

# Media Relations Made Easy

*A resource manual to help implement an effective media relations plan.*



*leadership | advocacy | action*

**PCAR**  
PENNSYLVANIA COALITION AGAINST RAPE

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction .....	4
<b>Chapter 1</b>	
<b>It's a media world</b>	
● Understanding media lingo .....	6
● Who's who in the newsroom .....	11
<b>Chapter 2</b>	
<b>Development of media materials</b>	
● Media materials .....	14
● Media list .....	19
<b>Chapter 3</b>	
<b>Reporter interaction</b>	
● Build the relationship.....	21
● Think like the media .....	24
● Prepare for an interview .....	26
● Respond to an inquiry.....	27
<b>Chapter 4</b>	
<b>Responding to a media “crisis” .....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Chapter 5</b>	
<b>Sample media materials</b>	
● Media advisory.....	31
● News/press release.....	33
● Calendar release.....	36
● Letter to the editor.....	38
● Op-ed .....	40
<b>Chapter 6</b>	
<b>Writing styles to follow</b>	
● Common guidelines .....	43

# INTRODUCTION

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Forging a positive relationship with local media outlets is crucial to the success of your organization, but it is no secret that building those relationships can sometimes be a challenge. This manual is designed to provide you with a better understanding of how the media operates, and make it easier to establish a positive working relationship with the media in your community.

Why local media? Local media ~ newspapers, radio and television stations throughout your community ~ are the outlets that thrive on reporting the news your neighbors want to know. But they are also the gateway to the national outlets like CNN and MSNBC. News you see on national networks often starts at the local level. High profile stories, and stories that would garner a lot of public interest, are then picked up by the larger networks for rebroadcast.

Local media coverage is a cost-effective means of conveying your message. Many media outlets will run releases and events free of charge in their print editions or on their Web sites. In addition, garnering media coverage for your events and the issues you focus on can further your mission, and ultimately social change.

This manual will provide you with many of the essential tools necessary to secure media coverage, including language and formatting that is used by media outlets. It is important to follow many of the basic guidelines included, as that increases the chances of seeing your message covered. Examples, reference tools and suggested contacts are also included throughout the manual.

Assistance is also available beyond this manual. You are encouraged to talk with colleagues at neighboring centers about media relations, and staff at the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape. In addition, the communications department at PCAR is available to provide assistance in development of media materials, to respond to media inquiries and help promote your center.

For more information on this media relations manual, or for any communications questions, please contact the communications department at PCAR:

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*“The media are a primary means for communicating with the public. Forming positive relationships with journalists is crucial to your communications success.”*

*- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration*

## CHAPTER 1: It's a media world

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Media comes in all forms and fashions ~ print (newspaper, national and local magazines, and newsletters), broadcast (radio and television), and Web sites. Even newsletters distributed throughout your organization are a form of media as each outlet ~ no matter how large or small ~ has the common goal of disseminating information important to readers and viewers in a timely fashion. To understand how the media operates, you must first understand the ins and outs of a media lifestyle.

### Understanding media lingo

Following is a list of terms important to the media industry:

#### *Advertisement:*

Paid print, broadcast or Web media, and typically the only form of media in which you can control when, where and how often your message appears.

#### *Associated Press (AP) Style:*

The style of writing used by all forms of media, including print, broadcast and public relations. The style manual, designed by the Associated Press, includes more than 3,000 rules on grammar, spelling, punctuation, capitalization,

abbreviation and word usage. All news/press releases and advisories should be written in AP style. See page 43 for details.

#### *Beat:*

The craft of focusing on one particular subject area, or issue. Many larger publications and broadcast outlets have beat reporters (e.g., education reporter, courts reporter, county government reporter, health reporter). For budgetary purposes, though, some publications are doing away with beat reporters, and moving toward a newsroom of general assignment (GA) reporters. GAs are often unfamiliar with in-depth background of an issue, and might cover an education story one day, and write about a health concern the next.

#### *Blog:*

Short for Weblog. Personal postings that are found chronologically posted on a Web site. Many media outlets will post blogs written by reporters and community members. Blogs can be about a specific topic, or random musings by the author, and typically updated at least once or twice a week, if not daily. Some media outlets will invite businesses or local non-profits to submit blogs.

#### *Breaking News:*

News that is reported as it is happening. Examples often include a fire, a police stand-off or election results.

#### *Broadcast:*

News that is reported on television or radio.

#### *Budget:*

A list of stories that will appear in each day's newspaper or broadcast.

### *Calendar Release:*

Promotes an event that is open to the community.

### *Cutline:*

The caption that appears next to a photograph that describes the scene, and identifies those who appear in the picture.

A cutline should also include the name of the person who took the photograph. Cutlines should be included with all photographs submitted to the media, and when possible, all persons in the picture should be identified by name and title.

### *Daily:*

A newspaper that is printed six days a week (Monday through Saturday), or seven days a week.

### *Editorial/Op-Ed (print or broadcast):*

An editorial is often written in reaction to a recent editorial piece, event or news story. An editorial's objective is to make a point, state a fact or express an opinion. **See sample op-ed on pages 40-41.**

### *Embargo:*

A period of time in which a release or statement is placed into the hands of the media, but not yet permitted for print. For example, a release is provided on Tuesday to the media, but cannot be printed until Thursday. This is usually only done as a way of providing background information to a reporter ahead of time, or to forewarn them that news will occur on a specific day. It is not recommended as common practice.

### *Feature Story:*

An article or newscast that is not meant to be the release of **hard news**, but that instead takes an in-depth look into an issue.

### *Hard News:*

Urgent, more serious and timely news typically found within the front few pages of a newspaper, at the head of a Web site or in the first few minutes of a newscast.

### *Hook:*

The angle (key idea, person or event) that will capture the attention of your target audience.

### *Media Advisory:*

A one-page synopsis that is intended to notify the media of an upcoming event (e.g. a news conference, rally, open house). An advisory is not meant for publication, and answers the basic questions: Who, what, when, where and why. **See sample media advisory on pages 31-32.**

### *Media Kit:*

A packet for media that includes informational materials pertinent to your organization, and a specific event or campaign. Media kits should be available at all **news/press conferences**, and public events. Whenever possible, try to include copies of remarks by speakers and any applicable background information on your organization.

### *News/Press Conference:*

A conference called by an organization to disseminate new information, or respond to a current event or issue. Media is invited (typically through a **media advisory**), and should

be given the opportunity to ask questions following a brief statement made by organization officials.

*News/Press Release:*

A detailed announcement that typically includes background information and quotes from officials. The release can be sent prior to an event you want covered, or to make an announcement or provide response or further detail on a current issue. **See sample press release on pages 33-35.**

*Pitch letter/phone call:*

A letter that is written, or phone call made, to the media in an effort to sell a story idea or issue for publication.

*Public Service Announcement:*

A television or radio announcement that disseminates your message to a target audience.

*RSS Feed:*

Really Simple Syndication is technology that notifies users of updates to content on a Web site, blog, or Internet TV channel

*Soft News:*

News that does not deal with issues serious in nature. Also sometimes called “human interest,” this type of news often focuses on individual achievements or organizational involvement that might be of interest to the community.

*Sound Byte:*

A brief, often shorter part of a longer interview, quote or speech that is considered by the editor or media outlet as the most important. This is often repeated throughout a campaign.

*Tagline:*

A frequently repeated phrase or clause that should be included at the bottom of each press release, or at the end of a public broadcast. It is typically a sentence or two that gives information on your organization.

*Talkshow (broadcast media):*

A structured format that allows you to discuss issues and concerns important to the public. A good way to expand the reach of your mission or message.

*Weekly:*

A newspaper that is printed once a week. Typically found in smaller communities.

## **Who’s who in the newsroom**

It is important to ensure that you are getting your message to the correct people in a newsroom. To do that, you must first understand the different roles and job descriptions of each person at each media outlet. While titles, responsibilities and positions can sometimes vary from organization to organization, here is a basic newsroom guide to who’s who.

*Advertising Representative:*

A sales associate who solicits paid advertisements for newspaper, broadcast and Web media outlets.

*Anchor:*

A television reporter who coordinates the news, with several correspondents contributing. Often the “face” of the news station.

### *Copy Editor:*

The person who corrects or edits copy written by reporters, and who writes headlines that appear both in print and on the Web.

### *Editor:*

The person who is responsible for the editorial aspects of a publication and its associated Web sites, and the person who typically determines final content. The larger the publication, the more editors for specific content areas.

- **Assignment Editor:** The person who typically assigns stories and photographs to reporters and photographers.
- **Calendar Editor:** Oversees event listings and announcements. Often your most reliable source of free publicity for community events.
- **City Editor:** The person who oversees the local news sections of a paper.
- **Web Editor:** The person who is responsible for online content. In today's world you will often find far more information appearing online than in a print paper, or on a news broadcast.

### *Editorial board:*

This is the group of people who typically guide the tone and direction the publication's editorials will take. An editorial board often consists of editors, the publisher and sometimes a reporter. Some publications will also include community members on their board.

### *Freelance Writer:*

A person who writes for a publication, and its associated Web sites, but is not an employee of the company.

### *News Director:*

The person who oversees content that will appear in radio or television news. This person typically receives news releases, and initial calls reporting news.

### *Paginator:*

The person who designs and places stories and art elements into the publication.

### *Photographer/Videographer:*

The person who typically accompanies a reporter – but sometimes travels alone – to capture the image through picture and video. A high-quality photograph can sometimes elevate the story to a more prominent page in a publication.

### *Producer:*

The person who oversees overall production of broadcast media.

### *Reporter:*

The person who works in the field to research and write stories. Typically, media outlets have a specific reporter for each beat (e.g., education, police and courts, health). You will want to know the local reporters, and what they cover. You are encouraged to pitch story ideas to the appropriate reporter, or editor. NOTE: In most media outlets, the reporter is not the person who writes the headlines that appear in print, or on the Web.

*Real life, real news:  
Reporters want to talk to those most  
impacted ~ survivors, family of victims and officials  
who work most closely with those individuals.*

## CHAPTER 2: Development of media materials

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A key to successful media relations is understanding the basics of various materials that can be submitted to local news outlets for publication. Materials that are well-written, and in proper news style, meet length and deadline standards, and confirm to basic news layouts, are often more successfully published. This chapter will help you to better understand the materials, and guidelines that follow. Samples of the materials ~ including templates and actual submissions ~ are included in Chapter 5 (see page 31).

### Media materials

#### *News/Press Release*

Objective: *To garner coverage in print, Web or broadcast media.*

When to send: *At least three days prior to an event for pre-coverage, or in the immediate hours after an event as a follow-up.*

A news release, also called a press release, should be used to make an announcement, or to proceed a news event or provide a response to a current issue or story. Only send out a release when you have **hard news**, or information that is previously unknown, a noteworthy event, a controversy, the release of a study, etc. Avoid saturating the media with news

releases on everything your organization does, but be sure to send a release whenever appropriate (e.g., an open house, the naming of a new director, release of new statistics). A news release is one of your best tools to garner the attention of the media, and ultimately your target audience.

News releases should be:

- Double spaced.
- Printed on one side of the paper only.
- No more than two pages in length.
- Include the organization name, contact name, telephone number and e-mail address at the top of the page.

News releases should include basics on the event, along with applicable quotes and background information. Whenever possible, include a comment from someone who would be impacted by your event, study, etc. as media outlets ~ and readers ~ relate best to the human element. Organize your thoughts in your release in order of importance. **See sample news release on pages 33-35.**

Double and triple check spelling, dates, names, etc. included in your release prior to sending to the media. If you notice an error after it has been submitted, contact the media outlets immediately to ensure the correction is made before going to press.

#### *Media Advisory*

Objective: *To serve as an invitation to media representatives to attend your event.*

When to send: *Prior to an event. Necessary time frame depends on media outlet, but you will want to allow a minimum of three days notice whenever possible.*

A media advisory serves as an invitation to the media to attend your event. Language should be enticing, yet clear, and written in future tense. The format should include details such as who, what, where, when and why the activity is occurring. **See sample media advisory on pages 31-32.**

Media advisories should be sent via fax and e-mail in advance of your event. Remember that **weekly** newspapers – often with far smaller staffs – typically need more time than **dailies**. Allow a minimum of three days, wherever possible. After you fax or e-mail the advisory, follow up with a phone call to ensure receipt of the advisory and to answer any questions the recipient might have. It is a good idea to call members of the media the morning of the event to again remind them of the time and location.

Be prepared following the event to speak one-on-one with members of the media, and be sure to have media kits available for distribution.

### *Letter to the Editor*

Objective: *To express an opinion, or respond to an article or previous letter.*

When to send: *As soon after the news, or previous letter is released. It is best to submit within 24 hours of the initial report.*

A letter to the editor should be mailed to the editorial page editor, and must be signed with an address and telephone. Most media outlets will call prior to printing to confirm you are the author of the piece. Each paper has their own guidelines regarding length, but a typical letter should be typed and kept to 200 – 300 words. Most papers also limit how often (typically once a month) they will print letters to the editor authored by a single person. Letters can be “ghost-written” by one person, and provided to other staff, board

members or volunteers for submission in their name. **See sample letter to the editor on pages 38-39.**

To place a broadcast editorial, send a letter to the **news director** at the television or radio station indicating interest, and follow up a few days later with a telephone call.

### *Opinion Editorial (Op-Ed)*

Objective: *To raise public awareness of an issue.*

When to send: *When timely to an event, campaign or issue, preferably within two to three days.*

Usually Op-Eds are written by syndicated columnists; however, papers will often accept articles from outside sources, such as local community leaders, center directors, etc.

Op-Ed pieces are an excellent tool to help raise public awareness. Opportunities throughout the year to write and submit Op-Eds include Sexual Assault Awareness Month, or prior to local events (a rally, an open house, etc.). Op-Ed pieces should be written in news article format, but in an opinionated and persuasive fashion that outlines your organization’s position and explains why. Also be sure to include solutions to the issue, and cite appropriate statistics and facts to serve as a back-up to your opinions and arguments. **See sample op-ed on pages 40-42.**

### *Radio and Television Talkshow*

Objective: *To speak openly about an issue, or topic, with a host that will be broadcast live, or taped and later transmitted, to a public audience.*

Identify the shows most appropriate for reaching your target audience, and research their usual format and show topics.

#### Target audience for violence prevention communications:

- Healthcare providers
- News reporters
- Allied advocacy groups
- Policymakers
- Law enforcement/prosecutors
- Schools and educators
- Elected officials
- General public

You will also want to contact your local cable or community-access channels, and radio talkshows, to see if your topic or guest would be appropriate for an upcoming show.

A **pitch letter**, followed by a telephone call, should be sent when your goal is to encourage a show to place a spokesperson from your

organization onto a talkshow. **Pitch letters** should include an enticing lead-in paragraph that will catch, and hold, the producer's attention, and encourage him or her to continue reading.

#### News Conference

Objective: *To disseminate new information to members of the media simultaneously, or respond to a current event or issue.*

When scheduling a news conference, make sure to give consideration to the date and time selected. Selecting a date that does not conflict with another event, special occasion or holiday is crucial for obtaining coverage. In addition, select a time that does not conflict with media outlet deadlines and TV/radio broadcasts (e.g., most newspapers with an early-morning delivery are working on deadline in the evening hours, while many TV stations are on air at noon, 5 or 6 p.m. and 11 p.m.).

Keys to a successful news conference:

- Pick a location that is relevant to your message, and easily accessible to all members of the media. Consider use of local community centers, or conference rooms, when available.
- Make sure the site offers adequate electrical, audio and video access. Also think about weather and noise concerns if you plan to host the conference outdoors.
- Invite media through the use of a **media advisory** (see **sample on page 31-32**), and follow up with a telephone call. Have a **media kit** prepared for the event. Select a spokesperson(s) for your organization, and prepare talking points and key messages. No more than three to five people should speak, and each speech should remain under five minutes. Provide written statements.
- Ensure ample time for an open question-and-answer session, and also make sure each spokesperson is available one-on-one after the news conference.
- Make a plan for answering difficult questions. See **page 21 for more details.**
- Media like to interview survivors or those most impacted by the issue.

#### Media list

It is imperative that your organization has a thorough and up-to-date media list. Nationwide, state and local resources exist to assist in the development of a media list. Local services include:

- Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape  
717.728.9740 (communications department)
- Commonwealth of Pennsylvania media market lists:  
[www.pa.gov](http://www.pa.gov)

- PR Newswire:  
www.prnewswire.com

Nationwide services also exist, but can become costly so it is recommended you do some of the legwork in-house. Most media outlets now include contact information on their Web sites and in specific articles and publications. Monitor your local media, and begin to identify key individuals as contacts. Create a list by watching news broadcasts, listening to radio announcements and reading your local print publications.

#### *Newspaper:*

Track reporters by **beat**, and **editors** by section they oversee.

#### A media list should include:

- Station or publication
- Contact name & title
- Direct phone and e-mail
- Fax number
- Web site address

#### *Radio:*

Do not send information directly to the on-air personalities, as they often are not the people responsible for the news. Send to the news editor or program director.

#### *Television:*

Track specific reporters when you notice a trend in their coverage, and also list contacts for the television station's **assignment editor**.

#### *Web:*

It is also a good idea to track Web sites that monitor your issue, and include the Web address, and any direct contacts.

## CHAPTER 3: Reporter interaction

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What do you do when a reporter calls? How do you build a rapport with the media? Why should you build a relationship when it seems they do not care about your issues, or get the issues wrong? If you are asking these questions, you are not alone. This chapter will provide you with recommended steps to improve relations with members of the media, including tips on forging positive relationships, and on how to respond to inquiries from reporters.

### Build the relationship

Building positive relationships with members of the media does not have to be difficult, if you remember two key things:

- Respect and take reporters and their publications seriously, and they will do the same for you and your issues.
- A reporter's job is to ask questions from *every* angle.

What does that actually mean?

It means you have to read your local print publications, and watch local news coverage. You do not always have to agree with what is being printed, or reported, but you need to know what is in the news and who is covering the stories. It means you offer praise when warranted, but also provide the correct information when factual errors are presented.

It also means developing a relationship with your local media.

You must get to know the style of the paper or broadcast and how each reporter works, and any political affiliations the media outlet might have. The bottom line is a reporter must ask questions, or sometimes be skeptical about, everything presented to them. They need to be objective in order to get information about, and report on, each side of the issue. If a reporter plays devil's advocate, or questions a response, it is not that they are doubting you or the issue, but rather searching for all sides of the story. Journalists often will ask a question based on what they think readers might be asking themselves as they read a story.

How do you build that rapport?

#### *Introduce yourself:*

Start with the media list you have developed (see pages 19-20 for details), and send a letter to each of the contacts. Introduce yourself and your organization, and provide information on the issues for which you serve as a community resource. Be sure to include any appropriate fact sheets, and all your contact information. Provide a cell phone number or evening e-mail address, in addition to daytime contacts, as reporters do not work a typical daytime schedule. Offering to meet, or provide a tour of your facility, is another ideal way to introduce yourself to the media.

#### *Offer feedback:*

Feedback is something a journalist rarely receives. It is as simple as leaving a voicemail, or dropping an e-mail, to let a reporter know you thought his/her story was fair, accurate and well-balanced. Your praise does not have to always be about a story that impacts your organization. In the shadow of the mounds of negative calls a reporter receives each week, they are far more likely to remember those who provided a positive comment when you call them later to **pitch** a story (see page 25 for more details).

Providing constructive criticism is just as important in achieving your goal

of becoming a credible source. Do not attack the reporter's story when you feel it was wrong, but rather provide reference materials that may back up a point that was not presented in the story, or suggest a different angle for any similar stories that might be written in the future. To help ensure the reporter does not get defensive about his/her story, be sure to begin by discussing what you liked about the story, and what was correct.

#### *Know the deadlines:*

Building that relationship also means knowing a reporter's deadline, and responding to requests for comments or information, in a timely manner. While they might not be calling at the most opportune time, journalists have a job that requires completing work within a tight deadline.

#### *Don't Forget:*

*A journalist needs you as much as you need them, especially in smaller markets where reporters search for, and report on, only local news stories.*

Just one failure to respond to a request could be enough to discredit you as a reliable source. You are not expected to be immediately available for each call, but you are expected to respond within a timely manner if you want to be considered for future stories. Bottom line: Whoever answers your phone must ask the deadline, and someone should respond within that timeframe whenever possible.

As a basic guideline, most local news stations have a deadline of at least two hours before on-air broadcast. Local print deadlines for **daily** morning papers is typically 5 p.m. for routine stories, and 8 or 9 p.m. for breaking news or coverage of evening events. The best time to call and **pitch** a story is during the late morning or early afternoon. But also understand most stories ~ or **budgets** ~ are planned a few days in advance so any successful **pitch** might not appear in the paper for several issues. It is not recommended that you call in late afternoon or early evening to **pitch** a story ~ unless it is a breaking news item ~ as that is typically when a **reporter** is working on deadline.

## Think like the media

If you want to get your message out to the public and have your story told through the media, then you have to think like a journalist. That means you need to know what is newsworthy and how to sell a story.

### What's newsworthy

The definition of newsworthy includes a story that has a broad appeal or importance to the general public. In addition, media outlets often look at other elements:

- Does it have a local angle?

- Does it have a human interest element? Would a reporter be able to talk to those most impacted by the issue (a survivor, family member of a victim, etc.)?
- Is it tied to a local or national anniversary, or seasonal event (e.g., SAAM)?
- Are there any photograph opportunities available to help sell the story (e.g., a counselor on the job, a group of rally supporters with signs, candlelight vigil, etc.)?

**Newsworthy:**  
Of sufficient interest or importance to the public to warrant reporting in the media.

~ American Heritage Dictionary

### Pitch the story

The best way to get your message heard is to **pitch** a story idea, not a general subject or issue, to the media.

You will want to think in terms of a specific story, and be sure to provide contacts and facts to help sell the idea. Keep in mind that reporters like to tell a story through the eyes of those most impacted:

- Try to show ~ not just tell ~ how proposed legislation, or current statistics, would impact the community.
- Whenever possible, offer to connect the reporter with a member of the community or local survivor who would be willing to be quoted in the paper, or on the broadcast, about the issue. **PCAR has a separate manual, "Speaking Out From Within," that is designed to assist survivors who are ready and willing to share their stories publicly.**
- Make suggestions for photo opportunities.

Do not get discouraged if you **pitch** a story that does not get reported. Media outlets are often forced to cut stories from their **budget** on a daily basis to fit within an allotted space. Continue to pitch stories, but if you feel you are unsuccessful each time, ask for a meeting with the publication's **city editor/news director** to discuss what you need to do to get your message spread through the media.

## Prepare for an interview

Your organization should develop a media protocol that outlines who will respond to media inquiries and who will serve as spokesperson. The person selected to respond to media calls should be able to respond with necessary information promptly and with authority. A backup should be named in case he or she is not available. In addition, a spokesperson must be able to smoothly articulate the message of your organization and should feel comfortable speaking in front of a crowd.

You should also develop a media contact sheet to be completed by the person who answers the initial phone call. The sheet should include the name of the publication and reporter, time of the call, deadline, nature of the story and specifics regarding what the reporter needs, when possible, and the reporter's contact information.

It is common to get nervous when a member of the media calls to interview you. But there are ways to help you relax.

- Take a deep breath, hold for three to five seconds and release slowly.
- Stand, shake your arms and hands to help blood flow.
- Relax yourself by rolling your neck and stretching your arms and legs.

- Prepare notes and an idea of what you plan to say.

You should prepare three- to five-sentence talking points prior to an interview. These points should serve as your key messages, and you should not be afraid to revert back to them as often as necessary throughout the interview. Your talking points should be short and concise. They should evoke emotion, discuss what is at stake, provide real-life examples and statistics, take a stand, and offer a solution or action steps. The general rule of thumb: Find three key elements, and repeat each three times in hopes that at least one will find its way into publication.

## Respond to an inquiry

First and foremost, return a reporter's telephone call or e-mail promptly as they are likely working on deadline. Once you connect with the reporter, gather information prior to issuing a statement, or answering the questions.

Ask the reporter:

- What is your deadline?
- What is the focus of the story?
- What information do you need from me?
- Who else have you contacted, or might you be contacting, for this story?

If you are prepared to respond immediately, go ahead and do so. Otherwise, there is nothing wrong with asking the reporter for 20 minutes to gather your thoughts and some facts before responding to the request. It is also acceptable to ask the reporter if he/she would e-mail you a list of questions so that you can respond electronically.

If you ask for some extra time, be prepared:

- Rehearse your talking points.
- Jot down a few notes and supporting statistics.
- Anticipate tough, or unexpected, questions. The reporter may play devil's advocate.
- Talk to other colleagues to get a range of ideas and responses.

A few other tips when responding to media inquiries:

- There is no shame in admitting you do not know the answer to a question. Feel free to ask for some additional time to research the answer, or connect the reporter with someone else who might know.
- Avoid saying “no comment.” If you are not able to answer a specific question, explain the reason to the reporter.
- Do not answer hypotheticals (e.g., “What if ...”).
- Repeat your position clearly and concisely, and do not repeat any inaccuracies that have been previously reported.
- Listen carefully, and ask the reporter to repeat or rephrase a question if you are unsure of what they are looking for.
- “Off the record” statements do not exist so be sure to not say something that you would not want to see in print.
- Follow up by sending a reporter any written supporting materials that might help with the story.

## CHAPTER 4: Responding to a media “crisis”

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A media “crisis” requires that you respond quickly, efficiently and effectively.

You should first take the necessary time to prepare a crisis-response plan that is reviewed with your spokesperson, and decide how to respond.

If you decide you need to respond, you will want to think like the media, and develop a “Questions and Answers” document that addresses controversial and difficult questions reporters may ask. Practice the answers, and do not deviate far from the prepared responses when asked. You will also want to remind all staff of who is/is not permitted to respond to media inquiries. It is extremely important during a media crisis to remain consistent in your message.

It is important that you give facts as soon as you know them and that you mount a strong campaign that includes cited supporting documentation and statistics. Clarify all misinformation, but do not repeat the inaccuracies as this leads to further chance that the mistakes will make their way into print. Do not speculate or criticize.

If you hold a **press conference**, it is recommended that you provide all statements in writing and include quotes from organization officials. This helps to reduce the risk of errors in print. Stick to your prepared statement when providing responses. Limit the time allotted for questions, and the scope of what you will respond to, if appropriate. In addition to reporters, it is also recommended that you invite some other friendly faces ~ including allied professionals, volunteers, coalition representatives, other agency officials and community members ~ to attend in support.

Other do's and don'ts:

- Do research when, where and how all media outlets are covering the issue, and how often.
- Do contact officials who might have details on the situation that you believe are not being reported by the media.
- Do not respond immediately to a question if you are unsure of the answer, or are unprepared to speak. Instead, ask for the question(s) and deadline. Let the **reporter** know you will get back to them by their deadline.
- Do research the reporters who are asking for statements, and pay attention to how they have reported on this issue, or similar issues, in the past. This can be done by searching the publication's Web site, or searching the Internet for others who might post the story on their site.
- Do contact allied agencies, PCAR and other neighboring agencies for input and assistance.

## CHAPTER 5: Sample media materials

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You do not have to be an award-winning writer to be able to craft a press release or media advisory. In this chapter you will find a few essential guidelines that should appear in each form of media material, followed by an actual product submitted to media outlets.

### Sample media advisory

#### ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

(LOGO)

PRESS ADVISORY

Contact:  
(Name, title)  
(Phone number)  
(E-mail)

WHAT: (Two or three sentences to describe the event)

WHO: (Event sponsor, and key speakers, attendees)

WHERE: (Location, including building name and address)

WHY: (Two or three sentences explaining why this event is important, and provide background details)

-- END (to signify end of release) --

## FINAL PRODUCT

### PRESS ADVISORY

**For more information contact:**

Jill J. Morris, director of communications  
717.728.9740, x144  
jmorris@pcar.org

**WHAT:** Second Annual Vision of Hope Gala and Silent Auction to benefit child sexual abuse prevention.

**WHO:** Sponsored by the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape together with the National Sexual Violence Resource Center. Key participants include:

- Michele M. Ridge, former Pennsylvania First Lady and Advisory Board Chair, Vision of Hope
- Delilah Rumburg, Executive Director, PCAR

**WHEN:** 6:30 to 11 p.m. on Saturday, April 5, 2008

**WHERE:** Sheraton Harrisburg-Hershey, 4650 Lindle Road, Harrisburg, PA 17111

**BACKGROUND:** The Vision of Hope was launched in July 2005 with the mission to make the future brighter and safer for our children. Led by former Pennsylvania First Lady and mother of two, Michele M. Ridge, Vision of Hope has grown into a national child abuse prevention campaign. Last Vision of Hope efforts raised more than \$150,000.

Vision of Hope is now poised to begin directing funds to create multi-level responses that promote effective prevention, critical intervention and adult responsibility for the safety and well-being of children. Awards will be presented to grant recipients and a leader in the field of child abuse prevention.

PHOTO OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE

- END -

## Sample news/press release

### ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

(LOGO)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:  
(Name, title)  
(Phone number)  
(E-mail)

(HEADLINE)

PARAGRAPH 1: (CITY, STATE, Date ~ Introduce the reason for the release, and who is involved)

PARAGRAPH 2: (Why is this newsworthy)

PARAGRAPH 3: (Quote regarding the event)

PARAGRAPH 4: (Basic background information, and more details on the event)

PARAGRAPH 5+: (More quotes, details about the event and special guests)

FINAL PARAGRAPH: Quote or sentence that sums the event.

~ MORE ~ (only if release continues to page 2)

~ END ~ (to signify end of release)

## FINAL PRODUCT

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Contact:**

Jill J. Morris, director of communications  
717.728.9740, x144  
jmorris@pcar.org

HARRISBURG, PA (April 14, 2008) – The Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape joined the Coalition of Pennsylvania Crime Victim Organizations and supporters at the Capitol Rotunda on Monday in a rally to bring awareness to the rights of victims of violent crimes.

The rally was held in conjunction with the National Crime Victims' Rights Week – April 13-19.

“PCAR was proud to be a co-sponsor of the Crime Victims' Rights Rally today in the Capitol Rotunda that was filled with survivors, victim advocates and law enforcement,” said PCAR Legal Director Diane Moyer. “Voices of courage and commitment were heard in our ongoing quest to make victim's rights a vibrant part of the social fabric of our society.”

National Crime Victims' Rights Week has been observed throughout the country since 1981. Rallies, candlelight vigils and commemorative activities highlight the week in an effort to promote crime victims' rights, and to honor crime victims and those who advocate on their behalf.

In Pennsylvania, hundreds of people from throughout the state – including elected officials, survivors, advocates and law enforcement officials – filled the rotunda to mark the start of the week.

The crowd heard Nancy Oppedal, victim activist for Mothers Against Drunk Driving, share her story of loss, and offer encouragement to speak to local legislators about ensuring victims' rights and funding.

~ MORE ~

Pennsylvania's Attorney General Tom Corbett served as the keynote speaker for the event. Corbett spoke to the crowd about the role government plays in public safety, and said that everyone must work together to ensure offenders of violent crimes are held accountable for their actions.

Pat Rushton with PCAR's Men Against Sexual Violence talked to the crowd in an effort to encourage men to take a stance against sexual violence. He told everyone to think of the women in their lives, and make a pledge to end sexual violence.

Lt. Col. Frank Pawlowski, deputy commissioner of operations for the Pennsylvania State Police, talked about challenges that currently exist in communities across the state, but said “we still stand here today strong and unwavering.”

“This rally offers a wonderful opportunity for victims, victim advocates, lawmakers and others to join together to raise our voices on behalf of survivors of crime,” said Mary Walsh, executive director of COPCVO. “It is our time to promote the rights of victims and the importance of standing up for survivors in our neighborhoods, our towns, our state and our nation.”

The theme of this year's rally was “Justice for Victims, Justice for All”. It is a message that is being used nationwide as individuals, agencies and local governments work to unite in their message so that no victim of crime is ever forgotten.

“That means there will be no justice for any of us if we don't seek greater fairness for victims of crime,” Moyer said. “It's time for our community to stand behind those harmed by crime. That's why we are here today and everyday.”

- END -

## HINT:

*Photos can sometimes sell the story.  
Send a photograph of the rally with the press release. Be sure to  
include a cutline (see page 8 for details).*

## Sample calendar release

### ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

(LOGO)

(Date)

Contact:  
(Name, title)  
(Phone number)  
(E-mail address)

(Headline)

PARAGRAPH 1: (City, State) ~ (Provide a few sentences that detail what the event is, when it will be held, and why you are hosting it).

PARAGRAPH 2: (Provide the location of the event, and any other pertinent information ~ contact information, Web site, rain date, etc.).

~ END ~

### FINAL PRODUCT

3/02/2008

**Contact:**

Jill J. Morris, director of communications  
717.728.9740, x144  
jmorris@pcar.org

#### COALITION SLATES VISION OF HOPE GALA

(Harrisburg, PA) ~ Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape together with the National Sexual Violence Resource Center will host its second annual Vision of Hope Gala and Silent Auction at 6:30 p.m. on Saturday, April 5, 2008. Proceeds from the Gala will go toward prevention of child sexual abuse.

The Gala will be held at the Sheraton Harrisburg-Hershey. Tickets are \$125 per person, and can be purchased by calling PCAR at 717.728-9740. For more information, visit [www.theirhope.org](http://www.theirhope.org).

~ END ~

### HINT:

*Calendar releases are a great way to ensure public attendance at an event. In addition to sending the calendar release, some publications will allow you to instantly upload your event to the community calendar they offer on their Web site.*

## Sample letter to the editor

### ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

(LOGO)

(Date)

To the editor:

PARAGRAPH 1: (Provide opening sentence, and mention the date of the article, specific event or statistic you will be discussing).

PARAGRAPH 2: (Provide brief background of the article, event or statistic).

PARAGRAPH 3+: (Commend or refute the opinion or point of view, and explain the reason for your support, or why you disagree. Provide a solution, including what the community can do, and what your organization is doing).

LAST PARAGRAPH: (Conclude with a closing sentence, and include your organization's contact information).

Sincerely,

(Name)

(Title, Organization)

### HINT:

*A letter to the editor can be praise for something positive!*

### FINAL PRODUCT

May 30, 2008

To the Editor:

Three cheers to the men who donned high heels, and walked the Memorial Day parade in Camp Hill on May 26 in an effort to raise public awareness surrounding rape, sexual assault and gender violence that occurs in our community each day.

While the men who strolled down Market Street admitted they finished their walk with blisters, calluses and otherwise achy bodies, we hope they also finished holding their heads high for their valiant efforts. The "Walk a Mile in Her Shoes" campaign raised an estimated \$5,000 for the Rape Crisis of Cumberland County and Domestic Violence Services of Cumberland and Perry counties. This is much-needed money that will help victims and survivors of these violent crimes, and their families.

These men - with or without their red high heels, lime green flip flops and hot pink toenails - have proven anyone can make a difference in the lives of sexual assault victims and survivors.

The Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape - an organization working in concert with its network of 52 rape crisis centers statewide to end sexual violence - encourages men of all ages and backgrounds to get involved. Sport a pair of high heels at next year's event, or join organizations that exist across the state, including Men Against Sexual Violence, a project of PCAR that brings together men who have publicly taken a stance against sexual violence.

More information about sexual violence prevention and resources, or "Walk a Mile in Her Shoes," can be found at <http://www.pcar.org>, <http://www.menagainstsexualviolence.org> or <http://www.walkamileinher shoes.org>.

Sincerely,

Delilah Rumburg

Executive director, Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape

## Sample op-ed

### ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

Contact:  
(Name, title)  
(Phone number)  
(E-mail address)

By (Name)  
(Title)  
(Organization)

PARAGRAPH 1: (Open with an attention-grabbing sentence, or shocking statistic).

PARAGRAPH 2: (Provide brief reason for your op-ed piece).

PARAGRAPH 3: (Provide background information related to your reason for writing. Offer persuasive points, statistics and solutions to your organization's point of view on the topic).

LAST PARAGRAPH: (Conclude with a closing sentence that wraps up your point, and appeals to the reader. Include your organization's contact information).

- MORE (only if op-ed continues to page 2) -  
- END (to signify the end of the release) -

### FINAL PRODUCT

**Contact:**

Jill J. Morris, director of communications  
717.728.9740, x144  
jmorris@pcar.org

By DIANE MOYER  
Legal director  
Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape

We see it all too often: The public – and sometimes the justice system – turns on a victim, and the victim of a heinous crime ends up being tried instead. It's a travesty for the victim, and for society because simply put, that's not the way our system was designed to work.

Such was the story for the victim who alleged former Penn State football player Austin Scott of rape last fall.

Scott's defense attorney was granted permission by the court to question the victim on similar allegations she brought against a Moravian College student four years earlier. This drove prosecutors on Friday to announce they were withdrawing all charges against Scott.

That's a shame for the victim in this case, and for victims of all crimes.

It's the duty of the state to investigate and thoroughly prosecute all crimes, and protect all victims. That's the law. And it's also the duty of the justice system – and the public – to take into account the facts that pertain specifically to the case at hand. We came a long way in our legal system when a rape victim's past wasn't allowed into a courtroom. Why is this case an exception? Why is she on trial?

While we're disappointed that the prosecution elected to drop the case against Scott based upon information completely irrelevant to the current alleged

~ MORE ~

crime, we're even more fearful of the message it might send to victims of all violent crimes ... victims who have gone voiceless and powerless to seek justice for far too long.

Rape and sexual assault remains the least reported of all violent crimes – only 41.4 percent of incidents were reported in 2006, according to Bureau of Justice statistics. We fear this decision might serve as a step backward for victims who might otherwise consider letting their voices be heard.

Just as it is the legal right of the accused to have his (or her) fair day in court, the victim is due the same justice. The day we allow a victim's past or the accused celebrity status to steer the actions of the state is the day that we fail to provide justice in our society.

We hope that victims of sexual violence know there are rape crisis centers serving every community across the Commonwealth. These centers provide a place where victims can step in and obtain free, confidential services needed to heal from the trauma of rape and sexual assault in order to reclaim their dignity and step forward in moving on with their lives.

For 24-hour confidential support, contact your local rape crisis center at (888) 772-7227.

- END -

## HINT:

*Submit op-ed pieces from a variety of individuals within your organization (e.g., board members, volunteers and even clients) in order to provide a broader voice. Op-ed pieces are the perfect tool to educate the public.*

## CHAPTER 6: Writing styles to follow

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All news outlets follow Associate Press (AP) style, which is outlined in “The Associated Press Stylebook.” It is recommended that your organization purchase a copy of the book for regular reference. The more accurate your release follows AP style, the better chance it will get reprinted in local media. Stylebooks are available at many larger bookstores. The Stylebook outlines rules on grammar, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, abbreviation and word usage.

### Common guidelines

#### Acronyms:

Acronyms can be used if easily recognized. Spell out the name of your organization on the first reference, but do not put the acronym in parenthesis. Use the acronym in subsequent references if it is easily recognized. If it is not easily recognized, use the full name. Example:

- The Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape will host a rally at the Capitol Rotunda on Wednesday. PCAR hopes to raise awareness of its child sexual abuse prevention programs during the rally.

### *Titles:*

Capitalize proper titles when used directly before a name, and lowercase when following a name. Examples:

- PCAR Executive Director Delilah Rumburg will offer welcoming remarks.
- Welcoming remarks will be offered by Delilah Rumburg, executive director of PCAR.

### *Web references:*

The “W” should always be capitalized in the word Web site. In addition, it is recommended that you include the entire Web address to guarantee linkage on Web pages. Web site is two words. Example:

- PCAR posted photos of the event on its Web site, <http://www.pcar.org>

### *Electronic Mail:*

The “e” should be lowercase when using the word “e-mail.”

### *Time:*

Numbers should be used to reference a time, except for noon and midnight. Only use a colon if necessary to reference a minute. Do not capitalize a.m. and p.m. Examples:

- PCAR will host an open house from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- The rally is scheduled for 11 a.m. to noon.

### *Numbers:*

Spell out numbers one through nine, and use the Arabic numeral for 10 and above. A number should always be spelled out if it begins a sentence. Also, see percent below. Examples:

- PCAR officials said six people will speak to the crowd of more than 50 attendees.
- Twelve people are expected to attend the conference.

### *Days and months:*

Do not abbreviate days of the week. Do not use “nd,” “th,” and “st” when referencing a specific date. Spell out the month when not referencing a day, but abbreviate in conjunction with a day. Time should always be listed immediately before the date. Examples:

- The rally is scheduled for the first Wednesday in August.
- The rally will take place at 10 a.m. on Aug. 6.

### *Percent:*

The word percent should be spelled out, and the numeral used. Example:

- PCAR is requesting a 3 percent Cost of Living Adjustment in the budget.

### *Spaces between sentences:*

Only use one space between a punctuation that marks the end of one sentence, and the first word of the next sentence.

## **HINT:**

*Spell check doesn't catch everything!  
Watch out for commonly misused words like:*

- *they're, their and there*
  - *to, too and two*
  - *affect and effect*
  - *than and then*

Excerpts from this book were reprinted with permission from “Media Advocacy Guide,” a publication of the California Coalition Against Sexual Assault.

Information was also compiled through Albert Mason, a retired professor of public relations at Shippensburg University, other experienced media professionals, and through online research and information courtesy the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

“Media Relations Made Easy” was written and designed by Tracy Panzer, and edited by Jill Morris, Diane Moyer, Carol Nodgaard and Beata Peck-Little, all of PCAR.

This publication is designed to serve as a basic guideline to assist with successful media relations. For additional consultation or assistance, please contact the communications department at the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape:

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