

Developing talking points

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 two or three 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?* or *Why should I care?* It is a nice reminder to consistently reflect on whether or not our message is actually addressing the needs of our audience, whether they are informational, entertainment or educational.

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 examples of 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.

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.
- 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.

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.