



**CALCASA**  
CALIFORNIA COALITION  
AGAINST SEXUAL ASSAULT

# Media Advocacy Guide

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## **Introduction**

As a coalition we are inundated with media and media requests about the issue of rape. The relationship between CALCASA member agencies and local media ranges anywhere from very close and collegial to non-existent or fearful. This guide should help to bridge gaps where they exist, to help build capacity for those who have not gone down that path, or as an additional resource for those who have developed media plans.

As our members work with local media, CALCASA hopes to demystify the process of media advocacy and share with our members the lessons we have learned.

## Section 1: Prioritizing Media

Media is central to our work. As advocates one of our foundational principles is the belief that violence against women is a social problem, not a biological one. So with that in mind feminists for decades have looked into how this problem is fixed into our society. Time and time again, advocates have noticed that the representation of violence against women in the media has created a supportive environment for those same behaviors in our community.

### Why work with the media?

Media advocacy is victim advocacy. The term “media advocacy” sounds scary, but it is the same type of work you do everyday in the schools, counseling sessions, meetings and more, the type of advocacy just has a different set of rules. Media advocacy is a way of talking to your entire community about sexual violence. People watch the news, read various papers, online media and their opinions are shaped by what they see and read. The media is a tool advocates can use to start conversations that are responsible and complex.

Media advocacy  
is victim advocacy.

Sexual assault victim advocates can engage media for the very thing that it is good for; instilling values in our society and informing our community.

That is not to say that this guide will try to tackle all of the ills in contemporary media, but rather that we see media as a tool for socialization and education (good, bad and indifferent) and we hope to harness that tool in ways that drive our advocacy toward a world free from sexual violence.

There are two common ways for organizations to gain visibility through media:

- Advertising
- Public Relations (PR)

On one hand, advertising is a way to generate a consistent branding, message and appeal across wide audiences. It is typically costly, and requires resources we often don't have in our organization (such as advertising and marketing specialists).

PR on the other hand is something that, when planned strategically, is an integral part of our organization. Good PR strategies can be flexible, they can have broad scalability, and any organization can attain a modicum of success, regardless of the level of resources available. We tend to look at PR as the place you can get the “most bang for your buck.”

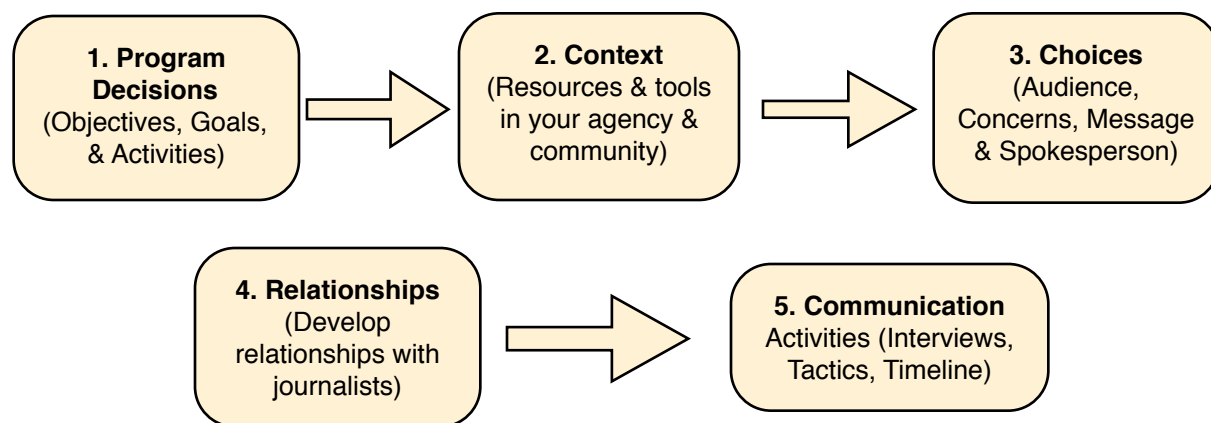
For the purposes of this guide, we will refer to these activities as “media advocacy.” We choose this label consciously, as it represents both the forum in which we work (the

media, in all its flavors), and our job in that forum (to advocate our position). You will find that this approach is very consistent with traditional PR approaches, but takes into consideration the resource limitations we are often faced with, along with the philosophical issues that we are trying to articulate in our communities. Like any good advocate, our media advocacy must be flexible, thoughtful, and strategic.

### 1.1 How does media advocacy work?

Media advocacy begins with a strategic planning process. In practice, it consists of developing content for the media and in turn developing relationships with its agents. Media includes traditional media such as print and broadcast journalism, as well as new media such as internet publications, social networking, and mobile media. Gone are the days where PR referred only to sending out press releases and having news conferences. In today's media market -- and particularly for non-profits -- we need to have a broader understanding of how to engage media in as many forms as we can and seek new opportunities not only for viability but for interaction with our community.

#### Strategic Planning Process



Organizations can use media to communicate core messages to their community. Along with community education programs this can be one of the single most important ways to interact with the community in attempts to effect change. Media advocacy will also include creative social marketing strategies that accomplish fundamental goals of any organization including branding, fundraising and creating a context for understanding sexual violence in our communities.

To better understand PR we have to understand those who are creating content (eg. the journalists, internet resources, etc.). This is one of the first steps in developing media literacy, a core skill in developing PR strategies. So to do this we suggest that you strive to become an active consumer of media -- that you analyze and evaluate media and you actively seek out media that suits your needs. Watch television news and listen to the radio with the same focus. Surf the Internet for online news and up-to-the-minute

information on breaking stories. Become a news hound with a voracious appetite to be in the know. The Internet is also a valuable resource for identifying potential partners. Investigate organizations with similar interests and look for best practices to maximize your efforts and resources.

In sum, public relations is your pathway into the media and will be the process for how you get your issue covered, how you shape the public discussion, and how you educate your community.

This guide will help you develop the basic components of a media and PR strategy. We hope you will be able to use this as a resource for planning, training, and reference as you continue to work towards building your agency as a vibrant voice in your community.