

2007 National Crime Victims' Rights Week Community Awareness Projects

April 22 - 28, 2007

Victims' Rights: *Every Victim. Every Time.*

If you have difficulty reading this message, an archived copy is available for NCVRW CAP subgrantees at <http://lists.navaa.org/lists/info/ncvrw>

This is the seventh in a series of periodic messages to assist in the planning and implementation of NCVRW Community Awareness Projects. Please feel free to send your individual questions or requests for assistance to Anne Seymour at anneseey@atlantech.net.

CAP TIPS

(To Improve Public awareness)

by Anne Seymour

Writing an Effective Press Release

Introduction

A press release provides information to the media that is timely, useful and informative to their audiences. Editors and news directors receive hundreds of press releases each week and have to decide what is newsworthy. A press release is generally skimmed, so your press release needs simple, concise details that grab the attention of the person reviewing it.

Not every event or activity is newsworthy. In writing your press release for 2007 NCVRW, consider any of your activities that will really "stand out in a crowd." Prior to writing your press release, ask the following questions:

- Is this information newsworthy to the general public?
- What is the main point or feature of this NCVRW press release? A unique spokesperson or guest speaker? A unique event? A summary of all key events you are sponsoring?
- Should the press release be distributed to print or broadcast media, or both? (Please see CAP Tip # 1, "Building a Comprehensive Media List")
- Is there a creative angle that will make the release more interesting and appealing to editors and news directors?

Content

- Writing style and content should be succinct, descriptive, and avoid unnecessary information. With the exception of personal quotations, the text should be written in "third person" style.
- Your headline should pique people's interest and doesn't have to tell the whole story. It should be no more than 10 words and seek to grab the attention of the news editor or news director.
- The first paragraph can be the "deal breaker." It should include the "5 Ws" (who, what, when, where, and why) written to immediately draw people in. For example: "A day without violence is

the goal of (event, followed by the 5 Ws).”

- *The second paragraph should explain the value and purpose of the event or activity, and why people should care about it.*
- *The body of the press release should include elements of human interest and articulate the theme of the information. For example:*
 - *How your NCVRW activity (or various activities) will make a positive difference in the lives of victims and the community.*
 - *Any information about resources or speakers that are unique and have something special to offer.*
 - *Quotations from victims and survivors or community leaders.*
 - *Linking the NCVRW theme, “Victims’ Rights: Every Victim. Every Time.” to actual victims/survivors and/or your events.*
- *The information should be factual, and language should avoid superlatives (the “best,” the “most”).*
- *Offer information that people can use. Tell why people should attend your event. Offer a free publication or something interesting in your press release or via a web site to make your press release more relevant.*
- *Also make sure to include information about the location of events, including access by public transportation and parking; their accessibility to persons with disabilities and, if relevant, provision of American Sign Language interpreters; and whether or not child care will be provided and/or if the events are “child friendly.”*

Format

The standardized format for press releases is shown below. Some format considerations include:

- *Press releases should be typed in a 12 point font (Arial, Verdana or Times Roman) and double-spaced.*
- *“FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE” indicates that the information in the release is ready to be published.*
- *The headline should not exceed ten words and should fit on one line, centered, using capital letters in a bold font that is slightly larger than the text font.*
- *If a press release exceeds one page, type “more” on the bottom of the first page and at the top of the second page, type in bold:*
 - *Press release*
 - *(Topic)*
 - *Page two*
- *Type “END” in bold in the center at the end of the release.*
- *Always “spell check” the draft press release.*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

CONTACT: *Contact person and organization affiliation*

Area code/telephone number
Email address
Website URL

HEADLINE OF THE PRESS RELEASE

City/State/Date – The first sentence should include the most important information to get the attention of the editor, and encourage further reading.

Text of the press release – it's a good idea to keep the length to less than 600 words.

The last paragraph should always read: "For additional information about (topic of the release), contact (name) at (area code/telephone number) or visit (web URL).

– END –

It's a good idea to have several people review the press release for content and accuracy, format, grammar and spelling prior to sending it.

Your press release should be mailed or emailed 7-10 days in advance of your event.

NCVRW Resource Guide

Within Section 4 of the Resource Guide, Working with the Media, there is a sample press release that includes a wonderful quotation from OVC Director John W. Gillis (which you are encouraged to use in your press release).

For More Information

Please contact National Crime Victims' Rights Week Community Awareness Project Consultant Anne Seymour via email at anneseey@atlantech.net; or by telephone at 202.547.1732.