



**SAKI**  
SEXUAL ASSAULT  
KIT INITIATIVE  
Reform. Accountability. Justice.

# **Media Relations 101:**

## **Best Practices for Telling Your Story**

**Melissa Schwartz and Ilse Knecht**  
The Joyful Heart Foundation

*This project was supported by Grant No. 2015-AK-BX-K021 awarded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance. The Bureau of Justice Assistance is a component of the Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the Office for Victims of Crime, and the SMART Office. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.*

# Building a Narrative

## Why Media Matters:

- Raising awareness
- Impact reforms
- Empowering survivors

# Building a Narrative

## Cultivating Reporters:

- New reporters
- Combative reporters

# Building a Narrative

## Getting Your Message Out:

### Deskchair Media

Press Release

Op-ed

Letter to the Editor

Website

Blog

Readout

### Media Relations

Media Interviews

Pen & Pad Briefing

Radio Tour / Interviews

Press Conferences

Speeches

Tele-Press Call

### Online Engagement

E-Newsletter

You Tube / Podcasts

Social Media

# Doing Your Homework

## Engaging Stakeholders:

- Criminal Justice Colleagues
- Community Partners
- Survivors

# Doing Your Homework

Helping Law Enforcement Prepare for Media:

- Reporter research
- Tough Q&A
- Stats and facts

# Doing Your Homework

## Helping Survivors Prepare for Media:

- Reporter research
- Setting context
- Trauma-informed environment



# Before the Interview

- Know your audience
- Know yourself
- Know your opposition
- Know your context

# During the Interview

1. It's an interview, not a deposition
2. It's your interview, not the reporter's
3. Reporters are conduits, not the audience
4. Memorize 3 top messages
5. Repeat them often
6. Provide conclusions first, evidence later

# During the Interview

- Whatever the question, give your “elevator” speech
  - Your best chance to establish context, get all messages in
- A question isn’t properly answered unless you:
  - Address the reporter’s subject
  - Tie it to one of your key messages
- Reporters are not going to cut you off
  - Finish what you started

# During the Interview

- Acknowledge the question, but move quickly to message
- View each question as a 'topic area'
  - Pick the word you want and run with it
  - Pick the thought you want and expand upon it
  - Pick the question you want and answer it

# During the Interview

## **Bridging:**

After acknowledging the question, 'bridge' back to your message:

“That speaks to a bigger point, which is...”

“It’s important to consider...”

“One of the things we haven’t talked about...”

“What this is really about is...”

“Let me put this into perspective...”

“Let me answer you by saying that...”

“Before we get off that subject, let me add...”

# During the Interview

## Flagging:

Flagging a point for emphasis helps stress key takeaways, underscore most important lines

“The essential point to remember is...”

“The most exciting thing about this Program is...”

“When you focus on...”

“What this boils down to is...”

# After the Interview

- Always take the opportunity to repeat your messages one more time
- Remember to thank the interviewer
- Remain courteous, charming and on your guard until you're well away
- Don't forget to provide follow-up, if you've promised it

# After the Interview

- A good interview/relationship can reap benefits for years
- If you are a reliable interview, they will come back
  - Reporters like process
  - Good to give them a chance to revisit their piece
- OK to be aggressive
  - “thank you for your focus on this – I hope we have the chance to talk again”
  - “happy to circle back with you (and your viewers) once we know more”



# INTERVIEW RULES: DOs

- Practice self-care before beginning
- Stay on message
- Be assertive, enthusiastic and positive
- Put things in context
- Support your claims with data
- Connect your answer to your broader messages
- Speak in clear, basic language
- Stick to what you know
- Read the morning papers

# INTERVIEW RULES: DON'Ts

- Don't do an interview until you're ready
- Don't speak for anyone else
- Don't let falsehoods stand
- Don't use jargon or ramble
- Don't end the silence
- Don't answer hypotheticals
- Don't lose your cool
- Don't be sarcastic/ironic
- Don't say "no comment"



**SAKI**  
SEXUAL ASSAULT  
KIT INITIATIVE  
Reform. Accountability. Justice.

Thank you!