Getting Information to the Media:
Tips for Victims of Crime

Victims of crime, or their spokesperson(s), can communicate directly with members of the news media by issuing a press statement or press release. Victims should be mindful of any information that could compromise the criminal investigation or affect trial proceedings. It is a good idea to seek advice from victim witness staff and/or the prosecutor to be sure that public comments will not cause problems with the case.

WHAT IS A PRESS STATEMENT?

A press statement is a brief written document used to communicate with members of the press. It can provide information or make a request. It might announce a memorial service or the establishment of a memorial fund. Sometimes press statements make an appeal to the community for information about an unsolved crime and provide the number to call with information, such as Crime Stoppers or local law enforcement. Press statements might thank the community for their support and/or make an appeal for privacy. A press release can be used to announce a press conference or an upcoming event.

HOW DO I GET MY STATEMENT TO THE PRESS?

Press statement can be mailed, faxed or emailed directly to media organizations. Contact information is often available on the news organization's website (on a "Contact Us" page). If it isn't clear who to contact at a particular media source, it may be useful to call the media organization and ask to speak with a news editor. Introduce yourself to the news editor and ask for their suggestion about how to submit a statement. (They are also the people to speak to if there is a mistake or inaccuracy with an article.) Sometimes officials associated with the criminal case, such as prosecutors or victim witness staff, can assist victims with getting their statement to the press.

HOW DO I WRITE IT?

There is a format commonly used by the media that can be followed when submitting a press release/statement. A quick internet search will provide many examples of press releases. The basic format below is a good template to use:

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SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: These words should appear before the body of the text. In this sample they are placed in the left-hand margin, just under the letterhead. Every letter is capitalized.

Headline: One sentence. Use proper title case, capitalizing every word except for the following articles: of, it, the, a, an, from, and, is, by …Use a boldface type.

Dateline: This should be the city your press release is issued from and the date you are mailing your release.

Contact Information: Skip a line or two after the statement and list the name, title, telephone and fax numbers of your spokesperson. When choosing which contact information to include, keep in mind that reporters often work on deadlines and may try to contact the spokesperson after hours.

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
[date]

For more information, contact:
[Contact Information]

STATEMENT TO THE PRESS

<City>, <State>, <Date> - The family of [NAME] issued the following statement today:

[*WRITE YOUR STATEMENT HERE* …When it is complete, type

"END" on the first line after your statement ends. This lets the medial

know they received the entire release. If your statement goes over one

page, type "MORE" at the bottom of the first page.]

For additional information: The Doe family will not respond to media inquiries. John Brown is the family's media spokesman. He can be reached at: [include contact information such as phone, cell, fax, email, address].

--END--