



RESHAPING THE FUTURE **HONORING THE PAST**

CAP TIPS is 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 annesey@atlantech.net.

CAP TIPS #5

To Improve *Public Awareness*

Tips to Create Effective Public Service Announcements

Introduction

A public service announcement (PSA) is a brief message aired on radio, television stations, in movie theaters or the Web that can provide information to the public about 2011 National Crime Victims' Rights Week (NCVRW), and the needs and rights of, and services available to, crime victims and survivors.

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 (including in the middle of the night!). In addition, opportunities for web-based PSAs range from posting PSAs on an agency's website or through online venues such as YouTube or Facebook.

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

Planning for PSAs

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

- Coordinate PSA efforts within a jurisdiction so stations are not inundated with requests (remember, it's important to focus on your main 2011 NCVRW events and messages!)
- Research the PSA submission requirements of different radio and television stations, and compile a simple database with this information (this will require both on-line research and likely telephone calls to the stations).
- Consider targeting broadcast stations that can enhance your outreach to a broad spectrum of victims and survivors – college and university radio and television stations, local cable programs, and stations whose audiences include people of color, older people, teens, etc.
- Seek consensus on the most important message(s) and information for your PSAs.
- Write, edit and finalize the PSAs to fit the message and time limits.
- Read the PSAs out loud to each other – several times – to make sure the message is clear, delivered succinctly and contains all relevant information.

Broadcast Public Service Announcements

“Broadcast PSAs” refer to television and radio. Your PSAs’ 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 website to determine:

- General submission requirements.
- To whom the PSA should be submitted (it helps to get *a specific name, title and email or snail-mail 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 broadcast-quality DVD.
- *When* the station needs the PSA copy (advance time required prior to its actual airing – usually *at least two weeks*).
- When to expect the PSA to air once the station receives it.
- For television PSAs, it’s very important to make sure that your PSAs are closed-captioned for people who are Deaf or hearing-impaired.

Broadcast stations usually prefer PSA broadcasting using the following approaches:

- Broadcast-quality DVD/video or audiotape that matches the station’s time requirements (usually 15 or 30 seconds).
- The provided script is read by the station’s on-air “talent” on either radio or television.
- A representative of your organization or coalition delivers the PSA message on-air.
- A local well-known person, i.e., Mayor, local celebrity or sports figure, etc., reads the PSA script.

In general, it’s a good idea to submit your 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 air.

PSAs are usually written in 15, 30, or 60 second formats (the one-minute format can also be used as a “radio or television actuality,” which features the spot being read on the radio or television by a person from the organization or entity sponsoring its content, or by the station’s on-air talent). 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 not more than 150 words.

Three sample PSAs that matches each of these recommended time-frames are included at the end of this CAP TIP.

Format for Submission

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--

PSA 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 the content of a PSA – "who, what, when, where and why?" – to organize your public service message.

Here are some important tips to help you consider your PSAs' 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 including a question to draw people's interest and engage them.
 - Compel people to listen by relating to *their lives* – most people are or know someone who is a victim of crime; are concerned about crime and victimization; and/or care about their own safety and that of their family.
- Keep your message *positive*.
- Give people something simple to do – show up, volunteer, make a call or send an 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 ("the Center") or use an acronym once the full name has been cited.
- Use short sentences.
- Use short action verbs (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 is not necessary. For web URLs, it's not necessary to include the www.

Follow-on

Once 2011 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 rights and service for crime victims and survivors, and informs victims about how to get help.

Community Calendars

Most broadcast stations feature online "community calendars," where you can post information about special events that is then included on the station's website (for example, see <http://katv.eviesays.com/submit.html> of KATV, the ABC affiliate of Little Rock, Arkansas). Most "community calendars" require you to register as a "member" to take advantage of this public awareness opportunity.

Web-based PSAs

All organizations and agencies engaged in your 2011 NCVRW planning activities can post print, audio and video PSAs on their websites. You don't have to worry about "broadcast quality" requirements – you just need to make sure that *your message is clear and your visuals are powerful*.

An excellent example to consider is available from the American Heart Association, which sponsors a comprehensive PSA campaign that features video, audio, print, outdoor (billboard) and web PSAs *all on one web page*. You can visit http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/News/PublicServiceAnnouncements/Public-Service-Announcements_UCM_312002_SubHomePage.jsp to gain ideas about how to implement this unique approach to PSAs.

YouTube

YouTube is a great venue to broadcast your video public service announcements. Unlike other electronic venues, "broadcast quality" footage is not required. All you need is a powerful message, interesting visuals, a DVD camcorder to record your PSA, and a computer to upload it to YouTube.

You can visit YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/> and, in the web site's search engine, type "*public service announcements, crime victims*." Nearly 150 examples are available for you to view and get ideas for your own YouTube PSAs.

Sample Public Service Announcements

Here are three sample PSAs that you can easily adapt to your community, and your special events planned for 2011 NCVRW:

:15 second

Everyone *is* or *knows* a victim of crime. Help make a difference in the lives of crime victims by joining us during 2011 National Crime Victims' Rights Week on (*day/date*) at (*time*) at (*location*) to honor victims and survivors of crime, and to help make our community safer. For more information, please visit (*web URL*).

:30 seconds

If you've *ever* been or known a victim of crime, you know the hurt and helplessness that result from crime. Even if you've *never* been a crime victim, you've benefitted because countless victims and survivors have worked hard to strengthened our state's victims' rights laws and worked to make our communities safer.

This is National Crime Victims' Rights Week. Please join us in recognizing our family members, friends, neighbors and colleagues who've been hurt by crime at (*provide specific information about your event*). Together we can shape a future that is free from fear! For more information, please visit (*web URL*).

:60 seconds

April 10 to 16 is National Crime Victims' Rights Week – a time to recognize the countless people in our community/state who have suffered the indignity of being the victim of a crime; and whose commitment as survivors helps prevent crime and other victims that has made *our community* a better place to live.

Not long ago, crime victims had *no rights* and *few services* to help them. Today, many victims' rights laws help ensure that they can be active participants in our justice systems, and there are countless programs that aid victims in the aftermath of crime.

On (*day/date*) at (*time*) at (*location*), our community will honor crime victims and those who serve them. Please join us to honor the many victims who have changed how we treat crime victims and how our criminal justice system responds to people who've been hurt by crime. *Together*, we can create a future free from fear, where crime victims are *always* treated with the fairness, dignity and respect they deserve.

For more information, please visit (*web URL*).

Office for Victims of Crime Resources for Public Service Announcements

In the past, the Office for Victims of Crime has produced video PSAs for NCVRW, as well as generic PSAs to promote victim and public awareness (see www.crimevictims.gov). These URLs will link you to previous video PSAs, along with tips for PSA production and dissemination:

- <http://ovc.ncjrs.gov/ncvrw2008>
- <http://ovc.ncjrs.gov/ncvrw2009>
- <http://ovc.ncjrs.gov/ncvrw2010>
- <http://www.crimevictims.gov>
- <http://www.ovc.gov/library/psas.html> (includes NCVRW Theme DVDs and PSAs going back to 2000)
- <http://www.ovc.gov/publications/infores/psakit/welcome.html> (this site provides helpful information on using public services announcements, including tips on how to get them played on air).

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.