



Developing Effective Responses to High-Profile Cases **A Factsheet for Rape Crisis Programs**

High-profile cases, whether or not they occur in your community, offer both an opportunity and a challenge. Rape crisis programs are uniquely positioned to engage the broader community through factual, victim-centered messaging and action at a time when people are thinking about sexual violence. This factsheet provides tips for responding to high-profile cases.

In general, a response strategy from a rape crisis program should be focused on:

- Supporting survivors everywhere
- Educating the community about sexual violence, its impact, and prevention of it
- Advocating for systems change

Some things to expect during and after a high-profile case:

What to Expect	Response Ideas
More survivors may contact the program for services because the news coverage has triggered them, or it has inspired them to disclose for the first time	Ensure adequate hotline coverage and prepare all staff members and volunteers for the possibility that the need may increase for a while
Some survivors may contact the program wanting to speak out or “do something”	Prepare to help survivors work through actions that would be appropriate and healing for them; if possible, prepare small but meaningful activities survivors could participate in within your program
Concerned citizens may contact the program asking what you are doing, or plan to do, in response to the high-profile case	Discuss any specific, non-confidential responses you are providing, but emphasize the ongoing services you provide that support survivors, educate the community, and advocate for change
Professionals from inside or outside the victim services profession may contact the program to collaborate on a project or shared response	Be willing to have discussions/meetings, but only commit to projects that reflect your mission, allow for careful planning and meaningful contribution, are allowable by your funders, and are realistic for your program’s staffing and resources
The media may contact your program for a quote or an interview; this may include newspapers, TV news stations or programs, radio stations, and/or web-based entities (e-magazines, blogs, etc.)	In addition to familiarizing yourself with media contacts in your area, prepare for interviews ahead of time (see below)

Preparing to Speak to the Media

- If possible, designate a single person to be the contact point for the media; this should be a Director or another staff member with considerable experience
- Develop general talking points for use in any interview
- Have materials available to give to reporters, including a business card, program brochure, etc.

Dos and Don'ts when Speaking to the Media

DO	DON'T
Investigate the media outlet and specific reporter seeking a quote/interview; if possible, review prior stories about sexual violence that this reporter has done	Assume that the media outlet/reporter is reputable or suitable for an interview about sexual violence
Agree to an interview at a mutually convenient time	Sacrifice your personal time, or time spent with survivors, in order to accommodate a reporter; at the same time, don't put off contacting the reporter, as he/she will quickly move on to someone else
Ask for the questions ahead of time, but be prepared for any question	Assume the reporter will ask predictable, comfortable, or easy-to-answer questions
Ask the reporter who else he/she has talked to or plans to interview	Assume you are the only one who will be heard on this issue
Stick to your main talking points	Comment on the specifics of the high-profile case or any individual survivor
Stick with positive messages that will inspire others to espouse your point of view	Make negative comments or focus on demonizing society
Say what you have to say during the interview	Make comments or statements "off the record"
Politely correct any myths or unsupportive statements made by the reporter	Argue with the reporter or suggest that he/she is part of the problem
Expect that your interview will likely be edited and that as a result, your statements may not come across as you would have liked	Be offended, take it personally or criticize yourself
Thank the reporter for contacting you and invite him/her to contact you in the future	Treat the reporter disdainfully or as a "necessary evil"
Ask for a copy of (or link to) the interview for record-keeping purposes, to share with others, and/or to learn from	Assume the interview will be published exactly as you hope, or pretend that others will not see/read/hear it