

Tip Sheet for Youth Talking to Journalists about Mass Violence

Following a violent event, youth may be asked by journalists to open up and discuss their thoughts or emotional reactions to the event. Journalists will ask youth to talk about their reactions so that people can understand the emotional impact these events have on young people. Youth may find that talking to journalists can help themselves and others feel more in control during periods of stress and crisis. Some may believe talking to journalists is a civic duty that promotes accurate information, educates the public, and helps the community (e.g., change community policies, or raise awareness about prevention), while others may find media attention intrusive, embarrassing, or overwhelming.

Sometimes when people are at their most vulnerable state, (for example, after witnessing, learning about or surviving a violent event) they might be asked to share their stories with others. This can occur with a journalist or during an online forum. Talking to a journalist or the media is an important decision. Later, youth might wish they could take back what they said or do things differently. It is perfectly acceptable to make the choice to protect one's privacy and thoughts during emotionally difficult times. Each individual can decide whether to talk to a journalist.

You and Your Child Have the Right to:

- Choose whether or not to talk to a reporter.
- Ask the journalist what questions s/he will ask you *before* agreeing to an interview.
- Talk to one journalist and turn down another.
- Stop the interview at any point.
- Refuse to answer a question.
- Say no to any topic you don't wish to discuss, without justifying anything.
- Correct an interviewer if his/her assumption about the situation is wrong.
- Postpone talking to a journalist—say “Sorry, not now, but maybe in the future.”
- Be treated with respect.
- Ask to have a friend or parent with you.
- Refuse to be filmed or photographed, even if you have agreed to an interview.
- Ask the reporter to read back your quotes to make sure they are accurate.

SIGNS OF A GOOD REPORTER

- Conveys dignity and respect.
- Asks permission.
- Discusses the rules of engagement and explains:
 - Why you have been approached.
 - That everything you say will not be used.
 - How long you might talk.
 - Limits of confidentiality.
- Accepts when you politely decline to answer a question.
- Takes accurate notes and concentrates on what you are saying.
- Thanks you for your input.