

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 sixth 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 #6

(To Improve Public awareness)

by Anne Seymour

Creating Public Service Announcements

Introduction

A public service announcement (PSA) is a brief message aired on radio or television stations that provides information to the public. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) requires that in order to receive or renew a broadcast license, broadcast stations must donate a certain amount of airtime "for which no charge is made," usually to nonprofit organizations and other community groups. PSAs can air at any time period during which a station broadcasts to the public.

PSAs are a great way to publicize special NCVRW events in your community, and introduce or enhance crime victim awareness to broadcast media. A strong PSA can result in actual news coverage of your NCVRW activities.

Format of Public Service Announcements

A PSA's format may vary, depending upon the submission guidelines of different radio or television stations. You can contact the public service director (also called "community affairs director) or visit a station's web site to determine:

- General submission requirements.
- To whom the PSA should be submitted (it helps to get a specific name, title and mailing address).
- Preferred length in words or amount of time.
- Suggested format (see below).
- The station's preferences and guidelines related to written copy, or providing an audiotape or videotape.
- When the station needs the PSA copy (advance time prior to its actual airing).
- When to expect the PSA to air once the station receives it.

If a station allows community members to read the PSA for audiotaping or videotaping, consider asking a community or civic leader – such as the Mayor, police chief, or crime survivor – to serve as the "on-air talent."

In general, it's a good idea to submit a PSA at least two weeks prior to when you want it to air; and to be very specific about when you want it to begin and end on the air.

PSAs are usually written in 15, 30 or 60 second formats (the one-minute format can also be used as a "radio actuality," which features the spot being read on the radio by a person from the organization or entity sponsoring its content). Brevity is very important; in general:

- *A 15-second PSA has no more than 40 words.*
- *A 30-second PSA has no more than 80 words.*
- *A 60-second PSA or actuality has no more than 150 words.*

The format below is generally acceptable to most broadcast stations:

Organization Letterhead

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

: # SECONDS

START DATE:

STOP DATE:

CONTACT: *(Name, area code/telephone number and email address of primary contact person and organization)*

CONTENT OF ANNOUNCEMENT (IT IS CUSTOMARY TO TYPE THE PSA DOUBLE-SPACED AND IN ALL CAPITAL LETTERS). ALWAYS END WITH: "FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL (TELEPHONE NUMBER) OR VISIT (WEB SITE URL).

– END –

Planning

It helps to assemble a "PSA team" to plan, develop and deliver the PSAs. Team members can:

- *Coordinate PSA efforts within a jurisdiction so stations are not inundated with requests. Focus on your main NCVRW events!*
- *Research the PSA submission requirements of different television and radio stations, and compile a simple database with this information.*
- *Seek consensus on the most important message and information for the PSA*
- *Write and edit and re-write the PSA to fit the message and time limits.*
- *Read the PSA out loud to each other – several times – to make sure the message is clear, delivered succinctly and contains all relevant information.*

Content

Broadcast stations receive many requests to air PSAs and have a limited amount of time in which to do so. It helps to follow the "5 Ws" in determining a PSA's content – who, what, when, where and why – to organize the public service message.

Here are some important tips to help you consider your PSA's content:

- Determine the most important thing you want to communicate, and do so right up front:
 - This is usually the key fact(s) about any event or issue, but also why people should care about it.
 - Consider posing a question to draw people's interest and engage them.
 - Compel people to listen by relating to their lives – most people are concerned about crime, care about their own safety and their family's safety, and likely have been, or know someone who has been, a victim of crime.
- Keep your message positive.
- Give people something simple to do – show up, volunteer, make a call or email, or contact your organization for information about how they can help. A simple “call to action” is a great way to begin or end a PSA.
- Mention the name of your organization at least once. It's okay to abbreviate the full name or use your acronym once the full name has been cited.
- Use short sentences.
- Use short action verbs (i.e., avoid passive verbs that end in “ing”).
- Avoid jargon and big words that the average viewer or listener won't understand.
- Keep your telephone number and web URL as simple as possible. For strictly local PSAs, an area code isn't necessary. For web URLs, it's no longer necessary to include the www.

As noted above, it's very important to read your PSA out loud and have others listen and comment – hearing how it will sound is very different from simply putting your words to paper.

You can submit several versions of the same PSA, either with slightly different content and approaches, and/or different lengths.

Follow-on

Once 2007 NCVRW is over, it's a good idea to write a brief thank-you note to all stations that aired your PSAs. You can note the success of your events that was made possible, in part, by the station's help with broadcasting the PSAs; and thank them for promoting a public service message that educates the public about victims' rights and services, and informs victims about how to get help.

NCVRW Resource Guide

Within Section 4 of the Resource Guide, *Working with the Media*, there are four sample PSAs for your consideration in 15-second, 30-second and 60-second formats. The content of these examples may help you consider the message and type of information to include in your PSAs.

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.