



## Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women

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### The Media and Special Events

- The media can be invited to any kind of event: candlelight vigils, fundraisers, open houses, displays of the Clothesline Project or Silent Witnesses, proclamation ceremonies, peace walks, voter registration drives, candidate forums, and so on. Whatever you're planning, it's sure to be newsworthy.
- Think about your target audience for your event. For example, the audience for coverage of a candidate forum will be very different for a Choose Respect initiative event geared towards community teenagers. Shape your media messages around your target audience.
- While planning your event with your staff, discuss what the message of your event will be. What do you want your event to say to your community and to the media? What do you want people to *do* after attending your event or hearing about it in the media? Do you want the public to mobilize their communities to vote for candidates who support ending domestic violence? Donate to your program? Volunteer? Utilize your services? Organize for the restoration of funding cuts your program has received since 2000? Always shape your message around concrete and simple action your audience can take.
- Also, while planning, designate someone (or a few people) to be the spokesperson for the media during and after the event. This will avoid confusing your messages.
- If possible, try to line up a survivor or two in your community who would be willing to talk to reporters, especially one who has utilized and benefited from your program's services. Survivors can often be the most effective messengers about the dangers and lethality of domestic abuse and how it *does* occur in your community. However, be aware of the safety concerns of survivors and working with the media.
- Invite the media to your event 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.
- If you can, try to get onto local radio or television to plug your event or get the newspaper to include it in a calendar of community events.
- Consider inviting your local state legislators, mayor, city council, police chief, sheriff, etc. to your events, either as guests or to speak at the events.

- 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.
- If the media has been invited, have media packets available for them. Include in the packet a press release and information about your program and other domestic violence programs in your community. MCBW has handouts that might be useful for media on our web site at [www.mcbw.org/handouts.htm](http://www.mcbw.org/handouts.htm).
- If you hold an event and the media does not attend it (despite having been invited), fax or e-mail your local media a press release after the event and then follow up with a phone call. In some smaller communities, the local newspaper may allow you to write the article yourself and/or submit your own pictures of the event.
- Make sure that your designated spokesperson is available to talk to the media immediately after the event and also can be reached after hours for the next few days. You can also hold a press conference before or after your event if you have a specific message you'd like to get out to the media.