements, or PSAs, are brief "commercials" about an agency or an event. They can be done for radio or television and can be useful to raise awareness about your service so people know where to turn to for help. Radio stations and public television stations may run PSAs for free. They usually run for 15-30 seconds.

You can include a 1-800 number for people to call or a website for them to visit, or can have the media outlet link back to your website. PSAs can be time consuming to plan, write, create, etc. They should sound professional and can be expensive to tape.

Every agency will have to determine if the time, effort and expense is worth it. If they are successful, you agency may receive a large number of phone calls, not all of them from people who fit your mandate.

The following examples of PSAs are provided by the Policy Centre for Victim Issues for National Victims of Crime Awareness Week – www.victimsweek.gc.ca

15 seconds:
Every victim of crime matters.

There are laws and programs to help victims of crime rebuild their lives.

April 18 to 24 is National Victims of Crime Awareness Week.

Call (insert local organization and phone number) for more information.

30 seconds:
April 18 to 24 is National Victims of Crime Awareness Week. Every Victim Matters.
Who do you turn to if you or a family member is a victim of crime?

There are laws, policies and programs to help victims of crime to rebuild their lives and to have their voices heard at every stage in the criminal justice process.

Spousal abuse, child exploitation, homicide, impaired driving, identity theft. These crimes change the lives of thousands of Canadians every day. Individuals, families and communities can all be victims of crime.

For more information call (insert name of local organization and phone number).

60 seconds:
You think it can't happen to you. And then it does. Who do you turn to? If you or a family member is a victim of crime, support and services are just a phone call away.

If you are a victim of crime, you are not alone. April 18 to 24 2010 is the fifth annual National Victims of Crime Awareness Week. There are programs to help victims of crime rebuild their lives and have their voices heard at every stage in the criminal justice process.

Across the country, thousands of people every year seek help from victim services offices. Dedicated professionals and volunteers work with victims of crime and their families to show that every victim truly does matter.

Services for victims of crime are available right here in (insert name of community or region). Call (insert local phone number) or visit (insert web address). For more information on National Victims of Crime Awareness Week, visit **www.victimsweek.gc.ca**

Evaluation

"Working with the Media: A Guide for Canadian Victim Service Providers"

INSTRUCTIONS

Please circle your response to the items
1 = "Strongly disagree," or the lowest, most negative impression
3 = "Neither agree nor disagree," or an adequate impression
5 = "strongly agree," or the highest, most positive impression

Choose N/A if the item is not appropriate or not applicable to you. Feel free to elaborate in the comments section, as needed. Your feedback is sincerely appreciated. Thank you.

CONTENT OF THE GUIDE

The Guide flows well and is presented in a logical order.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
The length of the Guide is appropriate.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
The Guide is easy to understand.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
The Guide is user-friendly. I can easily find the topics I am interested in.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A

Comments:

FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS:

The Guide provided me with useful information.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
I will be able to use this Guide to better assist my clients.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
The Guide accurately describes the role of the Canadian media in reporting crime and victimization.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
I feel the content is complete.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A

Comments:

FOR VICTIMS AND SURVIVORS

This Guide will be helpful to people who work with victims/survivors.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
I feel it accurately portrays the media in Canada.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
The Guide is written in a clear and understandable manner.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
I feel the content is complete.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A

Comments:

In what ways could this Guide be improved?

Please send completed evaluation forms to crcvc@crcvc.ca or by fax: 613-822-4904