

Media Relations Tip Sheet

Victim Services Awareness

Media Relations | Victim Services Awareness

*click the video link for practical tips from law enforcement agency personnel



Purpose and Common Uses

In the quest for enhanced public safety and elevated community trust, law enforcement agencies often recognize their relationships with media relations personnel as essential. Equally vital is the heightened awareness of victim services – including the personnel and the information, support, and resource connections they provide. Victim services personnel within law enforcement agencies have access to incident reports, can readily collaborate with internal agency personnel, and can serve as a bridge for media relations personnel. These interactions may occur during responses to incident locations, in connection with the development of stories or articles on specific topics, and for the promotion of broader awareness initiatives. Victim services personnel can be effective allies in ensuring the rights, needs, and interests of victims and co-victims remain at the forefront of decisions, actions, and processes.

Victims' Rights Connections

Although victims' rights in each state and the federal system are unique, they often include the rights for victims and co-victims to treatment with fairness and dignity, privacy around access to personal information, notice of and be present at justice system events, confer with system professionals, express views and accompaniment of support persons at key system intersections, reasonable protection from the accused, and information about processes and services. Agency personnel should actively collaborate with victim services personnel and adjust practices whenever possible to ensure proactive and consistent access to these rights for victims and co-victims.



Victimization Considerations

Victim services personnel may be tasked with serving multiple victimization categories. Media depictions of these victimizations and of law enforcement responses may influence victims' and co-victims' perceptions and experiences during system engagement. These depictions may also shape broader conversations around the prevalence and severity of specific crimes like death investigations and property crimes, fairness of accountability outcomes around sexual violence, and pathways to mitigation of harm and healing for victims and co-victims of nonfatal personal crimes. Victim services personnel can contribute specialized context and clarity during media relations.



Victim Services Role

Victim services personnel are uniquely positioned to address the unique needs of victims and co-victims and can be incorporated into multiple agency practices that directly affect victims and co-victims. During media relations practices, victim services personnel can provide support to victims and co-victims through process education, support during interactions with media representatives, and preparation for possible outcomes of media coverage. Victim services personnel can also provide a lens on victim-centered, trauma-informed, language and interactions for system professionals. Their incorporation into media relations practices can serve as a valuable connection for victims and co-victims to information, support, and services.