



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 #10

To Improve Public Awareness

Sponsoring a Panel Discussion

Introduction

Many CAP applications included plans to sponsor a panel discussion to address victims' rights and services, and individual and public safety. This is an excellent way to partner with criminal and juvenile justice and allied professionals and promote the 2016 National Crime Victims' Rights Week (NCVRW) theme, "Serving Victims. Building Trust. Restoring Hope." This CAP TIP is designed to help you with both the *process* and *content* of a panel discussion.

Process and Planning

Panel Goals

It's a good idea to develop clear, measurable goals for your panel discussion, as it will be helpful to your panelists and to your audience. Your goals should reflect the messages you wish to impart to your audience, which may include:

- Community members
- Crime victims and survivors
- Victim assistance professionals
- Justice and allied professionals
- Students

While your goals should be specific to your audience, here are some sample goals for your consideration:

"As a result of attending this panel discussion, participants will be able to:

- Describe at least two core services available to victims and survivors of crime in (*your state*).
- Identify at least two statutory (or constitutional) rights in (*your state*), and two challenges in consistent implementation of these rights.
- Describe effective strategies in our community that reflect the 2016 NCVRW theme: “Serving Victims. Building Trust. Restoring Hope.”

Length of Panel

The length of your panel discussion will depend on the number of panelists. A 60-minute discussion is possible with three or fewer panelists; and a 90-minute discussion is appropriate for four or more panelists.

In planning, you need to determine how to handle questions-and-answers (there are usually many!). You can open the panel discussion up for Q&A after each question, or wait until the end of the panel discussion to field questions.

For a 60-minute panel, plan for 15-20 minutes of Q&A. For a 90-minute panel, plan for up to 30 minutes of Q&A.

Selecting Panelists

There are a wide range of potential panelists for you to consider. Some jurisdictions sponsor “a walk through the criminal justice system” with justice officials, from law enforcement through prosecution, courts and institutional and community corrections. Other jurisdictions “mix and match” participants – for example, a crime survivor, community-based victim advocate, prosecutor and mental health professional – in efforts to promote collaboration and partnerships across agencies and organizations. And on occasion, a panelist is invited who is not particularly strong on promoting victims’ rights and services (with hopes of encouraging his/her support in the future 😊).

Potential panelists for you to consider include:

- Crime victim/survivor
- System-based victim assistance professional
- Community-based victim advocate
- Mental health professional
- Civic leader (mayor, city councilmember)
- Business community leader
- Victims’ rights attorney
- Educator
- Attorney General
- Law enforcement (police, sheriff)
- Prosecutor
- Judge
- Probation officer
- Corrections-based victim assistance professional
- Parole board member or parole officer
- Any victims’ rights compliance official

Outreach to Panelists

NOW is the time to reach out to your potential panelists!

Your invitation/email should include the following:

- The fact that you are a CAP recipient with support provided by OVC and NAVAA
- The fact that your panel is being held in conjunction with 2016 NCVRW (and provide the theme)
- Panel goals (see example above)
- Panel location and day/date/time
- Panel length (with specific times indicated for panel discussion and Q&A)
- Who will facilitate the panel discussion
- Who else is being invited as a panelist
- Who is anticipated to be in the audience, and size of audience
- Whether or not:
 - The panel will be videotaped or audio-taped
 - The news media will be invited
 - The panel will be “live-promoted” on social media

You will also want to ask your panelists to provide a 3-4 sentence biography for introductions (any lengthier biographies eat into your discussion time).

Once panelists have confirmed, it’s a good idea to send them the panel questions in advance to help them prepare for the discussion (*see below*).

Selecting a Facilitator

While it’s helpful to identify a facilitator who has knowledge of victims’ rights and services, virtually anybody with good communication skills can facilitate your panel discussion if you provide enough structure and assistance in preparation. Some ideas for a facilitator include:

- A seasoned victim assistance professional
- Attorney General
- Chief prosecutor or police chief
- Anchorperson from your local network television station
- Civic leader (such as Mayor, member of the Board of Supervisors or City Council)

You will want to provide your facilitator with the same detailed information that you provide to your panelists (*see above*).

Sample Panel Questions

Again, the questions you ask your panelists to answer will depend upon the messages you wish to impart; your audience; and what you think your audience needs to know. Here are three categories of questions for you to consider:

1. 2016 NCVRW theme
2. Victims’ rights
3. Community involvement and engagement

2016 NCVRW Theme

Serving Victims:

- How do we find out what crime victims and survivors *need*?

- What are effective strategies for justice agencies to collaborate with community-based victim advocates and improve victim services?
- Can you identify *one important need* of victims that we are not always able to meet? Do you have any suggestions on how we can better meet this need?
- Are there any populations in our (*community/state*) where victims remain un-served or under-served? Do you have any suggestions for improving support and services to these crime victims and survivors?

Building Trust:

- Do you think that some victims and survivors might have problems trusting the criminal/juvenile justice system or the agencies and organizations that provide victim assistance services? If yes, “why?”
- Do you have any suggestions on how to build greater trust in our justice systems, from the perspectives of both crime victims and community members?

Restoring Hope:

- In your experience working with crime victims and survivors, what are some of the things that bring them hope in the often devastating aftermath of criminal victimization?
- What is needed for justice professionals, victim assistance professionals and community leaders to help restore hope to crime victims and survivors?
- Are you personally hopeful about the future of victims’ rights and services in our community/state?

Victims’ Rights

- How have (or have) victims’ rights improved over the past two decades? If so, how so?
- Why is it so important for crime victims and survivors to have rights throughout the criminal and juvenile justice processes?
- What is the *one greatest challenge* to the consistent implementation of victims’ rights?
- In your opinion, is there *one victims’ right* that is less consistently enforced than others? Do you have any thoughts on how to improve the enforcement of this right?

Community Involvement and Engagement

- Do you see a role for members of our community in helping crime victims and survivors?
- What can we do to make sure that all members of our community are aware of victims’ rights and victim assistance services?

Follow-on after the Panel

It’s really important to personally thank your panelists and facilitator. A personal hand-written thank-you note or thank-you letter on your organization’s stationary is best. If you plan to send your thank-you by email, send it out to each individual separately instead of sending a group email.

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 202.487.7329.