

You have the right to ask for review of your quotations in a story prior to its publication. Articles are reviewed and revised by editors who have neither seen nor spoken to you. All too often, victims' statements and the intended impact of the remarks are misinterpreted or inaccurate. To protect your interests and the message you wish to convey, you have the right to request a review of direct quotations attributed to you in the story.

If at any time you feel harassed by reporters, you can file a complaint with their employers, victim service providers, or the police.

If a report contains inaccurate information, you may complain and seek a correction by calling the Office of the Victim Advocate.

**PHOTOS:** Reporters always use photos in their stories and oftentimes they default to a picture of the offender as they are easily accessible via a mug shot. However, it is important to note that you as the victim have every right to submit a photo of your choosing. The media are resourceful and they may use you or your loved ones social media sites to find pictures of you or your loved one. You have the right to contact the media and provide a photo that you and your family are comfortable with sharing. This is more common with homicide cases when the media want to show a recent photo of the victim.

**SOCIAL MEDIA:** Victims should be mindful of what photos have been or are placed in social media. There are no privacy protections and social media outlets have been a primary source for the news media to accompany any news story.

**If you have any questions or concerns when considering requests to be interviewed or wish to speak to a victim service provider, please call:**

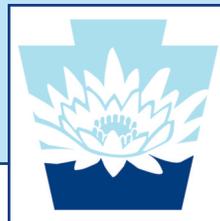
**Office of the Victim Advocate  
PA Board of Probation and Parole**  
1101 South Front Street, Suite 5200  
Harrisburg, PA 17104

1.800.563.6399 Nationwide  
1.877.349.1064 TTY (toll free)  
FAX: 717.787.0867

**Department of Corrections**  
1920 Technology Parkway  
Mechanicsburg, PA 17050

1.800.322.4472 Nationwide  
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**PENNSYLVANIA**  
**Office of the Victim Advocate**

# Victim's Rights and the Media



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Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*



**pennsylvania**  
OFFICE OF THE VICTIM ADVOCATE

# Things to remember when interviewing or dealing with the media

In many instances, the media focuses on the offender, showing the offender's photo and interviewing their friends and family. As the victim, if you are comfortable, you and your loved ones may choose and have the right to change the narrative by placing the focus on the victimization that occurred. This may be done by reaching out to local media either through your victim advocate or by yourself to provide comments, photos etc.

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.

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.

Giving an interview can compromise the appeal process, so it is best to seek advice from a victim advocate and/or prosecutor before you make public comments.

If you decide to grant an interview, you may try to set some conditions. The media may be unwilling or unable to agree to your terms. If they refuse, you may withdraw. In these instances, the use of a victim advocate is very beneficial as they tend to have pre-existing relationships with the media and can negotiate these terms for you.

Be careful about speaking "off the record." Not all journalists will treat what you say as confidential.

You may appoint a spokesperson to speak on your behalf if you do not want direct contact with the media. Suitable candidates may include a family member, friend, attorney, religious leader or victim advocate. The victim advocate often has pre-established media relationships and may function as your liaison or spokesperson. The role of the spokesperson is to represent you and your family in a positive way, seeks 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.

You have the right to refrain from answering any questions with which you are uncomfortable or that you feel are inappropriate. You should never feel you have to answer a question just because it has been asked.

## **A few examples of conditions you may want to consider:**

- ◆ 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; and
- ◆ No other family members are to be interviewed/filmed, including children

You have the right to say "**NO**" to an interview even though you have previously granted interviews. It is important to recognize that victims often ride an "emotional roller coaster." You may be able one day to talk with a reporter, and be physically or emotionally unable to do so the next. Victims should never feel "obliged" to grant interviews under any circumstances.

You have the right to release a written statement through a spokesperson in lieu of an interview. There may be times when you are emotionally incapable of speaking with the media, but you still wish to express your point of view. Writing and distributing your statement through the spokesperson allows you to express your views without personally granting interviews.

You have the right to conduct any interview with full anonymity. Television interviews can be done by using a silhouette and by disguising your voice. Newspaper interviews can be written without having your photograph taken or name used especially in cases where the victim is a minor or a sexual assault victim and names shouldn't be used.

You have the right to completely give your side of the story related to your victimization. If you feel that a reporter is not asking questions which need to be addressed, you have the right to give a personal statement. And if the alleged or convicted offender grants interviews which are inaccurate, you have the right to publicly express your point of view.