

After a homicide

Managing media interest

here
for
you

Some victims find it helpful and empowering to share their story. For others, dealing with the media is very stressful. Speaking with the media or not is your choice. This guide offers you some helpful tips to make informed decisions about dealing with the media.

When the media are interested in your story

A suspected homicide death can quickly become public information when the media share details about what's happened. Newspapers, TV, internet, radio, magazines, and social media can all play a part in spreading the story. You and others bereaved by homicide often have little choice but to have a personal loss talked about publicly.

In some cases, after a homicide, a judge will decide to suppress the names of victims, the suspected offender, or details of the case. This means media cannot report on these. In other situations, anyone from a media organisation could contact you, your family, whānau, friends, acquaintances, and even people you barely know to ask for details, comments, or an interview. If they do, it is always up to you to decide if you wish to speak to them or not.

The media can have a positive role in assisting with enquiries – eg. if you or members of your family or whānau are asked to make a formal public request for more information about the crime. In this case the police can provide you with guidance. Occasionally journalists also independently investigate a case and may discover helpful new evidence.

However, the media do not always have your best interests in mind. Some people can find journalists persistent, demanding, and manipulative when they are searching for details about a story. Their attention may be intrusive and distressing. They often find inventive ways to discover more information, including staking out homes, hospitals, workplaces, and funerals or tangihana. They may even use photos from social media or the funeral programme without asking for permission.

Be aware that you might also unexpectedly hear, read, or see something in the media about your case that is extremely upsetting or untrue.

Tips for dealing with media

These tips come from those who have experienced how challenging it can be to deal with media interest. A Victim Support Worker can assist and support you with any of these steps. If you need further assistance, you can call us 24/7 on **0800 842 846** to be connected to a Support Worker. We are here for you.

Consider appointing someone else to deal with the media on your behalf

You can pass all media queries onto this person to deal with as you choose.

Use your voice mail or text messages to filter all your calls

This way you don't accidentally answer a call from someone you don't want to speak to, and can choose to return the call when, and if, you are ready to.

Use social media wisely

Avoid making negative comments on social media about a suspected offender during an investigation. It's okay to talk about the impact of their actions on you and your family or whānau, but it's important to avoid accusations or statements that could impact the investigation or court process.

Social media can be mis-used. Any information or photos shared openly on social media, messaging apps or text messages can be used by media as public information. Members of the public can make comments on posts that might be insensitive and upsetting. Children and young people should be discouraged from viewing or replying to such comments.

CONTACT

Victim Support

Get Help: 0800 VICTIM (0800 842 846)
enquiries@victimsupport.org.nz
victimsupport.org.nz


Victim Support
Manaaki Tangata



If you decide not to speak to the media:

- You can simply ignore requests. It's okay to tell them you have "no comment", or ask them to direct all queries to police.
- It may be easier to decline to comment by text or email, where this is possible, as journalists can still keep pushing you for an answer if you are talking over the phone.
- Understand that even if you choose not to comment, it may not be possible to stop the media reporting on your case.

If you do decide to speak to the media:

- Decide what information you *do* want to share with the public and what you *don't* want to share before you talk with the media. Police can advise you on how to interact with media, such as what can and can't be said. Where applicable, discuss this as a family or whānau.
- You might choose to issue a written statement only. Sometimes victims employ a Public Relations (PR) company to assist them, especially if there is a lot of media interest in the case.
- Victims can also access the Police Media Spokesperson to help them do family media releases or to seek advice. Ask the police officer in charge of your case how to contact them.
- Choose who will speak to media on behalf of your family or whānau. This could be you, another member of your family or whānau, or a trusted friend. Where applicable, discuss this as a family or whānau.
- Ask reporters for their names, contact details, who they work for, and a copy of their questions before they interview you. Then make a time to call them back that suits you and gives you a chance to prepare.
- Always assume your interview is being recorded. If you are not comfortable with that, tell the journalist before your interview.
- Don't let the media rush you. If you feel pressured, say you will call or message them back or have someone else do that on your behalf. You can also delay an arranged interview.
- If you do give an interview, you do not have the right to see or approve what is produced before it's made public. You can ask, but it's over to the media person you are dealing with. Families and whānau can feel angry their words have been twisted or misconstrued so planning what you want to say is very important. Avoid saying

something on the spur of the moment that you might later regret.

- You can choose to be proactive and give interviews with the media at a time you choose such as around upcoming anniversaries or when the family or whānau want to highlight an aspect of the case. This allows you to get ahead of the media and do it on your own terms.
- Think carefully about which photos, written documents/messages, audio, or video you may want to give to media. It's very important to know that any of these could be used by them in the future – without your additional permission.
- Ask police to tell you about media releases they are making about your case or situation *before* they release them to the media.
- Incorrect information given to the media by relatives, friends, or others can be infuriating and hurtful. If this happens, you can ask the media to correct any misinformation. Please understand though, sometimes these people pass on information that is factual or considered their opinion.

Media attention may increase again at any time. Use these tips when you need to.

If media pressure is getting too much

Media can be persistent and resourceful. If you have further concerns and questions, talk with police or the Victim Support Worker assigned to your case. You can call us 24/7 on **0800 842 846** to be connected to a Support Worker.

You could also talk with the Police Officer in charge of your case if media pressure has become too intrusive and demanding.



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free, personal,
and confidential**

