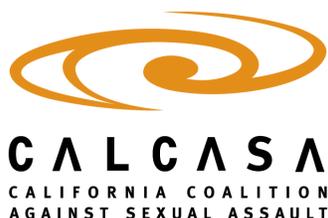


# **Media Advocacy Guide**

*(updated June 15, 2011)*



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## Introduction

Advocacy is used to promote an issue in order to influence policymakers and encourage social change. Advocating for the goals of safe, healthy and prosperous communities, identifying barriers to strategic policy implementation and sharing research help policymakers and the public to engage in creating systemic changes that improve the world in which we live.

As a coalition, CALCASA is inundated with media and media requests about issues of rape. As members work with media, CALCASA hopes to demystify the process of media advocacy and share the lessons this agency has learned.

This guide should help to bridge gaps where they exist, to help build capacity for those who have not gone down that path, or as an additional resource for those who have developed media plans. This guide is also a constant work-in-progress, and it is shaped by the questions, lessons and experiences that you share. Please email questions, comments and feedback to [jessica@calcasa.org](mailto:jessica@calcasa.org).



## Prioritizing Media

Media is central to this work. As advocates one of the foundational principles is the belief that violence against women is a social problem. Advocates have noticed that the representation of violence against women in the media has created a supportive environment for those same behaviors in communities.

The quality of information available to policymakers and the public helps to guide the manner in which they understand and resolve the challenges faced by communities in today's world. The news media, as a primary source of information, play a powerful role in shaping the dialogues that form community rules and standards.

### Why work with the media?

Media advocacy is victim advocacy. The term *media advocacy* sounds scary, but it is the same type of work you do everyday in schools, counseling sessions and meetings. This type of advocacy just has a different set of rules. Media advocacy is a way of talking to entire communities about sexual violence. People watch the news, read various papers and use online media, and opinions are shaped by what is seen and read. The media is a tool advocates can use to start conversations that are responsible and complex.

Sexual assault victim advocates can engage media for the very thing by which it is useful: instilling values in society and informing communities.

That guide will not address all of the ills in contemporary media, but rather frame media as a tool for socialization and education. CALCASA hopes to harness that tool in ways that drive advocacy toward a world free from sexual violence.

There are two common ways for organizations to gain visibility through media:

- Advertising
- Public Relations (PR)

Advertising is a way to generate consistent branding, message and appeal across wide audiences. It is typically costly and requires resources that agencies often do not have in-house (such as advertising and marketing specialists).

PR on the other hand is something that, when planned strategically, can be an integral part of your organization. PR strategies can be flexible; have broad scalability, and any organization can attain a modicum of success, regardless of the level of resources available. PR is the place you can get the “most bang for your buck.”

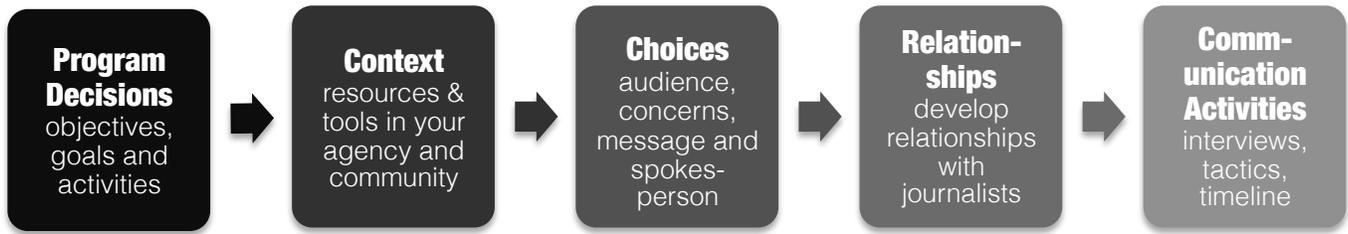
For the purposes of this guide, these activities will be referred to as “media advocacy.” This label represents both the forum in which we work (the media, in all its flavors) and our job in that forum (to advocate a position). This approach is consistent with traditional PR approaches, but takes into consideration the resource limitations, along with the philosophical

issues that victim advocates are trying to articulate in communities. Like advocates, media advocacy must be flexible, thoughtful and strategic.

### How does media advocacy work?

Media advocacy begins with a strategic planning process. In practice, it consists of developing content for the media and in turn developing relationships with its agents. Media includes traditional media such as print and broadcast journalism, as well as new media such as Internet publications, social networking and mobile media. Gone are the days when PR referred only to sending out press releases and hosting news conferences. In today's media market — and particularly for nonprofits — there must be a broader understanding of how to engage media and how to seek opportunities not only for viability but also for interaction with communities.

#### Strategic Planning Process



Organizations can use media to communicate core messages to its community. Along with community education programs, this can be one of the most important ways to interact with the community in attempts to effect change. Media advocacy will also include creative social marketing strategies that accomplish fundamental goals including branding, fundraising and creating a context for understanding sexual violence in communities.

To better understand PR, agencies have to understand those who are creating content (journalists, Internet resources, etc.). This is one of the first steps in developing media literacy, a core skill in developing PR strategies. To do this, CALCASA suggests that you become an active consumer of media — that you analyze and evaluate media and you actively seek media that suits your needs. Watch television news and listen to the radio with the same focus. Surf the Internet for online news and up-to-the-minute information on breaking stories. Become a news hound with a voracious appetite to be in the know. The Internet is also a valuable resource for identifying potential partners. Investigate organizations with similar interests and look for best practices to maximize your efforts and resources.

In sum, public relations is your pathway into the media and will be the process for how you get your issue covered, how you shape the public discussion and how you educate your community.

This guide will help you develop the basic components of a media and PR strategy. We hope you will be able to use this as a resource for planning, training and reference as you continue to work toward building your agency as a vibrant voice in your community.



# Creating a Communications Plan

## Planning

Developing a media plan is an important step in your strategic plan. This plan (sometimes refers to or includes a media protocol) will help determine your message and the specific audience to target. For organizations trying to do PR work without a plan, “it’s like traveling to a specific destination without a map. That route may be scenic, but you’ll cast about indefinitely without getting any closer to your goal” (W.K. Kellogg Foundation).

With that in mind, let’s put together the fundamentals of a media plan. Such a plan will be constructed with strategic communications goals and objectives. It requires a concerted effort among your staff, board members and others to consider those goals and objectives, along with specific activities to achieve them. Just as your organization's strategic plan is a critical component for organizational success, so is your media and communications plan essential for success.

<b>Objective: Where you want to be</b> Broad objectives that you want to achieve via media advocacy	<b>Goal: How to get there</b> Measureable outcomes that indicate successful approaches to achieving stated objectives	<b>Activity: What you want to do</b> Programs or actions chosen in an effort to achieve stated goals
<i>Example: Community education and engagement on the issues of sexual violence.</i>	<i>Local media have the resources to cover the issues. It is important to provide reporters the context to represent this issue without perpetuating myths, misperceptions and generalizations.</i>	<i>Develop background sheets, stat-packets and contact info for advocates. Distribute to local media.            Comment on local stories and offer to be a resource to journalists covering the issue.</i>
	<i>Increased visibility for the agency that aligns it with other vital community services.</i>	<i>Connect with local taskforces, committees and workgroups related to public safety or other core services.            Take part in local and statewide activities such as MyStrength, Denim Day or Sexual Assault Awareness Month events.</i>
<i>Your objective:</i>	<i>Goal #1:</i>	<i>Activity #1:</i>
	<i>Goal #2:</i>	<i>Activity #2:</i>
	<i>Goal #1:</i>	<i>Activity #1:</i>
	<i>Goal #2:</i>	<i>Activity #2:</i>



## **Objective: What you want to do?**

Lewis Carroll said, “If you don’t know where you are going, every road leads you there.” The good news is that you have started the planning process. Start thinking and talking about your broad objectives, goals and activities with your agency colleagues.

Good communications efforts are rooted in a vision for change. What is your ambitious objective for changing the world and how can the media help you meet this objective?

The core vision of your work sets the tone for communication efforts, thereby informing your strategy and activities.

Achieving your vision is a long-term objective and it can be difficult to create a long-term communications plan because the political and/or community environment can change dramatically in a few years, or less. Creating short-term communications strategies, from 18-20 months, is recommended by many organizations. Dividing your vision into smaller segments will enable you to achieve your long-term objectives. Creating your strategic communications plan with this in mind will help your effort.

## **Goal: How to get there...**

Supporting your organizational vision through solid communication strategies is an important step in planning. Considering goals is the next step of the plan. Objectives are broad outcomes that you hope to achieve through media advocacy. For instance, an objective would be *community education and engagement on the issues of sexual violence*.

Examining your vision will help you establish goals. Goals are concrete measurable outcomes that indicate successful approaches to achieving stated objectives. For example, measuring the goal *community education and engagement on the issues of sexual violence* could be accomplished by having local media cover issues relating to sexual violence in your community.

## **Activity: Where you want to be...**

After reviewing your goals and objectives, think about where you want to be and what activities your agency want to engage in or facilitate. For instance, to meet your objectives and goals in the table above you could:

- develop a background sheet, stat-packet and contact information for advocates and distribute it to local media;
- comment on local stories and offer to be a resource to journalists covering the issue;
- connect with a local taskforce, committees and workgroups related to public safety or other core services; and
- take part in local and statewide activities such as MyStrength, Denim Day or Sexual Assault Awareness Month events.



## Spokesperson

It is important to identify a media spokesperson for your organization. All media calls should be directed toward this individual and your agency should have a media plan in place that clearly identifies your key agency representative, role and scenarios that might develop.

### Process for Managing Media Calls



Since your official media spokesperson may not always be available to respond to media requests, it is important to have a back-up plan or alternative spokesperson in place. The media spokesperson can rely on staff to help field calls from the media, keep track of news and help return media calls in a timely fashion.

## Creating a Media List

An important part of your research and record-keeping should be the development of a database of skilled journalists. If you read an article or see a report with an accurate portrayal of sexual assault, be sure to contact the reporter and express your appreciation for the good coverage of a complex issue.

You may also choose to call reporters after sending out news releases to ask them if they are interested in further information for a story. You can suggest meeting briefly in order to discuss your organization and pitch story ideas. The worst they can do is say no.

### Questions to consider when contacting Journalists:

1. What do you want to accomplish? i.e. Increase awareness among target audience about sexual assault services and programs by generating news stories in target media.
2. What story ideas and angles are options? i.e. Leverage timely trends, seasons, holidays, high profile sexual assault incidents in the press.
3. What resources are available to you? i.e. time, money, staff, events.
4. What is your timeline? Including distribution of media material and regular briefings and updates with key reporters.
5. What is your intended reach? i.e. city, county, state and type of media such as print, radio, TV, websites, wire services, etc.



You can create a thorough media list by watching local news broadcasts, listening to the radio and reading local or regional print publications. For example, you can have an intern read and watch the news for a month and note: 1) where stories about sexual violence are likely to appear; 2) begin identifying reporters; and 3) give examples of media stories.

When creating the media list, always include station or publication information, a contact name, title, direct phone number, fax number and any other pertinent information.

Surveying your constituents (like survivors, collaborators, board members, etc.) is another way to learn which media outlets they use. Keep in mind that your messages may vary from audience to audience.

Be aware of non-traditional media sources such as school newspapers, church flyers, college papers, newsletters, blogs and more. You can also reach out to others to help build this list (Board members, allies and consultants). Remember to keep your list updated.

### **Proactive Communication**

As a rape crisis center, you provide a vital service in your community. Although a great deal of the work that you do is in crisis, some of the most important work that you do is simply promoting your service and educating communities. This is inherently proactive work.

Advocates, therefore, must not only be prepared to respond to stories but should also be prepared to pitch stories in a proactive fashion. As community members, you have an essential role in helping to document the health and safety (or lack thereof) of victims and survivors in your community.

Framing your stories is an essential component to using the media effectively. The broader the audience and the more newsworthy elements a story contains, the more likely the story will be published.

As advocates, you know that media reports of sexual assault often represent either the minority of cases or they serve to promote common myths. You are more likely to see stories covered in the media that are:

- Especially brutal or unusual assaults
- Patterned or serial rapes
- Sexual assault where victims are elderly or children
- Sexual assault that included other criminal aspects, such as kidnapping or murder

It is our responsibility as advocates to provide information that more accurately reflects the realities of the crime.



## Questions to help you strategically frame your story

### Step 1: Is the Information newsworthy and timely?

- Link your story to current events.
- Speak out on controversial issues that effect victims and survivors.
- Acknowledge local, national or topical milestones/anniversaries.
- Examples: celebrity involvement, increased discussion of topic elsewhere, crisis center openings, recent studies or data released, relation to other crime statistics.

### Step 2: Is the story local? What is the context of the story?

- Educate the audience (explain why they should care).
- Emphasize predictability and prevention.
- Adopt national reports and surveys for local use.
- Examples: how does an isolated assault affect local residents, what curriculum or efforts are underway locally, what are local statistics, prevalence.

### Step 3: Has the Impact on your community been communicated clearly?

- Translate individual problems to social issues.
- Explain why there is or should be broad interest in the issue.
- Use symbols, metaphors or visuals to make your case.
- Example: reflect the violent nature of sexual assault, what are the economic costs of sexual assault.

### Step 4: Is a human dimension discussed in the story? How does this issue affect real people?

- Highlight irony or hypocrisy, injustice or unfair circumstance.
- Announce committee appointments and new personnel.
- Present an award or hold a contest.
- Examples: survivor or family stories, arrest rate discrepancies, campus police procedures versus the general community, use of threats, force or other coercion, new board members or officer appointments, Women's Leadership Awards.

### Step 5: Is it feasible to offer solutions within the story or a call to action?

- Assign primary responsibility.
- Make funding, legislation or systems change recommendations.
- Suggest ways for individuals to help.
- Examples: state your case, speak out when policies have been ignored and make an appeal for volunteers to talk about support for survivors.



## Reactive / Crisis Communications

For many, interaction with the media occurs when a reporter calls to request a comment on a breaking news story. Just like proactive communications, this is an opportunity to promote accurate and timely information. Unlike proactive communications, which occur on your schedule and by your doing, reactive communications often catches you off-guard and unprepared of what to say. Despite these challenges, some thoughtful planning in advance can help your rape crisis center prepare the fundamental content for any one of these calls.

### Framing your message

Framing is an essential part of making sure your media response stays on mark. Many news stories begin with an opportunity to inform the public or correct misperceptions, but may end up with an advocate stuck in the position of defending a victim's actions, protecting privacy or struggling to deliver a message.

One way to navigate this obstacle in advance is to ask what angle a reporter is taking on a story. The angle on the story is effected by the people interviewed, the information reported and what the reporter believes is newsworthy. Most reporters are willing to share this information with prospective interviewees. Before your interview, find out to whom the reporter has spoken and what kind of angle they are taking on the story. This will give you insight into potential pitfalls, myths or misinformation that you will want to be prepared to clarify.

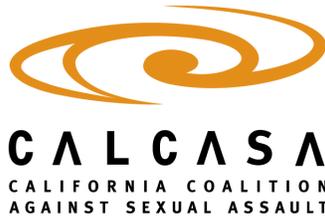
Many of the skills you need for successful reactive communications are referred to in Section 6: "When the News Media Call."

### Some tips to consider

- Having a plan in place before problems arise. This will allow a quick response.
- Designate one person to speak with the media and other audiences.
- Identifying the audiences who want information about a specific situation, including internal audience.
- Obtain input for all staff to formulate a crisis plan.

Some reactive communications are *crisis communications*. This is an event that is so controversial, so egregious or so central to the activities of a community or rape crisis center that it creates its own media storm. Crisis communications typically leave an organization totally overwhelmed and unable to respond quickly enough, if at all. Some situations in which you may find your agency reacting in a crisis communications mode include allegations of wrong doing on the part of staff or board members, local officials or volunteers.

Thoughtful planning in advance (See Section 2) can help your rape crisis center prepare the fundamental content for anyone of the crisis situations mentioned above.



## Message Communication

### Message

Good messaging is not accidental. Very few of us naturally speak in ways that flow with the rhythm, order and precision demanded by today's media. In order to capture the media's attention, it is important to hook into timely or engaging conversations about the issue, and construct messages that express the ideas, mission or campaign goals of the organization in a clear and concise manner. For instance, a media hook could be Denim Day, a gala, the issuing of a new report, etc.

Messages that your organization chooses to develop will depend on your communication goals and target audience. This may include:

- 1) Getting coverage of a specific campaign or issue
- 2) Educating the community about your organization's services
- 3) Or responding publicly to a local occurrence

Whereas each of these goals focuses on local events and services, you may also choose to construct your message based on an incident, campaign or event of regional, statewide or national recognition. Creating messages that link into broader stories can give journalists an opportunity to cover your agency.

### How to develop your messages—WIFM

At best, the majority of viewers/readers/listeners will only consume our message for a fraction of a minute. Therefore, conceptualize your messages in terms of points people should take away from that moment. This means you will have one or two key points covered in your messages. Messages should be:

- 1) Focused on a specific topic — don't try to force everything you've ever wanted to say into one talking point.
- 2) Consistent with your previous messages — repetition is a key component of making your message heard.
- 3) Based on your communication strategy — always remember the bigger picture and ensure that each message fits into your strategy.
- 4) Targeted for your audience — remember with whom you are talking, their values and why they should listen to you.

Another way to ensure that your message will have a clear takeaway for your audience is by placing yourself in their shoes and asking: "What's in it for me?" Sometimes media trainers refer to this as "the radio station that everybody listens to: WIFM" (the listener friendly version of "WSIC-Why Should I Care?") It is a nice mnemonic device that reminds us to consistently reflect on whether or not our message is actually addressing the needs of our audience, whether they are informational, entertainment or educational.



### Tips to Consider

1. Who will be speaking on what issues?
  - One spokesperson for the whole organization or key individuals on certain issues.
  - What are your top three messages?
2. Is your media list tailored to your issue?
  - You may consider having multiple media lists (e.g. crime and safety, fundraiser, policy)
3. How will you know when you have been successful?
  - Identify markers in order to evaluate success (i.e. Are the stories accurate, spokesperson, quote, message communicated).
4. What is the right vehicle for your message?
  - Choose print, radio and TV based on the audience segment they reach.
  - Do not leave out non-traditional vehicles such as targeted websites and wire services.
  - Do not forget social networking site, such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.

In order to be clear and to-the-point, your message must be self contained in a talking point. As we have discussed, a successful media interaction will be focused and direct, so you must limit the talking points to your absolute most important take-away messages.

In planning for interviews, distill your message to two to three talking points. For longer media endeavors, such as a campaign, tour or ongoing media blitz, spokespeople can utilize five to six talking points. By limiting the number of talking points, you ensure that every key message will be delivered with consistency.

Below are key talking points for topics often faced as victim advocates. Consider which ones you might use and how you would combine them with talking points about your agency, community or specialization.

### Victim blaming

- Rape is never acceptable. Social norms — such as a victim clothing, the area of the assault and whom the victim affiliates with — perpetuate rape.
- Rape is one of the only crimes in which a victim has to prove one's innocence. Victims of sexual violence deserve the same type of justice that a burglary victim or a robbery victim receive.
- The conversation shouldn't be about a culture of blame. But the conversation should be about the culture of behaviors that community members expect to be upheld.



### **Sex offender management**

- Community notification / residency restrictions / GPS tracking is only one part of a comprehensive sex offender management strategy.
- Sex offender management must be done in the context of bringing together a variety of service providers, which include victim advocates.
- When we bring together multi-disciplinary perspectives, we can be more effective at managing individual offenders.
- High-tech solutions are valuable as long as they open dialogue and help educate community members.
- Community notification does not mean just telling people that there is a sex offender coming to town.
- We want offenders to be successful and the measure of success is no more victims.
- We are also readily aware that the vast majority of sex offenses are not committed by strangers but by people that the victim knows, loves and trusts.

### **Frequency of sexual assault**

- The frequency of sexual assault is striking, with a forcible rape occurring on average once every 5.6 minutes in the United States and once every 56 minutes in California alone. That's why we are ... (Crime Clock, 2005)
- Statistically, as much as 70 percent of sexual assaults are perpetrated by someone that the victim knows, loves, and trusts (CALCASA, 2007 Report on Rape and Violence). Therefore, we try to focus on ...

### **CALCASA MyStrength Campaign**

- The MyStrength campaign creates an opportunity for young men to stand up and speak out against sexual violence.
- The MyStrength campaign empowers young men to help prevent sexual violence.
- Rather than looking at young men as potential perpetrators, the MyStrength campaign focuses on the positive aspects of strength and masculinity.

### **Green Dot**

- This strategy is a comprehensive approach to violence prevention that capitalizes on the power or peep and cultural influence across all levels of the socio-ecological model.
- The model targets all community members as potential bystanders, and seeks to encourage them, through awareness, education and skills-practice, in proactive behaviors that establish intolerance of violence as the norm, as well as reactive interventions in high-risk situations — resulting in the ultimate reduction of violence.



### **Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM)**

- SAAM is a month focused on raising awareness and informing to the public about what individuals can do to change the culture and to join the movement to end sexual violence in this nation and around the world.
- Throughout April, advocates and volunteers will canvass neighborhoods, produce public service announcements, reach out to local media, and ask public officials to end violence at college campuses, on the streets and in homes.
- CALCASA hosts an event annually called Denim Day CA, which takes place on the steps of the CA State Capitol.
- In 1999, the Italian Supreme Court overturned a rape conviction because the victim was wearing tight jeans. The judge argued, "because the victim wore very, very tight jeans, she had to help him remove them," concluding "it was no longer rape but consensual sex." Wearing jeans is a symbol of protest against destructive attitudes about sexual assault.
- Rape crisis centers and social services agencies host various SAAM events. For example: Walk a mile in her shoes, Clothesline Project.

### **Using technology to reach the masses**

A variety of online media and political advocacy tools are at your disposal, from websites to social networking. Online technology is especially suited for helping nonprofits reach the news media. You can save time and mailing costs by emailing your news releases and other materials to reporters and editors. For example, by making these materials available via agency website, you provide 24-hour access to information.

It is important to remember that the Internet is a two-way street. It is a place to communicate your core messages not only with the media but also to your constituency. Readers can comment on content, similar to news stories, blogs and on social networking sites. Be sure you check your resources and that all the facts are accurate.

#### **Websites**

Your agency website can be used as a focal point to distribute messages, information and the values of the organization. It is your public face and the first impression people may have of you.

#### **Blogs**

A blog is a type of website with regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other material such as graphics or video. They are frequently updated and can be the product of one or more individuals. Blogging software is a convenient publishing tool and can be used as a diary, a community center or a tool to promote a particular campaign, among a variety of other options.

Bloggers commonly discuss stories that appear in mainstream media or from another blog. Readers are able to contribute to the discussion by leaving comments. Blogs can also promote stories that are ignored in the mainstream media or keep a fading story in the public

1215 K Street, Suite 1100  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Phone 916.446.2520  
FAX 916.446.8166

TTY 916.446.8802  
Email info@calcasa.org

**calcasa.org**



view.

For example, CALCASA identifies legislation of interest that expands sexual assault victim rights, enhances survivor services, promotes prevention initiatives and holds sexual offenders accountable, and then posts this information on CALCASA.org. The site offers a variety of legislative tools to members and allies through the blog, RSS feed and Grassroots Online Advocacy Center. The blog is a forum that allows readers to take part in supporting CALCASA issues, contacting elected officials or finding out more about their representatives.

### ***Social Networking***

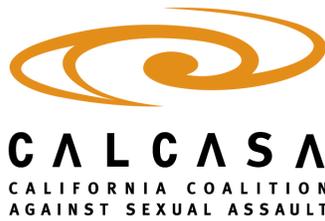
Social networking sites are a way to reach a new audience. Social networking websites allow people and organizations to set up a profile page with basic information about themselves or their organization and then link to other people's pages. Readers can browse profiles by conducting key word searches, clicking on links that direct them to other profiles and allow readers to leave comments.

Many corporations and advocacy organizations are using social networking sites to disseminate messages. You can also use social networking profiles as a mass communication tool by sending a message to all of your friends at once. In addition, some social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter include a blogging function.

### ***RSS***

RSS (Really Simple Syndication or Rich Site Syndication) is another great tool that enables you to keep readers up to date about your site content. RSS feeds send subscribers a brief blurb and a title about each new article or post on a website or blog, with a link to that post. RSS is also a great tool to promote podcasts, websites, radio and more.

If you are a small or medium-sized nonprofit, the media may not know what is happening with your organization. Aside from establishing relationships with reporters, keep the media informed through news releases, guest editorials, news media advisories and events held specifically for the news medias benefit.



## Who is Your Audience?

### Why knowing your audience matters

There is no single approach to media advocacy on the issue of sexual violence. As advocates, you know that different members of our community interact with this issue differently, and therefore, you need to craft messages accordingly. For example, you do not discuss this issue with law enforcement in the same way that you discuss it with students in a classroom. With that in mind, you have to define and refine messages to suit your audience.

Your broader communications plan seeks to address everyone in your community in some way. But when writing a press release, responding in an interview or choosing broadcast channels for running a PSA, identifying the audience and framing your message accordingly will have a tremendous impact on the effectiveness of your message.

### Identifying your audience

The audience you seek to reach will determine a number of factors, including: the media outlets you work with; the language you use; and the level of detail or areas of the issue that you discuss. For each publicity goal (*Page 5*), the agency is targeting at least one specific audience.

#### Points to remember when framing your story

Framing your story for maximum impact and the widest reach will catch reporters' attentions. Some questions to consider when framing your story include:

- How many people will be affected?
- What is the controversy or conflict in terms of political or cultural policy?
- How wide is the reach of the story?

Talking about sexual violence is difficult, but the crime affects a wide range of people and can be framed in a way that makes readers feel they have a direct connection with the issue.

For example, sometimes you may want to educate judges and other times you may be raising awareness in a particular neighborhood. In a perfect world, the common public would be so passionate about this issue that it would thirst for the level of detail and precision that judges sometimes require. Realistically, these two groups have different values, resources, engagement and knowledge about the issue of sexual violence; thus, advocates should direct messages accordingly.

Media advocacy goals can best be served by communicating to different audiences. In some cases, the broad general public should be targeted. In other cases, the audience is much more specific. For your organizational goals, write down the audiences you want to target.



Goal	Audience	Media Outlets
1)		
2)		
3)		
4)		
5)		



## When the News Media Call

Generating media about sexual violence is one of the most effective tools activists have for informing community members, politicians and policymakers. The media have the power to make this issue a top community priority. As advocates, you can educate and inspire reporters about the positive role they can play in ending sexual violence.

### Tips on Talking to the Media

Prior to giving interviews, it is a good idea to practice. For instance, you can videotape yourself and then critique your public speaking skills or you can practice by giving a mock interview with your staff. Once you start practicing, each interview will become easier, and you will be able to state key messages in a variety of situations.

Basically, an interview is a presentation tailored to an issue and/or audience. It is also an excellent opportunity to tell/sell your story. An interview is **not** a debate, an intellectual discussion, a friendly chat or an educational exchange.

#### When talking to print-based or broadcast media, consider these tips

- Speak naturally
- Avoid lengthy technical explanations
- Focus on your talking points
- Know the reporter, publication/program, interview format, audience
- Know the goal for the interview (what information will be gathered or shared)
- Gather any visual materials
- Write down any questions that may be asked and prepare answers
- Prepare for a multitude of questions to be asked
- Television is a visual media format and it is important to wear appropriate clothing



<b>Interview Guidelines: Crucial Steps</b>	
Return a reporter's call immediately and gather key information from the reporter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is your deadline?</li> <li>• What is the story about?</li> <li>• How do I fit into the story?</li> <li>• Who else have you talked to?</li> </ul>
Questions & tips to consider as you prepare for your interview.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is my message?</li> <li>• How can I prove/justify this message?</li> <li>• How might someone disagree with me?</li> <li>• How can I rebut this criticism?</li> <li>• Anticipate questions (particularly the tough ones).</li> <li>• Rehearse your answers.</li> <li>• Gather background facts and statistics for support.</li> </ul>
Stay on message during the interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bridge from reporter's question to your talking point (e.g. "Yes, that seems to be happening; however, we are really trying to emphasize ..." or "Certainly that's an important piece of this conversation, but the thing that is most vital to our community is...").</li> <li>• Use <i>flagging</i> to emphasize important points (e.g. "the most important thing to remember is..." or "Everybody should be most concerned about ...").</li> </ul>
After the interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thank reporters for their time and offer to be an ongoing resource on the issue or related stories. Make sure to give reporters a business card or brochure, and let them know about upcoming events or stories that may be of interest.</li> <li>• Be prepared for a reporter to call after the interview to double check quotes.</li> </ul>
Some final tips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not wait for the right question</li> <li>• Never repeat negative language</li> <li>• Turn negatives into positives</li> <li>• Avoid jargon and acronyms</li> <li>• Do not speak "off-the-record"</li> <li>• Do not guess, speculate or lie</li> </ul>

### **Interview Tips for Survivors**

CALCASA's priority is to minimize the trauma for any individual, particularly a survivor or family member, who chooses to speak to the media. Prior to any interview, it is important to provide specific options for a survivor to consider.

- Brief the survivor about the story and some of the questions the reporter may ask, before the interview begins.
- Let the survivor know that she/he can decline to answer questions that make her/him feel uncomfortable.
- Offer the survivor a support person during the interview.
- Remember nothing is off-the-record.
- The survivor does not have to give the reporter identifying information.

1215 K Street, Suite 1100  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Phone 916.446.2520  
FAX 916.446.8166

TTY 916.446.8802  
Email info@calcasa.org

**calcasa.org**



## Toolbox

### Press Release

A press release is intended to get journalists' interest and can be used to make an announcement or to provide a response to a current issue or recent story. For instance, your agency might have a new report you want to share with a large audience. Maybe you are hosting a gala or holding an event in your community. Perhaps your agency is talking about a recent policy decision in your community that is being discussed in the media.

Avoid saturating the media with news releases on anything and everything that your organization does. This dilutes the credibility of your organization and your chances of obtaining coverage when the really important issues arise.

#### Tips to consider

- Examine your intentions: Why are you writing a release? What do you hope to accomplish? Is it newsworthy?
- Avoid using jargon. Make sure the words you use are easy to understand by most audiences.
- Write your release for your audience. Imagine how you want your news written about in the media and craft your release accordingly.
- Be familiar with the media outlet and its audience.

See below for a sample news release.



# Sample Press Release

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**YOUR LOGO HERE**

**Contact:**

Jessica Renee Napier  
jessica@calcasa.org  
916.446.2520 x304  
@CALCASA

## Rape crisis centers, domestic violence agencies march to save 100,000 lives

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (March 7, 2011) — The California Coalition Against Sexual Assault (CALCASA) and the California Partnership to End Domestic Violence (CPEDV) are hosting a Legislative Action Day. At 10 a.m., representatives from California rape crisis centers and domestic violence agencies will march to the Capitol to discuss with legislators how they can commit to saving 100,000 lives. The day will conclude at District 30 Lounge with an awards ceremony to recognize legislators who championed the needs of sexual assault survivors.

**Opening paragraph should contain who, what, when, where and why**

**Remainder of body text**

- Should include any relevant information to your services.
- Include benefits and why your service is unique.
- You could also include quotes from staff members and survivors.

Community leaders, survivors, and staff from rape crisis centers and domestic violence agencies will meet with legislators to discuss securing the long-term stability of the Restitution Fund, which supports survivors' recovery needs. Participants will also be asking their legislator to support a bill that would require law enforcement agencies to submit rape kits for testing within 30 days of collection. Additionally, legislators will be asked to back a bill about sexual assault forensic exams to ensure compliance with the federal Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) to re-direct payments from local law enforcement to a secure funding mechanism.

"This is an opportunity for those working with survivors of sexual assault to communicate with policymakers who can make a difference," said Sandra Henriquez, Executive Director for CALCASA. "If survivors are to continue to receive excellent services, policymakers must understand why such programs are critical for Californians. Community leaders can share stories that can make a difference in protecting funds for sexual assault and domestic violence services."

CALCASA and CPEDV are asking policymakers to commit to saving 100,000 lives by demonstrating leadership on the issues of domestic violence and sexual assault. This can be achieved by supporting legislative priorities that will provide necessary services to survivors in the state of California.

If there is more than one page, use:  
**-more-**



Try to keep your press release to one page, but if you use two pages, use an abbreviated headline (page 2).

#### **About CALCASA**

The California Coalition Against Sexual Assault (CALCASA) provides the unifying vision and voice to Californians speaking out against sexual violence. Founded in 1980, CALCASA is the only statewide organization in California with the sole purpose to promote public policy, advocacy, training and technical assistance on the issue of sexual assault. CALCASA's primary membership is the 85 rape crisis centers and rape prevention programs in the state. CALCASA's affiliate membership includes organizations, businesses, individuals and others committed to the mission of eliminating sexual violence.

###

###

indicates Press Release is complete



# Press Release Template

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
(OR EMBARGO XX/XX/XXXX)**

**YOUR LOGO HERE**

**Contact:**

Name of spokesperson  
email@youragency.org  
XXX.XXX.XXXX

## Headline

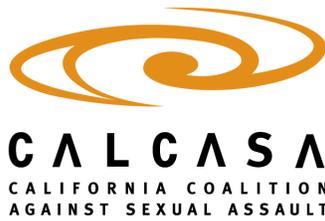
CITY, Calif. (DATE) — Opening Paragraph should contain: who, what, when, where and why.

Remainder of body text – Should include any relevant information to your services. Include benefits and why your service is unique. You could also include quotes from staff members and survivors.

If there is more than 1 page use: -more-

The top of the next page: Abbreviated headline (page 2); Remainder of text.

### indicates Press Release is finished.



## Media Advisory

The goal of an advisory is to get media to come to the event. Language should be enticing and written in the future tense. There is a particular format to follow when writing advisories, which includes details such as who, what, where, when and why the activity is occurring. Media Advisory's are an excellent example of proactive media and can be used to tell a story and generate media interest in an event.

Media advisories should be sent via fax or email in advance of your event. Remember that weekly newspapers need more time than daily papers. Radio and TV generally need two days notice. After you fax or email the advisory, make a follow-up phone call to ensure they received the information and answer questions they may have. Always call the media the morning of an event to remind them of the time and location.

Below is an example of a media advisory as well as a template for your organization.

1215 K Street, Suite 1100  
Sacramento, CA 95814

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FAX 916.446.8166

TTY 916.446.8802  
Email info@calcasa.org

[calcasa.org](http://calcasa.org)



Media advisories should only provide the who, what, when, and why of an event, directions to the event, interview opportunities or visuals for television.

## Sample Media Advisory

### MEDIA ADVISORY

**YOUR LOGO HERE**

### Contact:

Jessica Renee Napier  
jessica@calcasa.org  
916.446.2520 x304  
@CALCASA

### California Legislators Break Dress Code for Sexual Assault Awareness

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — Legislators from across the state will join sexual assault advocates on April 27, 2011, to recognize Denim Day California, an event in which participants wear denim to “break the dress code and speak out against sexual violence.” The California Coalition Against Sexual Assault (CALCASA) will host the annual Denim Day rally on the West steps of the state Capitol.

#### WHAT

In 1999, the Italian Supreme Court overturned a rape conviction because the victim was wearing tight jeans. The Judge argued, “because the victim wore very, very tight jeans, she had to help him remove them,” concluding “it was no longer rape but consensual sex.” Wearing jeans is a symbol of protest against destructive attitudes about sexual assault.

Legislators and victim advocates will have an opportunity to speak at the event, sign a pledge to end sexual violence and have their photo taken. There will be time for interviews following the event.

#### SPEAKERS

Executive Director Sandra Henriquez, CALCASA  
 Senator Elaine K. Alquist, California’s 13th Senate District  
 Senator Kevin De Leon, California’s 22nd Senate District  
 Senator Christine Kehoe, California’s 39th Senate District  
 Senator Mark Leno, California’s 3rd Senate District  
 Senator Darrell Steinberg, California’s 6th Senate District  
 Assemblymember Tom Ammiano, California’s 13th Assembly District  
 Assemblymember Paul Fong, California’s 22nd Assembly District  
 Assemblymember Bonnie Lowenthal, California’s 54th Assembly District  
 Assemblymember Fiona Ma, California’s 12th Assembly District  
 Assemblymember Anthony Portantino, California’s 44th Assembly District  
 Acting Secretary Mike Dayton, California Emergency Management Agency  
 Executive Director Julie Nauman, Victim Compensation and Government Claims Board

#### WHEN

Wednesday, April 27, 2011 from 10 a.m. – 11 a.m.

#### WHERE

California State Capitol: West Steps

#### About CALCASA

The California Coalition Against Sexual Assault (CALCASA) provides the unifying vision and voice to Californians speaking out against sexual violence. Founded in 1980, CALCASA is the only statewide organization in California with the sole purpose to promote public policy, advocacy, training and technical assistance on the issue of sexual assault. CALCASA’s primary membership is the 85 rape crisis centers and rape prevention programs in the state. CALCASA’s affiliate membership includes organizations, businesses, individuals and others committed to the mission of eliminating sexual violence.

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**calcasa.org**



# Sample Media Template

## MEDIA ADVISORY

## Contact:

**YOUR LOGO HERE**

Name of spokesperson  
email@youragency.org  
XXX.XXX.XXXX

### Headline

CITY, Calif. — Insert a short description of the advisory.

**WHAT** Write this as if it would appear in a public calendar listing. This is a short, factual description of the public event (e.g. speaker(s), controversial topic or the name and nature of the public gathering).

**WHO** This can include information about who is attending the event, who it is targeted toward, the event's goal, parking information or anything else that the audience needs to know about the event.

Proofread, proofread, proofread! And, plan early. Most media require 3-4 weeks lead time to list your event, or cover it with a reporter.

**WHEN** Day of week, full date, from when (AM/PM) to when (AM/PM),

**WHERE** Name of building (street address, room number)

**INTERVIEW** Provide information on who the media can interview.

**VISUALS** If any, provide information on what the media can use for visuals.

About YOUR AGENCY NAME  
BOILER PLATE

###



## News Conference

A news conference is a structured event, with the intent of creating an opportunity to release news simultaneously to all media. News conferences are helpful if you have a visual story to tell.

Alert the media by sending out a media advisory.

News conferences are used to make major announcements or in crisis situations are used to answer multiple press inquiries at one time. These events can sometimes be difficult to control, despite advance news releases, media strategy sessions and pitching efforts. Moreover, news conferences may not draw the attention of reporters unless there is a breaking news story.

When scheduling a news conference, consider the date and time. A date that does not conflict with another event or special occasion is crucial for obtaining coverage. Examples of events include special observances, holidays, local government announcements and anniversaries of monumental events. Monitor the news to remain informed about local events that may capture media attention before determining a date.

In addition to selecting a date that avoids competition with other events, choose a time and day that are convenient for reporters. Usually mornings after 10:00 a.m. or early afternoons work well for reporters. Avoid scheduled broadcast times, such as noon and 5 p.m.

### Tips to consider when planning a news conference

- Check your expectations—ask yourself and your team about what you want to achieve with a news conference. Could this information be shared with media in a different way?
- Decide on the location—consider the best place to announce your news. Aim for interesting and relevant locations to launch your news.
- Answer the question: What will the media take away from this briefing? Make sure you know what you want to communicate and that there's a call to action that journalists understand.
- Prepare, prepare, prepare.
- Use a media advisory to invite and remind people to attend your news conference. Don't just send an advisory and hope for the best. Follow up with phone calls.
- Entice your attendees with food.
- Follow up.



## Writing an Op-Ed or Letter to the Editor

**Opinion Editorial (Op-Ed):** An opinion editorial, commonly referred to as an Op-Ed, are in-depth opinion pieces commonly submitted to newspapers. Op-Eds are an excellent means of raising public awareness about sexual violence.

There are many opportunities for the RCCs to place articles in local papers, especially when timed with local events during Sexual Assault Awareness Month.

### Op-Ed writing tips

- Make it timely
- Keep it brief
- Stick to a single point
- Remember your audience

If submitting an Op-Ed paper, it should be written in a news article format but in an opinionated fashion, outlining your organization's persuasive points and solutions to issues, and citing necessary statistics and facts as support to your opinions and/or arguments.

**Letters to the editor:** Letters to the editor are generally written by individuals expressing a point of view on current issues. In the letter, it is important to note aspects of the story you feel were underplayed, correct factual items that were in error or present a point of view you feel was misrepresented. Letters should be no more than 250 words and relevant to current stories or editorials that have been covered in a newspaper.

Instructions to submit a letter to the editor should be available in the newspaper. It is preferable to use e-mail to submit a letter if an electronic address is provided.



## Sample Letter to the Editor / Op-Ed

How do you end rape? Let social service agencies, law enforcement offices, and the courts take care of the problem? Congratulate them when they get a notorious, serial rapist off the street? Or when they counsel another survivor?

Comment or refute the opinion or point of view presented in the article or event.

Maybe you alone are not capable of stopping someone else from using sex to overpower or control another person. But think about typical human response to sexual assault: the idea that the rape victim asked for it because s/he was in the wrong place at the wrong time; a friend or family member decides to protect a

perpetrator from legal consequence rather than the child who discloses s/he was sexually abused by him/her; a witness of sexual harassment plays along and fails to support the person who is harassed.

These attitudes and behaviors turn into excuses for the potential sex offender. So rather than counter sexual violence, they actually perpetrate it. Unfortunately our society is accustomed to accepting these responses to rape and sexual assault – rather than holding perpetrators responsible.

Provide your solution. Cite specific actions that your organization is doing to solve the problem.

The reality is that rape and sexual assault are crimes – deliberate acts in which the perpetrator uses sex to overpower and control. It does not matter what a rape victim wears, whether or not s/he was drinking, if s/he was physically disabled or otherwise hindered from protecting her/ himself. It does not matter if a rape victim was flirting with the attacker prior to the assault. Rape is a crime. Those who commit criminal acts deserve punishment.

We must each stop pretending that it is the rape victim or survivor who must learn about self-protection and avoiding the rapist. We must examine our own attitudes and actions that contribute to a culture that accepts and condones rape.

Conclude your point and include organization contact formation.

Report rape, talk to your friend and colleagues. Learn more from websites, books and most importantly seek help if you are in need.

Sincerely,

Name

Title, Organization



## Letter to the Editor / OpEd Template

(Your Letterhead)

(Date)

(Editor's Name)

(Publication)

Dear (insert editor's name):

**Paragraph 1:** Reference the article or event that you are commenting on.

**Paragraph 2:** Comment or refute the opinion or point of view presented in the article or event.

**Paragraph 3:** Provide your solution. Cite specific actions that your organization is doing to solve the problem.

**Paragraph 4:** Conclude. Include organization contact formation.

Sincerely,

Name

Title, Organization



## Defining Media Terms

**Advertising** often referred to as "paid media," is the controlled use of print or broadcast media in the hopes that your message will reach the exact audience you want, in the format you want and at the time you want.

A **blog** (or a web log) is a website where writers provide commentary on a variety of topics from politics to local news. It can also serve as a daily or weekly diary. Most blogs contain text, images and links to other blogs or websites.

A **Calendar Release** is a modified news release designed to provide community calendar editors (TV, radio and print) basic information about an event.

A **Commercial** is a paid-for announcement or advertisement. A radio or television sales message.

An **Editorial (Op-Ed)** is a reaction to another recent editorial, event or news story, to make a point, state a fact or offer an opinion. An opinion editorial is generally called an op-ed because it refers to the page or pages opposite the editorial page. It is an area set aside for articles that provide an in-depth and often personal perspective on issues considered to be of current importance.

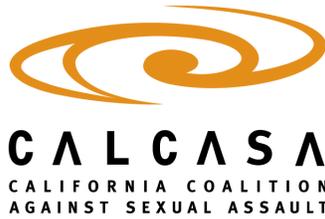
**Follow-up** with media is the key to any successful media relations plan. Not only is it important to distribute materials, but also follow-up calls are the tool allowing you to make personal contact and set your news release or advisory apart from the volumes of releases that come in each day. You can develop interest and keep an issue alive by making calls and writing letters to respond to columnists and reporters.

**Hard news** is usually information that is previously unknown, a noteworthy event, a controversy, the release of a study, etc.

A media **Hook** is the key idea, event or individual that will capture the attention of the media when pitching. The hook may be conveyed through written material, such as the headline of a news release, or in conversation during a follow up call.

A **Letter to the Editor** is an opinion of a notable public figure often expressed in a "letter to the editor" or guest opinion piece.

A **Media Advisory/Media Alert** is a brief, one-page, typed notice intended to notify the media of an upcoming hard news event, like a news conference.



A **News Conference** is a structured event, with the intent of creating an opportunity to release news simultaneously to all media. A news conference is also used when there is a visual story to tell.

A **News Release** offers more information than an advisory, and usually goes out to more media vehicles. A release may precede a news event you want covered, make an announcement or provide a response or explanation on a current issue or recent story.

A **Public Service Announcement (PSA)** is essentially a radio or television spot that provides an important message to its target audience. The space/time given to the spot is free of charge, so this media tool is reserved strictly for organizations that qualify as nonprofit under federal tax laws. Spot Broadcast messages are often referred to as "spots." They can be either paid-for advertising or PSAs.

**RSS (Really Simple Syndication or Rich Site Syndication)** is an easy way to keep your readers abreast of updates to your site content. RSS feeds send subscribers the title and a brief blurb about each new article or post on a given site or blog, along with a link to the post. Users can subscribe directly to feeds from sites they read regularly, though feed aggregators such as Feedster and MyYahoo also collect feeds in searchable form.

Using **social networking sites** is an excellent tool to reach a new audience and potential supporters. Social networking sites are similar to a web page. Organizations and individuals set up a profile page with basic information and then link to other pages. Using social networking sites is a way to promote specific campaigns or provide more information about a range of issues.

**Soft news** stories typically focus on individuals, organizations or families involved in something that may be of interest to the community.

The media creates **Sound Bytes** from messages that are presented to them. Sound bytes are tailored to fit media time constraints. Sound bytes should be catchy.

A **Talkshow (Radio and Television)** provides a structured format in which guests can present issues and concerns of interest to the community.



## Resources

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