



**NEW YORK STATE**  
**OFFICE *for the* PREVENTION *of* DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

**Working with Reporters: Tips for Domestic Violence Service Providers**

The table below contains information about the media and ideas for how domestic violence service providers can best work with them.

<p><b>Reporters want statistics</b></p>	<p><b>Deadlines are key</b></p>
<p>Reporters often want relevant statistics to include in their story.</p> <p><i>What service providers can do:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have your program statistics up-to-date and ready. Consider putting statistics on your website.</li> <li>• Develop a fact sheet about your program that can be immediately provided to the media and found on-line.</li> <li>• If possible, have statistics from other local agencies available to share with the media. For example, how many domestic incident reports (DIRs) were filed in your county for a given year or the number of orders of protection issued.</li> </ul>	<p>Reporters work under strict deadlines. The sources they use may be dictated by who they can reach in time to make their deadline.</p> <p><i>What service providers can do:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Designate ahead of time those people on staff allowed to speak with the media. Make sure all staff is aware who can handle media calls.</li> <li>• If a reporter calls and no one is available to speak to them, ask what their deadline is and what type of questions they are hoping to have answered so you can get back to them in time and be prepared to answer their questions.</li> <li>• Consider how your program can be responsive to after-hours media calls. Think about designating a person who could be on call, or if you run a 24-hour shelter, see if any shelter staff could be trained to speak with the press. Put the contact information for media on your website and out-going voicemail message, and give it to those who answer your hotline after hours.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Reporters want context</b></p>	
<p><i>What service providers can do:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help the reporter understand the dynamics of domestic violence by explaining how aspects of the incident they are writing about relate to domestic violence as a whole.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Referring reporters to victims</b></p>	
<p>Often, reporters want to speak with a victim or survivor of domestic violence and will ask service providers for referrals.</p> <p><i>What service providers can do:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many programs have survivors who work with them as volunteers because they want to help educate the public about domestic violence. The media can be a powerful tool to help get the message out. There are, however, things to consider before connecting a survivor to a reporter, including:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Do you think the survivor is emotionally prepared to speak publicly about her story?</li> <li>○ Will public identification put the survivor at risk?</li> <li>○ Has this reporter or publication been sensitive to domestic violence issues in the past?</li> <li>○ Should someone from the program accompany the survivor during the interview in case the reporter asks a question that is unexpected or otherwise distresses the survivor?</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>See <i>Working with the Media: A Toolkit for Service Providers</i>, page 9, for more on this issue.  <a href="http://www.mcadv.org/resources/files/providers/Advocates.pdf">http://www.mcadv.org/resources/files/providers/Advocates.pdf</a></p>	



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<b>Being taken out of context</b>	<b>Relationship building</b>
<p>Anyone who has spoken to the media knows that they run the risk of having statements attributed to them that aren't quite what they said or meant. This can happen because reporters cannot use everything that was said in an interview and pick only certain things to include.</p> <p><i>What service providers can do:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Always have a few general talking points about domestic violence prepared.</li> <li>• Prepare for an interview. Find out what questions the reporter is interested in having answered, as well as the angle of their story.</li> <li>• Develop three key messages that you want to communicate (about the issue of domestic violence, your agency's response, etc.). Use these key messages as the framework for your conversation, and keep going back to them to further reinforce your message. Repeat the concepts or phrases you most want included in the story often during the interview.</li> <li>• Know that nothing is "off the record." Assume anything you say could end up in the story.</li> </ul> <p>See <a href="http://www.mcbw.org/files/u1/mediachecklist.pdf">http://www.mcbw.org/files/u1/mediachecklist.pdf</a> for a checklist service providers can use to prepare for an interview.</p>	<p>Reporters may not know about your agency or that domestic violence services exist.</p> <p>What service providers can do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build a relationship with your local media:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Reach out to local media to introduce yourself and let them know you are available to them as a resource. If there are specific reporters who cover domestic violence frequently, reach out to them directly.</li> <li>○ Write letters to the editor or longer opinion pieces about the issue and submit them for publication. Familiarize yourself with a paper's editorial policies, such as the length of letters to the editor, before you make a submission.</li> <li>○ Call to let them know you enjoyed their thoughtful and educational reporting if you see or hear something about domestic violence in the media that you think is particularly good. If they have made a factual error about your program, let them know that, too, so they don't repeat the mistake in the future.</li> <li>○ Issue press releases and invite media to attend when you have a newsworthy event.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>