

Media Outreach Made Easy

An Advocate's Guide to Working With the Press

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The National Resource Center on Domestic Violence
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania



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The National Domestic Violence Awareness Month Project is one of several Public Education projects of the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence (NRC). The NRC was formed in 1993 with funds awarded through the US Department of Health and Human Services that established a national network of domestic violence resources. The NRC's first priority is to proactively support the work of national, state and local domestic violence programs as a source of comprehensive information, training and technical assistance on community response to and prevention of domestic violence. The NRC is a project of the Pennsylvania Coalition on Domestic Violence, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. For more information on the National Domestic Violence Awareness project, contact the NRC Public Education Specialist @ 1-800-537-2238.

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Table of Contents

Media Outreach	1
Preparing a Media List	
Building Your List.....	2
Updating Your List.....	3
Formatting Your List.....	3
Preparing for Interviews	
Developing Your Message.....	4
Knowing Your Rights.....	4
Taking Control of the Interview.....	5
Preparing a Survivor for a Media Interview.....	6
Keeping Your Address Confidential.....	6
Looking Good On-Camera.....	6
Responding to Media Stories	
Statements.....	7
Letters to the Editor.....	8
Talk Radio.....	8
Generating Coverage	
Proclamation.....	10
Op-Eds.....	10
Editorial Memoranda (Edit Memos).....	11
Columns.....	11
Calendar Announcements.....	12
Radio and Cable Access Stations.....	12
Community Bulletin Boards.....	12
How to Place a Public Service Announcement (PSA)	13
Appendices: Media Terminology	14
Sample Media Alert.....	16
Sample Op-Ed.....	17
Sample News Release.....	20



MEDIA OUTREACH

“We do media outreach to inform the public about our programs, and to let women know that our program has culturally sensitive services for Native Americans that aren’t available through other programs.”

*Sue Wolfe, Director,
Lac du Flambeau Domestic Abuse Program*

The news media is the primary source of information about what is happening in the world for the vast majority of American adults. The public gets the majority of its information about the world from the media.

- 75 percent of Americans receive most of their news from television (1995 Roper poll).
- 64.2 percent of American adults (84 million) read a newspaper in an average week and almost three in four adults (72.6 percent) read the Sunday newspaper (Newspaper Association of America).

If we are going to educate the public about domestic violence — encourage them to take action to prevent or reduce this crime, or ask them to support our efforts — we must work with the media.

There are many ways to use the media to disseminate messages about domestic violence to the public. They include:

- television and radio news programs
- talk shows
- newspaper articles
- feature stories
- columns
- editorials
- letters to the editor and guest editorials
- community and specialty ethnic newspaper

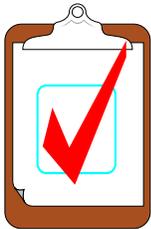
Included at the end of this paper is a complete list of media terminology that we urge you to become familiar with if you are not already.

Preparing a Media List

“There are times when you will want media support for advocacy work you’re doing. If you develop good relationships with key reporters they can help to support your efforts. As advocates we often have to use the power of embarrassment to effect change. The media can be a big help there.”

*Amazonas Olivella, Committee Member
National Domestic Violence Awareness Month Project*

It is important to have a list of area media to which you distribute press materials such as news releases, media advisories, press statements, etc.



Building Your List

You can build a media list with contact information on reporters, producers, and editors you already know and supplement it with a day or two of telephone calls to ensure that your list is comprehensive. In addition to your local phone book yellow pages, professional media associations and library reference materials can offer valuable information on media in your area. Your media list should include the following:

Broadcast (TV, cable TV and radio):

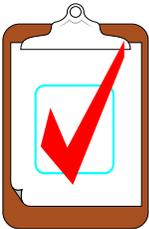
- talk or public affairs show producers, bookers, and hosts
- television news assignment editors, reporters, and producers
- radio news directors, assignment editors, reporters, and public service directors, including those at college and university radio and cable television stations (personnel at these outlets can be particularly useful if you are located in a rural area)

Print (newspapers, magazines and wire services):

- wire service bureau chiefs, assignment editors, and reporters
- newspaper editorial page editors and op-ed page editors
- national editors
- city or metro editors (may be the assistant managing editor or managing editor at smaller papers)
- health editors and reporters
- feature editors and reporters

- columnists who write on issues relevant to women
- calendar column editors
- anyone who has covered the issue, local program activities, or events sponsored by allied organizations in the recent past
- local magazine editors and reporters
- managing editors at community, ethnic, foreign language, alternative, lesbian/gay, and seniors' newspapers

Updating Your List



Reporters, editors and producers change jobs and beats frequently, so you should update your media list at least twice a year. Set aside a day or two — or some time each day for one week — to place phone calls to the media outlets on your list and ask if the journalists on your list are still there and still have the same beat and position. You should also update media list entries as you receive change-of-address cards, learn information from members of the media while talking to them on the phone, and get telephone inquiries from journalists covering domestic violence who are not already on your media list. It is better to have a media list that is too long, than one that does not include key people.

Formatting Your List



Media lists are best maintained on a database or large index cards that contain:

- the person's full name
- job title
- affiliation (proper name of station, newspaper, wire service, etc.)
- outlet (broadcast, print, etc.) and specialty (alternative publication, syndicated community newspaper, lesbian/gay, etc.)
- address
- phone number
- fax number
- e-mail address
- a space to note the last date the entry was updated and notes about previous contacts or conversations

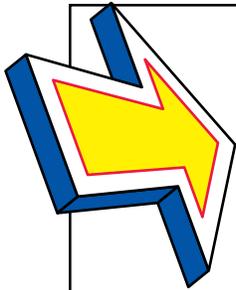
Preparing for Interviews

“As advocates, we need to communicate how our work relates to other world issues, like women’s rights and immigrant rights. Our role is to present not just what battered women go through, but to give the public the appropriate context for that experience. At this point the public knows a lot about domestic violence. The next step is to talk about what they can do about it.”

*Leni Marin, Senior Program Specialist
Family Violence Prevention Fund*

Developing Your Message

Before you, or someone you designate, talk to a reporter or goes on the air, decide on your message. Formulate two or three points that you most want to make. Write them up as “***talking points***” Each talking point should be clear and concise — no more than two complete sentences. For example: “While protection orders are lifesaving for many women, they provide inadequate protection for others;” “In addition to passing good domestic violence laws, we need to ensure they are properly and consistently implemented throughout the state;” or “Many women deal with both poverty and domestic violence. The goal of welfare reform should be both safety and self-sufficiency.”



Make your message compelling. Use active verbs and colorful words as much as possible. People respond better to things they are familiar with, so use analogies and contemporary references as appropriate. Tangible numbers speak volumes; say “one in four,” rather than citing a huge number.

Know Your Rights:

To be comfortable:

Don’t agree to be interviewed anywhere you do not feel comfortable.

To be prepared:

Find out in advance what the interview will be about and how long it will take. Ask how the interviewer was briefed and send her or him any information you have that is relevant.

To be treated fairly: Find out who will interview you and who else they will be interviewing or have interviewed. If you are going to be on a radio or TV talk show, ask someone about the interview style of the host. Know in advance if the program takes calls from listeners.

Taking Control of the Interview

You have primary responsibility for the interview, not the reporter. Look at each question as an opportunity to deliver your message.

If you are asked a stupid question, try to turn it around. The following lines might give you some ideas:

- “The issue here is not why the woman didn’t leave sooner. The issue is his choice to use violence against his wife and young children.”
- “No, that’s not really accurate, but I can tell you that...”
- “I think what you are really getting at here is...”

ANTICIPATE THE QUESTIONS.....

There are two kinds of questions you should prepare answers for *before* you do a media interview:

- 1) Questions you are most likely to be asked;
- 2) Questions you are most afraid to be asked.



Preparing a Survivor for a Media Interview

It's the nature of the media to want to talk to someone directly affected by the issues on which they are reporting. You have probably been asked to identify a survivor of domestic violence who will agree to an interview, and you probably will be asked again. So, just as you maintain a media list, it's also a good idea to make a list of survivors who are willing to talk to the media. When you receive a media request, call one of the survivors on your list to see if she's interested in this particular interview. Do not identify anyone to the media until checking with a few possibilities.

Gather all the information you would before doing an interview: the topic, the length of the interview, who the reporter will be, who else they have spoken to, and who else will be interviewed (particularly if the interview is in a panel or talk show format). Ask if the survivor will be identified by name in the story and make that information clear to anyone you ask to do the interview. If the survivor does not want to be identified by name or any other distinguishing characteristics, tell the reporter or producer beforehand so no mistakes occur.

Review some of the questions the survivor is likely to be asked in the interview and go over her answers with her. Let her know she does not have to answer any questions that make her uncomfortable and talk about ways to address those questions.

Keeping Your Address Confidential

While you will likely want your program's telephone number or hotline publicized, you may not want your street address made public. Explain this to all media contacts from the outset. Let them know that publicizing the address or location of your shelter/program poses a serious danger to the women you are serving. The vast majority of journalists will respect and understand the need to keep your address confidential. Make sure they also understand that outdoor shots (TV camera or still photograph) of the shelter/program are off-limits. The risk is too great that an abuser might notice a street sign or landmark that would help identify or locate the shelter/program.

Looking Good On-Camera

Throughout the interview, sit up straight and pay attention to your posture. Use hand gestures for animation but contain them so that they don't go off the screen. Remember that the camera is focused on just your face and neck most of the time.

If you usually wear glasses, keep them on while on camera or you may squint.

SIMPLE TIPS

- Wear simple clothes, like a blouse or sweater and a jacket or blazer, or a dress.
- Avoid white, wear solid colors, but avoid any color that blends in with your skin tone.
- Women should not wear large bows or ties at the neck. Unless you're very good with scarf-tying, don't wear a scarf. Men should avoid loud ties and ties with small, complicated patterns.
- Avoid loud plaids, stripes or patterns, very small patterns (like black-and-white houndstooth), and fabrics that sparkle (like lurex) or have a high sheen (like silk or satin charmeuse).
- Avoid large earrings, necklaces that may be a distraction, and bracelets or bangles that could clang into a microphone.
- If someone offers to powder your face, accept it. Powder is generally used to keep guests from looking shiny or sweaty on television.

Responding to Media Stories

"In many media stories there is a backlash. It's important for domestic violence programs to get their stories out, so that people are aware of the reality of what a domestic violence victim goes through."

*Sujata Warriar, Domestic Violence Specialist,
State of New York Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence*

There are several ways to respond to media stories that are breaking or have already been in the news.

Statements:

Statements are brief prepared remarks that quote a spokesperson. Good reporters often follow up with questions, but having a statement in advance helps the reporter insert commentary into the story immediately.

Writing Statements. Statements should be two or three paragraphs long, and no more than a page, double-spaced. Because its purpose is to be included in a news story, a statement must be pithy, succinct and quotable. A statement should reflect and make a persuasive case for the position or policies of your program. Any statement you issue will probably be under the name of your program director or executive director. A statement should be dated and include a contact name and phone number.

Distributing Statements. If you hold a news conference or any public event, prepared statements for each speaker should be given to the press. (This is your chance to provide written quotes for the media.) Statements can also be used to respond to a breaking story (such as a comment by an official on domestic violence, passage of a piece of legislation, or a highly publicized incident of abuse). Statements must be prepared and distributed quickly. Dictate, deliver or fax a statement within an hour or two of an event. A statement faxed the next day, when stories already have been filed, is useless.

Letters to the Editor:

Letters to the Editor respond to reports or editorials in newspapers or magazines with a confirming or opposing point of view, often expanding on a point made in the original article. Letters-to-the-Editor is one of the most widely read sections of the newspaper, and it is relatively easy to get published in this section. Monitor all area print media for stories on domestic violence, including alternative, ethnic and community newspapers and magazines, and respond with letters to the editor when appropriate.

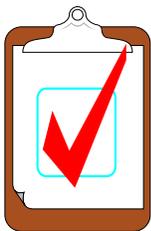
Writing a Letter to the Editor. A letter to the editor should be no longer than a page — four or five very short paragraphs. If much longer, the letter may be edited when published. Letters should be signed by someone who has credibility on the issue being addressed, probably your program's director, a woman aided by your services, or another program representative.

The letter should be addressed to “Letters-to-the-Editor” at the address of the newspaper or magazine. Mail or fax the letter (check the publication for their preference), and then follow up with a telephone call to be sure it was received.

Talk Radio

Radio call-in shows are extremely popular and can be a good way to get your message out.

What You Need to Know about a Talk Show



- What is the show's format?
- What kinds of guests does the show usually have? (people offering community services or people discussing issues?)
- When does the show air?
- Is it live or taped?
- Is it call-in?

- How long are the guest segments?
- Is the host aggressive? Hostile?
- Does the host ask good questions?
- Is there a producer other than the host?
- How far ahead does the show book guests? (Most public affairs shows book at least two weeks ahead.)

Booking a Guest on Talk Radio. Try to schedule appearances on programs that air during drive time (7 am. to 9 am. or 4 pm. to 7 pm.) or other maximum exposure slots.

Before you book anyone on a show, find out what kind of show it is. If the show is in your area, listen to it. If not, ask the producer about the type of show it is and the style of the interviewer.

Send the producer a pitch letter proposing a topic and spokesperson. In your letter, highlight the event, activity, or issue you would like to talk about. Briefly explain your spokesperson's qualifications, provide some simple background material and include a daytime phone number. Follow-up with a telephone call.

Questions to ask when booking someone on a radio talk show:



- Will the regular host be there?
- How long will your spokesperson be on the air?
- Will there be live telephone calls with questions?
- Will there be other guests? Who will they be?
- What time should the guest be at the studio?

Getting Your Message Out on Talk Radio. Write up two or three key messages you want to use and practice saying them succinctly and crisply. Avoid acronyms, technical terminology, and movement jargon.

Prepare answers to the most difficult questions you may receive. You may want to write down the answers and rehearse them aloud.

Ask people you know (program staff, colleagues, friends) to call in with planned questions and comments. If the show is extremely popular, ask them to call before it actually goes on the air, so they get through before the switchboard becomes tied up. This is not cheating! People do it all the time.



Generating Coverage

“We use media to draw attention to the issue of domestic violence so that women know what services are available and accessible to them. So that when they feel most desperate and alone, they know there are places and people to help them.”

*Alva Moreno, Executive Director,
East Los Angeles Sexual Assault Program,
Avance Human Services*

Proclamations:

Although generating a proclamation usually requires *several months lead time*, you may be able to do so in a matter of weeks—if you have a good relationship with the mayor’s or governor’s office.

Generating a Proclamation. Write a letter to the governor’s or mayor’s chief of staff requesting a meeting to discuss the possibility of her/him making a proclamation. (Governors and mayors will usually make a proclamation for Domestic Violence Awareness Month.) In your letter discuss the prevalence of domestic violence in your community and offer local statistics. Indicate that you will follow up in a few days with a telephone call.

If you get a meeting with the governor, mayor, or chief of staff, take a sample proclamation that uses the language you would like.

Publicizing a Proclamation. If you are going to hold a news conference to announce the proclamation, work with the governor’s/mayor’s press secretary to select a suitable date, time, and location. You can collaborate with the press secretary to coordinate media work, which includes drafting an advisory and contacting journalists. You should also give statements by the governor/mayor and your program director, as well as copies of the proclamation, to the media.

A “paper release,” another method of distributing a news release about the mayor’s proclamation (and a copy of the proclamation) is a much less labor-intensive route. On the day the governor/mayor signs the proclamation, simply fax your news release and copies of the proclamation to contacts on your media list. If you do not have a fax machine, news releases and proclamations should be mailed about two days beforehand. You should also coordinate a “paper release” with the governor’s/mayor’s press office, because they may have their own plans for publicizing the proclamation.

Op-Eds:

Op-Eds are brief opinion pieces focusing on a particular issue from a particular point of view. They

run *opposite the editorial pages* (hence the name **OP**posite **ED**itorial page). Smaller newspapers may not have an Op-Ed page, but may still run guest editorials. (Check with the editorial page editor.)

Writing an Op-Ed. An op-ed should be no longer than 500 to 700 words and be signed by the author. An op-ed emphasizes the writer's experience and opinion. Approach your topic so that it will be of interest to the general public, or the newspaper's readership if you are submitting an op-ed to a community, alternative, or ethnic newspaper.

Submitting an Op-Ed. You can submit an op-ed to more than one newspaper. However, larger and/or competing newspapers may not want to print a piece that is appearing in another publication. So, get to know your media and what they want and don't want. You may send the op-ed to multiple outlets and simply withdraw it from other papers once you know a paper is going to print it. In some areas, though, this may not be an issue.

Send the op-ed with a letter to the Op-Ed Page Editor (the person's name and fax number usually appears in the paper or you can call). Frequently, the op-ed page editor and the editorial page editor are the same person. As with a letter to the editor, you should fax or mail the op-ed, and then follow-up with a telephone call. Be sure to include the name, title, organization, and telephone number of the author.

Editorial Memoranda (Edit Memos):

An edit memo is a memorandum addressed to newspaper or magazine editorial page editors or writers, encouraging them to editorialize on an issue from a particular perspective. An edit memo can also request a meeting with editorial staff.

Writing an Edit Memo. An edit memo should be no longer than two to four paragraphs. Include some paragraphs that can be lifted and used in an editorial. It is acceptable to make an emotional plea in an editorial memo—the more compelling your argument, the more likely you are to convince the editor and subsequently the readers. Use short sentences and avoid jargon.

Near the beginning of the edit memo, specify that you would like the newspaper to publish an editorial and explain your expertise in the area of domestic violence. If you are requesting a meeting, spell that out and suggest a time period within which you would be available. At the end, give your full name, title, and telephone number.

Submitting an Edit Memo. Timing is very important. If possible, send an edit memo at least two weeks prior to the date that you would like the editorial to appear. Weekly newspapers need even more lead time. Follow up with a telephone call a few days after sending the memo to be sure it was received.



Columns:

Newspaper columns are often widely read, and the writers are usually interested in writing about timely issues of importance to the community. Many respond well to letters or telephone calls suggesting topics. Before you pitch a columnist on an idea, read her or his column a few times so that you get an idea of the kinds of issues she or he tackles.

Making the Pitch. Address your pitch letter or phone call to the columnist directly. Indicate that you would like the columnist to address domestic violence in her or his column, and explain why your topic is timely and why readers should know more about it.

When sending a pitch letter, you may also want to include information about your program. Keep in mind that the columnist may want to focus on a personal story, so you may need to identify and prepare a survivor. Mention that you will follow up with a telephone call in a few days. Be sure to include your name, title, program, and telephone number.

After sending your pitch letter, follow up with a telephone call to ensure that the columnist received your letter, to determine the level of interest, and to see if you can offer any additional information.

Calendar Announcements:

The event listings that appear in most daily and many weekly and community newspapers are a great way to publicize events that you hold.

Placing a Calendar Announcement. Contact the calendar editor at your local newspapers (check local community, ethnic, and alternative newspapers to see if they have events calendars as well) and find out what kinds of events they include, when the calendar runs, and how far in advance you need to submit an announcement.

Send or fax a one-paragraph calendar announcement of your event or activity. Briefly describe the event in one or two sentences and include the sponsors. List the date, time, and place of the event/activity. Also mention whether there is a charge to the public and how much it is. Include the name and telephone no. of the person whom the public should contact about attending or participating.

If you are in a rural community, maintain contact with the editors of weekly and/or monthly community newspapers or newsletters. As you plan events and activities, alert them with advance telephone calls as well as media advisories and news releases. Newspapers and newsletters published weekly or monthly require more lead time than dailies, so ask the editor about submission deadlines to ensure that your event is mentioned. You will want your upcoming function to be included in the community calendar, and you might consider submitting an article about the event afterwards—accompanied by a black and white photograph of the event or activity.



Radio and Cable Access Stations:

Ask the public information or community affairs directors at area radio stations and cable television stations about their community calendars. In most cases, you should be able to get information about your event or activity included if you get the information to the station early enough.

Community Bulletin Boards:

Community bulletin boards are usually more accessible and efficient public outreach tools in rural areas. Ask area churches, synagogues, mosques, Y's, supermarkets, and community centers about access to their bulletin boards. You may be able to post fliers about the events you are planning on any or all of their bulletin boards.

How to Place a Public Service Announcement (PSA)

Submitting a PSA to TV or Radio Stations

Using your press list or the phone book, compile a list of all radio and TV outlets in your area (including cable in addition to regular broadcast stations). Call each to find out if they run public service announcements.

Write a letter to the community affairs director, asking her or him to run your PSA. You might want to include some local statistics on domestic violence to better make the case that they should run the PSA. Include a copy of the radio script or TV story board with your letter. Don't forget to include your name, title, program, telephone number, and the best time to reach you! Follow up in a couple of days with a phone call.

Submitting a PSA to Newspapers or Local Magazines

Compile a list of all the newspapers (including weekly, community, alternative, and ethnic newspapers), newsletters, and local magazines (again, be sure your list is comprehensive and includes alternative and ethnic magazines) in your area. Call the display advertising department or the advertising department (if there is no display advertising department) at each to find out if the publication accepts PSAs. In some cases, you may get referred to someone else at the outlet.

Send the appropriate person at each outlet a letter in which you ask her or him to run the PSA. Enclose camera-ready copy of the PSA with your letter (in a 10" x 13" envelope so the PSA doesn't get bent or folded). In your letter, include some local statistics on domestic violence, your name, title, program, and telephone number with the best times to reach you. Also mention that a camera-ready copy of the PSA is enclosed.

Follow up your letter a couple days later with a telephone call. Ask if she or he received the letter and if the publication will run your PSA.



Media Terminology

Events

News Conference—an event staged exclusively for the press. One or more spokespeople (but not more than four) read prepared statements and answer reporters' queries. Organize a news conference only if you have something timely and extremely important to announce.

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 briefers and up to 12 reporters. Ordinarily, you would hold a briefing 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, fund raisers, public speeches or appearances, awards ceremonies, and issue forums are press opportunities.

Photo Opportunity—a press opportunity that has a particularly good visual component, worthy of space in a newspaper or magazine. Rallies, marches, and candlelight vigils can offer photo opportunities.

Pre-interview—a telephone conversation with a producer at a talk show. These are used to be sure a guest is intelligent, articulate, well-versed on the issues, quick on her or his feet, and interesting to hear. A pre-interview requires the same serious preparation as the interview itself.

Materials

Media Advisory or Media Alert— a one-page dated announcement of an upcoming event such as a press and/or photo opportunity. The alert includes a contact name and telephone number, so reporters can call for further information, and is sent to assignment editors, reporters, editors, and producers on your press list.

News Release— a one to four-page report (written as an article) of a newsworthy event. Good news releases, or portions of them, often appear in print. A news release contains a contact to call for further information, a headline, a first sentence that grabs the reader, a quote from a spokesperson, and additional background information. A news release can be distributed prior to, at the time of, or after an event either through mailing, faxing, or handing it out.

Backgrounders—in-depth explanations of an issue that can be used to bring reporters new to an issue up to speed.

Fact Sheets—one-page information sheets that often contain statistics or other data.

Statements—brief (one page or less) prepared remarks of a spokesperson. Statements are dated and include a contact name and phone number. If you hold a news conference, a rally or any other public event, you should have prepared statements for all speakers to distribute to the press. Statements can also be used to respond quickly to a breaking story (such as a highly publicized incident of abuse). Dictate, deliver, or fax a statement within an hour or two of an event. Statements *must be* quotable. Good reporters often follow-up a statement with questions, but the prepared statement helps the reporter insert commentary into the story immediately.

Press Kits—sets of information for the media, usually in a pocket folder, distributed at news conferences, press briefings, or in response to requests for information. Press kits contain news releases, statements, backgrounders, fact sheets, as well as materials not designed specifically for the media (like newsletters or brochures).

Calendar Announcements—short, one-page notifications of events that are of interest to the public. A calendar announcement is intended to air or to be published.

Pitch Letters—personalized notes that specifically urge a particular reporter to cover an event or issue. Pitch letters often describe a particularly newsworthy aspect of the event.

Edit Memos—short memoranda 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. Edit memos can help direct editorial writers to the issues.

Op-Ed Pieces—signed guest editorials of 500 to 700 words submitted to newspapers. Op-Eds should emphasize the writer's opinion or experience and be of interest to the general public. (Most newspapers print guidelines and word limits, or you can call the Op-Ed page editor.)

Letters to the Editor—letters from newspaper readers that respond to articles or editorials with a confirming or opposing point of view. Letters to the Editor often expand on a point made in the original article or editorial. Keep letters brief—no more than a page, four or five very short paragraphs—signed by the program director, a survivor, or another representative. (Most newspapers print guidelines and word limits, or you can call the editorial page editor.)

Public Service Announcements (PSAs, Public Service Spots)—brief announcements made on behalf of nonprofit organizations on both radio and TV. Like commercials, they are limited to specific lengths. They must be non-political and of wide interest and benefit to the public.



Sample Media Alert

Program Name:
Date:
Phone Number:

Mailing Address:
Contact Person:

For Immediate Release

On (DATE) a Candlelight Ceremony to remember women who have suffered from battering and to celebrate those who have survived and made new lives for themselves will take place at (TIME, PLACE). The event is being sponsored by (PROGRAM NAME), a shelter/program for battered women and their children and will include formerly battered women speaking out about their experiences, as well as music, poetry and dance.

This event is part of a month of activities observing Domestic Violence Awareness Month including a National Day of Unity Against Domestic Violence. Across the country formerly battered women and battered women's programs are planning events to draw attention to the reality of violence in the home and to the work that is being done to end violence against women.

A woman is physically battered every 15 seconds in the United States according to FBI statistics. Children in these homes suffer the psychological anguish of witnessing and often experience abuse themselves. In (CITY, MAYORS NAME) has proclaimed (DATE) as a Day of Unity Against Domestic Violence and encourages citizen participation in the month's activities. The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence acknowledges the first Monday of October as the National Day of Unity Against Domestic Violence and encourages citizen participation throughout the month of October. (PROGRAM NAME) is planning a number of activities in addition to the Candlelight Ceremony. For additional information, please call (PHONE NUMBER).

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Fill-in-the-Blanks Op-Ed

[date you send op-ed to the press]

CONTACT: [name of program contact]
[program phone number]

GUEST COMMENTARY, by [name of author, title]
FOR PUBLICATION IN OCTOBER

Note to editors: October is National Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HURTS EVERYONE *October Offers Time to Take Action to End This Crime*

If someone close to you was assaulted by a stranger, what would you do? Worry about the person's **safety**? Offer **support**? Look for **resources** that would provide assistance? Help her seek **justice** through the court system? Most likely, you would.

But what if that same person was assaulted by someone she loves and trusts — an intimate partner? The crime is the same, the injuries just as severe, except that the assault occurred in the context of an intimate relationship. Do you still reach out to her in the same way? If you're like many Americans who believe domestic violence is none of their business, most likely you wouldn't.

But make no mistake, it is your business. It's everyone's business because domestic violence systematically shatters lives, destroys families, and devastates communities. Consider:

- **Domestic violence harms our children.** More than 3 million American children (estimates range from 3.3 to 10 million) are at risk for witnessing domestic violence — of watching their fathers beat their mothers — annually. Researchers say these children are at an increased risk of being abused themselves.
- **Domestic violence keeps qualified employees from being able to work.** Studies of women who are being battered have found that at least half missed work due to abuse and 24 to 30 percent had lost their jobs due, at least in part, to domestic violence.

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Domestic Violence Awareness Month Op-Ed
developed by Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence, 1998



- **Domestic violence fills our emergency rooms with the injured.** A 1997 U.S. Department of Justice study of emergency rooms showed that approximately 17 percent of all people and 37 percent of women who sought treatment for violence-related injuries were hurt by a current or former intimate partner.
- **Domestic violence contributes to rising medical and crime costs.** A 1996 National Institute of Justice study estimates that domestic violence accounts for almost 15 percent of total crime costs — \$67 billion per year. According to a 1992 Pennsylvania Blue Shield Institute study, the estimated annual medical cost of domestic violence in the commonwealth was \$326.6 million in 1992.
- **Domestic violence challenges the police and clogs the courts.** Studies show domestic violence accounts for the largest category of calls to police each year and one-third of all police time is spent responding to these calls. Each year, more than 30,000 *Protection From Abuse* petitions are filed in Pennsylvania courts.
- **Domestic violence fills our morgues with victims.** Analysis of newspaper reports from the past eight years reveals that, on an average, an adult or child dies every three days in Pennsylvania as the result of domestic violence.

Given these facts, we can clearly see that domestic violence is a health issue, an economic issue, a family issue, a social issue, and a human rights issue — each of us has a responsibility to help stop it. There's no better time to start than right here, right now.

October is *National Domestic Violence Awareness Month*, a time to initiate coordinated efforts in every community across the country to eliminate this crime. *National Domestic Violence Awareness Month* is observed to mourn those who have died as a result of abuse, celebrate those who have survived, and raise public consciousness about violence in the home.

Already this year, there have been [*insert local stat(s) — e.g., number of domestic violence homicides in your community, number of domestic violence incidents reported by local police, etc.*] and [*number*] of women and their children have sought services from [*program name*].

There are countless steps we can take in our daily lives that are easy, yet which convey intolerance of abuse and support for battered women and their children. To learn more about how you can help eliminate domestic violence in [*community name*], call [*program name*] at [*program phone number*]. A program staff member or volunteer can provide additional information about available

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services, volunteer opportunities, and ways you can help stop the crime of domestic violence.

As a society, we cannot afford to turn our backs on battered women and their children. They simply cannot escape the abuse without the support, safety, resources, and justice they desperately need and surely deserve.

This October, and throughout the year, make domestic violence your business. Join Americans across the country and neighbors in your community in the movement to end domestic violence — so that women and children never again have to experience abuse at the hands of those they love and trust and live in fear in their own homes.

**Domestic Violence Awareness Month Op-Ed
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Fill-in-the-Blanks News Release

[date you send release to the press]

CONTACT: [name of program contact]
[program phone number]

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

COMMUNITIES TAKE ACTION TO END DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

[Program Name] Will Hold Awareness Month Events

[COMMUNITY, date you send release to the press] — *National Domestic Violence Awareness Month*, recognized in October, is a time for collective action — a time when communities throughout the country unite to help end this devastating and deadly crime.

A tradition for the past decade, *National Domestic Violence Awareness Month* is observed for the purpose of mourning those who have died as a result of the abuse, celebrating those who have survived, raising public consciousness about violence in the home and galvanizing individuals to help eliminate it. The U.S. Congress passed the first *Domestic Violence Awareness Month* commemorative legislation in 1989 and has continued to do so every year since.

The effects of this crime are far-reaching. A 1993 national survey found that almost four million American women who were married or living with intimate partners were physically abused by these spouses or boy/girlfriends.* In (NAME OF STATE OR COUNTY), one adult or child dies about every (BLANK) days as a result of this abuse, according to (SOURCE).

“Domestic violence is a crime that occurs in every community, including ours,” said [program spokesperson, title]. “Last year alone, [program name] offered lifesaving services to more than [number] victims of domestic violence and their children.”

As part of *National Domestic Violence Awareness Month*, [program name] will [hold/sponsor/co-sponsor] events that pay tribute to the pain and perseverance of those who are abused and honor those who have lost their lives.

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Domestic Violence Awareness Month Materials
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DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS — 2

Events being held in [community] include:

- [event, date, time, place]
- [event, date, time, place]
- [event, date, time, place]

These public events will provide an opportunity to learn more about domestic violence and how to end it.

“Purging domestic violence from our community requires teamwork,” explained [program spokesperson (*last name only on second reference*)]. “Each one of us needs to make a commitment to help eliminate domestic violence. It’s time to work together to create a community — a society — that has zero tolerance for domestic violence.”

* *First Comprehensive National Health Survey of American Women*. The Commonwealth Fund. New York, July 1993.

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