

The Sexual Assault Advocate's Guide to the Media, Communications, and Public Relations



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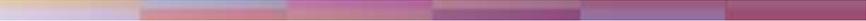
We also extend our thanks to M. Kathleen Murphy for compiling and editing the information contained herein to fit for sexual assault advocates and organizations, and to Modern Foundation and Pivot Strategies for lending their expertise to this project.

With this, our member advocacy programs are better equipped and enabled to serve the victims/survivors within their own communities throughout Minnesota.

Introduction

We are all aware that communicating is central to our work and our lives. Providing and receiving information helps us make educated decisions and grow our understanding of others' experiences. But communication is a process through which we must try to be as clear and accurate as we can, in order to convey our thoughts, intentions and objectives.

As advocates for sexual assault victim/survivors, we understand the complex dynamics of this social problem. We know it is not very well understood. Our communicating to the public through all the various channels available is key to addressing this complex issue, and why this manual was conceived for advocates to be better equipped to engage in each of those mediums. The objectives and outcomes of good communications planning include imparting our knowledge, creating awareness, projecting an image, shaping attitudes, and effecting change.



Definition of Media: the main means of mass communication (broadcasting, publishing, and the Internet), regarded collectively.



Why is a media/communications/public relations strategy needed?

To affect change in this environment, we need to continue putting forward our organization's message and the message of victim/survivors. We need to use the media to communicate core messages to our community. Along with community education programs, messaging can be one of the single most important ways to change attitudes and awareness. Media advocacy includes creative social marketing strategies that help to accomplish the fundamental goals of any organization including branding, fundraising, social media presence, and creating a context for understanding sexual violence in our communities.

To better understand media relations, we have to understand those who are creating the content (e.g. the journalists, bloggers, Internet resources, etc.). This is one of the first steps in developing media literacy, a core skill when creating public relations (PR) strategies. So first we suggest that you strive to become an active consumer of media. Analyze and evaluate media, and actively seek out media that suits your needs. If you watch television news or listen to the radio, do so with the same focus. Surf the Internet for online news and up-to-the-minute-information on breaking stories. Social media has taken off in just the last few years but has become a central source of information, mis-information, and advertising in disguise. Be careful with what you read and/or share, and always seek a second source if the first is not considered reliable.¹

Media advocacy is victim/survivor advocacy.

Media advocacy is a way of talking to your entire community about sexual violence. People's opinions are shaped by what they see and read. The media is a tool advocates can use to start responsible and complex conversations. Advocates can engage the media to instill values in our society and inform our community.

That is not to say that this guide will try to tackle all of the ills in contemporary media, but rather that we see media as a tool for socialization and education (good, bad and indifferent) and we hope to harness that tool in ways that drive our advocacy toward a world free from sexual violence.

In sum, PR 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. The Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MNCASA) wants to help you get the word out about the good work of your organization.

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 towards building your agency as a vibrant voice in your community.

¹ California Coalition Against Sexual Assault, *CALCASA Media Advocacy Guide*, http://www.calcasa.org/wp-content/uploads/files/calcasa_media_advocacy.pdf, page 5-6

Chapter 1: Communications Planning

Building Your Strategy

A good communications and media strategy operates in yearly intervals. Be proactive by planning out your entire calendar year in advance, leveraging the previous year to shape the future.

To start, ask yourself how much media activity or attention you had over the course of the last year. If you got any coverage at all, big or small, review it with an analytical eye. Determine which angles and pitches worked well for you. Additionally, make note of the journalists who wrote about you and those who didn't.

This is the analysis that dictates your organization's media message. Maybe the previous year you successfully spread a message about a major new initiative. If this is still central and relevant, the next year could build on that media message.²

On the other hand, maybe this is the first time you've built a media strategy. Regardless, you have to define the central message to your strategy. Ask the following questions to polish your organization's key message:

- What do you want people to see in your organization?
- What about your organization captures outside audiences' interests?
- How does your organization's work fit into a broader societal conversation?
- What new projects, partnerships, or initiatives have you built?

The media message doesn't have to be elaborate, but it does have to provide a defined direction for your strategy. Once your media message has been set, build out a plan of attack.

Identify potential opportunities that could arise over the course of the next year:

- Your organization's new activities or new staff
- Journalists to work with again
- Journalists to contact for the first time
- New publications looking for stories
- Local connections to broader issues

When you map out your key message, strategies, and goals in writing, you can refer back to them over the course of the year. It makes the evaluation of your success and failure easier. It also makes your organization's story more engaging.

² Classy Resource Guides, *The Ultimate Guide to PR for Nonprofits*, www.classy.org, page 7-8

Creating a Media Plan

Developing a media plan is an important step in your strategic effort. This plan 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 overall strategic plan is a critical component for organizational success, so is your media and communications plan essential for success.³

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 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 even less, as recent years have shown us. Many PR professionals and nonprofit leaders recommend creating short-term communications strategies, from 18-20 months. Breaking up 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 your goals is the next step in your overall plan. Objectives are broad outcomes that we hope to achieve through our media advocacy. For instance, an objective could 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.

³ California Coalition Against Sexual Assault, *CALCASA Media Advocacy Guide*, http://www.calcasa.org/wp-content/uploads/files/calcasa_media_advocacy.pdf, page 8-10

Activity: Where you want to be

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

- Develop a background sheet, statistics and contact information for advocates and distribute it to local media;
- Comment on local stories and offer to act as a resource to journalists covering the issue;
- Connect with local task forces, committees or workgroups related to public safety or other core services;
- Take part in local and statewide activities such as or Sexual Assault Awareness Month events or other MNCASA events.
- Offer to share MNCASA's *Reporting on Sexual Violence: A Guide for Journalists* with local media organizations.

Identifying Your Audience

Why knowing your audience matters

There is no single approach to media advocacy on the issue of sexual violence. As advocates, we know that different members of our community interact with this issue in a variety of ways, and we must craft our message accordingly. For example, we don't discuss this issue with law enforcement in the same way we discuss it with students in a classroom. With that in mind, we have to define and refine our message to suit our audience.

Your broader communications plan will seek to address everyone in your community in some way. But when it comes down to writing a press release, responding in an interview or even choosing certain 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.

Finding 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 of your stated publicity goals, the organization should be targeting at least one specific audience.⁴

⁴ California Coalition Against Sexual Assault, *CALCASA Media Advocacy Guide*, http://www.calcasa.org/wp-content/uploads/files/calcasa_media_advocacy.pdf, page 21

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 they would thirst for the level of detail and precision that judges sometimes require. In our world, these two distinct groups have very different values, resources, engagement, and knowledge about the issue of sexual violence and we should direct our message accordingly. This is also the time to consider the complexity of your message and how it varies with each audience.

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 own organization's goals, write down the audiences you want to target and why – do you want to educate, collaborate or persuade a particular group?.

Proactive Communicating

As a sexual assault crisis center, you provide a vital service. Although a great deal of the work we do is in response to a “crisis,” some of our most important work is simply promoting our services 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. 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.⁵



Media advocacy is a way of talking to your entire community about sexual violence and prevention.



⁵ California Coalition Against Sexual Assault, *CALCASA Media Advocacy Guide*, http://www.calcasa.org/wp-content/uploads/files/calcasa_media_advocacy.pdf, page 13

As advocates, we 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 includes other criminal aspects, such as kidnapping, trafficking, or murder
- Stranger sexual assault

It is our responsibility as advocates to provide information that more accurately reflects the realities of the crime. Sexual violence has a disproportionate impact in many communities, usually involves someone known to the victim, is a lethality factor in domestic abuse situations and often the victim doesn't respond in ways that the general public might expect (i.e. report immediately or fight back). MNCASA's *Reporting on Sexual Violence: A Guide for Journalists* provides statistics and other resources about how sexual violence most often occurs.

For reactive, or crisis communications, see Chapter 5.

Chapter 2: Telling Your Story

Message, framing, audience, and storytelling

After getting your communications strategy set up, the next item on your checklist is crafting a story. Unquestionably, this story has to line up with your media message.

The hard part about this step is identifying the right story to tell. A lot of nonprofits get caught up in thinking their organization itself is the story, but it shouldn't be.

As blogger Danielle Blumenstyk explains,

Your existence is not news. This is a pitfall many for-profit companies fall into as well, and is even more evident in nonprofits. If you started, or work, in a nonprofit, you are probably extremely passionate about its cause, as you should be. What you shouldn't do is assume that a writer will be as passionate about it as you are.⁶

As advocates for victims of sexual assault and sexual violence, our story isn't that you just want to help or protect people. The story could be about the people that assist in our work, the volunteers, or the multidisciplinary partners who collaborate in the work. Or it could be about recent media events affecting survivors, how individuals can contribute to prevention efforts, or how you plan to strengthen activism against rape culture.

Stories affirm who we are, and allow us to experience the similarities between ourselves and others, real or imagined. Stories help us make meaning of our lives, and good stories have the power to transform our perceptions of the world.⁷

Your 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 we must "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.

⁶ Blonde 2.0 Blog, *Six Tips to Getting PR for Nonprofits Right*. <https://www.blonde20.com/blog/2014/12/30/six-tips-to-getting-pr-for-nonprofits-right/>

⁷ Id.

For instance a media hook could be Sexual Assault Awareness Month, a fundraising or other special event, a specific community training or the issuing of a new report.

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

- Getting coverage of a specific campaign or issue
- Educating the community about your organization's services
- 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)⁸

At best, the majority of viewers, readers, or listeners will only consume our message for a fraction of a minute. Therefore, conceptualize your messages in terms of what 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:

- Focused on a specific topic – don't try to force everything you've ever wanted to say into one talking point. Remember your words will become sound bytes.
- Consistent with your previous messages — repetition is a key component of making your message heard
- Based on your communication strategy — always remember the bigger picture and ensure that each message fits into your strategy
- Targeted for your audience — remember who you are talking to, what their values are, and why they should be listening to what you have to say

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.

⁸ California Coalition Against Sexual Assault, *CALCASA Media Advocacy Guide*, http://www.calcasa.org/wp-content/uploads/files/calcasa_media_advocacy.pdf, page 16

In order to be clear and to-the-point, your message must be self-contained in a “talking point.” A successful media interaction will be focused, and direct, so you must limit the talking points to your absolute most important takeaway messages.

In planning for interviews, we tend to urge people to distill their message down to two or three talking points. (More on interviews in Chapter 4.) For longer media endeavors — such as a campaign, tour or ongoing media blitz — spokespeople can utilize up to five or six talking points. By limiting the number of talking points, we can ensure that every key message will be delivered with consistency.

Tips to Consider⁹

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?
- What shared message should any spokesperson use? i.e. Information about where to get help.

2. Is your media list tailored to your issue?

- You may consider having multiple media lists (e.g. crime and safety, fundraiser, policy issues)
- Local vs. statewide?

3. How will you know when you have been successful?

- Identify markers in order to evaluate success (i.e. are the stories accurate, spokesperson quoted, messages communicated, story picked up by key media, number of stories in a given time frame, variety of media)

4. What is the right vehicle for your message?

- Choose print, radio, TV, or social media based on the audience segment they reach.
- Don't leave out non-traditional vehicles such as targeted web sites and the wire services
- Determine which social media sites will work for your audience: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, SnapChat, etc.

⁹ California Coalition Against Sexual Assault, *CALCASA Media Advocacy Guide*, http://www.calcasa.org/wp-content/uploads/files/calcasa_media_advocacy.pdf, page 17

Framing

Framing is an essential part of making sure your media response stays on the mark. Many news stories start out 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/survivor’s actions, protecting privacy, or struggling to get out a message.¹⁰

One way to navigate this obstacle in advance is to find out what “angle” a reporter is taking on a story. The angle of the story is affected by the people being interviewed, the type of information being reported, and what the reporter believes is newsworthy about the issue. Most reporters are willing to share this information with prospective interviewees. Take advantage of the opportunity before your interview to find out who else the reporter has spoken to and what kind of angle they are taking. This will give you insight into potential pitfalls, myths, or misinformation that you will want to be prepared to clarify.

How something is presented to an audience is called “the frame.” The words people use can influence how something is perceived. And the choices people make about how they present an issue may or may not come with a conscious agenda. The most common use of frames is in terms of the angle the media place on the information they convey. We’ve all heard of the “liberal media.” This is the idea that the news will influence how the audience perceives the information, so it is thought to be a form of second level agenda-setting – they not only tell the audience what to think about, but also how to think about that issue.¹¹



Framing your story is an essential component to using the media effectively.



¹⁰ California Coalition Against Sexual Assault, *CALCASA Media Advocacy Guide*, http://www.calcasa.org/wp-content/uploads/files/calcasa_media_advocacy.pdf, page 14

¹¹ Davie, G., *Framing Theory*. <https://masscommtheory.com/theory-overviews/framing-theory/>

The Frameworks Institute

The Frameworks Institute has researched the framing of how media perceives sexual violence in their report: “American Perspective on Sexual Violence.” Here is an excerpt from their interview findings along with a list of theme titles around this issue. Please refer to the report for elaboration of each theme.¹²

Below is a list of the core themes that emerged from analysis of the expert interviews.

These themes establish and comprise the foundational components of the “core story” of sexual violence and can be divided into three types of themes: how experts define what sexual violence is (definitional), why they think sexual violence occurs (causal) and how it might be addressed (policies and interventions). This “core story” is important because it provides a baseline understanding from which communications and translation of expert material for public audiences are derived. In this way, the core story simultaneously represents the object that the communication research seeks to translate and impart, and the outcome against which the success of such communications is evaluated.¹³

Definitional

1. Sexual violence is pervasive.
2. Sexual violence occurs most often among people who are familiar to one another.
3. Sexual violence is a continuum of behaviors that includes both physical and nonphysical acts.
4. Sexual violence is not just a “women’s issue.”
5. Sexual violence has widespread, societal ramifications.

Causal

1. One of the primary causes of sexual violence is a culture of unequal power relationships.
2. Acts of sexual violence build on one another.

Policies and Interventions

1. Policies can reduce the incidence of acts of sexual violence.
2. Sexual violence is preventable.
3. Interventions need to be evidence-based.
4. The importance of defining sexual *health*.

¹² Moira O’Neil and Pamela Morgan, *American Perceptions of Sexual Violence, A FrameWorks Research Report*, September 2010 https://www.frameworksinstitute.org/assets/files/PDF_sexualviolence/AmericanPerceptionsofSexualViolence.pdf

¹³ California Coalition Against Sexual Assault, *CALCASA Media Advocacy Guide*, http://www.calcasa.org/wp-content/uploads/files/calcasa_media_advocacy.pdf, page 13

Below are some questions to ask yourself 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 affect victim/survivors
- Acknowledge local, national or topical milestones/anniversaries.
- Examples: recent court cases or arrests/charges, changes in the law, increased discussion of topic elsewhere, crisis center openings, recent studies or data released, relation to other crime statistics, or celebrity involvement.

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
- What type of community are you in: urban, suburban, rural? What are the connections between issues in these communities? (i.e. trafficking is not just a “city problem”)
- 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: sexual violence is not always overt, consider the coercive aspects as well as 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
- Consider communities that are affected disproportionately and not often discussed (i.e. Native American/indigenous communities)
- 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

Points to remember when framing your story:

Framing your story for maximum impact and the widest reach will catch a reporter's attention. Some questions to consider when framing your story include:

- Who is involved that the public may be interested in?
- 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?

Sexual violence 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.

Audience (Again)

Content must connect to your audience.

You can't approach content as a business goal, you have to approach content as a human. The audience is human, and people are multifaceted. So understand what your audience cares about, and the different ways they view the world. That will help you connect with them and build an ongoing audience.

Put yourself in your audience's shoes.

How are you supposed to know what your audience wants? Erica Williams Simon, Creative Director of [upworthy.com](https://www.upworthy.com) suggests you ask the following questions to put yourself in your audience's shoes:

- What are people seeing in their Facebook feeds?
- How much content are people consuming on a daily basis?
- What are people consuming?
- Is this a story that would stop me mid-scroll on my newsfeed?
- Is this a story I would read? Why or why not?
- How can I best optimize this story for success?

Ideally, these questions provide insight into different ways you can shape the narrative of a story that targets multiple audiences. Tell your story through the lens of your leadership.

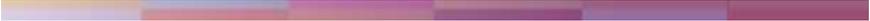
When you combine all of these elements together, you can craft a nonprofit story that is compelling and message-driven. Not only that, it will differentiate your organization from the rest of the pack.

Storytelling

Great stories build relationships and make people care. For stories to work, to be powerful, they need to be honest and authentic.

Scientists like to say that neurons that fire together, wire together.¹⁴ Stories emphasize the brain's reaction to information. Oxytocin, a neurochemical in our brains, rises more specifically when we experience character-driven stories. The purpose is to make us care. Research has shown that when people experience this rise in oxytocin, they are more likely to support the person or their cause because our brains can't resist putting ourselves in other people's shoes.

Stories must be relatable to your audience. Successful stories that have gone viral on the Internet don't try to say something that is familiar to everyone, they try to speak very deeply and relatably to smaller groups, and in turn those groups will share those stories.



Connection is at the root of great storytelling, because great story foments connection.

Brene Brown

¹⁴ Shane Snow, *Shane Snow on Storytelling*. <https://www.lynda.com/Marketing-tutorials/Shane-Snow-Storytelling/491532-2.html>

The Core Elements of a Great (Business) Story¹⁵

1. **Get to the point.**

Even before you consider the story you're going to tell, know the results you're striving for. Identify the points you want to make (ideally no more than three) and include supporting detail.

2. **Get over your conflict aversion (and review your "5 Cs" checklist below).**

A great story — whether presented as an anecdote, a presentation or a pitch for attention to your organization — has structure. When you're reviewing the story you're about to tell, this checklist can help to ensure that the fundamentals are in place:

A. Circumstances

Have you properly set the scene, providing the information necessary to give your audience context?

B. Curiosity

Have you offered your audience a reason to care or be curious?

C. Characters

Are the people or characters in your story relatable?

D. Conversations

Have you included believable dialogue?

E. Conflict

Does your audience have reason to hang on till the end to find out what happens?

3. **Get emotional.**

Identify the kinds of emotions you'd ideally like your audience to feel, and craft your story to hit those notes. Don't be afraid to share what's real and true to you, but don't go to extremes or be exploitive.

4. **Find your hero.**

Identify the hero of your story, whether it's your organization, your service, your client or audience, or a place. Give that hero a conflict to overcome (see the "5 Cs"). And if the hero in your story is you, consider sharing at least as many failures as successes. Empathy and authenticity must come into play.

¹⁵ Shannon Emmerson, *Storytelling Fundamentals: Core Elements of a Great Business Story*
<http://www.echostories.com/storytelling-fundamentals-core-elements-of-a-great-business-story>

5. Prize the details.

You heard it from your English teacher in third grade: “Show, don’t tell.” The more your audience feels, sees, tastes what you’re describing, the more they’re hooked.

6. Don’t start at the beginning.

Have you ever heard of anyone excited to hear a chronological recitation of occurrences? Try starting in the middle, where things are most exciting.

7. Challenge your audience.

Since you do have a purpose in telling your organization’s story, consider ending with a question or assignment that will compel your audience to take action.

For more on storytelling, Erica Williams Simon, creative director of upworthy.com, spells out that you are far more likely to get something published if you understand the following:

- Every story is ultimately PR in one way or another
- You **MUST** think of your audience, not just your organization
- It’s not enough to say you’re doing good in the world
- You need something surprising, compelling, emotional, and attention-grabbing
- What your readers want to know
- What makes this particular story compelling

Don’t be afraid to take your audience on a journey. Just be sure to optimize your story so it’s in line with how they think, act, and feel. Always look at your story from their perspective.¹⁶

This story is the cornerstone of your entire communications strategy. When you tell it right, you set yourself up for success in the hardest part of the entire PR process: Getting your story noticed.

¹⁶ YouTube, Classy.org, *Why Some Stories Make Headlines and Others Fall Flat*.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qnRos4swW_8

Get Your Story Noticed

After you've developed a communications strategy and defined the story you want to tell, your objective is to get noticed, accepted by publications, and published. Without a doubt, this is the hardest part of the entire PR process.

What makes this part so tricky is that members of the media are constantly inundated with pitches and press releases.

However, the process dictates that you have to pitch your story. There's no way around it. Fortunately, nonprofits have a leg up when it comes to pitching.¹⁷

Nonprofits Are Credible by Nature

Unlike other industries and businesses, nonprofits have credibility on their side right out of the gate. According to Tanya Garcia of *PRNewser*, this credibility is native and inherent to all nonprofits:

*Nonprofits have one significant advantage over corporate peers: their perceived inherent credibility, unencumbered by the profit motive. That said, no matter how noble the mission, if an organization is not telling its story consistently and strategically, it will fall on deaf ears.*¹⁸

Garcia reaffirms the importance of a defined communications strategy. If you have no strategy, your story will suffer. If your story suffers, reporters won't pay attention to it. All the credibility in the world won't help you then.

This is further compounded by the fact that reporters aren't going to hunt you down. You have to do the majority of the legwork.

That aside, let's say you've mapped out a strategy, prepared a great story, and are ready to track down journalists on your own. How are you supposed to know what journalists want to see?

¹⁷ *The Ultimate Guide to PR for Nonprofits* from classy.org

¹⁸ *PRNewser, Five Best Practices for Nonprofit PR Programs*. <http://www.adweek.com/prnewser/five-best-practices-for-nonprofit-pr-programs/39989>

The Media Is Subjective

Each news site, independent journalist, or freelancer looks for specific stories that line up with their publication. Because of the subjectivity in the media industry, you have to conduct research on which publications and reporters best fit your communications strategy, media message, and story.

Every editor, writer, news site, and press outlet has a different voice. Simply put, your story might not fit with each one. Research and target specific publications and journalists to increase your chances of having a pitch accepted.¹⁹

Repetition

You will need to keep telling stories. You don't just tell one story. You have to continually cultivate and develop this audience. It's like Martin Luther King Jr. said, "If you stop preaching to the choir, they'll stop singing."

Sound Bites

The main reason sound bites are important to the media is because of tight time restrictions. In this environment the value of a sharp and succinct sound bite becomes obvious. You may be interviewed for five minutes or hold a 20 minute press conference but likely only two "grabs" of you speaking will be used. So you have to make your main points clear because you will only have five to 10 seconds at most to explain your issue or point of view. That's about 20 or 30 words and the trick is to make that time work for you with a strong sound bite. The key to a successful sound bite is preparation. Be prepared to answer questions in the way you want to present the information, not how the interviewer may want to frame it.²⁰

Staying Relevant

In order to keep media contacts from tiring of your message, offer different points of view, including connecting them to other perspectives or experts in the issue. Show the versatility of the subject matter in stories. This will lend further credibility, and will broaden the perspective while getting out the message. Look to MNCASA for help on the big picture with details of the state and national issues, while your organization can highlight the local point of view.

¹⁹ Classy Resource Guides, *The Ultimate Guide to PR for Nonprofits*, www.classy.org, page 13

²⁰ *Media: Preparing a Winning strategy - Tips for Media Interviews – Why Sound Bites are Important*, OurCommunity.com.au

Chapter 3: Media Outlets

Creating a Media List

An important part of your research includes the development of a database of journalists in your community, state, and beyond. 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 their 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 to describe your organization and pitch story ideas. The worst they can do is say no.

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, have an intern read and watch the news for a month and note where stories about sexual violence are likely to show up. Use this information to start identifying reporters and give examples of media stories.²¹

Google Alerts is a free online tool that allows you to track your chosen keywords and phrases so that you never miss a news story about the subject. It is a content detection and notification service, offered by the search engine company Google. The service sends emails to the user when it finds new results — such as web pages, newspaper articles, or blogs — that match the user’s search terms.

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

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

Be aware of non-traditional media sources like school newspapers, church flyers, college papers, newsletters, blogs and more. You can also reach out to others to help build this list (for instance, your board, allies, and consultants). Remember to keep your list updated. Media members are sometimes transient and their roles can change often.

²¹ California Coalition Against Sexual Assault, *CALCASA Media Advocacy Guide*, http://www.calcasa.org/wp-content/uploads/files/calcasa_media_advocacy.pdf, page 11

Tools to Approach Media Outlets

The following table describes various media outlets, the opportunities they present, and the ways an organization can work with them to get their message delivered through that source.²²

Media Outlet	Service Provided	Our Activity/Tool to Use
Television: Network and Cable	Media event or press conference	Media Advisory Press Release
	Breaking news story	Press Statement Press Release Call to give quote
	Feature Story	Call to pitch story Follow up with information
	Talk Show	Call to get onto show
	Public Service Announcement (PSA)	Creation of video or print product
	Paid Advertisement	Creation and/or purchase of ad
	Calendar Listing (cable)	Submission or purchase of listing

²² Deborah Linnell, Zora Radosevich, Jonathan Spack, and TSNE Mission Works, *Executive Directors Guide: The Guide for Successful Nonprofit Management*, published by the United Way of Massachusetts Bay, <http://www.tsne.org/executive-directors-guide>

Media Outlet	Service Provided	Our Activity/Tool to Use
Radio	Media event or press conference	Media Advisory Press Release
	Breaking news story	Press Statement Press Release Call to give quote
	Talk Show	Call to get onto show as a guest OR call into a local show to contribute your knowledge or experience
	Public Service Announcement (PSA)	Creation of audio or print product
	Paid Advertisement	Creation and/or purchase of ad
Wireservices: AP (Associated Press)	Media event or press conference	Media Advisory Press Release
UPI (United Press Internat'l) Reuters	Breaking news story	Press Statement Press Release Call to give quote

Media Outlet	Service Provided	Our Activity/Tool to Use
Newspapers Daily, Weekly, Monthly	Media event or press conference	Media Advisory Press Release
	Breaking news story	Press Statement Press Release Call to give quote
	Feature story	Call to pitch story Follow up with information
	Community Calendar listing	Submission of listing
	Editorial/Guest editorial (OpEd)	Call to pitch story
	Letter to the Editor	Submission of letter
	Photo	Submission of photo with press release
	Print advertising: display ad, certified ad, or ad insert	Creation and/or purchase of ad

Media Outlet	Service Provided	Our Activity/Tool to Use
Magazines	Feature story	Call to pitch story
	Calendar listing	Submission of listing
	Letter to the Editor	Submission of letter
	Print advertising: display ad, certified ad, or ad insert	Creation and/or purchase of ad
Internet	Online news	Press release by email
	Website link	Creation of site Exchange of links
	Listserv	Development of listserv
	Search Engine Optimization (SEO)	Optimization of keywords
Social Media	See chapter 6	

Chapter 4: Working with the Media

If you're a small or medium-sized nonprofit, chances are the media does not know what's happening with your organization. Aside from establishing relationships with reporters, keeping the media connected and informed of your organization through press releases, guest editorials, media advisories, press-friendly events and social media can only benefit the level of understanding of sexual violence issues within your community

Building Relationships

Build for the long term. Perhaps the best way to ensure continued coverage on future stories is to foster a relationship with the journalists you target.

*Being a [PR person] is about more than sending out press releases to every reporter whose email you can get your hands on. Always start with the grunt work—find the right publications, and the appropriate writers in those publications. When reaching out to them, make sure they know this isn't a mass email, that you sought them out because you know this is something they will be interested in. Cultivating a reciprocal relationship is key, and greatly increases your chances of getting coverage.*²³

Have you previously worked with the person you want to pitch your story to? If not, your first interaction with them should never be an ask. Instead, set up a coffee, lunch, or other informal meeting. And when you meet with them, focus on legitimately getting to know them.

*"If you've worked with somebody and established a relationship and trust factor, you're more likely to get your story heard," says Forbes magazine's Randall Lane. "It's not, 'I know you and I'll write about you.' The dialogue is more about if they trust you or not to deliver a great story. That's the key."*²⁴

It's a long process to build trust and relationships with reporters, but that's one of the primary reasons you design a communications strategy in yearly intervals. Once you've established a rapport with a journalist, it's on you to keep the relationship alive.²⁵

²³ Blonde 2.0 Blog, *Six Tips to Getting PR for Nonprofits Right*. <https://www.blonde20.com/blog/2014/12/30/six-tips-to-getting-pr-for-nonprofits-right/>

²⁴ YouTube, Classy.org, *Why Some Stories Make Headlines and Others Fall Flat*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qnRos4swW_8

²⁵ Classy Resource Guides, *The Ultimate Guide to PR for Nonprofits*, www.classy.org, page 15

Designate the Right Spokesperson

It is important to identify a media spokesperson or persons 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 representatives, their roles and various scenarios that might develop.²⁶ More than one person can be considered a spokesperson, due to expertise in certain areas, but one individual should be the point person to make the decision about who represents the organization for every media call.

See Appendix A for MNCASA's Communications Protocol for a suggested approach.

Be the Expert

Build your communications strategy so that it aligns with your expertise in the nonprofit or sexual assault advocacy world. Becoming a de facto expert could, in fact, draw reporters to you.

One way to get the attention of reporters is to become a go-to source when they are covering a particular issue. If you work at a healthcare nonprofit, for example, having your executive director quoted in a story about a health trend is likely to give you more mileage than a mention about your annual gala. And here's a secret about reporters — if you've been a good source for them in the past, they're likely to put you at the top of their list of calls the next time they're covering a topic.²⁷

Further, being an expert in your field opens the door to becoming a contributor at publications. Most news sites are hungry for content every day of the week. A great way to feed them stories is to be a contributing author of an editorial, a column or a blog.

This approach accomplishes two goals. First, it further deepens your relationship with a publication. Second, it allows you to specifically tailor your created content to line up with your communications strategy.

Lastly, always strive to make your nonprofit newsworthy. Take on big challenges, build great infrastructure, and solve problems. Always put your story in the public eye when you get the chance, but always be sure it's in line with your overarching communications strategy.²⁸

²⁶ California Coalition Against Sexual Assault, *CALCASA Media Advocacy Guide*, http://www.calcasa.org/wp-content/uploads/files/calcasa_media_advocacy.pdf, page 10

²⁷ The Nonprofit Marketing Guide, *Developing a Modern Public Relations Strategy*. <http://www.nonprofitmarketingguide.com/blog/2015/03/17/developing-a-modern-public-relations-strategy/>

²⁸ Classy Resource Guides, *The Ultimate Guide to PR for Nonprofits*, www.classy.org, page 19

Additionally...

Be the Voice

Showcase your knowledge through speaking engagements in your community.

Be the Source

Invite local media members to casual meetings and show them you're a source for content. Be a connector and a source for any relevant information. If someone else has better information than you be sure to direct the media to that source – this honesty enhances credibility.

Be the Contributor

Become a contributing author at a news site and use it as a platform to publicize your organization.

Be an Open Book

Build trust with your constituents by communicating your story openly and honestly. Remember reciprocation is absolutely required to be mutually beneficial to both sides. Trust goes both ways.

Pitching Your Story

Successful pitches require a certain level of finesse. You can't send cold, prefabricated emails to a list of reporters. You should take time to tailor every outreach opportunity to the person you're pitching. You don't have time to pitch everyone so identify the journalists who are most likely to respond. Over time, genuine personalization will take you a long way when it comes to getting a pitch accepted. Make sure you are pitching to the right people from the start.

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

Hooks

A hook is something designed to catch people's attention. According to the *Urban Dictionary*, it is the catchy part of a song that draws in the listener. So too, you can draw in a reporter's attention with a hook to make stories more newsworthy. Hooks can be included in the framing of a story in a way that expands the significance of the news.

From the bottom up

As a rule of thumb, never pitch the editor of a publication. This is what's known as a top-down pitch and it's almost always guaranteed to fail. Much more effective is the bottom-up pitch, where you target lower-ranking staff writers or contributors at news sites – they will then pitch the story to their editors. The only exception is for small, local papers, where the editor is the primary staff writer as well.

Questions to consider when contacting journalists²⁹

- **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.
- **What story ideas and angles are options?**
i.e. Leverage timely trends, seasons, holidays, high profile sexual assault incidents in the press, reports with data and statistics that give new and/or unexpected insight.
- **What resources are available to you to get media attention?**
i.e. Staff time, funding or donations, events, referrals from others, social media.
- **What is your timeline?**
Include time for media material distribution, and regular briefings and updates with key reporters.
- **What is your intended reach?** City, county, state and type of media like print, radio, TV, web sites, wire services, etc.

²⁹ California Coalition Against Sexual Assault, *CALCASA Media Advocacy Guide*, http://www.calcasa.org/wp-content/uploads/files/calcasa_media_advocacy.pdf, page 11

Managing Media Calls

Tips on Talking to the Media

In Chapter 1, we talked about the importance of developing a strategic communications plan. With that in mind, let's discuss some key points to remember when 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 give a mock interview with your staff. Once you start practicing, each interview will become easier over time 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, or a friendly chat. It can be an educational exchange of the issue or story.

Interviewing Guidelines

Below are some interviewing guidelines that are helpful to follow³⁰:

1. Return a reporter's call immediately and gather key information from the reporter	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is your deadline?• What is the story about?• How do I fit into the story?• Who else have you talked to?• Will this be "on the record" or simply background information?• Try to be available on the reporter's schedule.
2. Questions & tips to consider as you prepare for your interview.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is my message?• How can I prove/justify this message?• How might someone disagree with me?• How can I rebut this criticism?• Anticipate questions (particularly tough ones).• Rehearse your answers.• Gather background facts and statistics for support.

³⁰ California Coalition Against Sexual Assault, *CALCASA Media Advocacy Guide*, http://www.calcasa.org/wp-content/uploads/files/calcasa_media_advocacy.pdf, page 24

<p>3. Stay on message during the interview</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bridge from reporter's question to your own talking point (e.g. "Yes, that seems to be happening, however what we are really trying to emphasize is..." or "Certainly that's an important piece of this conversation, but the thing that is most vital to our community is..."). • Use "flagging" to emphasize important points (e.g. "the most important thing to remember is..." or "What everybody should be most concerned about is...")
<p>4. After the interview</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thank the reporter for his or her time and offer to serve as an ongoing resource on the issue or related stories. • Make sure to give the reporter a business card or brochure, and let them know about upcoming events or stories that may be of interest. • Be prepared for a reporter to call after the interview to double check quotes.
<p>5. Some final tips</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be on time and do not reschedule unless absolutely necessary • Be flexible as media schedules change quickly • Don't wait for the right question • Never repeat negative language • Turn negatives into positives • Avoid jargon and acronyms • Don't speak "off-the-record" (however, when speaking just on background, you are off the record) • Only share information that you want to be made public • Don't guess, speculate or lie

Additional tips to consider include:

- Have a plan in place before problems arise. This will allow quick responses to situations.
- Designate one person to coordinate with the media and other audiences. The designated person can help determine who will speak on the topic and whether a subject matter expert is needed.
- Identify the audiences who want information about a specific situation, including internal audiences.
- Obtain input from all staff to formulate a crisis plan.

Interview Tips for Survivors

Sexual assault advocates' priority is to minimize the trauma for any individual, particularly a survivor or family member, who chooses to speak to the media. Provide specific options for a survivor to consider, prior to any interview. Sometimes survivors will want to speak to the media to call out an issue, such as a problem with their case. To determine whether this is a good idea or not, walk the victim/survivor through the questions and tips to consider listed in #2 in the chart above and the items below. Advise them based on how ready and comfortable they are about speaking.³¹

- Brief the survivor about the story and some of the questions the reporter may ask, before the interview begins.
- Let the survivor know that they can decline to answer questions that make them 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.
- Many media outlets do not identify survivors or will blur the image, use their initials, etc. Ask about policies for protecting survivor identity.

When a victim chooses to be interviewed, it is usually after a great deal of thought and typically only after court activity has concluded. In MNCASA's [Reporting on Sexual Violence: A Guide for Journalists](#), journalists are reminded of the difficulties in approaching a person who may still be suffering the lingering effects of trauma, anger, and grief. Offer the tips on page 38 of that guide to your media contact prior the interview.

³¹ California Coalition Against Sexual Assault, *CALCASA Media Advocacy Guide*, http://www.calcasa.org/wp-content/uploads/files/calcasa_media_advocacy.pdf, page 25

Hosting a Press Event

MNCASA understands the importance of drawing attention to the issues of sexual violence — advocacy awareness, policy changes, and prevention messaging, just to name a few. Using your local media is an excellent way to get publicity for your local events and your organization, as well as to educate your community about sexual violence. This section will help guide programs in using various forms of media to promote a specific event. However, you can also use the suggested methods to promote your important work.

It is important to develop a working relationship with your local media.

If you are not already familiar with them, it's a good idea to start now. Know “who's who” in the community and understand the type of impact they have. For example, learn who your local reporters are and what type of articles they write. If they write an article that you enjoyed or was not victim blaming, let them know; this will help establish trust or history with the paper and with the reporter before having to bring up any difficult conversations and/or issues. This rapport may also help pave the way for drawing additional attention to sexual violence awareness and prevention.

Press Plan/Media Timeline

Timing your outreach to the media for your event is critical. You need to plan your contact strategically. Here are some tips for when to first make contact, when to follow up, and how:

1. As soon as your event is confirmed

Email Media/News Advisory: It is good to start notifying your local press as soon as you know the date of your event. Start by sending a media advisory as a type of “save the date” notice for any media outlet you wish to contact. It should be in the form of an email with the information in the body of the message. Include only the basic details of what, who, when, and where, and a very short description. This provides something to refer to as you make contact with editors and reporters in advance of the event. More details of how to create a media advisory are listed on the following pages.

2. Within two days of emailing the Media Advisory

Follow up with a personal call: Contact your local press directly with a personal phone call to introduce yourself and the organization. If time allows, schedule a meeting to discuss the event, educate them about sexual abuse and your role as advocates or as a team, and the need for community involvement to emphasize the issue. Use MNCASA's media manual *Reporting on Sexual Violence: A Guide for Journalists* as a way to suggest they learn about the best way for the media to present information in a non-victim-blaming way. A link to the manual can be found at www.mncasa.org/news.

3. Approximately ten days prior to the event

Opinion-Editorial (Op-Ed): Ten days prior to your launch, e-mail or fax an Op-Ed to the editorial page editor at your local newspaper, but do not send an Op-Ed to more than one newspaper at a time. Follow up with a phone call to reinforce the importance of informing the public that your event is happening.

4. One week prior to activities if Op-Ed is unsuccessful

Letter to the Editor: If you are unlikely to get an Op-Ed printed, or if you have a second newspaper in your community, mail or fax a letter to the editor roughly one week prior to the event. Encourage community partners to submit their own letters to the editor in support of your efforts.

5. Three or Four Days Prior to the Event

Updated Media Advisory: With all the recent attention on sexual harassment, individuals who commit sex offenses, sexual assault on college campuses, and other sexual assault related stories, the media is interested in reporting new information on sexual violence. Three to four days before your event, email the advisory to TV, radio and newspaper outlets. Send it to the assignment desk (TV) or news director (radio), unless you have established relationships with specific reporters. Make follow-up calls to each outlet to be sure that reporters know about your efforts, and encourage them to attend your event.

6. Day of Your Event and/or Following the Event

Press Release: The press release or news release is written as you hope the press would report the story. It is your narrative with your messaging, and should be tailored to emphasize the event. *Consider including a quote from a representative of your organization, an elected official, a representative from the local community groups that are involved, or a person who has had a positive experience with your program.* E-mail the release to TV, radio, and newspaper outlets on the morning of your event or the day your activities begin and follow up to find out whether they need more information. If you are requesting that the media attend your press event, be sure you have enough press releases, fact sheets, etc., at your event to give to reporters.

7. Following the event, send or email a press packet to the reporters who did not attend.

Press Packets

A press packet is a good way to put a spotlight on your organization, or on the collaboration of organizations if you're working with a SART or SMART team. It's a compilation of the information you want the media to know about you and your services – all into one tidy package as a helpful tool for distributing a larger quantity of information to the press. Press packets not only represent your agencies, they help educate the press.

There are no specific rules as to what components you must include in your own press kit. Your packet will vary based on what you're using your press release to promote and the type of venue where you'll be distributing your press kit. Consider having your press kit available in electronic versions for reporters who cannot attend the event as well as in hard copy.

A press packet typically consists of the following items contained in a standard twin pocket folder labeled with your agency information as well as what campaign or event the press packet is associated.

We suggest including the following:

- Your business card
- One-page information sheet describing your agency (mission, services, history, etc.) or organization brochure or newsletter
- Contact information of the individual who is assigned to working with media
- Press Release
- Other agency brochure(s)
- Past press coverage (if any)
- Event flyers
- Bios
- Quotes
- Images
 - should be sent via email or posted on your website
 - should be sent as a medium-size JPEG file at a high resolution
- Fact Sheets

Depending on the event you may choose to include different information. MNCASA's standard fact sheets include:

- Sexual Assault
- Sexual Assault Laws
- Local and National Statistics
- Prevention Facts or Steps to Take to Prevent Sexual Violence
- How to Get Involved

Chapter 5: Crisis Management

For many of us our interaction with the media happens when they call requesting a comment on a breaking news story. Just like proactive communications this is an important opportunity to promote accurate and timely information. Unlike proactive communications, which occur on our schedule and by our doing, reactive communications often catch us off-guard, unprepared, and unsure of what to say, especially when they involve the organizations we represent. Despite these challenges some thoughtful planning in advance can help any sexual assault crisis center prepare the fundamental content for one of these calls.³²

Purpose of a Crisis Communication Plan

A crisis communication plan can help us effectively manage communications through a formal, clearly defined channel in order to mitigate a crisis or serious negative repercussions for your organization or the sector. It can also help to maintain a reputation of leadership and transparency on vital issues and breaking news. In today's fast-paced news environment, it is easy to lose control of the message when you don't have a plan in place.

In speaking with the media and public, you will need to be prepared to provide factual information and the messages most beneficial to your organization, as well as your sector and community. To the best of your ability, assist the media by providing information that enables them to do their jobs and positions your organization as a reliable resource and nonprofit leader.

In all communications, you will need to create a positive opportunity for the public positioning of the sector as a whole. Messages should strike the tone and level of information appropriate for the situation.

How to Create a Plan

Identify what is a crisis and what is not. This will help prevent mini-crisis (overreacting to every situation) or missed responses (not responding to a crisis because your front line — advocate, volunteer, etc — didn't know what should be escalated to leadership). Generally, this could be a list of issues defined as low-medium-high risk with appropriate steps on how to respond. Low risk would be business as usual, medium risk would require closely watching/monitoring and responding with caution, and high risk would require crisis mode/activation of your crisis plan.

Develop the details of crisis communication plan in advance. This includes determining the tone of the response, initial response statements that can be used for immediate needs with media or social media, roles and responsibilities of who is convening, who is monitoring, what does that mean/what are they looking for, guidance on responding via social media and any other

³² This plan was written and prepared by Rachel Setzke of the Colorado Nonprofit Association with assistance from Rebecca Arno and Ellen Brilliant, as well as other members from the Colorado Nonprofit Association's 2006 Marketing and Communications Committee. Some updates and adaptation provided by MNCASA.

public facing channels, and identifying how the internal team is informed and when. It is a common misperception that the communications person or executive director can "do it all at once". They cannot. A plan without detail, will result in a very slow and disconnected response.

The following is intended to serve as a crisis communications guide. Its purpose is to help manage communications around a crisis, but does not suffice for an overall crisis management plan that would also include other organizational considerations.

The objectives of a crisis communications plan are as follows:

- Prepare your staff to effectively and nimbly manage crisis communications;
- Help staff respond in a unified, professional manner that reinforces sector leadership and creates loyalty;
- Strategically enhance the organization's brand/role, and the public understanding of the value provided by the nonprofit community;
- Manage the distribution of critical, often sensitive, information to the media, members, and public;
- If you have members, inform them of your organization's position to help shape a consistent sector-wide response.

Using the Crisis Communications Plan

Items in this section are intended for use by staff, board and committees that play a role in communications, particularly in a crisis. Information should be explained at staff orientation and periodically reviewed by staff.

The suggested Crisis Communications Plan should be used by the executive director, board leadership and the staff member directing communications to prepare, oversee and evaluate the handling of communications around a crisis situation both internally and externally as appropriate. The steps outlined should be firmly in place before a crisis situation occurs and should be reviewed and revised by staff, as necessary, but bi-annually at a minimum.

Suggested Crisis Communications Policy

1. All crises should be reported to a supervisor and the executive director immediately.
2. Only the chief spokesperson and back-up spokespeople are authorized to release information to the media and to the public. All other staff, board and committee members should be professional and helpful to the media by connecting them with the spokespeople, but will neither speak to the media, nor provide any information.

3. There should be one designated crisis management lead person, directing and coordinating all aspects of the organization's response including managing the messages and the media. There should also be one designated spokesperson who actually interacts with the media and other inquirers. In some cases, particularly in the event of a "small crisis," the two may be the same person. In others, the jobs may be divided to facilitate efficient handling of the situation. Most likely, but not necessarily, the two roles will be filled by the director of communications and the executive director, respectively.
4. All comments should be guided by professionalism and transparency, and serve to mitigate the crisis while reinforcing the leadership role of the organization.
5. "No comment" is not an acceptable response. If an answer is unknown or cannot be immediately answered, make note of the question, tell the inquirer you will get back with him/her, and do so. If the question cannot be answered due to a policy (such as sharing personnel information, etc.) let the inquirer know that.
6. Personnel matters are to remain confidential.
7. When possible, responses should be proactive, responsive, and action-oriented.
8. The organization recognizes the importance of media relations to public trust. In times of crisis, maintaining effective media relationships will be particularly critical in bolstering public confidence in the sector as a whole.
9. Social media best practices should be determined if your organization has an online media presence also.

Crisis Communications Checklist Overview

This is a brief overview of crisis management steps.

1. **Safety**
Ensure safety of all staff and site. Call 911 if needed.
2. **Notification**
Notify the executive director immediately.
3. **Crisis Communications Team**
Key staff and, if needed, the chairs of the board and any communications committee, will convene to strategically review the situation and manage the communications surrounding the issue. Determine who will serve as the convener, how or where (e.g. conference call or a specific location), and when will everyone come together. Set time expectations (e.g. within one hour of notification, everyone notified needs to join the meeting/call.)

Note: In some cases, a larger crisis management team may be needed when action surrounding the crisis involves more than just handling communications. In those cases, the crisis communication team would be a part of the larger team, though the guidelines in this manual only outline the steps to take in the communication needs surrounding a crisis.

4. **Designate method for communicating**

Determine the communications process for all staff. This designation should be laid out in advance and practiced on a regular basis so it is familiar in an actual crisis..

5. **Before Going Public**

- Determine crisis communications lead person who is responsible for ensuring all tasks are completed (most likely the executive director or communications lead staff).
- Determine the crisis communication spokesperson who will answer all media and other inquiries (again most likely the executive director). Key communications staff may be involved in organizing and scheduling requests for the executive director.
- Assess the situation to determine the facts. Do not make assumptions or fill in facts that have not yet been confirmed.
- Determine appropriate response/action and what will remain internal versus external information that can be shared with media.
- Create plan of action for internal and external communications. Remind staff not to share details with colleagues outside the organization. It is recommended to plan this out in more detail during a practice session and documenting for future use.
- Develop factual, detailed messages that reflect the status of the crisis, the organization's response, and any steps the organization is taking in response.
- Prepare talking points and provide a script for the receptionist and other staff or volunteers receiving incoming calls.
- Responding to media over email is preferred. Sending your exact wording/response, avoids the possibility of rambling and saying too much or having the reporter capture info inaccurately. Most reporters prefer this method.
- Determine if a media statement, web, social media, and/or voicemail updates are necessary. This should be part of the communications plan. Anticipate questions and answers. Your social media, website, and phone reception should all be aligned in the response plan.
- Assess resources necessary to manage the crisis (i.e. cell-phone availability, on-location resources – signs, lectern, visuals, etc.).
- A communications plan, mapped out and practiced in advance should have the following roles pre-assigned to:
 - Serve as the official spokesperson and manage media;
 - Keep the members of the board informed;
 - Contact partners, allies, members, etc. and assist with sector-wide talking points, if appropriate;
 - Record crisis details, actions taken, external responses, and resolution.

6. Going Public

- Begin placing telephone calls to critical internal audiences, including staff, board and/or legislators, funders, etc.
- Begin media and other external audience outreach, use press release if appropriate.
- Use social media updates for outreach.
- Update web site and your organization's voice mail, if needed.
- Evaluate message effectiveness as the situation progresses.
- Implement methods for updating key audiences with ongoing information.
- Distribute post-crisis communications.

Post Crisis Review

1. Secure Loose Ends

Appropriate communications should be made outlining the resolution of the crisis to appropriate audiences. If changed, voice mail, website and social media platforms should be updated. All media contacts should be double checked for completed interaction, then new names added to the organization's media list.

2. Recognition of Heroes

The crisis communications team will work with staff and any communications committee to determine the best and most appropriate means for recognizing the "heroes" involved in the crisis situation.

3. Crisis Communications Review

Re-convene the crisis communications team to evaluate response, actions, what didn't work, what needs to be improved or revised for the future, lessons learned, etc.

4. Media Coverage Assessment

Review coverage. Check for message consistency and saliency. Follow up on issues that might need further clarification.

5. File and Update

File notes, clips, talking points, communication, etc. into one location. Update your website with media links; scan materials; save video and radio links either by downloading files to your website or your organization's YouTube page.

6. Revise the crisis communications plan if necessary

Chapter 6: Social Media Advocacy

The science behind media relations isn't like physics or engineering. It's fluid and ethereal. Recently, PR has shifted away from a shotgun blast strategy towards a laser-focused approach using targeted online media. It's wrong to say the landscape of PR is dead or dying, but it absolutely needs redefining.

Nonprofits should seize this shift in momentum as a chance to develop the future of outreach for the sector on their own terms. It seems an almost insurmountable challenge, but the first step toward a solution is to start taking control of your messaging, branding, and story. Once you establish your organization's key message and strategy, then you can see where you might selectively tap a resource where — and if — needed.

Using technology to reach the masses

A variety of online media and advocacy tools are at your disposal, everything from web sites to social networking. Online technology is especially well-suited for helping nonprofits reach the news media. It's now standard practice to email your news releases and other materials directly to reporters and editors or to communicate with them via social media. And by making these and other informational materials available via your organization's website and social media outlets, you provide 24-hour access to important information.

It is important to remember that the Internet is a two-way street. It is a place to communicate your core messages to not only the media, but also your constituency. Readers can comment on content, like news stories, blogs and on social networking sites. Watch for negative, misleading and defamatory portrayals of your work. Be sure you check your resources and that all the facts are accurate.³³

Websites

Your organization's 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. When using social media outreach, drive the audience to your website for more information. It is preferred to have hyperlinks connect directly to the subject that piqued their interest. Landing pages can be created for this purpose if there is not a specific web page developed on your website.

³³ California Coalition Against Sexual Assault, *CALCASA Media Advocacy Guide*, http://www.calcasa.org/wp-content/uploads/files/calcasa_media_advocacy.pdf, page 19

Google Alerts

Monitor the web for content that pertains to your organization or your subject matter. You can get emails when new results for a designated topic show up in Google Search. You can determine how often you are alerted: as-it-happens, once a day, once a week. Go to [Google Alerts](#) and enter in the words to be followed. This also allows you to listen to conversations you may not be aware of, conversations that involve you or your organization or related issues of interest in your community. As you manage your online presence, it's important to listen to what people are saying and how they are saying it.

Blogs

A blog is a type of website with regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other material such as graphics or video. Blogs 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 view.

Blog examples:

1. MNCASA's Rural Realities blog: <http://www.mncasa.org/rural-realities-blog>
2. Women's Media Center Speech Project:
<http://www.womensmediacenter.com/speech-project>
3. Help Scout: <https://www.helpscout.net/blog/>

Social Networking/Social Media

Social networking sites can be a good way of reaching a new audience. Social media sites 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 keyword searches, clicking on links that direct them to other profiles and allow readers to leave comments.

Many 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 LinkedIn include a blogging function. It is important to understand that there is organic and paid content. All social channels have begun to drastically de-prioritize organic content in favor of paid content, which is important to consider when deciding how you want to hit your target market.

News Feed

Almost all social platforms have a form of a news feed. The news feed aggregated the data from the people you follow and uses an algorithm to rank the posts in the relevancy to you. It can also serve as the highlight reel of the people you follow since it will often pull the posts from the people you most often engage with to place it at the top.



Online technology is especially well-suited for helping non-profits reach the news media.



Using Main Social Channels

Facebook

Facebook is a great place to connect with your target audience. It allows you to view your “friends” status updates in your news feed where you can interact with them by liking, commenting, or sharing the post. Facebook’s demographic is expansive with 18-49 year olds being most active on the platform. It leans towards women, as 83% of all women online are on Facebook compared to 75% of men. For more information about using Facebook please refer to their website where they have a wide range of FAQs about the platform: https://www.facebook.com/help/570785306433644/?helpref=hc_fnav

Twitter

Twitter is great platform if you are a news network or want to follow local media or journalists known to cover your issue. In 280 characters or less you can post a status about your current thoughts, actions or ideas. You can use it to share your expertise and become a thought leader in sexual assault issues. Start by responding to the media contacts you want to get your message to or tag them in a message. It is common to see someone tweet multiple times a day and can be useful during live events to use a common hashtag (#). Whenever a user adds a hashtag to their post, it is able to be indexed by the social network and becomes searchable/discoverable by other users. Twitter typically has a younger demographic of 18-29 years old and skews towards men with 22% of all online men being on the platform versus 15% of women. For more information on how Twitter works you can refer to their website guide here: <https://help.twitter.com/en/twitter-guide>

LinkedIn

LinkedIn offers a platform that is designed for business professionals and thought leaders. It is a great platform to post relevant articles about the industry you work in or seek employment. It can also be used as a way to reach out to other businesses as a B2B (business to business) strategy for social advertising. The demographic on LinkedIn leans male, but is relatively even and 45% of all people who are making \$75,000/year or more are on LinkedIn. For more information about LinkedIn, please refer to their website here:

<https://www.linkedin.com/help/linkedin>

Instagram

Instagram is a photo-based social channel that allows the user to absorb visual content with a caption alongside each photo. 38% of women online are on this platform versus 26% of men; 90% of users are under 35. For more information about Instagram, please refer to their website here: <https://help.instagram.com/454502981253053/>

SnapChat

Snapchat is a platform that allows users to send ephemeral data, which means that the photos disappear after a very short, set amount of time. Longer messages can be made using “My Story.” This is a select collection of your Snaps that play in the order you took them. My Story posts last 24 hours, so your friends can see a longer message. 71% of Snapchat users are under 34 years old and roughly 70% of them are female, making Snapchat a great way to reach millennial women. For more information on how to use SnapChat, please visit their website here:

<https://support.snapchat.com/en-US/article/how-to-use-snapchat>

Pinterest

Pinterest is a platform where users can “pin” posts to their own board for later reference. It can be a great referral source as many times the pins will lead directly to the website where recipes, DIY and other tips and tricks can be found. Pinterest has many more women than men active on the platform (45% of online women vs. 17% of online men) but is distributed fairly evenly by age with those from 18-64 all being similarly active on the channel. For more information about Pinterest, please visit their website guide here: <https://help.pinterest.com/en/guide/all-about-pinterest>

Musical.ly

Musically is a platform that allows users to create a short lip sync video on the public news feed where other viewers can upvote their video and gain more exposure. For more information about Muscial.ly visit their website: <https://musical.ly/en-US/about>

Reddit

Reddit is a social news aggregation in a conversational forum that allows users to upvote the best comments and contribute to the conversation as well. Reddit is a male dominated channel with 67% of online men active on the channel and only 33% of women. 64% of Reddit users are under the age of 30. For more information on Reddit, please visit their website:

<https://about.reddit.com/>

Other Social and Digital Topics

Staying up to date on new platforms

Other than talking to people who consume these media platforms regularly, a great place to find new platforms is to go on the App Store or Google Play store and see what's new in the top downloads. You can access these app stores on any smartphone. Another way to stay current is to follow blogs and websites such as Mashable, Social Media Examiner, and AgroPulse. These websites will not only help to stay up to date but will teach you how to best utilize new social media features for your brand or cause.

Searching/Following Hashtags

A great way to get news the fastest is to search and follow hashtags. A hashtag is determined by a single word with the # symbol in front of it. Often times social channels will provide news more quickly than a Google search because it is easier to craft a post than write and publish a news article. On Instagram you can now follow hashtags so any posts with a given hashtag will show up in your feed. For example, you could follow or search #sexualassault on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, etc. to see the most current news surrounding the topic (Twitter is almost always the first channel to break news). This way of searching is also why it is important to include hashtags in your posts, which makes them easier for your audience to find.

Dealing with trolls and negative online comments

With the sea that is the Internet, there are bound to be trolls on any content. The best way to deal with them is to block and report them. Depending on your website's following, or your social media platform, some loyal audiences will actually shut down trolls on their own. We are also seeing the "Vote Up" style forum like on Reddit and Yik Yak which self filter the trolls to the bottom.

Many news media sources permit readers to make comments on a news story and do not censor or review the comments, or only remove comments upon the request of other readers. Some of these comments are insensitive and hurtful to victims/survivors, with the writers hiding behind anonymity. Use this opportunity to ask your local media if certain stories like those about sexual assault can be exempt from public comment. Additional questions to be asked are taken from page 18 of MNCASA's *Guide for Journalists* are: How are the comments monitored? In smaller communities are the readers engaging in discussion about the case in the comments section because they know the parties and are filling in details or providing opinions? What about defamatory comments? Are policy changes needed?

Liking, sharing, boosting, retweeting, etc.

Each media platform has their own way of acknowledging each others posts. Facebook and Instagram have "Likes", while Twitter calls it "Favoriting." Sharing on Facebook and retweeting on Twitter are basically the same, you are taking information from someone else's page and re-posting it on your page so that your audience/followers can see it. By sharing or re-tweeting something it is often assumed that you are in agreement with the post, unless commenting something additional.

Use reputable sources

Do not forward information or post onto your social media page any information that you are not sure about its accuracy or source. Anything you post on your social channels is a direct reflection of you. Use caution before posting just anything on your page. Be sure to confirm the information is coming from a reputable source. With the topic of "Fake News" on the rise it is advised to be extra cautious before reposting. If you aren't sure about it, don't post about it before you re-Google it so as to find verifying information from additional sources.

How to get followers

The best way to gain more followers is to put out quality content that provides value and a reason for people to follow you. Advice, tips, tricks, or humor are all great ways to connect with your audience and eventually grow your following. It is important to use hashtags and tag people/brands in your posts so that they are more easily searchable and will be seen by more users. Cross exposure is also a popular way to grow your audience. You can do this by collaborating with another brand and promoting each others' content so that both audiences are exposed to both brands. You can also run paid campaigns with a focus on growing your social following, but ultimately it is important that your content provides users with value.

Engagement strategies

There are many ways brands can invoke engagement. People like things because they can relate to them, they agree with them or they appreciate something about the post. You can ask people to vote by liking or sharing a post, or provide a type of incentive such as using a polling feature to ask your audience questions or with an incentive such as “every time this post is shared, our organization will donate do something for a given cause.”

Safety concerns

All social media platforms have their own rules and regulations in regard to the content that is shared. It is strongly advised that you adhere to these guidelines to stay compliant with these rules. You never want to publicly slander anyone on social media, and it is wise to keep all posts positive to avoid any backlash.

What is the right amount of censorship &/or personal stories

This is ultimately a matter of preference for each organization, but the recommended course of action is to avoid censorship unless you feel the statement severely damages the brand or another person. It’s often recommended to first respond on behalf of the brand to attempt to resolve the situation, if that doesn’t work you can hide the comment or post, and if the user continues to post it is then reasonable to block them entirely.

Chapter 7: Definitions of Media Terms

Media

Refers to broadcast and print outlets such as network television, cable television, newspapers and magazines, radio stations, wire services, and the Internet.

Social Media

Refers to a variety of social networking sites on the Internet.

Press Events

News Conference or Press Conference

A news conference is a structured event, with the intent of releasing news simultaneously to all media. One or more people read prepared statements and answer reporters' questions. A news conference is also used when there is a visual story to tell or if there is something timely and extremely important to announce. Announcing that April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month most likely will not draw reporters to a news conference, but having the mayor present to read a proclamation and speak to a new community effort might create interest.

Press Briefing

An informal, by-invitation-only meeting at which advocates give reporters background and information. Press briefings often take place over breakfast and usually involve one to three presenters and up to 12 reporters. Briefings are held to bring reporters up to speed on facts relating to an incident or a report that might be important to the program and the community. Fact sheets and other background materials should be distributed.

Press Opportunity

An event that is not planned for the media but which reporters may attend. Rallies, marches, candlelight vigils, fundraisers, public speeches or appearances, awards ceremonies, and issue forums are press opportunities.

Photo Opportunity

A press opportunity that has a particularly good visual component that is worthy of space in a newspaper or magazine.

Pre-interview

A telephone conversation with a producer of a talk show. Pre-interviews are used to make certain that the prospective guest is intelligent, articulate, well-versed on the issue, quick on his or her feet, and interesting to listen to. A pre-interview requires the same serious preparation as the interview itself.

Follow-up

Following up with media is the key to any successful media relations plan. Not only is it important to distribute materials, but follow-up calls allow 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 sending messages to respond to columnists and reporters.

Talk show - Radio or Television

A talk show provides a structured format in which guests can present issues and concerns of interest to the community. It may include a call-in component for audience questions.

Press Materials

Media Advisory

Also called a Media Alert, it is a one-page dated announcement of an upcoming event such as a press or photo opportunity. A media advisory should include a contact name, email address, and telephone number so that reporters can contact someone specific for further information. It is sent to the assignment editors, reporters, editors, and producers on your press list.

Press Release / News Release

A news release offers more information than an advisory, and usually goes out to more media vehicles. A news release should be written as an article because outlets will often print portions of good news releases verbatim. It 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 news release must include a contact to email or call for further information. Ideally it will also include a headline or first sentence that grabs the reader, a quote from a spokesperson or agency leader, and additional background information.

Backgrounder

An in-depth explanation that can be used to help a reporter who is completely new to an issue become familiar with it.

Fact Sheet

A one-page information sheet that often contains statistics or other data.

Statement

A brief – one page, maximum – commentary with the prepared remarks of a spokesperson. A statement should be dated and should include a contact name, email address, and telephone number. If you hold a news conference, a rally or other public event, you will want to issue statements that all the speakers can distribute to the press.

A statement can also be used to respond quickly to a breaking story, such as a highly publicized incident of sexual violence. It must be prepared and distributed within an hour or two of an event, and must be quotable. Good reporters often follow up a statement with questions, but having a statement helps the reporter insert commentary into the story immediately. It also increases the likelihood that the exact message you want relayed is the one the reporter uses.

Press Kit

A packet of information, usually in a pocket folder, that is distributed to the media at news conferences, at press briefings, or in response to requests for information. A press kit may contain news releases, statements, background fact sheets, and materials such as newsletters and brochures that are not designed specifically for the media but may provide helpful background information.

Calendar Notice or Calendar Release

A short, one-page news release designed to provide community calendar editors (TV, radio and print) basic information about an event. A calendar notice or announcement is intended to air or to be published.

Pitch Letters or Emails

A personalized communication that specifically urges a particular reporter to cover an event or issue. Such correspondence often describes a particularly newsworthy aspect of an event.

Edit Memo

A short memorandum, addressed to editorial page editors or members of an editorial board, asking them to devote space to an issue. A good editorial memo contains several well-written paragraphs that can be lifted and used in an editorial. Use an edit memo to direct editorial writers to specific issues. It's a good idea to include suggestions for actions that people can take.

Opinion-Editorial aka. Op-ed Piece

Also known as Commentary, an editorial is a reaction to another recent editorial, event or news story, to make a point, state a fact, provide a clarification 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.

Letter to the Editor

A letter from a newspaper reader that responds to reports or editorials with a confirming or opposing point of view and that often expands on a point made in the original article. A letter to the editor should be brief, to the point, and signed by the program director, an affected party, or another representative.

Public Service Announcement (PSA)

A public service announcement (or 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 non-profit under federal tax laws. Spot Broadcast messages are often referred to as "spots." They can be either paid-for advertising or PSAs.

Other Terms

Advertising

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

Blogs

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.

Commercial

A paid-for announcement or advertisement. For example, a radio or television sales message.

Earned Media or Free Media

Refers to publicity gained through promotional efforts other than paid media advertising. "Media acquired via word of mouth."

Electronic news/RSS

RSS (Really Simple Syndication or Rich Site Syndication) is an easy way to keep your readers abreast of updates to your site content. At their simplest and most common, 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.

Hard News

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

Hook

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.

Message

A significant political, social, or moral point that is being conveyed through a means of communication. A message may contain information, news, advice, request, point of view, etc., delivered through a variety of platforms including news stories, blogs, online discussions, and other media and social media.

Social Networking Sites

Social networking sites are excellent tools to reach new audiences and potential supporters. Social networking sites are similar to a web page. Organizations and individuals set up their own profile page, with basic information, and then link to other pages through a news feed or sometimes referred to as a “wall.” Using social networking sites is a way to promote specific campaigns or provide more information about a range of issues.

Soft News

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

Sound Bite

The media creates sound bites (brief quotes) from messages that are presented to them. Sound bites are tailored to fit media time constraints. Sound bites should be “catchy.”

Glossary compiled in part from United Way of Massachusetts Bay and CalCASA, with input and clarification from MNCASA.

Chapter 8: Toolkit

Media Advisory

The goal of an advisory is to get media to come to the event. Language should be enticing and in the future tense. The information is to get the idea of your event in front of the media and to put on their calendar. More details will follow in the press release. There is a particular format to follow when writing advisories, to include details such as who, what, where, when and why the activity is occurring. Media advisories 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 email in advance of your event. Attachments are not always opened (and sometimes cause email to go to spam folders), so the full text of your advisory should be cut and pasted into the body of the email. Remember that weekly newspapers need more lead time than daily papers, and magazines need significant lead time. Radio and TV generally need two days notice. After you email the advisory, make a follow-up phone call to make sure they have received the information and answer any questions they may have. Always remind the media on the morning of an event of the time and location.³⁴

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.*
-

³⁴ California Coalition Against Sexual Assault, *CALCASA Media Advocacy Guide*, http://www.calcasa.org/wp-content/uploads/files/calcasa_media_advocacy.pdf, page 3

Press Release

A press release is intended to capture 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 everything that your organization does. This dilutes the credibility of your organization and your chances of obtaining coverage when the really important issues arise.

A press releases should read like a news story and provide the who, what, when, where, why and how of your event. Include the most salient information in the first two paragraphs. Keep the length of the release to no more than two pages and indicate the end of the release by placing “###” or “30” at end of the document.³⁵

How to format a press release

1. The first line of the e-mail message should read: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE in all caps. This lets the reporter know the news is authorized for publication on the date they receive it.
2. Allow one spacer line, then write a headline using a combination of lower case and capital letters in a bold font. Keep your headline to 10 words or less and use action words. Do not write the headline in all capital letters because it is harder to read using e-mail software.
3. Allow another empty line for spacing, then begin the text of the release as we show, with the city and state followed by a dash. All releases must include a date because reporters do not always use releases immediately.
4. Include press contact information below the text of the news release. A reporter reading your release should be able to make a decision about your story in the first few sentences. Don't waste that space with contact information. They will scroll down to find out who to contact if they want to follow-up with you.

³⁵ California Coalition Against Sexual Assault, *CALCASA Media Advocacy Guide*, http://www.calcasa.org/wp-content/uploads/files/calcasa_media_advocacy.pdf, page 26

5. Include all relevant information. For example, don't make a reporter search for additional specifics about your event's time, date, location, registration information, etc.
6. Finally, close the document with the characters -30- or ### which are style conventions that let the reporter know that they have reached the end of the story.

If you have created an event flyer, include it with the press release.

See Appendix B for a sample press release.

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.

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 like noon and 5 p.m. If an event is too late in the day it will not likely get coverage until the next day unless it involves a major news story.³⁶

³⁶ California Coalition Against Sexual Assault, *CALCASA Media Advocacy Guide*, http://www.calcasa.org/wp-content/uploads/files/calcasa_media_advocacy.pdf, page 33

Op-Ed: Opinion-Editorial

An Op-Ed is an opinion piece presented by a guest writer that appears opposite the editorial page in a newspaper. Most papers will print Op-Eds that are around 650-750 words. As Op-Eds grow longer, the risk of them being "chopped" by the editor increases significantly. Because each paper has specific criteria for publishing Op-Eds, it is best to call the editorial page editor of the newspaper to verify its policy prior to submitting your piece.

Format

The first line grabs the reader's attention. The first paragraph highlights the issue, pegs it to the news hook, and states your opinion. If you are responding to another Op-Ed or a news story, be sure to reference the title and author. Paragraphs should be no more than two to three sentences each. Focus on one or two points that flow logically to a brief but strong conclusion. Finish with a strong memorable phrase, also known as a "pull" quote. Be sure that your Op-Ed is double spaced with wide margins and typewritten. Newspapers follow up with people who submit Op-Eds before printing the pieces (to verify the identity of the author). List your name, address, phone, fax, and e-mail contact information at the top of the opinion piece.

How to get your Op-Ed published

Decide which newspaper you want to submit your Op-Ed to and contact the opinion page staff to ask how they prefer to receive submissions. Instructions for submitting an Op-Ed are usually at the bottom of the page where they appear or on the paper's website. Some newspapers like to receive them by email when possible.

Follow up

Most Op-Ed editors will respond to you within a week. If you have not heard back in that timeframe, or if your piece is particularly time sensitive, you should call the newspaper and inquire about whether they received your Op-Ed and whether they are considering publishing it. If they say that they are not interested, be sure to ask why and, if possible, make any suggested changes and re-submit the piece. Or try another news outlet.

Pass it on

Send a copy of your Op-Ed to your state representative and senator, your board members and to MNCASA. It is very helpful for MNCASA to keep track of what pieces are being written across the state. It is also important to remember that once an Op-Ed is published, you should take advantage of its publication. Distribute copies of it or email it to others who may find it useful.

Here is an outline for an Op-Ed piece:

<Date>

<Byline>

<Suggested Title>

<First paragraph. Should state your opinion, introduce the issue, and relate it to a recent news event.>

<Remainder of body text. Includes your main points and a brief conclusion.>

<Insert identification information at the end of the article.>

###

(Indicates op-ed is finished.)

Letter to the Editor

Writing a letter to your local paper's editor regarding a news story is a good way to draw attention to your organization and the work you are doing. Sexual assault programs often write letters to the editor after problematic coverage of a story dealing with sexual violence or individuals who commit sexual offenses. Programs also write letters to the editor to recognize the newspaper's exceptional coverage of the issue of sexual violence.

Here is an example of a letter to the editor:

<Name of Organization>

<Address>

<Bldg., Floor, Suite, Other Address Info>

<City>, <State> <Zip or Postal Code>

Dear Editor:

<State your reason for writing here. If you are responding to writings or editorials by the media outlet, use the first sentence to reference the title of the article, name of the publication, and date it appeared.>

<State your case here. Include facts and references to establish credibility.>

<End with a strongly worded positive statement. >

Sincerely,

<Writer's Signature if this is a paper copy>

<Name of Writer>

<Writer's Title>

<Writer's Organization>

Press Kit

Organization Brochure

Brochures are especially helpful to explain your organization outside of a simple press release.

For a press kit, you can include any number of brochures that give the editor/reporter a large amount of information about your organization/services. This helps them determine if they want to cover what you're offering up for free media exposure.

Past Press Coverage

If you've received free media coverage, you can include a simple sheet identifying those media outlets. Remember to include the title of the article, the media outlet, the date, and if possible, a link to where to find it. Don't go overboard, one page of past articles listed should be sufficient. If you're including full copies of past articles, a few pages will be more than enough content for your press kit. Try to use articles that were recently published.

Organization/Issue Background

Writing a company history page can be valuable for all of your future press kits. This background details your company's beginnings — where you've been and where you're going. Be sure to update it with recent accomplishments and other good news in your history.

Bios

A new Executive Director. A new staff person. New program launch. New members on your board of directors. Biographies, along with high-resolution images, give the editor much-needed background information about the people behind the organization. Some publications print a bio word for word so write the bio in the third person point of view rather than first person point of view.

Quote Sheet

Your media contact's info should be very easy for any editor to find for additional questions about your press kit. But a quote sheet can also be used to give busy editors quotes they need to complete an article without tracking down a company's PR person.

A quote sheet can feature quotes from your executives, product developers, even the PR contact. One sheet of quotes can answer the most obvious questions an editor's likely to have and can be put in a quote that sounds professional and informative. You want each quote to look good on paper since that quote could be used verbatim in print.

Images

Is an image relevant to your press kit? If so, you can include a printed copy in your press packet, but be sure it's available on your website, or can be emailed as a high-resolution image of at least 200 dpi (dots per inch) and in a photo format such as a JPEG (or .jpg). Just be sure to include the direct link to an image gallery in your press kit materials.

Fact Sheets

A fact sheet can be a great addition to a press kit because it details features, benefits and other specific information in a way that educates the reporter or editor about your organization and/or programs and services with quick hits of information. Fact sheets can be used for program launches, press kits about new research, news conferences and other areas where you want to give the editor key bits of facts that they may want to use word for word.

Talking Points

These are for YOU or your speakers — not to be included in a press packet.

Crafting talking points helps you stay on task. If the interview is more heated — if you were being interviewed about a very publicized sexual assault that has caused the community to take sides — having talking points prepared will keep the interview focused on your organization's position and the facts. Remember, you're representing your organization, and you want to make sure your messages are clear and fact-based.

Appendix A – MNCASA Communications Protocol

1) Media Inquiry (route based on availability and urgency of request):

- a) Public and Legal Affairs Manager
Coordinate all media inquiries; will either respond directly or, based on the request/subject matter, refer to executive director or appropriate staffer. It is okay to provide PLAM's cell phone to text/call when a major media outlet is inquiring. Major media outlets include daily newspapers, network or cable news, radio news. If you are not sure, ask.
- b) Executive Director
The executive director will receive direct media inquiries and will either respond or involve the appropriate staffer(s). ED will inform the PLAM when she has these contacts. It is okay to provide ED's cell phone to text/call when a major media outlet is inquiring.
- c) Prevention and Membership Managers
Back-ups above are not available. They will communicate with above if they engage with any media contacts.
- d) SVJI Manager
Run all SVJI related matters through either PLAM or ED but then refer to SVJI manager for response either via that manager or appropriate staff. If PLAM or ED not available go directly to SVJI manager.

2) Guidelines

- a) For media contacts: Respond or refer as quickly as possible since most print and television outlets are on a short deadline.
- b) When receiving a media inquiry find out basically what they are seeking in their communication with MNCASA. This will be helpful in determining the appropriate staffer to respond.
- c) Always offer full disclosure to media about any relationships that may be perceived as conflicts of interest or have an impact on ability to be impartial.
- d) It is okay to decline a media request if the information required to respond is not available. Note that in most situations MNCASA will not respond to the specifics of a case because the organization does not have access to all the appropriate information. However it is possible to comment generally on concepts raised by a case. An exception would be a situation like the recent U of MN case in which the investigative reports were made public.

- e) If a manager receives a direct media request and you sense that you are able to answer it because it is in your area of expertise it is okay to respond and then inform PLAM and ED. Otherwise refer to the PLAM or ED to determine response.
- f) The outgoing agency message should indicate who to contact for media inquiries.
- g) When possible, the executive director should respond to any media inquiries from national media sources (i.e. Associated Press, New York Times, CNN, etc.); however if she is not available the PLAM or back-up managers will assess response based on timing needs and subject matter.
- h) If none of the above staffers are available do not respond to the media request until seeking further guidance from a manager, as listed above.
- i) At times MNCASA may refer media to outside sources who will provide additional expertise. This may be a MNCASA contractor or a colleague from another agency. Seek permission first for the referral if you think it is necessary or if the person is someone who regularly speaks to the press let the referral know that an inquiry may be coming.
- j) When necessary, media corrections will be directed to the writer and/or addressed in a statement on MNCASA's Facebook page

3) Press Releases

- a) Press releases will be issued in coordination with major MNCASA initiatives or partnerships, or in response to significant events.
- b) The PLAM and ED will be listed as contacts on the press release.
- c) Press releases will be sent to media contacts, all staff, the program director/member listservs, posted on website plus Facebook and Twitter pages.

4) Other Forms of Public Communication

- a) Op-Eds, Letters to the Editor, Commentary – The need to respond in this manner will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis with an eye toward using this approach when additional explanation to the public would be helpful (i.e. the media coverage did not go into sufficient detail or presented wrong information). These tools will be used judiciously.
- b) Talking Points for Members – These will be provided to members as tools for communicating in their own communities and with their local media. MNCASA staff assigned to developing talking points will be determine on expertise area and on a case-by-case basis.

Appendix B – Sample News Release

November 17, 2017

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Teri McLaughlin, Executive Director, 651-288-7441
Caroline Palmer, Public and Legal Affairs Manager, 651-288-7445

Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault Statement on New Sexual Harassment Reports

St. Paul, MN: Last week the Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MNCASA) issued a statement on sexual harassment at the state legislature in response to reports involving Senator Dan Schoen and Representative Tony Cornish. Yesterday Senator Al Franken was in the news for sexual harassment as well. It is our expectation that in the weeks to come we will hear many more reports involving lawmakers and other individuals in power, both in Minnesota and beyond.

With today's statement, we reinforce our commitment to stand with victim/survivors of sexual harassment. We call upon those whose behavior has caused harm to assume responsibility for their actions and to accept the consequences.

We also re-assert that sexual violence, including sexual harassment, is not a partisan issue. Those who hold power and privilege must take the lead in stopping the tolerance of such behavior, rather than perpetuate the problem by turning a blind eye or minimizing the impact. They must take the concerns of victim/survivors seriously and commit to action rather than rhetoric.

The sheer number of personal experiences is overwhelming. As a result, through media reports victim/survivors are experiencing daily reminders of the harms perpetrated against them. These memories can exacerbate physical and mental health symptoms related to stress, trauma and lingering injury. Victim/survivors need strong, nonjudgmental support systems to help them cope. Advocates are standing by, 24-7, ready to help through free and confidential support services. See www.rapehelpmn.org to find a local crisis center.

This is a historic moment in the movement to end sexual violence. Victim/survivors feel empowered by the courage on display. With each new report, others feel they too can take the chance that someone will believe, listen and act. Now is the time for a significant cultural shift, one that makes sexual harassment the exception, not the norm, in all sectors of society.

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Appendix C – Sample Commentary (2)

An imperfect but understandable response to sexual misconduct

By: Caroline Palmer January 12, 2018

Editor's Note: Caroline Palmer, public and legal affairs manager at the Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault, sent this piece to Minnesota Lawyer in response to "The Fallout from Sen. Franken's resignation," published Jan. 3, 2108.

Watershed cultural moments inspire tough questions, and #MeToo is no different. Over recent months we've seen powerful men in politics, business, media and entertainment held accountable for sexual harassment and sexual assault. In many cases their behavior was tolerated, excused and even encouraged, often for years. And those of us who work in the anti-sexual-violence movement have also heard the sort of questions about due process, zero tolerance and the hierarchy of harm raised by Professor Steven Schier in his Jan. 3, 2018, commentary, "The Fallout from Senator Franken's resignation."

It is impossible to deny the catharsis of so many voices coming together to say out loud what was repressed for so long. Our society is unkind to those who speak out about sexual harassment and sexual assault. It is difficult to find support even among friends and family, let alone the broader public, where blame and disbelief are the most common responses. There's the usual dismissive terminology "he said/she said" or some variation thereof depending on the genders of those involved. For those who do report to law enforcement, justice can be elusive. The rate of cases resulting in conviction is extremely low, approximately 0.2 to 5.2 per 100 according to End Violence Against Women International, a federally funded technical assistance and training provider.

Civil actions are also challenging, despite the lower burden of proof. It can be difficult to find an attorney who will take a case when there is little to gain from the defendant, be it an individual or an institution. Legal fees are costly. Countersuits, including defamation, are always a risk. The victim/survivor is often portrayed as an opportunist out for a big payday. And a settlement or verdict can take a very long time to reach — if ever.

The vast majority of victim/survivors — many of whom are marginalized and vulnerable and don't have the means or platform to speak out — continue day in and day out to endure sexual harassment and assault because they have no other choice, no access to a lawyer, no knowledge of their rights and no faith that anyone will care. Food, shelter, childcare and other basic needs all depend on staying in situations that are degrading and harmful. They cannot afford to say "me too" without suffering extreme consequences.

The above paragraphs describe just a few of the barriers to justice for victim/survivors. And while these barriers in no way negate the importance of due process, it's easy to understand why so many people, denied justice for too long, are impatient for action. Zero tolerance is an extreme stance and potentially not appropriate in all cases, but it may be necessary in a world where tolerance has only perpetuated the problem of sexual harassment.

We have to be clear about what we expect from those who hold powerful positions, especially when they are charged with making the laws. This can be difficult when a legislator is a champion for a cause we care about — much is lost in a situation like Sen. Franken's. While in office, he used his position to improve the system response to sexual violence, and he will hopefully continue to do so as a private citizen.

Franken resigned because he could not be effective in this or any other pursuit as a lawmaker. He may have even considered how an ethics investigation would put the women who made allegations into a harsh spotlight, one that Anita Hill dealt with during the Clarence Thomas Supreme Court confirmation hearings in 1991. That was a shameful moment in congressional history, but also one that could easily be repeated in 2017.

The court of public opinion is neither fair nor nuanced. Victim/survivors know this all too well. Most people don't want vigilante justice but are understandably interested in gaining leverage against the powerful, privileged and connected who break the rules and laws in our society yet retain their roles with impunity. Zero tolerance can feel like a way to recalibrate an imbalance that has existed for centuries. It's an imperfect response but an understandable one.

Right now we need to honor the moment and learn from it. It's going to be uncomfortable and messy — like any other movement it will take time to evolve and grow and mature. The message of #MeToo is ultimately about culture change. To achieve a world where sexual harassment and assault no longer exists does not mean trading in our values, like a commitment to due process. But as lawyers we know that due process isn't the only answer — it doesn't guarantee just results. In the end, we need to look at how all of the systems that govern our lives are complicit in the harm and respond accordingly.

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Published in Minnesota Lawyer 1/12/17

Additional sample commentary:

<http://www.startribune.com/adjudication-process-didn-t-spiral-out-of-control-in-u-football-players-case/414017453/>

COMMENTARY

Adjudication process didn't 'spiral out of control' in U football players' case

Editorial wrongly faulted a process that differs substantially from a criminal prosecution.

By Rana Alexander and Jeanne Ronayne FEBRUARY 16, 2017 — 5:58PM

The editorial “Lessons to be learned from U football mess” (Feb. 9) perpetuates several misconceptions. As organizations committed to improving the response to sexual violence, we feel compelled to clarify.

The University of Minnesota’s campus adjudication process did not “spiral out of control” in this case. The school’s procedure is dictated by federal law — Title IX — and by its own codes of conduct for student-athletes and students. To understand this point, it is necessary to separate the decisions of the Hennepin County attorney’s office from the school’s approach. Criminal charges are not required for the campus adjudication process.

The burden of proof in a criminal prosecution is “beyond reasonable doubt.” It is the highest burden in our legal system because the constitutional right to liberty is at stake.

A college student who is subject to campus adjudication is entitled to due process but the stakes are not as high. Access to adult education is not a fundamental right, nor is playing football. Schools can set forth reasonable expectations for how students behave (like not perpetrating or watching a sexual assault) and because students can’t be put in jail or prison for violating the school’s expectations, the burden of proof is lower — preponderance of the evidence.

Characterizing the preponderance-of-the-evidence standard as “50 percent and a feather” is grossly inaccurate. It is the same standard used in civil litigation for workplace-based gender and racial discrimination cases under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, hardly a lightweight law. Four students were found “not responsible” because the preponderance of evidence standard was not met. The students who were suspended or expelled can pursue additional legal remedies at school or in court.

Complaints by the press about the public display of players’ identities are disingenuous. Ironically, the editorial links to an article with a photo showing some of them. An attorney for the players talked about the case on Twitter. Their parents were interviewed by reporters. The

story was all over mainstream media and social media because of the players' advocates. Had the case been criminally charged, public documents and player photos would have been broadcast.

Conversely, the university maintained confidentiality as required under federal law. There is no evidence that the school leaked the investigative report from the Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action Office. When asked, the school declined to share protected information, and continues to do so.

Characterizing the players' threatened boycott of the bowl game as an act of "solidarity" that was "snuffed out" by the report leak disregards their misguided approach. It is past time for the media, attorneys and parents to treat these student-athletes as adults who have an obligation to understand the requirements of their athletic contracts and codes of conduct, as well as the basics of sexual assault prevention. All of this information was available to them via trainings through the athletic program and the university.

The players' boycott news conference ignored the seriousness of sexual assault. Not only did they incorrectly equate the campus investigation process with the criminal justice system, they failed to mention that a visiting high school recruit — a minor — was encouraged into sexual activity. They also completely mischaracterized the student-athlete code of conduct, a code many of them had been governed by for several years. They cast themselves as victims of a system they made no effort to learn about. Chagrined after the release of the EOAA report and related public outcry, some players acknowledged that a woman took the difficult step of reporting a sexual assault.

The Star Tribune's Editorial Board made the same error. The editorial only referred to the alleged victim regarding her right to appeal, as if it is somehow unfair that all parties have a chance to seek review. The board compares this campus-based procedural right, incorrectly, to the criminal justice process, failing to recognize that the processes are completely different.

If the board believes the players are having a tough time, please remember that the victim and her family have spent many horrific months seeking accountability. She now lives with the trauma of a sexual assault. Don't burden her with blame for "ruining" people's lives by seeking justice.

Rana Alexander is executive director of Standpoint. Jeanne Ronayne is executive director of the Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault.

Appendix D – MNCASA Sample Position Statements

Position Statements Opposing the 2012 Minnesota Ballot Questions

Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault

On November 6, 2012, Minnesota voters will encounter two state constitutional amendment questions on the ballot. The first question limits the status of marriage to opposite-sex couples. The second question proposes changes to the in-person and absentee voting process, voter registration and provisional ballots.

Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault is a voice for victims/survivors, sexual assault programs and allies committed to ending sexual violence. Both ballot questions present negative consequences for sexual violence survivors. MNCASA opposes these ballot questions.

The Marriage Amendment

MNCASA believes that systems of oppression, such as homophobia, are among the root causes of sexual violence. Because MNCASA is committed to challenging institutions, issues, practices and policies that promote systems of oppression the organization is opposed to the marriage amendment. If passed, the amendment will permanently enshrine discrimination in our state constitution, restrict the freedom of Minnesotans to create families of their choosing, and send a message that some people are worthy of the full protections and guarantees of a civil society while others are not. MNCASA will join the Minnesotans United for All Families campaign to work with allies in opposition to the amendment.

The Voting Amendment

Voting is one of the most important routes citizens can use to inform lawmakers about the issues that matter to them. Survivors of sexual violence have a right to full participation in the electoral process and yet this amendment has the potential to disenfranchise survivors and suppress their electoral participation by creating barriers to access. Any restriction on the ability of survivors of sexual violence to advocate for their interests is of concern to MNCASA.

Most pertinent, the amendment creates a new system of provisional balloting that will replace election day registration. This change could hinder a survivor's ability to vote. If a survivor has fled from home for safety reasons and votes in a new location, the survivor will only be able to cast a provisional ballot and then must return to her local elections office (perhaps many miles away) to show valid photo identification. This inconvenience will be compounded by the degree of risk in returning, lack of funds and geographical distance. Many survivors will not be able to

take this step and their votes will not count. The amendment also presents possible restrictions to absentee voting (another means of safer voting access for survivors) because of requirements to present “substantially equivalent identity and eligibility verification” prior to casting a ballot.

MNCASA is committed to challenging systems that further victimize survivors of sexual violence. The voter photo identification amendment will harm survivors’ ability to participate fully in society. MNCASA will join the Our Vote Our Future campaign to work with allies in opposition to the amendment.

Appendix E – MNCASA Draft Social Media Policy

Platforms

MNCASA maintains organizational pages on the following platforms:

- Facebook (MNCASAinfo)
- Twitter (MNCASA1)
- Instagram (mncasa)
- Pinterest (mncasa)

Goals

The goals of MNCASA's social media pages are to:

- Provide a leadership voice on current issues related to sexual violence prevention and intervention;
- Identify the countless ways that sexual violence shows up in our communities;
- Shift public thinking about sexual violence towards prevention and community responsibility;
- Provide education for partners, allies, and the general public via news, blog posts, and resources relating to sexual violence; and
- Promote and celebrate MNCASA's, partners', and allies' accomplishments.

Content Curation and Management

MNCASA's social media pages will be managed by the Public and Legal Affairs Manager (manager), and the Communications and Resource Design Specialist (specialist). Other staff may post on behalf of MNCASA and should request access from the specialist.

The manager and specialist may request that staff who are attending special events post from the event on behalf of MNCASA. Any staff who do this will be shown how to post on behalf of MNCASA. Any staff who want to share photos from an event but do not wish to have account access should send photo(s), a description of the event, and who/what is shown in the photo(s) to the manager or specialist. If prior permission has not been requested and granted on a registration form, staff will ask for a person's consent before taking and posting their photo. If someone requests that we remove their picture from our social media for any reason, we will do so immediately.

All staff are encouraged to send content to the manager or specialist to share on our various platforms. In order to share information about a broad range of experiences, staff are encouraged to share their preferred sources for news gathering with the manager or specialist. All posts should be consistent with MNCASA's values and strategic directions to:

- Activate people to prevent sexual violence;
- Create systems that are free from oppression;
- Create and advance practices so that victims/survivors experience fairness, dignity, and respect;
- Increase the effectiveness of sexual violence/sexual assault programs in Minnesota; and
- Develop and deepen partnerships to build the movement.

When posting, we will hide photos from the timeline that reinforce myths and misperceptions.

When responding to questions or comments, we will solicit input from staff "issue experts."

We will have a clear disclaimer on all platforms that indicates where survivors can find support. Anyone who requests support through our social media pages will receive a response within 24 hours that provides information about local advocacy resources for them, including a link to RapeHelpMN.org and our phone number if they have additional questions about connecting to advocacy services.

Posts may not promote specific candidates for office, or fundraise for any individual or organization external to MNCASA and its partner programs. Posts that serve to educate about legislative efforts may be shared, but they must be related to our current policy agenda and be approved by the manager or Executive Director before posting.

Negative posts

Negative posts will not be deleted unless someone's safety is in question, a victim/survivor's name is posted, or if the post is considered abusive by MNCASA staff. We will have a disclaimer on all platforms that states our comment policy. Negative posts which are not deleted will be responded to within two business days of their posting, with the input of the manager or Executive Director.

Feedback Disclaimer

"You are invited and encouraged to share your thoughts and responses to our posts via the comment function. We reserve the right to delete any comments that are deemed inappropriate (e.g. derogatory, inflammatory, or abusive)."

Appendix F – Sample Communications Strategy Plan

Guiding Questions

- Who are we trying to reach?
- What information does our audience want and need? If we do not know, how can we find out?
- What is our audience's use of, and comfort level with, various communication tools?
- What do we want to accomplish with this particular audience?
- Is someone else already doing this? What partnerships do we need to engage to learn more about this audience and plan a response?
- What resources (e.g. funding, time, capacity, human resources, etc.) do we have to implement and maintain this strategy?
- What tools are most appropriate for this target audience, objectives, and strategy?
- What would success look like? How can we measure it?

1. PEOPLE: Who are we trying to reach?

We have the ability to reach anyone who has Internet access through a computer or mobile device, as well as face-to-face through conferences and trainings. The better we understand our audiences – their priorities, concerns, issues, environment – the greater our ability to target messages to them.

Our primary services target:

Victims/Survivors and their family and friends
Allied professionals and organizations
SART/SMART teams

We also provide and/or promote information to:

- Legislators/Elected officials
- Individual allies & supporters of our work
- Media
- General public
- Donors

Consider: What do these audiences think about our issues/topics now? (preaching to the choir vs. general public attitude/awareness)

WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT CHALLENGE?

2. OBJECTIVES: What are we trying to accomplish? What do we want to be different with new communication efforts? What do we want the audience to KNOW, THINK or DO as a result?

Our mission and primary objectives will guide our communication approach, and help us to meet the needs of our target audiences.

Mission:

The Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault provides leadership and resources for sexual assault programs and allies to prevent sexual violence while promoting a comprehensive, socially just response for all victims/survivors.

Objectives:

- Position MNCASA as the “thought leader” for all issues relating to sexual violence.
- Provide technical assistance and support to member programs throughout the state, including ongoing training and education, development and distribution of educational materials, community outreach, public policy initiatives, resources and referrals.
- Increase knowledge about sexual violence prevention throughout MN, increase access to advocacy services and justice outcomes for victims/survivors.
- Change society’s attitudes toward sexual violence and its victims/survivors, and change the systems that further victimize survivors.
- Call out the root causes of sexual violence (sexism, racism, homophobia, transphobia, classism, disability discrimination, religious oppression, ageism) and challenge the institutions, issues, practices and policies that promote these systems of oppression.
- Increase use of new media tools and emerging technologies to extend the reach of MNCASA/SVJI programs to victims/survivors, advocates and teams.
- Focus communication efforts on engaging stakeholders to take action on behalf of victims/survivors.

WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT CHALLENGE?

3. MESSAGES: What are the key messages for each audience? What is the purpose of the communication?

- Victims/Survivors and their family and friends: Outreach, support, prevention initiatives, policy issues
- Allied professionals, organizations: Trainings, prevention initiatives, policy issues
- SMART/SART teams: Support, trainings, technical assistance, surveys, evaluation resources, policy issues

- Legislators/Elected officials: Policy issues, prevention initiatives
- Individual allies & supporters of our work: Policy, prevention, surveys, outreach
- Media: How to speak/write more accurately about sexual assault issues, policy, emerging issues, response to news items, crisis communication
- General public: Understanding the issue, change in attitude, lead to culture/systems change
- Donors: Support our work, understand the importance of various issues, funding challenges, etc.

Know our messages backwards and forwards. Focus on what our audiences need to help identify and develop our message.

WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT CHALLENGE?

- 4. TOOLS: What are the most appropriate tools to use? Be creative in accessing our audience, but go where they already are – if online, communicate online, if on same floor, gather and talk in person.**

Use multiple communications vehicles and approaches to reach target audiences and accomplish our objectives, including:

- print publications/newsletter;
- online communications (e-newsletter, action alerts, policy updates);
- SMS (text) messaging;
- website, landing pages;
- meeting and conference materials;
- media relations and public relations materials (journalist guide);
- marketing/tabling tools;
- legal and legislative documents;
- incoming communications, including reception procedures and voice mail content;
- committee and board communiques;
- corporate identity materials, including letterhead, logo, and envelopes;
- surveys;
- certificates and awards;
- annual reports;
- signage;
- speeches; and
- invoices.

Through our communication strategy, we disseminate and promote a variety of information, including:

- State and federal laws, policies, resources and research updates relating to sexual assault, gender violence, stalking, and trafficking;
- Updates and information on Action Day at the Minnesota Capitol and Sexual Assault Awareness Month;
- Relevant sexual violence awareness and prevention conference information and details;
- Tools for using new media in response to sexual violence prevention;
- Other tools, materials and communication campaigns.

Current Communication Tools?

Possible tools you may already have:

- Comprehensive and responsive website
- ListServ communications
- One-way email notifications, i.e. Constant Contact
- Webinars/Conference calls
- Journalism/Media Guide
- Facebook
- Twitter
- Pinterest, Instagram or SnapChat
- YouTube
- RapeHelpmn.org
- Conference trainings
- In-person meetings
- Meetings with Federal, state or community partners

Other technology tools to consider: E-newsletter, blog, podcasts

Secondary Focus/Presence

- Press Releases/ Media Advisories
- Executive Director/other interviews
- Public Service Announcements

Other technology tools to consider: Flickr, Storify, Slideshare, Foursquare, SMS

5. STRATEGY: How do new and traditional media support our objectives? (need to be consistent with our usual activity)

To best meet our audiences' information needs, we will use the following strategies:

- Disseminate, repurpose, and promote sexual violence awareness information via new media platforms “anytime, anywhere, and on any device” and encourage individuals to personalize and share information, thus extending the reach of prevention messages to broader audiences and giving those messages peer-to-peer credibility.
- Encourage others to build new media into their communications planning and promote new media to partners and target audiences.

6. IMPLEMENTATION

Organizational communication is a management process. It is a change agent – not just conveying information but also influencing behavior by persuading people to take action toward our objectives. To be understood and effective, we must use a receiver-focused approach in content and context, and our message and information must be compelling, continuous, creative and credible.

- Develop clear, consistent **messages** delivered in one clear voice.
- Develop clear **branding elements** for all marketing and communications materials and stick to these elements consistently.
- Create **print materials** as needed (brochure, letterhead, annual report, etc).
- **Website design** should be consistent with, or even lead the branding of all other material.
- Develop means of “perception of freshness” to **keep updated**: i.e., list of three occurrences within the last 7-14 days).
- Develop regular means of communicating with each audience (ie. **newsletter**). May be different with each, but do-able and not overlapping of information.
 - What format?
 - How often?
 - Prevention vs. Policy vs. Member info vs. Sexual Violence Justice Institute – each separate? Or MNCASA as a whole?
- Develop **social media** plan
 - Which platforms (Facebook, Twitter, others?)
 - How often?
 - Content?
- Meet regularly with **news media** re: *Journalist Guide to Reporting on Sexual Assault* (www.mncasa.org)

7. SCHEDULE: When to deliver which messages? Timing may determine how to communicate.

Sample Calendar of expected events:

- January
 - Start of legislative session/policy agenda
- February
 - First fundraising appeal letter
- March
 - Action Day at the Capitol
- April
 - Sexual Assault Awareness month
- May
 - End of session/session wrap up
 - National conference
- June
 - Pride Festival
- September
 - Second fundraising appeal letter
- October
 - Annual Report/Annual Membership meeting
- November
 - Training Symposium
 - Policy Agenda released
 - Give to the Max Day
- December
 - Year end/holiday greetings & fundraising appeal
- Others events with open-ended dates:
 - Legal advocacy training
 - Regional meetings
- Issues:
 - Policy Updates
 - New laws
 - Upcoming community events
- Communication monitoring:
 - Daily: Monitor and respond to direct messages, Facebook comments, Twitter mentions and retweets
 - Bi-/Weekly: Update websites for content change
 - Monthly: Track visitor traffic to website, track social network followers
 - Quarterly: Track progress towards stated goals
 - Biannually: Look at current status of progress toward objectives and reassess as needed
 - Annually: Review and revise the Communications Strategy; revisit target audiences, mission, objectives and activities

8. EVALUATION: How do we measure success?

Suggested schedule:

- Monthly report on work in progress
- Interactive (web visitors, analytics, social media)
- Media coverage (how much, tone, audience, message)
- Periodic briefings with the Executive Director and department managers
- Public inquiries (letters, emails, calls, tone)
- Other stakeholders' reaction (board, volunteers, members, colleagues)
- Year-end summary for the annual report

Appendix G – Advocates’ Experiences and Advice

Response to Media

These statements are responses from advocates to the question “Can you tell us about a time when you received media coverage and had not wanted it?”

Member Statement	Advice
“When the media printed an article about a client and included lots of details from court/[initial complaint report] and then stated she was staying in a shelter.”	Use this opportunity to contact the media, and try to meet with the editors and publishers about how their actions can cause further harm to victims. Offer them the link to the MNCASA Guide for Journalists.
“The local newspaper made a publication about a survivor of trafficking that put her in danger.”	Similar to the situation above, make your concerns completely known to the media outlet, and insist on a response that they are aware of their actions and will strive not to do it again.
“<i>Rolling Stone</i> article where... (the) published article made victim appear to lie [and] then everyone focused on false reports.”	Refer those that bring up false reports to the current research that shows sexual assault reports have the same false reporting rates as many other crimes, at 2-8%. Reports on this topic are available on MNCASA’s website.
“The press likes to cover sensational stranger-danger rape stories - especially if perpetrator is a registered sex offender and/or man of color. It’s annoying when they call me about that sort of story.”	Use this opportunity to turn their questions into your own talking points. Point out the stranger rape scenario is a much smaller percentage of assaults than where the victim knows the assailant. Talk to media about monitoring coverage so as to not perpetuate racial and ethnic bias.

Crisis Examples

Member Statement	Advice
“A high profile corporate donor got convicted in a Ponzi scheme and we had received donations from said corporation several years earlier.”	This is a good example of when it is appropriate to have a crisis communications plan in place. Have a clear hierarchy of who responds to the media, and develop a concise message that addresses the issue.
“For the most part, we were able to manage and shape the conversation following a high profile case (28 interview requests in 8 hours). We worked without [a] consultant and made decisions to focus on a positive campaign instead of focusing solely on the end of the crime.”	This is a good example of taking control of the message with the goal of having both a short-and long-term impact, especially when a news story is focused on a high-profile crime.

Promotion

These statements are responses to the request “Tell us about a time when you tried to get media coverage but did not get the response you wanted.”

Member Statement	Advice
“Anytime there is a local [domestic violence] homicide, we’d rather they give out facts instead they interview neighbors who are shocked <i>“He’s such a nice guy.”</i> ”	Message the interview with statistics and facts about prevalence and dynamics. Explain that sexual and domestic violence may be hidden, and that it can be difficult to really know what goes on in private.
“This summer, [our organization] contacted the local media to share the news of our significant increase in [sexual assault] cases. Unfortunately, the resulting headline and article labeled the information as domestic assault. Subsequently, the message was lost.”	This is a good opportunity to point out they were wrong and ask for a redaction or another story to clarify the difference between sexual assault and domestic violence cases. Write letters to the editor for publication or an Op-Ed if they refuse to do a correction or follow up story.
“[Our local paper] did a report on who are the sex buyers [and] all about how most sex buyers are 40 [year] old married white men and used pictures of all black young men.”	Similar to the case above, use this opportunity to point out their error to the publication and ask for an apology. Use the a letter to the editor or an Op-Ed to get their attention if they do not respond to your request. Reiterate that media can help to address racial and ethnic bias.
“When the media hounds you for info that is specific to a victim/survivor you may or may not have worked with [and] clearly you can’t speak to that [and] they don’t often understand.”	Make it clear to the journalists asking the questions that the law prohibits organizations or spokespeople to provide a response without the victim’s consent. Never confirm or deny whether you know the victim/survivor or have provided services to them. Explain why confidentiality is important to advocacy.

What Went Well

These statements are responses to the request “Tell us about a time that media coverage or your interaction with media went well.”

Member statement	Advice
“A few years ago, we advocated (successfully) regarding the city attorney’s neglect of victims in cases at arraignments. Our success was due, in large part, to a great informative newspaper article.”	This shows the power of having a good working relationship with the media to raise awareness a issues that may be overlooked without media attention. The media can be a very helpful partner in promoting system change.
“It goes well if we’re prepared, have questions prior, [and] they have a general understanding of the issue, of confidentiality, [and] aren’t rushed.”	Exactly.

What Went Wrong

These statements are responses to the request “Tell us about a time that media coverage or your response to the media did not go well.”

Member Statement	Advice
“Publish stats pulled from website about [sexual violence] rates and then (they) framed it as I said it somehow - which made prosecutors office be defensive.”	Always be truthful. In some cases, it could be advised to give advanced notice to a party you have referenced in your discussion with the media. This might not be the case in every instance depending on your relationship. Be tactical about how and what you say.
“Media not understanding if untested kits (does) can include anonymous kits (not understanding the “whole story” behind data)”	Some information cannot explained in a sound bite; tell the journalist this and say why (i.e. “This is a very complex topic and I cannot give you a short answer ” Use this opportunity to see if the journalist or publication will sit down with you to have a more in-depth conversation about larger issues such as this.

Needs to Help be Prepared

These statements are responses to the request “List the topic areas you feel less prepared to discuss with the media.”

Member Statement	Advice
“Our organization is looking for/creating a media “tool kit” for survivors/families with tips for how THEY can deal with the media. HELP!!”	Use some of the resources in this manual. Remind survivors/families that they don’t have to talk to the media if they don’t want to or they could ask/hire someone to serve as a spokesperson. Sometimes it can be very difficult to avoid the media in high-profile cases so help the survivor/family members plans to avoid confrontation.
“We attempt to send reporters to different agencies if it is a better fit for them to answer.”	Good advice.
“When media thinks you will speak directly about a specific case.”	Say to the reporter, “We are only able to speak to concepts, not specifics during an ongoing case. It is difficult to respond in more detail until the sentencing stage.” Again, make it clear the law prohibits organizations or spokespeople to provide a statement or response without the victim’s consent. Do not guess about any aspect of the case – it is okay to say “I don’t know.”

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Other resources

- ***Reporting without Re-Victimizing*** (For journalists/journalism students) available at <http://www.gundersenhealth.org/ncptc/jacob-wetterling-resource-center/workshops-webcasts/descriptions/>

