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## Interviews with the Media - Tip Sheet for Crime Victims

In some cases the media may contact crime victims for interviews or appearances on talk shows. Because there can be risks as well as benefits to interacting with the media, the National Center for Victims of Crime has assembled these tips to help you choose the level of contact you have with the press.

### Points to keep in mind when considering interview requests

- Some crime victims find media attention helpful, beneficial, and in their interests. Others prefer privacy and shun the press. The choice is yours, but a trained victim advocate can help you weigh the pros and cons.
- Giving an interview can compromise the criminal investigation and/or affect trial proceedings. It is best to seek advice from a victim advocate and/or prosecutor before you make public comments.
- 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.
- You have no obligation to agree to be interviewed, but choosing privacy cannot guarantee that there will be no publicity about you. Journalists usually have several sources.
- If you decide to grant an interview, you can try setting some conditions. The media may be unwilling or unable to agree to your terms, but if they refuse, you can withdraw. Conditions you may want to consider include:
  - Time and location of the interview
  - A specific reporter to conduct the interview
  - Advance information about the general angle of the story
  - Non-disclosure of interview location and protection of your identity
  - No other family members will be interviewed/filmed, including children
- Be careful about speaking "off the record." Not all journalists will treat what you say as confidential.
- Agreeing to one interview does not mean you have to agree to follow-up interviews, or to interviews with other reporters.
- If a report contains inaccurate information, you can complain and seek a correction.
- You can appoint a spokesperson to speak on your behalf if you do not want direct contact with the press. 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.
- If at any time you feel harassed by reporters, you can file a complaint with their employers, victim service providers, or the police.

### Specific points concerning talk show appearances

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, you can decide to either proceed or withdraw. Conditions you may wish to seek include:

- Victim advocate to be present to give support
- Advance information about other guests and the topics to be discussed with them
- Advance details of any criminal offender invited to participate from the studio or from another location and arrangements to make you feel safe and comfortable
- Opportunity to familiarize yourself with the set prior to the show
- 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 non-disclosure of your residence/place of work/whereabouts
- Advance information about when and where the show will air and when it will be re-broadcast

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**National Center for Victims of Crime**

2000 M Street NW, Suite 480

Washington, D.C. 20036

phone: 202-467-8700

fax: 202-467-8701