Media

This chapter will cover:

- Dealing with media – Your rights
- Dealing With The Media - Your Rights

Dealing With The Media - Your Rights

You have the right to say “No” to an interview.

Never feel that because you have unwillingly been involved in an incident of public interest that you must personally share the details and/or your feelings with the general public. If you decide that you want the public to be aware of how traumatic and unfair your vic-timization was, you do not automatically have to give up your right to privacy. By knowing and requesting respect for your rights, you can be heard and yet not violated.

You have the right to select the spokesperson or advocate of your choice.

Selecting one spokesperson – especially in multiple-victim cases – eliminates confusion and contradictory statements. You also have the right to expect the media to respect your selection of a spokesperson or advocate.

You have the right to select the time and location for media interviews.

Remember, the media is governed by deadlines. However, nobody should be subjected to a reporter arriving unannounced at the home of a victim. When you are traumatized, your home becomes your refuge. If you wish to protect the privacy of your home, select another location such as a church, meeting hall, office setting, etc. It helps if you are familiar and comfortable with the surroundings.

You have the right to request a specific reporter.

As a consumer of daily news, each of us identifies with or respects a reporter whom we may never have met. We often form personal opinions about reporters whom we feel are thorough, sensitive, compassionate and objective. If a newspaper, radio station, or television station contacts you for an interview, don’t hesitate to request the reporter you feel will provide accurate and fair coverage of your story.

You have the right to refuse an interview with a specific reporter even though you have granted interviews to other reporters.

You may feel that certain reporters are callous, insensitive, uncaring, or judgmental. It is your right to avoid these journalists at all costs. By refusing to speak to such reporters, you may help them recognize their shortcomings in reporting victim-related stories. However, recognize that the reporter may write the story regardless of your participation.

You have the right to say “No” to an interview even though you have previously granted interviews.

It’s important to recognize that victims often ride an “emotional roller coaster.” You may be able one day to talk with a reporter, and be physically or emotionally unable to do so the next. Victims should never feel “obliged” to grant interviews under any circumstances.

You have the right to release a written statement through a spokesperson in lieu of an interview.

There may be times when you are emotionally incapable of speaking with the media, but you still wish to express your point of view. Writing and distributing your statement through a spokesperson allows you to express your views without personally granting interviews.

You have the right to exclude children from interviews.

Children already suffering from the trauma of crime are often re-traumatized by exposure to the media. Children often lack the means to verbalize their emotions and may be misinterpreted by both the media and the public. You have a responsibility to protect the interest of children at all cost!

You have the right to refrain from answering any questions.

You have the right to refrain from answering any questions with which you are uncomfortable or that you feel are inappropriate. You should never feel you have to answer a question just because it’s being asked.

You have the right to know in advance what direction the story about your victimization is going to take.

You have the right to know what questions reporters will ask you, along with the right to veto any questions. This places you in a partnership with the reporter who is covering the story.

You have the right to ask for review of your quotations in a storyline prior to publication.

Articles are reviewed and revised by editors who have neither seen nor spoken to you. All too often, victims' statements and the intended impact of their remarks are misinterpreted or inaccurate. To protect your interests and the message you wish to convey, you have the right to request for a review of direct quotations attributed to you in the storyline.

You have the right to avoid a press conference atmosphere and speak to only one reporter at time.

At a time when you are in a state of shock, a press conference atmosphere with numerous reporters can be confusing and emotionally draining. If a press conference is absolutely unavoidable, you have the right to select one reporter to ask questions for the majority present.

You have the right to demand a retraction when inaccurate information is reported.

All news mediums have methods of correcting inaccurate reporting or errors in stories. Use these means to correct any aspect of media coverage which you feel is inaccurate.

You have the right to ask that offensive photographs or visuals be omitted from airing or publication.

If you feel that graphic photographs or visuals are not the best representation of you or your loved ones, you have the right to ask that they not be used.

You have the right to conduct a interview anounmously.

You have the right to conduct a television interview using a silhouette or a newspaper interview without having your photograph taken. There are many ways for reporters to project your physical image without using your photograph or film footage of you, therefore protecting your identity.

You have the right to completely give your side of the story related to your victimization.

If you feel that a reporter is not asking questions which need to be addressed, you have the right to give a personal statement. And if the alleged or convicted offender grants interviews which are inaccurate, you have the right to publicly express your point of view.

You have the right to refrain from answering reporters’ questions during trial.

If there is any chance of jeopardizing your case by interacting with the media during judicial proceedings, you have the right to remain silent.

You have the right to file a formal complaint against a reporter.

A reporter’s superior would appreciate knowing when his or her employees behavior is unethical, inappropriate or abusive. By reporting such behavior, you will also protect the next unsuspecting victim who might fall prey to such offensive reporters or tactics.

You have the right to grieve in privacy.

Grief is a highly personal experience. If you do not wish to share it publicly, you have the right to ask reporters to remove themselves during times of grief.

You have the right to suggest training about media and victims for print and electronic media in your community.

Resources are available to educate media professionals about victims, how to deal with victims, and how to refrain from traumatizing victims. You will be suggesting a greatly needed public service to benefit not only victims and survivors, but all members of the community who interact with the media.

You have the right, at all times, to be treated with dignity and respect by the media.