



## CRIME VICTIM SERVICES

SAFETY • HEALING • JUSTICE • RESTITUTION

### COMMON MEDIA QUESTIONS

- What happened to you/your loved one? When did you learn about it? Where were you when you found out? How did you find out?
- Why was your loved one doing what they were doing when this happened?
- How has this affected you and your family?
- Tell me about your loved one. Who was he or she?
- How do you feel about what happened to you? Are you angry?
- Who was involved?
- Why did it happen? What was the cause?
- What should happen next? Who is to blame? Who should pay for this and how?
- What can we all learn from this?

### FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL

Allen County (419) 222-8666  
Putnam County (419) 523-1111

[www.CrimeVictimServices.org](http://www.CrimeVictimServices.org)

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<http://crvc.ca/publications/if-the-media-calls>

# MEDIA GUIDE

## FOR CRIME VICTIMS & SURVIVORS

From Crime Victim Services (Ohio)

Allen County (419) 222-8666 • Putnam County (419) 523-1111

### THINGS TO KNOW:

- Most local reporters are caring people who do not try to cause you harm, but each has different skills, deadlines, experience and abilities to understand and report your story. Reporters may prioritize facts, photo, video, short or long interviews, the personal side or disagreements.
- **You have a choice whether to speak to the media**, but keep in mind that you will have little control over what is reported and how it is presented.
- **If you want to ask a question or talk "off the record,"** meaning, something you do not want them to report, **then be very clear when that begins and ends.**
- Take time to prepare for an interview and you may want a support person with you.
- If a criminal investigation or proceedings are underway, **media coverage may harm the case.** You may want to discuss what you should or should not say with the investigator or prosecutor prior to speaking with the media.
- Be careful who you give your phone number or social media contacts to, but often a direct contact with you is better than a public interview. **Don't forget your public social media content is available to journalists.**
- Your privacy may be difficult to guard and **what you say in court may be recorded.**
- Coverage may include video and pictures of body bags, crime scenes, and injuries.
- **The tone of media coverage can change.** For example, a victim may be viewed positively **until it is discovered the victim had a criminal record.**
- Reporters usually do not know ahead of time how traumatized you are.
- Reporters usually want to report as much information as fast as possible.
- The media often focuses on public officials, violent, sex, youth, stranger and emotional crimes.
- The media may publicize information that you believe is unfair, inaccurate or incomplete, but remember they only have information from people and sources that are available at the time, and they can make mistakes.

# TIPS FOR MEDIA INTERVIEWS

- You can select the timing and location for an interview, including someone to speak for you. Remember that other friends and family also may have something to say.
- Ask the reporter what the story is about to help you prepare your answers.
- Relax and speak slowly and clearly. Listen to the entire question before answering.
- Come up with a few points you want to get across, write them down and say them right away during the interview. For example: "The one thing I really want to say is . . .", or "My most important message is. . ." You can repeat your important points.
- If a reporter says or asks something that offends you, you may want to stop the interview and explain why you feel offended. If disrespectful behavior continues, then you may want to report the situation to their supervisor.
- Give yourself a break if you get emotional during the interview.
- Although you cannot control coverage, you may ask reporters to not attend a funeral, go to the victim's home, or show offensive images on television.
- If you're unsure, you can say, "I don't have enough information to answer that."
- Reporters may have information that you do not know. Ask them what they know.
- If you believe an important error was reported by the media, you may want to talk to the news director and explain your concern and, if need be, ask for a correction.
- Let victim services or law enforcement know if you feel harassed by a reporter.

# MAKING YOUR DECISION

## SOME REASONS TO SPEAK WITH THE MEDIA:

- You may be able to prevent future crimes like this and change policies regarding this type of victimization.
- You can help the public understand what victims go through physically, emotionally, spiritually, financially and socially.
- You can tell your side of the story so the focus is not on the perpetrator or how the crime was committed.
- You may feel validated as the innocent victim by having your side told and gain community and family support.

## SOME REASONS **NOT** TO SPEAK WITH THE MEDIA:

- You may harm the investigation and prosecution of the crime.
- You may increase your trauma, feel revictimized, or even increase your danger by being identified.
- You may feel like you lost control over the information that is released since you don't know what or when it will be used, especially pictures and video of your loved one or of you in an emotional state.
- You may lose family or community support because of what you say or how you say it.
- You may feel a "media let down" when the attention is gone or less frequent.