



Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women

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Holding a Press Conference

- A press conference can be held in conjunction with a special event or to get information to the media about your specific message. Before planning a press conference that is not being held along with an event, consider what your focus will be. What do you want your press conference to be about? What are your specific messages? What do you want people to *do* after seeing or reading coverage of your press conference? Only hold a press conference if you have something specific to say and are sure that it will hold interest for the media and for your community.
- If the press conference is not being held along with a specific event, consider where you want to hold it. It's often a good idea to hold the conference somewhere photogenic, such as your City Hall, the local hospital, the county courthouse, etc. Make sure you have the proper permission from the site to hold your press conference.
- Visuals tend to attract the media. Consider having a visual display at the press conference, such as the Clothesline Project, the Silent Witness display, photographs, a quilt, or a videotape.
- Invite the media to your press conference with a faxed or e-mailed media advisory at least 24 hours in advance and a follow-up call the morning of the event. If you live in a smaller rural area with a weekly paper, send your media advisory, if possible, at least one week ahead of time.
- Press conferences should not be too long—a maximum of 15-20 minutes. The media frequently has many events to cover and your press conference shouldn't take up too much of their time.
- Arrange for 2-4 speakers to *briefly* get your message across. Some good choices would be 1) the director of your program; 2) a survivor who was helped by your program and 3) an ally or two who is prominent in the community—your police chief, the mayor, the county attorney, a legislator, a member of the clergy, a doctor, etc.
- After you have organized the event and the speakers (if there will be any), call your guest speakers to ask for quotes of things they will actually say, to use in a press release. Write up the press release.

- The director, a board member, or a staff member of the program should speak first at the press conference, welcoming the press and giving a quick overview of why the conference is being held and of the overall message.
- After the speakers, give the media time for questions. Before the press conference, make sure all those who have been designated to speak have thought through what questions they might be asked by the press.
- Have press packets available for the media. Include in the packet a press release and information about your program and other domestic violence programs in your community. MCBW has handouts that would be useful for media on our web site at www.mcbw.org/handouts.htm. Also include contact information of all the speakers at your press conference so that if the media wants to do follow-up interviews, they can reach the speakers.
- Be sure that the press conference speakers are available directly after the press conference to talk to the press. Make sure you remind them that *everything* they say to reporters is on the record!