

YOUR RIGHTS & THE MEDIA

What people impacted by family violence need to know about radio, TV and news interviews

safety | healing | support

Sojourner helps people impacted by family violence find safety, healing and peace.



SOJOURNER

Transforming lives impacted by family violence



Family violence victims' rights and the media

If you are impacted by family violence, you have rights, including the right to be treated with dignity and respect at all times by the media.

You have the right to say NO to a media interview. Never feel that because you have unwillingly been involved in an incident of public interest that you must personally share the details and/or your feelings with the public or the media. If you decide you want to share your experience, you do not have to give up your right to privacy. Being heard does not mean you should be violated. Also, it would be good for you to consider the impacts of speaking with the media and whether doing so puts you or loved ones at risk for further violence/retaliation. An Advocate can help you explore these risks.

You have the right to pick an advocate or spokesperson to speak on your behalf. You don't have to be filmed/interviewed to share your story. Pick someone you trust to handle media inquiries and discuss what they can say on your behalf.

You have the right to pick the time and location for media interviews. We live in a world where news is reported 24 hours/day, 7 days a week. Though a reporter may be working on deadline, do not feel pressured to speak to the media before you feel ready. Your home might be your refuge as you recover from a traumatic event. Feel free to protect the privacy of your home by holding the interview elsewhere at a comfortable setting (e.g., church, meeting hall, office setting). Sojourner can host the interview at the Family Peace Center.

You have the right to exclude children from interviews/filming. Children dealing with trauma can be further traumatized by exposure to the media. Refusing to film, record or interview a child protects their privacy and prevents further harm.

You can request a specific reporter. If the media contacts you for an interview, you may request to speak with a reporter you feel will provide accurate and fair coverage of your story. You can refuse an interview with a reporter even if you have previously granted interviews to other reporters. You might feel certain reporters are callous, unfair or biased and it's your right to refuse to avoid these reporters. It is important to recognize the reporter may proceed with the story without your input.

You have the right to release a written statement through a spokesperson instead of doing the interview yourself. If you are emotionally unable to speak with the media – or feel uncomfortable doing so – consider issuing a written statement instead. This option lets you share your story without personally granting interviews or asking someone to speak on your behalf.

You have the right to refrain from answering any questions that make you uncomfortable or that you feel are inappropriate. You are not obligated to answer every question that's asked. Simply say, "I'd rather not discuss that," and move on. You also have the right to stop an interview at any time.

You have the right to refrain from answering reporters' questions during trial. Consider whether speaking with the media could jeopardize your case and any judicial proceedings. If so, you have the right to remain silent.

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You have the right to know in advance what direction the story about your experience will take. It can be helpful to ask the reporter the questions that will be asked prior to the interview. You can veto questions that are inappropriate or mischaracterize the situation.

You have the right to demand a retraction when inaccurate information is reported. Media outlets have the means to correct or retract stories with inaccurate information. Use these means to correct reporting errors.

You have the right to avoid a press conference atmosphere and speak only one reporter at a time. A press conference with several reporters can be confusing and emotionally draining – especially if you're in shock or dealing with trauma. If a press conference is unavoidable, you can pick one reporter to ask questions for the majority present.

You have the right to ask that offensive/graphic pictures/video are omitted from airing or publication. If you feel graphic photos or visuals are not the best representation of you or your loved ones, you may ask that they are not used.

You have the right to grieve in privacy. Grief is a deeply personal experience and one you do not have to share publicly. You have the right to ask reporters to leave during times of grief.

You have the right to protect your identity during interviews. Your safety is important and it may be necessary to protect/hide your identity. You must consider the risks and impacts of sharing your story with the media and take steps to avoid further violence or retaliation. Reporters have many ways to project your image without using your picture or video. Filming you in silhouette, digitally obscuring your image and/or voice are a few options.

You have the right to give your complete side of the story related to your experience. If the reporter is not asking questions with need to be addressed, you may give a personal statement. Also, if the alleged/convicted offender grants interviews which are inaccurate, you have the right to publicly share your point of view.

You have the right to file a formal complaint against a reporter. If a reporter's behavior is unethical, inappropriate or abusive, you have the right to file a formal complaint with the station manager.

Questions?

We're here for you. Contact your Sojourner Advocate for help addressing concerns regarding the media.

SOJOURNER

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