

Knowing Your Rights:

If you decide to speak with the media, you can set the boundaries and take control, by knowing you have the right to:

- Choose to speak with them or not speak with them,
- Choose the time or place of an interview,
- Chose to meet with certain reporters/news outlets and not others,
- Choose who you want with you during an interview,
- Request the interview questions in advance,
- Provide the media a list of questions that you deem to be “off limits”,
- Refuse to answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable,
- Stop an interview at any time if you are uncomfortable or do not wish to proceed,
- Request a retraction of inaccurate information about you or a loved one.

IMPORTANT CONTACT NUMBERS

Victim Services Specialist:

Name _____

Phone _____

Detective:

Name _____

Phone _____

Please feel free to reach out to the above identified Victim Services Specialist or Detective if you have any questions about the information outlined in this pamphlet or need additional assistance.



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Fairfax County Police Department**

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Dealing With The Media After A Crime



VICTIM SERVICES DIVISION
FAIRFAX COUNTY POLICE DEPARTMENT

(703) 246-2141

Important information for victims
of crime and their family members.



Introduction

When a crime occurs the media may be interested in reporting information on the crime, parties involved and other relevant details. This can include wanting to speak with the victim and/or family and friends of the victim. The decision of whether to speak with the media or not can be a difficult one. Two main factors to keep in mind:

- As a crime has occurred, there will likely be an investigation into that crime. You will want to consult with your Detective and/or Victim Services Specialist prior to speaking with the media to verify that there will be no negative impact to the investigation or future prosecution.
- As a victim of a crime, you have a right to privacy. It is your choice whether you want to speak with the media or not. No one can force you to speak to the media, you have a right to say “no”.

If you are unsure about speaking with the media, feel free to contact your Victim Services Specialist. They can assist you in weighing the pros and cons of engaging with the media.

Important Factors To Consider

Directly After The Crime Occurs:

- The media may be at the scene of a crime. They may be filming the crime scene and asking to speak with related parties.
- The media may try and reach out to you and other family members via phone or in person.
- The investigating department may potentially release information about the crime to include victims name, suspects name, and pertinent facts about the crime to the media. This may occur quickly after the crime occurs.
- You may see news articles, social media updates, and television reports about the crime and related information. This can include information about you or your loved one.
- Inform your Detective or Victim Services Specialist if you believe the media has reported incorrect information about you or your loved one. They can review actions you may be interested in taking, to include requesting a retraction.

During the Criminal Justice Process:

- The media may be in the courtroom taking notes during hearings, trial and sentencing.
- The media can film outside the courthouse and may try to film you entering and leaving the courthouse. Your Victim Services Specialist can assist you with an alternative entrance and exit to aid in your privacy during court.
- The media may contact you after court is concluded to tell your story.

Choosing Whether Or Not To Speak With The Media

Reason why you might choose to speak with the media:

- To honor your loved one and their memory
- To potentially assist you in your healing process
- To maintain or re-engage public attention and interest on the investigative and prosecution efforts.

Reason why you might choose not to speak with the media:

- To maintain your right to privacy
- To prevent negative impact on the investigation or future prosecution
- To prevent re-victimization and the further trauma of having to retell your story
- To prevent the media from using your interview/comments in away you do not like.

