

Privacy & Dignity

A Guide to Interacting with the Media

Multidisciplinary Responses
to Families and Communities in
Complex Homicide Cases



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About the Project

The National Center developed the Privacy & Dignity Project because we often receive questions from victims, advocates, and journalists about the media portrayal of crime victims and their families. Victims speaking with media and the media reporting on crime are controversial topics and can be difficult to navigate. Media coverage can sometimes produce unintended consequences during the investigation or trial.

Although each crime victim and victimization experience is unique, it is important to share information that will lessen victimization for all involved. Information is focused on the concepts of privacy and dignity, which are of vital importance to victims of crime.

Overview

We provide tips for three groups that interact with crime and victimization: **victims, victim advocates,** and **journalists.**

There are many points where crime victims may interact with journalists, reporters, and other members of the media, including:

- At a crime scene
- Before, during, or after a criminal or civil trial
- In a follow-up story about a crime in the months or years after the victimization

The media may interact with events, individuals, and institutions related to the crime in various ways, including:

- Police speaking with media, possibly to release details about the crime and investigation
- A victim sharing his or her point of view on the victimization
- Advocates calling a press conference on behalf of the crime victims and/or their family members

We also emphasize the risks and benefits of interacting with the media and hope that individuals make the best decision to their unique experience.

Key Concepts

Privacy and dignity are major issues surrounding the media's (including social media's) portrayal of victimization and crime victims.

Privacy emphasizes the need to protect victims from exploitation and additional trauma by providing basic information about the potential risks and benefits of interaction with the media. It also emphasizes that victims must understand their rights, including their right to privacy.

Dignity for a crime victim survivor varies by individual and circumstance. This project emphasizes the critical need for advocates to empower victims to make their own informed choices that are best for them, particularly when interacting with the media and social media.

Throughout this project, we use the terms "victim advocate" and "advocate" to refer to anyone who provides services to victims of crime, including counselors. This includes system- and community-based providers.

This project also refers to the media, reporters, and journalists synonymously.

The National Center can answer any questions and/or provide technical assistance to victims, victim advocates, and journalists as needed. Please contact VictimConnect for more information:

VictimConnect helpline: **1-855-4-VICTIM (855-484-2846)**

or visit www.VictimConnect.org

to chat online and find web-based information and service referrals

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For Victims

Victims

Some crime victims find media attention helpful, beneficial, and in their best interests. Others prefer privacy and avoid the media. The choice to engage with the media is solely yours, but a trained victim advocate can help you weigh the pros and cons.

“ Just after Polly was kidnapped, I had an epiphany. I had refused an interview with a reporter. I told her the kidnapping was a private, family matter, and we were only dealing with law enforcement. Her response? She said that in a single, 10-second slot on the evening news, she could get me far greater exposure for the kidnapping than I could get by spending the next 100 years nailing flyers on telephone poles. I agreed to the interview.”

– Marc Klaas, father of Polly Klaas, kidnapped and murdered at age 12

When considering requests to be interviewed, keep the following points in mind:

1. Giving an interview can compromise the criminal investigation and/or affect trial proceedings, so it is best to seek advice from a victim advocate and/or prosecutor before you make public comments.
2. You and your family are entitled to grieve in private and can refuse permission for reporters and cameras to be present at a funeral or burial.
3. You have no obligation to agree to be interviewed. However, choosing privacy cannot guarantee that there will be no publicity about you. Journalists usually have several sources from which to gather information, including social media accounts. Consider setting your social media accounts, including past posts, to private.
4. If you decide to grant an interview, you can try setting conditions. The media may be unwilling or unable to agree to your terms, but if they refuse, you can withdraw from the interview.

Examples of conditions to consider and request:

- Time and location of the interview (choose a place where you feel comfortable)
- A specific reporter to conduct the interview
- Advance information about the general angle of the story

- Nondisclosure of interview location and protection of your identity
 - No other family members to be interviewed/filmed, including children
 - Knowledge of others who will be interviewed for the story
 - Direct contact information of the journalist
5. Be careful about speaking “off the record.” Not all journalists will treat what you say as confidential.
 6. Know that if you share photos or images, they may be shared with other media outlets.
 7. Agreeing to a single interview does not mean you must agree to follow-up interviews or to interviews with other reporters.
 8. If a report contains inaccurate information, you can contact the journalist or his or her supervisor to seek a correction.
 9. You can appoint a spokesperson to speak on your behalf if you do not want direct contact with the media. Suitable candidates may include a family member, friend, attorney, religious leader, or victim advocate. The role of the spokesperson is to represent you and your family in a positive way, seek to protect your privacy and dignity, release written statements at your request, and accompany you to interviews if you decide to speak to the media.
 10. If at any time you feel harassed by reporters, you can file a complaint with their employers, victim service providers, or the police.

“Viewers often accuse [journalists] of not knowing where that line is, and sometimes they’re right -- but, then again, many viewers don’t know the difference, either. Not because they are uncaring, but because they are human. “Most people don’t want to see victims exploited,” McBride says. “Yet you can post the most exploitative interview ever and people will read it.” Human beings, she adds, understand the world through stories. “The narrative of how that victimization happened and how that victim responded is incredibly meaningful. It helps us make sense of the world.” That’s why networks send their biggest stars to sit down with victims. Diane Sawyer’s interview with Jaycee Dugard, the young woman kidnapped as a child, raped and rescued a decade later, garnered huge numbers.”

– **Carol Costell**, CNN reporter

Specific points concerning talk show appearances or podcast recording sessions:

If you are invited to appear on a talk show, you can try to set some parameters. If the producer rejects any of your requests or refuses to agree to them in writing, you have the option to withdraw.

Examples of conditions to consider and request:

- A victim advocate be present to give support
- Advance information about other guests and the topics to be discussed
- Advance details of any criminal offender invited to participate from the studio or from another location and assurances that necessary arrangements will be made to make you feel safe and comfortable
- The opportunity to familiarize yourself with the set prior to the show
- The opportunity to preview any photos, graphics, or video/audio tapes that will be used for the show
- Special precautions to protect your identity and safety, including use of silhouette screens, disguises, electronic alteration of your voice, and nondisclosure of your residence/place of work/whereabouts
- Advance information about when and where the show will air and when it will be rebroadcast

“After my brother’s murder, I felt a need to tell people about my brother, about what kind of person he had been, about the senseless, random killing that had devastated my family. Initially, I just wanted to get the word out and the awareness up. My attitude was, “the more eyes the better.” I felt compelled to fight for my brother as he would have fought for me. So I gave press interviews and bared my emotions and my soul on television.”

– Dan Levey, brother of homicide victim

For more detailed information on your rights as a crime victim, you may view the Department of Justice’s [Crime Victims Act](#).

Important information for crime victims about social media

This project differentiates between social media (where anyone can post and there are few regulations) and professional media, including journalists and reporters who have been trained on ethical standards around issues such as privacy and dignity.

In social media, anyone can post content and tag other people (depending on notification settings). This may be harmful to victims of crime and/or their families as they repeatedly see images and videos of their personal crime. This may re-traumatize and/or re-victimize a victim.

This project's most important and helpful tip is to check your social media accounts' privacy settings. Make sure your profile is not public (especially after a traumatic event, such as a crime) and tell people within your social media circle if you wish for privacy. Remember that journalists may use social media to get information about you and your family. Please also review the tips about how to best interact with journalists.

Media's Coverage of Victimization

Even though crime (especially violent crime) has always been a focus of media attention, crime victims today, much like celebrities, are confronted by a general change in outlook that has taken place in the last few decades. Thirty years ago, editors were willing to exercise more restraint regarding the private lives of public figures. Some matters were deemed too private and some were hidden because the media perpetuated the myth that victims should be ashamed.



The facts of the case are now famous. A young woman attends a Stanford party with her younger sister. A few hours later, two Swedish graduate students on bicycles stumble upon freshman swimmer (and Olympic hopeful) Brock Turner, manually penetrating her unconscious body behind a dumpster. He flees; they give chase. She awakes in a hospital room to discover—gradually and horrifyingly—that she has been the victim of sexual assault. After a jury finds Turner guilty at trial the victim—now referred to by the media, and in this essay, as Emily Doe—delivers a victim impact statement at his sentencing. Judge Aaron Persky sentences Turner to a mere six months in a county jail. Emily's victim impact statement "goes viral" on social media, tearing open a space in the national discourse most recently occupied by the UVA student shown to be lying to The Rolling Stone about a frat house gang rape."

– Erin Sheley, author of "Victim Impact Statements and Expressive Punishment in the Age of Social Media"

Now, all details are an accepted part of the news cycle. Today's prevailing culture, reflected in tabloid news outlets and ever-popular television and radio talk shows, dictates that everything is in the public interest, as long as the public is interested. News reporters and editors and producers of television and radio shows have more encouragement than in the past to intrude on the privacy of individuals.

Live-streaming video has also changed the way in which people report crime. Individuals who witness crimes can now easily digitally record the event.

These videos can be used as evidence in an investigation and are sometimes uploaded onto social media accounts. This may be problematic and upsetting for crime victims and family members of crime victims, as the footage may be replayed on several different platforms. For example, Diamond Reynolds live-streamed seconds after her boyfriend, Philando Castile, had been fatally shot by a Minnesota police officer during a traffic stop.



Within hours, millions had watched her video, and the death of Ms. Reynolds's boyfriend, Philando Castile, was international news." On July 6, 2016, Philando Castile, a black man carrying a legal firearm, was shot dead by police officers during a traffic stop in front of his girlfriend and her child. His girlfriend, Diamond Reynolds, live-streamed his death and her subsequent interactions with officers and posted the video to her Facebook page. It depicts Diamond tearfully imploring the officer: "Please, officer, don't tell me you just did this to him. You shot four bullets into him, sir. He was just getting his license and registration, sir."

– Erin Sheley, author of "Victim Impact Statements and Expressive Punishment in the Age of Social Media"

This kind of outreach may have traumatizing implications for crime victims and their families, especially if they did not originally post the content.

Victims of crime, like everyone else, have certain rights to privacy. But media intrusion may have consequences for crime victims that do not apply to other groups of people. For example, in the immediate aftermath of a crime, when victims and other witnesses may be in a state of shock, details of their private lives may be pertinent to criminal investigations. In cases of serious crime, they may be frightened of or further traumatized by media attention. Their wellbeing and that of their families may suffer. Their ability to work with law enforcement and assist prosecutors may be put in jeopardy.

#Viraltrends

Some victims of crime and/or their families and friends have used #hashtags to bring attention to the crime. Hashtag campaigns and viral trends can help bring attention to a criminal case, policy change, or other event but may also be difficult for the victims' family to relive since they are seeing the crime mentioned repeatedly on, sometimes, various media platforms.

If, as a crime victim, you wish to share details about the crime or case, consider how it will impact you, your family and the case. Successful campaigns have been ones that highlight the positive aspects of the victim's life and are specific in their call to action. Here are some helpful tips to consider:

- Keep the hashtag short (for example, the [#MeToo](#) movement was highly successfully because it was easily recognizable).
- Be aware that other social media campaigns that might arise because of your call to action. If you have chosen to collect donations for your cause, be aware of copycat [Gofundme.com](#) funds or other donation funds. Make sure that any funds set up are appropriate to the victim's medical or end of life costs, that the correct person will receive the donations, and that donors know that your fund is legitimate.
 - It is also helpful to review all of the tax implications with [Gofundme.com](#) and other donation campaigns. Most donations are considered personal gifts, but tax implications may apply for charitable donations. More information about [Gofundme.com](#) can be found [here](#).

Usually, viral campaigns will bring out individuals who oppose the campaign's point of view or goals. Beware of reading comments on your social media hashtag campaign. Remember that as a user of social media, you are opening up yourself to scrutiny from individuals who may disagree with you. Be aware that cyberbullying may cause re-traumatization and contact your local police department if you feel a threat made on social media is credible. [Learn more about cyberbullying here](#).

Law Enforcement Body-Worn Cameras (BWC)

As BWC have become increasingly more popular across the country, it is important to keep in mind that footage from BWC may be used during criminal investigations. According to a report released by the IACP National Law Enforcement Policy Center, law enforcement officers are aware that, "recording[s] especially those that may be subject to the Freedom of Information Act requests... may be posted on media sites that could cause unnecessary distress for families and relatives." The full report may be accessed [here](#).

BWCs are another concern with regards to privacy and dignity and have been found to be a useful tool for officers and as a defense resource in cases of civil liability.

For Victim Advocates

Victim Advocates

Victim advocates must be alert, sensitive, and prepared for any reactions that a victim may have because of the media. You must be conscious of your own predispositions and prejudices and avoid making assumptions about what a victim may want to speak about publicly. While seeking to support and protect those anxious to preserve their anonymity and privacy, you must guide and counsel others who welcome interaction with the media. Advocates must support and empower victims to make their own informed choices on how and to what extent they engage with the media.

Victim advocates must prepare victims for the criminal justice process by predicting or highlighting what may happen according to the choices they make. Similarly, you must anticipate the possible consequences of media attention when helping victims decide what is in their own best interests.

Important points:

1. Advocates must ensure that all crime victims, and particularly those in high-profile cases, understand that they are entitled to seek privacy if they wish. No victim is required to give interviews or speak to the media.
2. Victims who choose anonymity should be supported and protected to every extent possible. However, advocates must explain that choosing privacy or anonymity is not a guarantee that nothing will be written or said about them in the media, nor will it protect victims against distressing media coverage. Victims may choose not to watch television or engage with social media.
3. Advocates must remember that each crime victim may respond differently to media attention. All victims need information to help them weigh the potential risks and benefits of interacting with the media. Advocates' responsibilities are to provide this information and then support the victims' preferences and choices.



Your [victims'] interests and the media's interests are totally different. Therefore, if you decide to cooperate with them, you must be very certain that you know what you personally wish to get out of it. And then you must focus on that alone, making sure you say exactly what you want, regardless of what the media says or does. You must choose your ground."

– Lucy Murray Brown, victim advocate, Somerville, Massachusetts

Advocating on Behalf of Victims

1. In all cases, but especially when victims have died or have been seriously injured, ask law enforcement to keep identities confidential and withhold the information from the public until family or close friends have been notified. If necessary, approach senior police officers directly about this request. Similarly, try to prevent the release of distressing details and photographs (including photographs of a place associated with the crime) before victims or survivors have been forewarned. This should be taken into consideration in preparation for trial so that the victim knows the details may be released and broadcast at this time.
2. When victims have chosen that they do not want public attention, try to persuade law enforcement to prevent the publication of their names or details that might identify them to the larger community.
3. Although the media is under no obligation to omit public information, advocates can ask them to do so in particular circumstances. Many newspapers have policies of excluding victims' street addresses and, if there are persuasive reasons, may be sympathetic to requests to omit some details. If the media publishes highly insensitive or misleading accounts of a victim's experience or ignores prior assurances given to a victim, consider not cooperating with those outlets in the future and filing complaints to the editors.
4. If inaccurate reports are published, inform victims that they can seek corrections. If they wish to contact the media outlet to complain, help them do so. Alternatively, if a journalist is sensitive and/or accurate in their reporting, highlight and praise their approach. Overall, remember that journalists might be friendly, but they are focused on doing their job rather than befriending the victim.
5. If the relationship with the media is going well and you feel comfortable, you may also ask the media to help with fundraising efforts.

Supporting Crime Victims

1. Provide victims with key information at the outset, informing them as early as possible about choices they can make regarding interactions with the media. Victims may wish to place a sign on their front door asking for privacy and/or heighten the privacy settings on their social media accounts.
2. Never pressure victims to agree to interviews or make them feel guilty about refusing. Make it clear that consenting to one interview puts them under no obligation to consent to follow-up interviews. Also let them know they can refuse interviews regardless of the reason.
3. Reporters can investigate and report stories as they choose, and other people (family members, friends, neighbors of the suspect or victim) may provide them with information. Supporting victims includes preparing them for these realities, as well as seeking to preserve their privacy.

4. Be sure victims have enough time to consider if they want to be interviewed. Strongly discourage the participation of children in interviews, podcasts, or talk shows. Reserve the right to end an interview if the victim becomes distressed. Discuss ways to stop the interview or how a victim can signal to stop the interview. Review with reporters, producers, and talk show hosts the questions that a victim will or will not answer.
5. Never give a reporter a victim's name without prior permission. Respect the victims' rights to privacy at all times and never give the media "off the record" information.
6. Advocates should be well-versed in different forms of social media, crowdfunding websites, and other technology that may affect their clients so they can best advise them.

Empowering Crime Victims

Victims of crime are entitled to make their own choices and establish parameters and conditions when dealing with the media.

Examples of conditions that victims may set:

1. Grieve in private without engaging in any interaction with the media and select a spokesperson or advocate of their choice to speak on their behalf
2. Refuse to give an interview –
 - a. and release a written statement through a spokesperson instead
 - b. with a specific reporter even when interviews have been granted to others
 - c. even if interviews have been previously granted
3. Request an interview with a specific reporter, possibly because they trust and have confidence in a particular journalist or favor the media outlet they represent
4. Grant an interview on the condition –
 - a. that children (and any of their photos or images) are excluded
 - b. they are filmed only in silhouette (for television interviews)
 - c. that no pictures are taken or used (for print interviews)
5. Refrain from answering any questions they feel are inappropriate or that make them uncomfortable, and request that offensive photographs or visuals be omitted from broadcasts and publications
6. Avoid press conferences and/or speak to only one reporter at a time

7. Request corrections if broadcast or newsprint reports contain inaccuracies
8. File formal complaints against reporters and media producers if they behave inappropriately or improperly

It may be helpful to familiarize yourself with the [Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma](#), which provides resources for journalists.

Media Contact During the Criminal Justice Process

Advocates should emphasize that victims can refrain at any time from giving interviews or answering questions. Explain to victims the risks and possible consequences of giving comments or interviews during the criminal justice process. Innocent remarks may be taken out of context and misinterpreted or misused to discredit the victim's own testimony or that of other witnesses. This also applies to social media posts made before or after the crime occurred. Victims should focus on the facts of the case and their personal observations to safely share how it has affected their lives.

The following is an example of a victim unintentionally affecting the criminal justice process:

“ A homicide survivor talked continually to the press even after prosecutors expressed concern that his statements could jeopardize their case. He did not realize the serious implications of his actions until the defense counsel subpoenaed video footage of his statement in an effort to impeach him on the stand. ”

**– Jeannette M. Adkins, director, Victim/Witness Division, Greene County Prosecutor's Office
Xenia, Ohio**

Victim service organizations should have a written policy outlining procedures that will be followed when responding to requests for information from the media. It should include confidentiality policies and procedures, which must be strictly upheld. Generally, advocates should not speak with the media without explicit authorization from a supervisor, and must never speak to the media on behalf of a crime victim or surviving family without specific consent from the victim.

When writing about a case, reporters will often ask for a local or human-interest angle. Be prepared for the following types of questions when pitching a story on a crime victim's behalf, if this is typical for your position or organization:

- Has a local victim triumphed over tragedy or found a way to help other victims restore their lives? Is there a victim who would be willing to share his or her story?
- Do you have a reliable source for up-to-date statistics on a particular kind of crime? (Position your organization as a resource and refer to the "Crime and Victimization Fact Sheets" in the annual National Crime Victims' Rights Week Resource Guide for data points.)
- Have there been any other recent examples in your area of the crime you are discussing? In other communities around the country?
- Is there a local expert on criminal law who could brief the media on any issues related to the crime or criminal justice that might impact the victim and/or the victim's family?
- Can your organization's director provide an on the record comment?

We hope that this guide will encourage victim advocates to enroll in professional media training and seek out the many valuable materials available to educate and guide those who interact with the media on a regular basis.

How to Organize a Press Conference

It might be helpful to convene a press conference on behalf of the victim/victim's family so that individuals can provide information once, rather than retelling the story over and over again, which might lead to further traumatization.

A press conference can be called by the victim, the victim's family representative, and/or the victim advocate.

Tips for organizing press conferences:

- Invite the journalists, organizations, and individuals who are most likely to be interested. Send short details on a one-page press release. Make personal phone calls to remind key journalists to attend.
- Schedule the conference at a convenient time: Monday through Thursday, between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. If inviting local news broadcasters, it may be most convenient to hold a press conference in the late afternoon or early evening. Ask the most important attendees for their desired times. There is less chance of good attendance on Fridays and Saturdays, so avoid these days, if possible. If it is necessary to plan a weekend press conference (when fewer journalists work) choose Sunday rather than Saturday.

- Consider the best venue for the conference. If your offices are not suitable (or suitably located) find a good, accessible alternative. If you choose an outdoor location, make contingency arrangements in case of bad weather. If you plan to hold a conference in a public location, ask the police or local municipal authorities if a permit is required.
- Make proper preparations. Always try to provide seating to create a more comfortable working environment for those attending. Members of the media usually bring their own electrical supplies for lighting and cameras, but an adequate sound system must be provided. If the organizing entity has a logo, it should be displayed in an appropriate way.
- Prepare and distribute press packets. Journalists rarely welcome lengthy written material, so limit the contents to a news release, brief biographies of the speakers, an article or two about your mission, and, perhaps, one longer piece (possibly the executive summary of a relevant report). Assign a staff member to greet reporters and hand out any materials.
- Be prepared for early or late arrivals. Photographers may arrive early in search of candid shots of participants. Begin the press conference on time because reporters and camera crews may be called away to another story. If only a few reporters turn up on time, use your best judgment to decide whether to delay the start of the conference by five to 10 minutes.
- If television crews are expected, attempt to fill as many seats as possible. Recruit supporters if there is concern that the conference may appear too empty on camera.
- Consider three or four speakers, but only allow them to speak for about five minutes each. The press conference should not last more than half an hour, as reporters are always busy. The best speakers should speak first, and a strong moderator should prevent speakers from running over their allotted time. Remind all speakers to dress appropriately to avoid offending or alienating the audience. Consider visual props (such as charts with statistics or reports) when appropriate.
- Offer visuals if they are appropriate. Online stories and television stories will require multiple visuals from a press conference and it may be helpful to provide photos on a large screen or in a press packet.
- Allow 10 to 20 minutes for journalists to pose questions to the speakers. If someone asks for additional information, invite him or her to stay after the press conference concludes.
- Rehearse the order of speakers in advance. If you have a practice run-through that includes asking and answering anticipated questions, this will improve the effectiveness and preparedness of the speakers.

For Journalists

Journalists

The news media can often inflict a “second victimization” upon crime victims or survivors by enhancing their feelings of violation, disorientation, and loss of control. Common concerns victims express about the media include: interviewing survivors at inappropriate times, filming and photographing scenes with bodies and body bags, searching for the “negative” about the victim, printing the victim’s name or address, inappropriately delving into the victim’s past, and using footage from a previous social media video or post.

It is important for journalists to understand the emotions felt by victims and survivors. They are usually numb and often physically and mentally stunned by the crime and its impact. Frequently, victims feel confused and completely disoriented, especially immediately after the crime occurs, when the story is timely.

The issue of privacy of the individual versus the freedom of the press is a contentious one, and the related issue of victims’ rights often creates a “battleground.” There is an ethical consideration that the media is reexamining: many journalists realize that while they may have a legal right to publish certain information, they have an ethical responsibility to balance the potential for public good against the private harm resulting from publication. This varies by crime; sexual assault victims’ names are usually not shared, but homicide victims’ names are often shared.

Victims should have rights when interacting with the media. Although, in most cases, a person will not be able to bring a legal action against the media if his or her rights are violated.

Victims should have the right to the following:

- Refuse an interview
- Select the spokesperson or advocate of their choice
- Select the time and location for media interviews
- Request a specific reporter
- Refuse an interview with a specific reporter, even though they have granted interviews to other reporters
- Refuse an interview even though they have previously granted interviews
- Release a written statement through a spokesperson in lieu of an interview
- Exclude children from interviews

- Refrain from answering any uncomfortable or inappropriate questions
- Avoid a press conference atmosphere and speak to only one reporter at a time
- Demand a correction if inaccurate information is reported
- Ask that offensive photographs or visuals be omitted from airing or publication
- Conduct a television interview using a silhouette or a newspaper interview without having their picture taken
- Completely give their story of the victimization
- Refrain from answering reporters' questions during a trial
- Grieve in private
- Suggest training about media and victims for print and electronic media in their community

Victims have the right to be treated with dignity and respect by the media at all times. Victims' rights to privacy can be better protected by the active participation of a victim advocate. A victim advocate can play an effective role as a "go-between" for the reporter and the victim, establishing an environment conducive for the victim to speak to the media. This minimizes the invasion of privacy victims may feel, allows advocates to advise victims about their rights in the media, and gives the media access to the story.

Additionally, such a process assists those victims who wish to refuse interviews and provide a written statement instead. The advocate can assist the victim in preparing a statement, including reviewing the facts that can and cannot be released to the public. Advocates also offer emotional support to victims by calming their fears and being present when the actual interview is conducted.

Things for the media to keep in mind immediately after a trauma and/or breaking news:

- Recognize that the victim may be coping with shock and trauma
- Approach the victim without equipment (notebooks, tape recorders, cameras, and lights) and try to make a human connection
- Introduce yourself as a reporter, give the victim your name and title, and briefly explain what you hope to achieve with your story
- Express concern for the victim by saying, "I am sorry for what happened to you" or "I am sorry for your loss"

- Ask the victim how he or she would prefer to be addressed, and observe that preference in all your questions
- Give the victim a reason to speak with you by explaining the purpose of the story
- Tell the victim how much time you need and observe that time limit
- Courteously accept the victim's refusal if he or she is unwilling to be interviewed

If the victim says no, express interest in a future interview, leave a business card, or send an e-mail with your contact information, and ask for the names of others who may be willing to speak.

Find additional resources at the [Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma website](#).

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