



General Tips for Communicating with Media in Times of Disaster or Crisis

Presented in partnership with



Special considerations for the domestic violence field when dealing with media

Confidentiality

It is important when working with media interested in getting the perspective of someone with first-hand experience with domestic violence that the utmost consideration for confidentiality is observed. Yes, it is critically important to raise awareness and educate the public through media, however it is even more important to keep victims and survivors and survivor-advocates safe. Keep in mind that survivors may want to share their story with the world immediately after leaving their abusive situation, however it may not be safe yet for them to “go public” with their story. Take time to evaluate their situation and determine if they would endanger themselves or their families by talking to media. Even your organization could possibly be a target for abusers because of your role helping victims. Here are some recommendations:

- **Keep the outside of your building out of media photos and video.** When working with a television crew who wants to shoot video (B-roll) inside of your organization, explain to the reporter that your organization provides safety and assistance to victims of domestic violence. Share with them the need to keep the facility’s address confidential. You should also secure confirmation from them that they will not provide any detailed descriptions of the building’s exterior or location and that they should not shoot video of the exterior. We have found they understand the risk of endangerment and they respect your requests.
- **When allowing media inside to conduct an interview, make sure your manager on duty knows as soon as possible when they will be arriving so she/he can take care of alerting and making arrangements with any survivor-advocates or volunteers who work at your organization.** Managers should identify upon hiring who may or may not be videotaped or photographed by media.
- **If you run a shelter, it would never be appropriate to have television cameras or photographers at your location, when the possibility of a victim in hiding might be caught on camera.** Instead, arrange to meet the media at their studio for the interview or another nondescript location.
- **If advocates or survivors are interviewed, consider keeping their names or identifying information out of the interview. You might also be able to have them interviewed “off camera” where only their voice is heard. For print, you can provide anonymous quotes.** Better to be safe and protect identities when dealing with a survivor even if the abuser lives in a different city. Remember, local media stories can usually be seen online by anyone.
- **If you run a hotline, and have invited the media in to shoot photos and video, make sure the advocate’s computer screens is not in the photos or videotaped.** Explain to the photographers why it is

mandatory that they can only shoot the pictures in a way the display screen is not at all in the photo. Also make sure the advocates don't have nametags showing or identifying information in their work areas visible when the photographer is shooting. Photographers are there to capture a story and want to help you protect survivors and victims. Mention this ground rule upfront before the photographer arrives and make sure to mention it again when they are there. Escort them during the whole shoot, or have someone else stay with them who can help look for any information displayed that should not be included in the photo.

In situations where the media turns to you to comment on a high profile domestic violence case

- **Do NOT comment on specific domestic violence situations whether they happened on your property, in your local community or on the national stage.** You don't have all the facts and you never will. Publicly speculating jeopardizes your credibility when time proves your first observations were incorrect. Don't allow the media to draw you into judgment or comment on these incidents.

- **When the media calls for comment from you in this situation, explain that while you won't comment directly on this case, you would be willing to serve as the expert on domestic violence in general.** You can shed light on some very real issues the public struggles with such as "Why victims don't leave", "Why is leaving the most dangerous time in a relationship", "How children can be impacted by parents who are in an abusive relationship", victim blaming, protective orders, etc. The media is always very agreeable to this and will work with you.

- **If what they really want is legal analysis, recommend to them someone else in the community who could address those issues.**

The National Domestic Violence
HOTLINE

1.800.799.SAFE (7233) • 1.800.787.3224 (TTY)

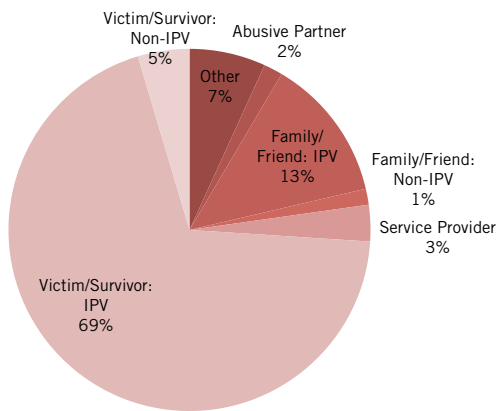
New York State Report

Based on Hotline contacts documented in 2014

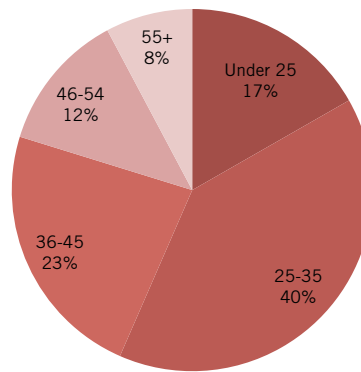
In 2014, the National Domestic Violence Hotline documented **7,548 contacts** from New York. The state ranks third in terms of Hotline contact volume. The Hotline provides Crisis Intervention, Safety Planning, Referrals and DV Education for these contacts.

☎ Phone	6,979
💬 Chat	559
✉ E-Mail/Mail	8
📞 TTY	0
Total	7,548

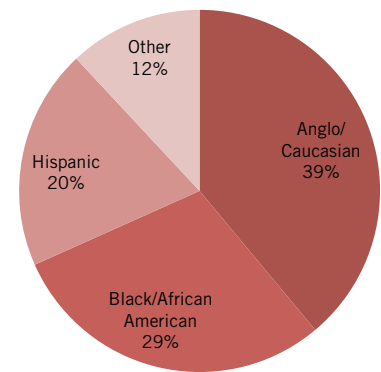
Who is calling from New York?



Caller Type



Victim Age



Caller Ethnicity

Caller Type Definitions:

- Victim/Survivor: IPV (Intimate Partner Violence) – a victim or survivor of abuse from his/her partner or spouse
- Friend/Family: IPV (Intimate Partner Violence) – a friend or family member of a victim/survivor of IPV
- Victim/Survivor: Non-IPV– a victim or survivor of abuse by anyone else: parent, sibling, caretaker, etc.
- Friend/Family: Non-IPV – a friend or family member of a victim of any other type of abuse, such as child or elder abuse
- Service Provider – a caller from any agency, including other domestic violence agencies, which provides social services
- Abusive Partner – a caller who identifies as abusive or who an Advocate believes to be an abusive partner
- Other – any caller about whom an Advocate is able to gather info, but who does not fit into an above category; this might include callers like law enforcement or medical professionals

Top 10 Cities in Contact Volume

1. New York	29%
2. Brooklyn	12%
3. Bronx	9%
4. Queens Village	3%
5. Long Island City	2%
6. Albany	2%
7. Rochester	2%
8. Buffalo	2%
9. Staten Island	2%
10. Syracuse	1%
Total:	63%

The National Domestic Violence Hotline is a 501c3 organization that relies on generous contributions from the public, government and corporations to continue operation.

What are victims experiencing?

97%

Emotional/Verbal Abuse

degradation, threats, insults, humiliation, isolation, etc.

70%

Physical Abuse

hitting, biting, choking, etc.

8%

Sexual Abuse

rape, exploitation, coercion, etc.



Referrals to Service Providers

6,773

Offers to Direct Connect

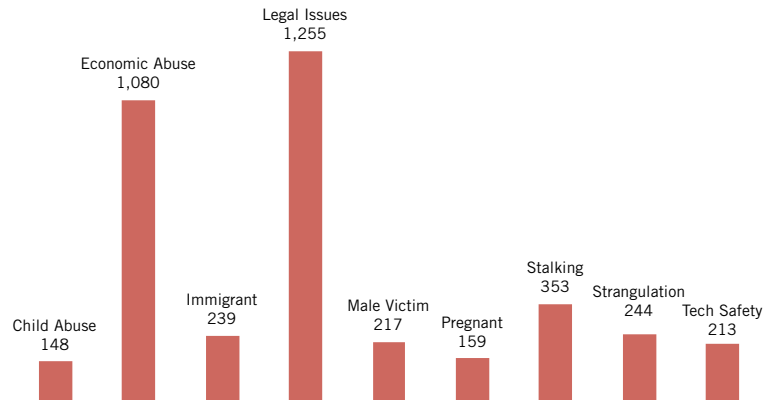
4,302

Referrals to Other Resources

7,548



Most Commonly Disclosed Special Factors in Victims' Experiences



Those disclosing legal issues:

Custody/Visitation	411	33%
Divorce	271	22%
Immigration	123	10%
Interstate Custody	56	4%
Other	214	17%
Protective Orders	705	56%

Commonly Requested Hotline Services:

Legal Representation	682	9%
DV Nonresidential Services	1,397	19%
DV Support Groups	1,449	19%
Individual Professional Counseling	1,718	23%
Legal Advocacy	1,603	21%
Domestic Violence Shelter	2,605	35%

Top Resource Referrals

New York (5 boroughs) Bed Line

Womenslaw.org

211 - United Way

Legal Resource Center on Violence Against Women

Connecticut Statewide Bed Line

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Domestic Violence Counts New York Summary

On September 10, 2014, 71 out of 96 (74%) identified local domestic violence programs in New York participated in the 2014 National Census of Domestic Violence Services. The following figures represent the information reported by the 71 participating programs about services provided during the 24-hour survey period.

4,084 Victims Served in One Day

2,230 domestic violence victims (1,242 children and 988 adults) found refuge in emergency shelters or transitional housing provided by local domestic violence programs.

1,854 adults and children received non-residential assistance and services, including counseling, legal advocacy, and children’s support groups.

This chart shows the percentage of programs that provided the following services on the Census Day.

Services Provided by Local Programs:	Sept. 10
Emergency Shelter	76%
Court/Legal Accompaniment/Advocacy	66%
Transportation	66%
Prevention Services and/or Educational Programs	58%
Advocacy Related to Housing Office/Landlord	54%
Advocacy Related to Mental Health	39%
Transitional Housing	28%
Financial Skills/Budgeting	27%

1,045 Hotline Calls Answered

Domestic violence hotlines are a lifeline for victims in danger, providing support, information, safety planning, and resources. In the 24-hour survey period, local and state hotlines answered 1,045 calls, averaging more than 43 hotline calls every hour.

1,041 Educated in Prevention and Education Trainings

On the survey day, 1,041 individuals in communities across New York attended 52 training sessions provided by local domestic violence programs, gaining much-needed information on domestic violence prevention and early intervention.

605 Unmet Requests for Services in One Day, of Which 40% (242) Were for Housing

Victims made more than 600 requests for services, including emergency shelter, transitional housing, and non-residential services, which could not be provided because programs did not have the resources to provide these services. The most frequently-needed service that couldn’t be provided was housing, followed by counseling and legal representation.

Cause of Unmet Requests for Help

- 29% reported reduced government funding.
- 13% reported not enough staff.
- 8% reported cuts from private funding sources.
- 8% reported reduced individual donations.

Across New York, 55 staff positions were eliminated in the past year; most of these positions were direct services (86%), such as shelter or legal advocates, so there were fewer advocates to answer calls for help. Seventy-eight individual services at local programs were reduced or eliminated in the past year.

“An advocate assisted a client in obtaining a temporary order of protection, emergency custody order, a backpack and school supplies for her daughter, and assisted the client in getting her daughter’s prescription waived through a local not-for-profit program. The advocate told her about, and referred her to, the Office of Victim Services to apply for compensation.”

— Advocate



SAMPLE: Press Release

CONTACT: Joan J. Smith
Safe Surroundings
(555) 446-9966 x 23

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SAFE SURROUNDINGS ANNOUNCES DETAILS OF DISASTER ACTION PLAN IN PREPARATION FOR HURRICANE SALLY

Belmont, NY—*Date*—Safe Surroundings, a New York emergency shelter for women and children, announced today details of its disaster action plan in response to weather predictions that Hurricane Sally will reach the eastern United States on Monday. Because of the potential for flooding in low level areas near the coast, Safe Surroundings is collaborating with other New York shelters, coalitions, and emergency responders to meet the unique needs of its residents and victims of domestic violence who may find themselves in need of services during this stressful time. [INCLUDE INFORMATION FOUND IN THE DISASTER & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE POWER AND CONTROL WHEEL ABOUT THE INTERSECTION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND DISASTER]

“We want victims and survivors to know that we are taking extra steps to ensure they have access to resources that can help them during this time of emergency.” said Karl J. Sams, Executive Director of Safe Surroundings. “[INCLUDE ADDITIONAL DETAILS OF HOW YOU ARE PREPARED FOR THE DISASTER]

Safe Surroundings is rolling all calls to its 24 hotline to the National Domestic Violence Hotline (The Hotline) where anyone affected by abuse can find information that will help them find safety and additional informational resources regarding domestic violence. The number for The Hotline is 1-800-799-SAFE. In addition to making sure victims have hotline resources available to them, Safe Surroundings is also transporting residents to alternative evacuation sites and providing transportation assistance to critical staff. In addition, [INCLUDE MORE DETAILS OF YOUR ORGANIZATION’S DISASTER ACTION PLANS WITHOUT COMPROMISING CONFIDENTIALITY]

Throughout the storm, the New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence will provide additional resources and provide access to its staff in order to assist any impacted programs. For an interview about the unique circumstances facing domestic violence victims during a disaster and the resources available to them, please contact Joan Smith at (555) 446-9966 x 23.

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POLICIES ON ISSUING A MEDIA STATEMENT DURING CRISIS

1. All statements issued by your organization should be issued on company letterhead, from the Executive or Communications Director.
2. Statements should be factual, addressing who, what, when, where and why (if known) of the situation. Other facts critical to the nature of the situation should also be included.
3. The identities of any persons injured in an incident involving your organization should be released **ONLY** by the authorities/officials investigating the incident and **NOT** by the organization spokesperson.
4. Crisis Communications Team members must be in agreement on all steps to be taken.
5. If you are not sure of your next action, do not guess. Consult the Crisis Communications Team or with your organization's attorney.