



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 TIP #8

To Improve Public Awareness

Creating Effective Public Service Announcements

Introduction

A public service announcement (PSA) is a brief message aired on radio, television stations or the Web that can provide information to the public (including crime victims and survivors) about 2014 National Crime Victims' Rights Week (NCVROW), 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, Facebook or Flickr (see 2012 CAP TIP #5, "Tips for Engaging in Social Media through Six Popular Venues").

PSAs are a great way to publicize special NCVROW 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 NCVROW 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 2014 NCVROW events and messages!*)
- Research the PSA submission requirements of different radio and television stations (for both broadcast and web-based PSAs), 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 with 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 (“start date” and “end date”).

PSAs are usually written in 15 or 30 second formats. 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.

Sample PSAs for 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:

(YOUR LETTERHEAD)

2014 National Crime Victims' Rights Week

THEME: *"30 Years: Restoring the Balance of Justice"*

CONTACT: (Name, Title, Area Code/Telephone Number and Email Address)

START: (Either "IMMEDIATELY" or specific start date)

STOP: (specific end date, i.e. April 12, 2014)

(PSA CONTENT PRINTED DOUBLE-SPACED)

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."
- End with "call, click or come in" to indicate that the audience can contact you by telephone, email or a personal visit.

It's also important to include a cover letter with your PSA request that:

- Provides a brief overview of 2014 NCVRW and its theme.
- Provides an overview of your organization and its services.
- Makes a strong pitch about why your PSA is important to victims, and to individual and public safety.

Follow-on

Once 2014 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 KAFM Radio in Grand Junction, CO, Community Events Calendar, at <http://www.kafmradio.org/Community-Calendar%26eventid=429804%26calendarid=47>).

Most "community calendars" require you to register as a "member" to take advantage of this public awareness opportunity, and it's a good idea to do this so you can promote your public awareness activities throughout the year.

Web-based PSAs

All organizations and agencies engaged in your 2014 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*.

A powerful PSA about human trafficking is available online from the 2014 OVC Resource Guide at http://ovc.ncjrs.org/ncvrw2014/camera_ready.html.

YouTube is also 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*." Over 150 examples are available for you to view and get ideas for your own YouTube PSAs. Radio interviews can also be uploaded to YouTube. Once you post a video PSA on YouTube, make sure to publicize it through URL links to the PSA via email, Facebook and other outreach venues.

Other Ideas for Free Publicity for Your NCVRW Activities

Respond to any published news article about crime and victimization with a "letter to the editor" that comments on the article, and ends with an invitation to your community to join your NCVRW activities.

Respond to online news articles about crime and victimization in the "Comments" section that follows with information about your NCVRW activities.

Tune into talk radio programs and don't hesitate to call in to respond to any discussions that are *remotely related* to crime and victimization! You can join the discussion, and end with briefly asking people to visit your website for "more information about our NCVRW activities."

Make a pitch to get onto public affairs programs sponsored by broadcast stations. Such programming is often repeated across various hours and days, and provides excellent opportunities to “get the word out.” The Wisconsin Broadcasters Association has published “Getting Your Message on Air,” which features great tips for getting on public affairs programs at http://ftpcontent.worldnow.com/wgow/public_files/PSA_Guidebook.pdf.

Sample Public Service Announcements

Here are five sample PSAs that you can easily adapt to your community, and your special events planned for 2014 NCVRW:

:15 seconds

It takes all of us working together to “restore the balance of justice” for crime victims and our community. Find out how you can help during National Crime Victims’ Rights Week, April 6 to 12. For more information, please visit (*web URL*).

:15 seconds

Crime victims and survivors need and deserve help, hope and healing. Join (*your organization*) to restore the balance of justice for crime victims during National Crime Victims’ Rights Week and throughout the year. Call, click or come in! For more information, please visit (*web URL*).

:30 seconds

This is National Crime Victims’ Rights Week, a time where crime survivors and those who help them join together to restore the balance of justice for crime victims and communities. Victims of crime in (*your jurisdiction*) have many rights under law, and services to help them cope in the aftermath of crime.

Please join us from April 6 to 12 to learn about victims’ rights and services, and how YOU can help us to help victims of crime in (*your jurisdiction*). You can call, click or come in! For more information, call (*area code/telephone number*) or visit us online at (*web URL*).

:30 seconds

What does it take to “restore the balance of justice” for crime victims and our communities?

It takes awareness about crime victims’ legal rights that facilitate their active participation in our criminal and juvenile justice systems. It takes knowledge about the many supportive services that help victims in the aftermath of crime. And it takes a commitment from each of us to provide help, hope and healing to our family members, neighbors, co-workers and friends who are hurt by crime.

During National Crime Victims' Rights Week – April 6-12 – find out how *you* can help at our special events that seek to “restore the balance of justice.” (*You can include very brief information about any specific event here*) For more information, call (*area code/telephone number*) or visit us at (*web URL*).

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 (office) or 202.487.7329 (cell).