

7 Creating and Managing Media Advocacy Opportunities

Media advocacy involves engaging in an eclectic and varied range of activities, opportunities and events. As well as working with the media, it can include public speaking, involvement in community campaigns, contributing to public consultations and many other activities.

7.1 Promoting a Media Advocacy Program

Media and community advocacy opportunities complement each other and, together, will generate more interest in your program and a greater call for advocates' voices on the issue of violence against women.

Good promotion of your program and building strong relationships with those active in addressing violence against women will ensure a wide variety of opportunities for advocates. It will assist in sustaining a successful Media Advocacy Program that contributes to changing the way we understand, talk about, act in response to and prevent violence against women.

A planned approach to building and maintaining awareness of your program is critical. Strategies for promotion might include creating an online presence (on your organisation's website, a program website or through social media), a launch event, media releases, promotional flyers, advertising and word of mouth through organisational networks and relationships. Your communication plan will assist you to plan your promotional activities.

This section covers the two important factors to be considered when responding to media enquiries: meeting advocates' needs and meeting the media's needs. It provides direction on how to approach media advocacy work effectively while keeping advocates safe. It also provides suggestions on how to promote your program to ensure a variety of advocacy opportunities are available for advocates.

Key elements to communicate in promoting your Media Advocacy Program

Advocates are:

- women from the local community who have experienced sexual assault or family violence
- speakers and advocates who are ready to share their personal experiences with the community
- community members with compelling and powerful stories to tell
- not trained in what to say, but in how to tell their stories effectively and safely.

Advocates will:

- tell their personal stories of surviving violence
- use evidence to challenge myths and misinformation about violence against women
- inform the community about the prevention of violence against women.

How to engage an advocate:

- what is the process
- who to contact.

It is important to consider if and how you will promote individual advocates. Examples include a media release that profiles an individual advocate, or details about an individual advocate on a website or promotional flyer. See [Section 6: Working with advocates](#) for more information on an advocate personal profile.

Sharing personal stories of surviving violence can be emotionally demanding, and interviewing women who have experienced violence can cause a variety of ethical concerns for the media. It is important, therefore, to ensure that program promotion highlights the fact that advocates are supported in such a way that makes it possible for them to tell their stories and speak out, while staying physically and emotionally safe. Additionally, the support and training given to advocates helps to ensure the information they share is evidence based.

A sample promotional flyer and media release are provided as part of this guide.

7.2 Creating advocacy opportunities

In addition to responding to media and community advocacy requests, a successful Media Advocacy Program involves seeking out and creating opportunities for advocacy on the prevention of violence against women.

In creating advocacy opportunities ensure that they are appropriate and safe for advocates and will further your program goals. A communication plan that allows you to plan and prepare for how you want to approach media advocacy will ensure you develop clear goals, strong messages and effective strategies for getting your messages picked up in the media.

Communication plan

A communication plan provides the following information:

- **The goal**
What you want to achieve and how you will know when you have been successful
- **The challenge**
What is the challenge that must be met if the work is to be successful and identification of any barriers to achieving goals
- **Target audiences**
Who needs to receive the messages and which media to target to reach these audiences
- **The messages**
The key messages to be communicated to achieve goals
- **Strategies**
How we will get there, how we will reach the target audience, how we will overcome barriers and list of approaches, tactics and tools to achieve goals
- **Implementation plan**
What needs to be done, who will do what and when, including how the key messages will be delivered to target groups, what are the most appropriate communication vehicles and tactics, and activities and deadlines, tracking and evaluation mechanisms.

Source: adapted from *Veronica McGowan (communications consultant)*

Being aware of events and other activities in your community on this issue, having good relationships with community organisations, local governments and other partners and keeping track of any public policy changes or consultations will all assist in keeping advocacy requests coming in.

Creating other community advocacy opportunities may involve pitching stories or ideas for an advocate's involvement in events to other organisations. It may also involve creating campaigns, for example, a social marketing campaign, to share advocates' voices. Anything that allows for the contribution of advocates' voices to the public conversation on violence against women can be considered part of media advocacy.

Strong networks and an investment in building and maintaining good relationships with the media, community organisations and those active in the prevention of violence against women are key to ensuring that advocacy opportunities are identified and capitalised on and that when you do pitch stories or create opportunities, they are picked up.

Creating media opportunities and getting your story in the media requires creativity and a solid understanding of what is news. Journalists need an 'angle', a side to the story that others don't have or that makes the story interesting. They also need to be comfortable that the story will have relevance and interest for their audience.

Pitching your story

Answer the following questions before pitching a story to a media outlet:

- Why is this news?
- Who does it affect?
- What's new or interesting about it?
- What's concerning or unique?
- Why should this be reported?

Creating media opportunities can be approached many ways. Some strategies or approaches you can consider include:

- pitching a story about an advocate's personal journey to coincide with a state or national story or event, or promoting your Media Advocacy Program and the difference it is making locally
- 'hitching a ride' by capitalising on an existing story that is getting coverage and add something new to it, perhaps a story about a local, single incident of gendered violence and adding your voice about how this links to the broader social issue of violence against women and its prevention
- creating great photo opportunities that communicate your message, remembering that pictures can communicate important messages as well
- building stories around days of significance, such as White Ribbon Day
- releasing new data or evidence on violence against women such as new research or police data.

7.3 Engaging and working with the media

7.3.1 Building effective media relations

Media Advocacy Programs are primarily concerned with the news media including newspaper, online publications, television, radio, magazines and social media.

It is essential to understand the media in order to work effectively with them. Get to know and understand your local media including journalists, editors, broadcasters and producers, along with their deadlines, processes, target audience and what they consider to be news.

Building strong relationships with your local media and understanding the news cycle will go a long way towards developing effective media relations and a successful Media Advocacy Program. Similarly, you need to be familiar with the coverage of your issue. Consider the following questions:

- How is violence against women covered by the media outlet you hope to work with?
- Does your local media report about violence against women in a respectful manner? Ask yourself the same question about particular journalists –some might be pushing agendas that you do not agree with while some may be particularly helpful allies.
- What aspects of the issue are reported?
- What's missing?
- What language is used?
- Who is quoted as a source?
- Where do the stories sit in the paper or broadcast?
- Is coverage sporadic or frequent?

Knowing the answers to these questions, and keeping track of media reporting of violence against women, will help you pitch your stories at the right time and in the right manner. It will focus your efforts on the changes you want to see.

Media representations of violence against women

Although violence against women and their children has almost daily media coverage in Australia, what is often missing is informed analysis and understanding of the links between sexism, gender inequality, community attitudes and this violence.

In worst-case scenarios some reporting or commentary actually perpetuates or excuses precisely the kinds of attitudes and myths that give rise to the violence in the first place.

As part of its wider program of work, Our Watch commissioned Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety to undertake a study of Australian media reporting of violence against women and children in print, broadcasting and online reporting.¹

According to the study findings:

- The vast majority of reporting on violence against women was incidence based, and failed to draw attention to the broader social context in which violence against women occurs.
- 15% of incidence based reporting included victim blaming references, and 14% offered excuses for the perpetrator.
- Only 4.3% of articles included help seeking information, such as 1800RESPECT.

In addition:

- One third of women in the general community do not know where to go for outside help to support someone experiencing violence, demonstrating the importance of including service information.²
- An empirical study in the US found that exposure to news articles endorsing rape myths made participants far more likely to side with the defendant and dismiss the victim's claims of sexual assault.³

What is news?

What is news or newsworthy differs widely depending on the media outlet. However, the list below provides some guidance. When reviewing this list, it is important to be aware that what is sometimes considered news by a media outlet may or may not match how you would like the article to be framed. For example, you may actively seek to avoid media opportunities that would sensationalise the experience of an advocate.

News is often:

- now – immediate or imminent
- local, or a national or international story with a local link
- affects people, preferably locals or people like us
- new or exclusive
- interesting, unusual, shocking, unique or bizarre
- has pictures
- -est – largest, biggest, oldest, youngest, fastest, mostest
- a human interest angle with bigger stories told through the individual, hitching a ride on another's story
- what the editor or producer says it is.

Source: adapted from *Veronica McGowan, communications consultant*

Media training will help your organisation build essential skills such as knowing how to contact the media, respond to and meet media requests, handle an interview, be a good source and pitch stories. See [Section 5: Program planning](#) for more information on potential media training for your organisation.

The following tips will help you work effectively with the media, but is not an exhaustive list or substitute for media training or recruiting staff with media expertise.

1. Develop or purchase a media list.

This list will include:

- media in your local area that you might want to target
- journalists who regularly cover issues relevant to or related to violence against women
- media who reach your target audience
- media who are leaders on this issue.

Update your media list regularly as information goes out of date quickly.

2. Understand the media outlet's audience.

Target your story or media release to this audience. Media like to be treated as individuals and receive tailored stories and news angles so it is rarely productive to send the same media release or story to all your media contacts.

3. Build relationships with the decision makers.

Where possible, get to know producers and editors as well as journalists. Inform them of your Media Advocacy Program and what your organisation has to offer in terms of both advocates and expertise in the prevention of violence against women. Aim to build relationships that will make your organisation a 'go-to source' on violence against women and its prevention.

4. Provide feedback.

If you notice good quality, responsible reporting on violence against women, get in touch and let the journalist know. Tell them what you thought was good about their article and how they demonstrated responsible reporting. Let them know about the Our Watch national media awards scheme and encourage them to apply and be recognised for their work. Consider writing a letter to their editor or producer thanking them as well. Similarly, if you see inaccurate or irresponsible reporting on violence against women, or reporting that does not contribute to the development of community attitudes that are helpful in stopping violence, get in touch and let the journalist know. Provide constructive feedback that addresses the concerns you have.

5. Make the journalist's job easier.

Write media releases as though they are news stories, provide all the information required, such as up-to-date and accurate statistics and data and supporting materials, provide times, dates, locations and directions, link journalists to experts and other people for them to contact for other comments or angles. Ensure that you are succinct and relevant. Journalists are time poor, and cannot wade through pages of material. One page is sufficient, or a succinct email is best. You can provide links to further information.

6. Be reliable and responsive.

Deliver what you promise, know your material, be a good source, be available, be accurate and be prompt. Most importantly, meet deadlines!

7. Do your homework.

Be prepared, know your message and your material, know what you can say yes to and when you will say no. Consider photo opportunities and let journalists know about them. Stories with a photo are not only more likely to be picked up and reported on, they are also more likely to get a better position in a publication or broadcast. Always consider your advocates and their safety before offering photo opportunities.

7.3.2 Responsible reporting

Responsible reporting is about ensuring that ways we talk about violence against women in the media contribute to a culture that is preventative. It also shows respect for the victim, ensuring not to imply she is somehow to blame or minimize or sensationalize her experiences.

The media play a powerful role in informing public attitudes, knowledge and understanding about violence against women. Responsible reporting guidelines⁴ have been developed by Our Watch to support the media to report on both instances of violence against women and the broader social issues underlying the violence, accurately and ethically.

Research has shown that media reporting on violence against women can have a range of impacts including victims feeling either increased or decreased vulnerability and stigma, the issue seeming rare and isolated or systemic and prevalent, an increase or decrease in public awareness and understanding, and a strengthening or weakening of community responsibility towards the prevention of violence against women.^{5,6} Responsible reporting guidelines have been informed by research into trends in media reporting of violence against women and aim to address concerns with the way the issue has been reported historically.

It is important for program workers to be familiar with the recommendations of responsible reporting guidelines (outlined below), as advocating for them is an important part of working with the media for the prevention of violence against women. Wherever possible, stories about violence against women should be encouraged to adhere to these guidelines:

- **Name it**
Use legal terminology and avoid language that trivialises or downplays violence.
- **Safety comes first**
Report on an issue in a way that does not compromise the advocate's safety.
- **Know the law**
Be aware of the legal parameters that outline what you can and cannot report about a situation.
- **Violence is never okay**
The perpetrator is always solely responsible for a violent situation. Avoid using language or framing the story in a way that suggests the survivor of violence was in any way to blame for what happened to her.
- **Violence is serious, highly traumatic and life threatening**
Never report on violence in a way that sensationalises or trivialises it.
- **Acknowledge that this crime has both a victim and a perpetrator**
Emphasise that someone perpetrated the violence and that it was a crime.
- **Take the emphasis away from stranger danger**
Don't misrepresent violence against women as a crime perpetrated by a stranger as most violence against women is perpetrated by somebody known to them.
- **Use sensitivity and good judgement when reporting an advocate's story**
Make sure you do all you can to report on violence in a way that upholds the advocate's dignity.
- **Contextualise the story with statistics**
Use local, national and international statistics on violence against women to frame the story.
- **Violence has a significant gendered dimension**
Acknowledge that violence against women is a systemic social issue, not simply a one off incidence, and that it occurs in a broader context in which power and resources are distributed unequally between genders, and in which women are much more likely to be victims of violence than men.
- **Humanise the story with appropriate terminology**
Where possible, and only where consent has been given, refer to the survivor of violence by name.
- **Call on community experts for comment**
Community experts on violence against women will be able to put the issue in context.
- **Always include information about available support options for women who have experienced or are experiencing violence.**

7.3.3 Gendered nature of media

Research suggests that media coverage of public health issues, like violence against women, has an influence on both public policy and public opinion.⁷

When considering how we engage and work with the media, it is important to reflect on who the media are and how they work. 'The media' is not a neutral entity. News media in Australia is a highly gendered industry, renowned for its macho culture and male-dominated leadership.^{8,9,10,11}

There is a relative absence of women in senior roles or in influential editorial decision-making roles, particularly in the print media.⁹ Similarly, there is also a significant gender gap when it comes to by-lines and the sources used by journalists, with both overwhelmingly dominated by men.¹¹ As in many industries, women working in the news media experience a significant gendered pay gap and promotion for women journalists is less likely today than it was 16 years ago,⁹ despite women dominating enrolments in journalism education for the last three decades.^{9,10}

Research into the Australian media has also highlighted high levels of discrimination and sexual harassment of women working in the media, with one study finding that female journalists experience sexual harassment at twice the rate of women in the general workforce.¹⁰ The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (now the Australian Human Rights Commission) identified within the Australian media 'a culture of disrespect towards women, led by the way they are portrayed in the media (that) normalises and encourages sexual harassment'.¹² Other Australian studies of the culture of the Australian news media have similarly identified a culture of sexual harassment, systemic inequality and disrespect towards women.^{9,10,13}

Evidence shows that our news media is written predominantly by men, with women journalists and stories about women less commonly represented. Where women are represented, they are more often featured in topics such as relationships, arts, education and health.¹⁴ Sources of expert opinion in articles are most likely to be men.¹⁵ These are all challenges for a program which is aiming to promote messages of gender equality, respect and non-violence through the use of women's voices.

What this analysis makes clear is that some segments of the Australian news media still relegate women and women's voices to the margins and view women's stories as less important and less relevant. Making women an equal partner in our public conversations and media coverage of social issues remains an important and needed shift if we are to challenge and change the structural inequality in both the news media and society more generally.¹¹ Media Advocacy Programs that support women to tell their stories and advocate for change are a powerful way to highlight women's voices and stories, provide journalists with access to female sources, and encourage reflection on the need for gender equity.

However, one of the most likely ways women make the news is as a victim.¹⁶ For a Media Advocacy Program profiling and highlighting women's experiences of violence, this stereotype can facilitate the likelihood of media seeing these stories as newsworthy but repeat the gendered stereotypes and gendered limitations we are seeking to break down.

Finding ways to challenge this stereotype are important. This can involve discouraging the use of 'victim', encouraging and supporting journalists to link individual stories to broader social patterns of violence against women and its prevention and linking journalists to other female sources, such as researchers, academics or experts on violence against women. See the Our Watch Media Resources for more responsible reporting guides for journalists.⁴

Finding ways to challenge gender inequality in media organisations may not be at the forefront of your interactions with journalists, which are more likely to be focused on providing information, asking questions and meeting deadlines. However, a preparedness to identify and take up opportunities to challenge gender inequality or advocate for gender equity is essential if this work is to contribute to the broader goal of preventing violence against women.

7.4 Preparing for advocacy enquiries

Any activity that allows advocates' voices to contribute to, influence and inform the public conversation about violence against women can be an important part of advocacy. Even if your community advocacy opportunities do not result in media coverage, they can be powerful ways to challenge community attitudes and raise awareness in your community about violence against women.

Community advocacy can involve:

- public speaking
- participating in community projects and organisations, for example through steering committees
- meeting with politicians and community leaders
- contributing to public inquiries, for example Senate inquiries or Royal Commissions
- contributing to academic research
- addressing schools, businesses, organisations and other community groups
- participating in public events, community forums, conferences and other public discussions
- contributing to campaigns.

As your program worker will not always be available, it is essential that all staff in your organisation who might answer the phone know what to do if a call is received from the media or advocacy opportunity organiser. Staff should know who to refer an enquiry to for an organisational comment, and if that person is not available, what initial steps to take in response to a journalist's enquiries.

As Media Advocacy Program workers will attend all media advocacy opportunities, they need to know whether they can speak to the media on behalf of the organisation and, if so, what their organisational message is. It is best if Media Advocacy Program workers are media trained and prepared to be spokespeople as an invitation to comment is possible during media advocacy opportunities.

There is no such thing as an 'off the record' comment. When program workers speak to the media what they say may be reported. It is important for organisations to prepare Media Advocacy Program workers for this possibility.

Being prepared also involves having at hand materials that may be useful to support the advocate during the media or community advocacy opportunity, and to ensure quality reporting by the journalist. This might include:

- a copy of Our Watch's Responsible Reporting Guidelines to share with the journalist if the journalist is not aware of these
- a list of relevant services available to support women experiencing violence.
- statistics, data or evidence you could share with the advocate or the journalist to support the story
- a list of other Media Advocacy Programs in case you need to seek their assistance to identify an advocate
- a list of other potential experts that you can refer the media to if they are looking for additional sources for their article which might include people within and external to your organisation.

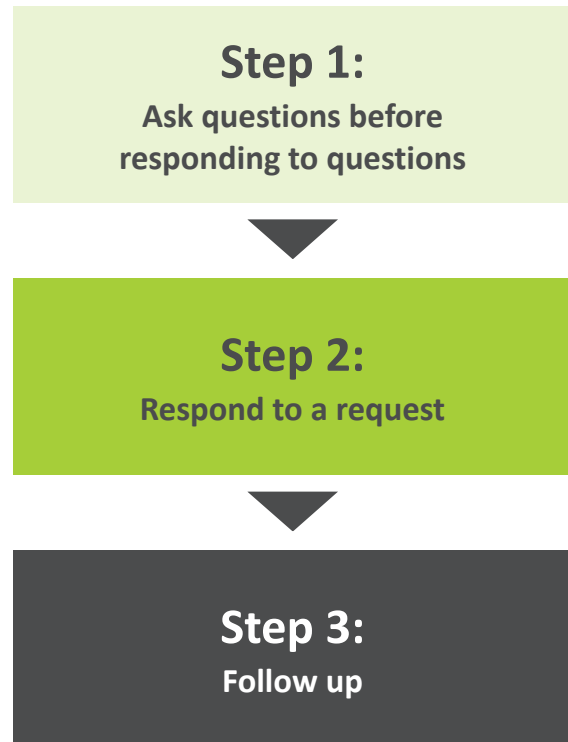
1800 Respect is a national sexual assault and domestic violence counselling service that provides information and support to women who have experienced violence. Women in emergency situations should be directed to ring 000. It might also be relevant to include telephone numbers of local services dependent on the story and media outlet. Providing service information for a journalist to include in their story is important as Our Watch's research into media coverage of violence against women found that only 4.3% of articles included information about services, such as crisis and support phone numbers. This is equally important for community advocacy organisers due to the possibility of women disclosing experiences of violence after an advocacy event on violence against women. [See Section 7.3.2, step 2](#) for more information on disclosure.

For more about working with advocates to prepare for media advocacy engagements see [Section 6: Working with advocates](#).

7.4.1 Responding to media enquiries

Your organisation will need to develop a media protocol – this will differ for each organisation, depending on its structure and the people responsible for engaging with and responding to media. The following steps can be used as a guide to develop a simple protocol for handling media enquiries.

An essential element is letting the journalist know whether or not you can meet their request within their deadline, and allow enough time to find and prepare an advocate.



Step 1:

Ask questions before responding to questions

When receiving a media request you should find out as much as possible about what the journalist is seeking in order to assess the request and determine whether or not you can or will meet it.

Ask a range of questions (see 'Questions' box below) to determine what the journalist is after, whether your program and advocates can meet that request, whether it is appropriate and safe to put advocates in this position and whether responding to the request will help achieve your goals. You may also need to determine whether you need more time and/or information and may need to advise the journalist that you will get back to them to confirm your response.

Questions to ask a journalist to assess whether you can or will meet their request

- **What is your story?**
What is their position or angle?
- **When do you need our response? What is your deadline?**
Be responsive, but ensure there is enough time to find an advocate and for them to prepare.
- **Who else have you spoken to or are you speaking to?**
Are they individuals who are likely to agree or disagree with your stance? Could their involvement compromise your involvement? Are there other people you could refer the journalist to?
- **What do you need?**
To speak to an advocate? Statistics? A good quote? A referral to another source? A picture?
- **When and where will the story be published or broadcast?**
- **How would an advocate be involved?**
An interview? A photo?
- **Are there specific questions you are seeking answers to?**
This helps to appropriately prepare an advocate.

Other considerations

This is also a good time to talk to the journalist about whether there will be a photograph used with the article. Photographs can be a powerful and effective addition to a story; however they can be problematic at times if the photographer is not aware of the full content of and background to the article. It is vital that the journalist or the program worker make sure that the photographer is sensitive to the advocate's story and is not reinforcing gender stereotypes or vulnerability of women in photographic imagery. Photographers must also be aware of privacy and confidentiality when taking photos. It is likely to be important that the photograph does not identify an advocate's home address.

You may need to negotiate where the media interview will be conducted. A quiet, safe place is important. If the interview is for television or a newspaper, consider taking advantage of opportunities to communicate positive messages through the location of your interview, such as incidental signage of your service or adding positive images to the background. Think also about what resources or additional support material you can provide to encourage appropriate coverage of the issue.

Declining a media request

You do not have to agree to all media requests. You may decide an opportunity is not right for your program or advocates or is at odds with your objectives. For example, a journalist intent on taking a sensationalist approach to a story on violence against women may be a request you decide not to accept, as may be a request where you feel there is no opportunity to be fairly represented or to adequately protect your advocate. In those cases, saying no and clearly explaining to the journalist why you are declining is the best course of action. Saying no is a better choice than putting an advocate in an inappropriate or unsafe situation and/or compromising your goals.

Alternatively, you may want to suggest they reconsider their angle. You could also inform the journalist of the kind of requests you can meet and encourage them to contact you in future.

Step 2: Respond to a request

Once you decide to accept a request, let the journalist know that you will arrange for an advocate who can answer their questions. Ensure that you fully understand the journalist's deadlines and availabilities. Let them know you will get in touch with the advocate and then get back to them to confirm a time. Explain to journalists that you will not disclose an advocate's personal contact details but that you will act as the liaison. This is for the advocate's safety.

You will then need to consider which advocate is best placed for this opportunity or whether you will offer it to all advocates.

Matching advocates to opportunities

When a media advocacy opportunity comes in you will need to have a process for offering that opportunity to an advocate. The process of matching advocates to opportunities could consider:

- **How much time you have**
Media enquiries often have very short turnaround times, so it is important to know which advocates are available at short notice and how comfortable they are with limited time to prepare as this will not suit all advocates.
- **The topic requested**
Often requests are seeking someone to speak to a specific experience such as legal experience reporting a sexual assault or a partner who breached intervention orders.
- **Where it will be shown or published and how public the opportunity is.**
Advocates might feel very differently about a story in the local paper or radio compared to speaking on the television news.
- **Where and when the opportunity is.**
Convenience will be a factor for advocates.

- **Who else is involved?**
Are other speakers involved and are they likely to support or contradict an advocate?
- **What is being requested?**
Is it an interview, or a comment? Is it for television, radio, print or online?

Many of these questions will have been discussed ahead of time with advocates so program workers know who is comfortable with which kind of opportunity. For more information, see [Section 6: Working with advocates](#).

Based on this, you may decide to approach an advocate who is suited to the opportunity, and often if turnaround is brief, this can be best. Alternatively, especially where there is more time available, you may decide to contact the advocates as a group and see who is interested.

However when you match or offer opportunities to advocates, the most important things to keep in mind are providing as much information and transparency to the advocates as possible and ensuring they have some time to think over the request and decide if it is right for them.

When a media opportunity has been accepted and you have considered which advocates the opportunity is best suited to, the following steps are key to communicating with an advocate about a potential media opportunity:

- Contact the advocates and provide as much information as you have about the opportunity.
- Specify the process for accepting and declining the opportunity and always remind advocates that every opportunity is optional, and that they can change their mind at any point.
- Advocates learn about the pace of the media cycle as a part of their training and will be aware of the need to be able to respond in a timely way, however it is important to provide advocates with time to think over the opportunity and decide whether they want to take it up. Never put advocates on the spot, regardless of deadlines. Always allow them to reflect and get back to you.

- When an advocate accepts an opportunity, discuss how they would like to handle the request and any concerns or requirements they have about their involvement. Together make a plan about how you will support the advocate's participation.
- Let the advocate know that you will get back to the journalist to confirm the process and what will happen. For more information about supporting advocates during a media opportunity, and ensuring their safety and wellbeing, see [Section 6: Working with advocates](#). Ensure that both the journalist and the advocate know that you will be accompanying the advocate during the media opportunity.

If there are no advocates interested or available for the request, consider whether there is another Media Advocacy Program that may be able to take up the request. Let the journalist know as soon as possible. Apologise for any inconvenience and find out if there are any other ways you can support their story, such as referring them to another trusted source of information about violence against women in your community or provide them with factual information.

It is good practice that the program worker, or someone from your organisation, is present at every media opportunity to support the advocate, ensure the agreements you have made with the journalist or outlet are met, and to know what follow-up information needs to be provided. See [Section 6: Working with advocates](#) for more information on supporting advocates before and during their media advocacy opportunities.

Step 3: Follow up

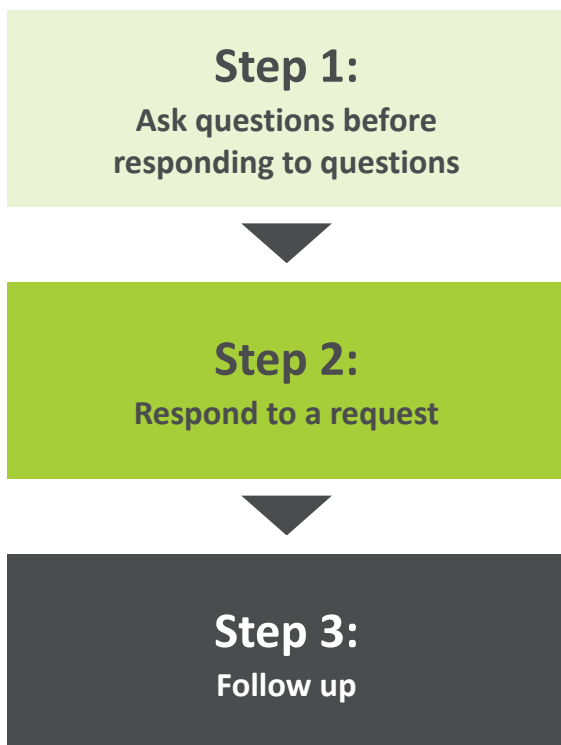
After a media engagement, the program worker should follow up with the journalist to confirm that they got what they needed and find out whether they have any further questions or requests. Thank the journalist for the opportunity and encourage them to contact you in future for stories on violence against women and its prevention.

Gather all media coverage resulting from the media opportunity and provide feedback to the journalist. Give the advocate an opportunity to provide feedback on the media coverage, and pass this on to the journalist. If you have concerns about the resulting coverage, offer polite and constructive feedback that highlights your concerns and how they could be addressed. You want to maintain a relationship with the journalist and you also want to encourage the journalist to report responsibly. Provide all media coverage to the advocate and congratulate them on their work.

Keeping a record of media engagements and articles is also important. See the evaluation section of [Section 5: Program planning](#) for more information on how to do this.

7.4.2 Responding to community advocacy enquiries

Community advocacy opportunities can be quite different from media engagements. They usually have a greater lead time, which means more time to gather information, recruit an advocate and prepare. However, this will not always be the case and knowing how you will handle and respond to enquiries quickly remains important. A prompt response may not be as critical for these kinds of opportunities as it is for the media, but clear, efficient processes will ensure you make the most of opportunities and requests as they arise.



Step 1: Ask questions before responding to questions

When receiving a community advocacy request you should find out as much as possible about the activity and its purpose. Sometimes, the organisers will not be clear, or know what they want, and this is an opportunity for you to make suggestions about how to best involve an advocate and provide solutions. Gaining clarity about the opportunity might take several conversations.

Gather information including:

- what type of advocacy opportunity is proposed, when and where it is taking place, the purpose of the advocacy, who else is involved and who the audience is
- whether the advocate is expected to present and/or to engage interactively such as take questions or provide comment
- if it is desired that the advocate take questions, whether it possible for these to be provided to the advocate before the engagement
- if relevant, how the advocacy opportunity is being promoted (you may want to have some say in this) and what is expected of the advocate.

The program worker must also consider the physical space or venue where the engagement will be held and discuss this with the organiser. This is important for both the advocate and the audience. The venue must provide a feeling of safety and comfort for the advocate with easy access to exits, be light, airy and not confined. This may also be an important consideration for the audience at a public speaking event, as it is likely that there will be women in the audience who may have experienced violence, or members of the audience for whom the advocate's speech may be triggering.

Given that you are likely to have a greater amount of time to respond to this type of request, it is useful to ask those organising the advocacy opportunity to consider and respond in writing to these questions to inform your understanding of the request. See example Advocacy Request Form in the appendices.

Declining a community advocacy opportunity

Not all requests have to be accepted. After finding out what the opportunity entails, you may decide it is not appropriate or safe for advocates or that it will not contribute to your program goals. Provide a clear explanation of why you are declining, along with information about the sorts of opportunities that are appropriate for advocates and your program.

However, community advocacy opportunities are often more flexible so you may be able to negotiate or provide suggestions to the organiser about ways in which the engagement may be made safe or appropriate for advocates. Many organisations will welcome advice and assistance in this regard.

Step 2: Respond to a request

After accepting a community advocacy request, consider how best to offer the opportunity to advocates. This will likely depend on timelines and the nature of the request. See [Matching advocates and opportunities](#) earlier. Most of the steps for communicating with an advocate about a potential community advocacy opportunity are the same as those listed in [Section 7.3.1](#) step 2 – see this section for more information.

The diversity of community advocacy opportunities often means there are considerations which may differ from media engagements, for example, if it is an invitation to sit on a steering committee, is this a role that the advocate is familiar with?

- Tease out exactly what is expected of an advocate and whether particular knowledge or skills are required so that you can adequately support and prepare the advocate. The program worker will need to discuss this with both the person requesting the advocate and the advocate themselves, to ensure that access to any training, support or assistance required for the advocate's safe and meaningful participation is provided.
- It is the role of the program worker to work with both the advocate to ensure she is prepared for advocacy opportunities and with the person requesting the advocate to ensure her participation will be safe and meaningful.
- If the request involves addressing a community group or organisation it will be important to consider how well the audience is prepared to hear about the topic of violence against women. This can have a significant impact on how the advocate is received and how the audience responds.
- Whether the audience will be expecting to ask questions of the advocate and whether the advocate will be meeting with the audience before, during or after the event can also impact how the advocate and program worker will prepare. They can also influence an advocate's decision to take up the opportunity or not, so considering these things ahead of time is critical.
- It is important for the program worker to consider the possibility of disclosures being made to the advocate, and have a plan for how to handle them. See 'Handling disclosures' box in [Section 6: Working with advocates](#) for more information on disclosures.

Step 3: Follow up

After an advocacy opportunity, the program worker is advised to follow up with the organiser to obtain feedback and find out how the event or opportunity went from their perspective. This is a great opportunity to undertake evaluation and find out any impacts that arose from the advocate's involvement. Recording all your community advocacy opportunities is also important. See the evaluation section of [Section 5: Program planning](#) for more information on how to do this.

Thank the organiser for the opportunity and encourage them to contact you in future for opportunities related to violence against women or gender equality. Make sure to gather any media coverage, publicity or responses to result from the advocacy opportunity. If you have concerns about anything that occurred as part of, or after, the opportunity, offer constructive feedback that highlights your concerns and how they could be addressed. If you have positive feedback, be sure to pass that on too. Ensure that all feedback, evaluation or coverage is also provided to the advocate and congratulate them on their work and the result.

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