

National Crime Victims' Rights Week
Community Awareness Projects
April 19 - 25, 2015

"Engaging Communities. Empowering Victims."

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 #5

To Improve Public Awareness

Sample Proclamation to Commemorate 2015 National Crime Victims' Rights Week

Introduction

An important way to promote 2015 National Crime Victims' Rights Week (NCVRW) to crime victims, survivors and the general public is to seek proclamations related to the 2015 NCVRW theme, and to victims' rights and needs in your jurisdiction. This year's theme – *Engaging Communities. Empowering Victims.* – recognizes the importance of involving community members in ongoing efforts to improve victims' rights and services and to empower victims and survivors.

The Office for Victims of Crime 2015 NCVRW *Resource Guide* will include a sample proclamation. The information included in this CAP TIP offers you additional resources to draft and seek proclamations from state and community leaders. It is *very important* that you personalize your proclamation to reflect on the accomplishments and successes of *your* state and/or jurisdiction to provide a more "local angle."

Proclamation Outreach

Who can issue proclamations?

There are a number of entities that can issue official proclamations for 2015 NCVRW:

- State level:
 - Governors
 - Attorneys General
 - Legislature (House/Assembly and Senate)
- Local level:
 - Boards of Supervisors
 - City Councils
 - City Mayors

Each of these entities receives many requests for proclamations, so it's important to make a strong case for proclaiming the week of April 19 – 25, 2015 to be *(state/ municipality/city)* Crime Victims' Rights Week. It's a good idea to submit your request *as early as possible* and *with as many co-signatories as possible*, including:

- Crime victims and survivors
- Directors of system-based victim assistance programs
- Directors of community-based victim assistance programs
- Leadership within your criminal and juvenile justice systems (Chiefs of Police, County/Parish Sheriff, Prosecutor, Probation or Parole Director, Department of Corrections Director or Commissioner, etc.)

Here is sample language you can adapt for a letter or email request for a 2015 NCVRW proclamation:

Dear ():

National Crime Victims' Rights Week (NCVRW) is a time-honored tradition observed annually each April. Since 1981, when President Ronald Reagan declared the first NCVRW, crime victims and survivors and those who serve them join together in April to promote victims' rights and services, and efforts to prevent crime and work together to make our communities safer.

The theme of 2015 NCVRW is "Engaging Communities. Empowering Victims." This theme provides us with the opportunity to consider effective strategies for involving communities in crime victim assistance, crime prevention and public safety efforts; and for empowering victims to help them reconstruct their lives in the aftermath of crime.

We would be honored if you would issue a formal *(Governor's/Legislative/ Attorney General's/Board of Supervisors/City Council/Mayoral)* proclamation to commemorate 2015 Crime Victims' Rights Week in our *(jurisdiction)*. We have *enclosed/attached* sample language for your consideration in drafting a proclamation.

This year, *(your program)* received a Community Awareness Project award from the Office for Victims of Crime within the U.S. Department of Justice to increase public awareness about victims' rights and services in our *(jurisdiction)*. Your proclamation is an important component of these efforts to educate crime victims, survivors and our community about resources for victim assistance and community safety.

We welcome the opportunity for you or a representative to present the proclamation at our NCVRW special event, scheduled for *(day/date/time/location)*.

We appreciate your consideration of our request, and know that a *(Governor's/Legislative/Attorney General's/Board of Supervisors/City Council/Mayoral)* proclamation will enhance our efforts to promote National Crime Victims' Rights Week in April.

Sincerely,

(SIGNATORIES)

ENCLOSURE/ATTACHMENT: Sample Proclamation Language

Personalizing the Sample Proclamation to *your* Jurisdiction

The sample proclamation at the end of this CAP TIP provides a fine “starting point” for you. However, it’s a good idea to *personalize the language to your jurisdiction* and include strategies that have been successful in the past, and/or are still needed today and in the future to “engage communities” and “empower victims.” For example:

Successful Strategies to “Engage Communities”

- Recognize the significant impact of crime on individuals, families, neighborhoods, schools, communities and the economy.
- Identify the fact that “everyone *is* or *knows* a victim of crime.”
- Encourage community members, victims and survivors to report crimes.
- Providing meaningful opportunities for voluntarism that benefits crime victims and survivors.
- Have victims share “the power of their personal story” with communities to demonstrate the personal impact of crime.
- Educate the news media to improve sensitivity in coverage of crime and victimization.
- Educate the public about the often devastating impact of crime on victims and communities.

Successful Strategies to “Empower Victims”

- Promote victim autonomy and decision-making.
- Promote victim participation in justice processes, including the rights to be heard, to be informed, and to reasonable protection.
- Support programs and strategies that promote victim safety and protection.
- Always balance the rights of those accused and/or convicted/adjudicated of crimes or juvenile offenses with the rights of victims and witnesses.
- Provide advocacy and support to victims who engage with the criminal or juvenile justice systems.
- Encourage victims and survivors (reporting and non-reporting) to seek supportive services in their communities.
- Ensure that justice- and community-based victim services are culturally competent.
- Encourage collaboration among public, private, non-governmental and cross-jurisdictional agencies (geographic, as well as local/state/federal) agencies to create comprehensive victim services across systems and jurisdictions.
- Create partnerships among crime prevention, justice, victim assistance, mental health and substance use/abuse professionals (*among others*) to encourage seamless delivery of victim assistance services.

NOTE: Findings from the victim/survivor survey and “2015 NCVRW Theme Worksheet” included in CAP TIP2, *Tips to Promote the 2015 NCVRW Theme*, should provide additional successful strategies to “engage communities” and “empower victims” that are personal to victims and survivors in *your* community.

Other Successful Strategies

- Crime victims and survivors whose willingness to speak out about the impact of crime on victims and communities delivers the “power of the personal story” to people in America nationwide.
- Partnerships among criminal and juvenile justice agencies and victim assistance programs enhance the enforcement of victims’ constitutional and statutory rights.
- A national focus on research and evidence-based practices helps clarify “what works” in identifying and addressing the needs of crime victims and survivors (see www.crimesolutions.gov).
- A national focus on evidence-based practices determines the best approaches to offender supervision, treatment, rehabilitation, accountability and ultimately public safety.
- Greater attention is being paid to identify and address the needs of traditionally-underserved victims of crime, including (*describe “under-served victims” in your jurisdiction*).

Recommended Strategies for the Future

- Increased funding for victim assistance programs to meet the significant need for survivor services and support.
- Continued research on the impact of crime on victims and communities.
- State- and community-level needs assessments to identify victims’ most important needs, along with strategic planning to develop appropriate, collaborative responses to meet such needs.
- A focus on victims’ legal rights that enhances their participation in criminal and civil justice processes.
- Implementation of the recommendations included in *Vision 21: Transforming Victim Services* published by OVC in 2013 (<http://ovc.ncjrs.gov/vision21/>) .

Sample Proclamation*

(This sample proclamation is provided in the standard proclamation format.)

- Whereas,** Three million persons in America experienced at least one violent victimization in 2013, and 11.5 million households experienced one or more property victimizations; **and**
- Whereas,** less than half of violent crimes were reported to police in 2013, and less than one out of ten violent crime victims received assistance from a victim service agency; **and**
- Whereas,** victims and survivors of crime across America *need* and *deserve* consistent access to support and assistance that can help them cope with the short- and long-term consequences of crime; **and**
- Whereas,** National Crime Victims’ Rights Week – April 19 to 25, 2015 – is an important time to join together to engage communities and empower victims in our Nation’s efforts to promote individual and public safety and justice; **and**
- Whereas,** “Engaging Communities” requires recognition of the devastating impact that crime has on individuals, families, neighborhoods, schools and the economy of our Nation, which calls for a collective response from everyone in America to address crime prevention, justice and victim assistance; **and**

- Whereas,** “Empowering Victims” requires a collective understanding of the devastating emotional, physical, financial, spiritual and social impact of crime on victims and survivors, and a national commitment to provide support and services to victims that respect their autonomy and privacy and promote their personal safety; **and**
- Whereas,** Victims and survivors of crime can gain strength from the wide range of supportive services offered by over 10,000 community- and justice system-based programs, and the more than 32,000 Federal and state statutes that define and protect their rights; **therefore, be it**
- Resolved,** that *(individual or entity)* proclaims the week of April 19 to 25, 2015 to be *(city/county/parish/state)* Crime Victims’ Rights Week, and honors crime victims and those who serve them during this week and throughout the year; **and be it further**
- Resolved,** that we join together during *(city/county/parish/state)* Crime Victims’ Rights Week to recognize the significant accomplishments of our Nation’s victim assistance field, and to recommit our collective energies to “engaging communities” and “empowering crime victims and survivors” in America and around the world; **and be it further**
- Resolved,** that a suitably prepared copy of this proclamation be presented to *(your organization)* on *(date)*.

* *The statistics included in this Sample Proclamation are derived from “Criminal Victimization, 2013” published by the Bureau of Justice Statistics in October 2014;*
<http://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=pbdetail&iid=5111>

For More Information

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