

# Public Relations Checklist

---

## Create Thoughtful Branding

- Examine the community-specific issues and concerns that typically garner public engagement and incorporate these into your Center's message
- Explore how your work in domestic violence and sexual assault advocacy influences the outcomes people want in their community
- Be sensitive to underserved communities
  - **Recommendation:** Your public relations efforts should reflect your community so that all locals feel comfortable seeking services
- Utilize the information above and solicit survivor feedback to determine a name for your Center
  - Consider the history of your community and use culturally sensitive language to inform the name of your Center
  - **Examples:** Use the name of the county or city (ex: San Diego Family Justice Center); highlight co-location (ex: One Safe Place in Fort Worth, TX); omit certain words like "justice" from the name (ex: Family Peace Center); or choose symbolic names (ex: Palomar, which means the strongest knot that can be tied)
- Rebrand when applicable
  - **Examples:** Rebranding can be explored as a viable solution to a variety of circumstances, such as changes in partnership, tragedy or controversy that has damaged reputation, cultural evolution of the Center that no longer fits its original name, etc.
- Utilize survivor focus groups and input prior to making any decisions

## Develop Marketing Expertise

- Use field experts for brand analysis
  - Explore consulting firms in your community
  - Enlist a marketing expert to be on your board
  - Utilize board and staff members who have backgrounds in marketing and public relations who can synthesize this knowledge with their understanding of your Center and services
  - Foster relationships with marketing agencies who offer pro-bono campaigns for nonprofits
- Partner with local colleges and universities that have public relations and marketing majors and engage students to create plans for your Center as part of their coursework

- Partner with large organizations in your community that have marketing departments (i.e. hospitals, large manufacturers, or universities)

## Create an Online Presence

- Share your story online as a powerful avenue to telling your Center's story
  - **Recommendation:** Purchase the perfect URL (ex: Sacramento Family Justice Center: <http://www.hopethriveshere.org>; One Safe Place: <https://www.onesafeplace.org>)
  - **Recommendation:** Create a website *dedicated* to your Center. This allows you to control the message you are sharing and highlight the co-located services offered at the Center. Be sure to honor your partners in the process
    - Some Centers use the lead agency's existing website to advertise services, but this can be difficult to find, navigate or understand
- Create a host of social media sites (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest)
  - **Recommendation:** Fill social media sites with valuable information about the Center, relevant news stories, and informational graphics
- Tell stories through messaging to engage funders and donors
  - **Recommendation:** Avoid *always* soliciting donations (money, food, clothing, etc.) on your social media pages
    - A good rule of thumb is to share valuable information 85% of the time and give your followers the opportunity to be involved (donations and volunteer time) the remaining 15%
  - **Recommendation:** Keep phrasing donor-centric and emphasize the donor's role in your Center's impact (ex: "You transform lives" instead of "you help us transform lives")

## Establish Your Center as a Thought Leader

- Foster relationships with top leaders and advocates on the big issues in your community to ensure your Center is central to the dialogue around systems change and social justice
- Drive the conversation about domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse, human trafficking and elder abuse
  - Publish brief papers or articles
  - **Recommendation:** Use publications to explore the relationship between domestic violence/sexual assault and the problems facing your community; highlight the work of your Center and how it provides solutions to community issues
- Take ownership of the message of your Center by covering important current topics in monthly media pitches and blog posts
- Make conversations more accessible to the general community by using widely accessed outlets and avoiding technical jargon

## Use a Proactive Approach

- Create talking points for key leaders and board members about important programs the Center offers, including statistics and individual survivor stories
- Build rapport with reporters
  - **Recommendation:** Dedicate time and thought to media interviews
  - **Recommendation:** Connect reporters with secondary contacts if your Center is unable to comment on a story
  - **Recommendation:** Appoint a spokesperson for the agency for consistent messaging
  - **Recommendation:** Honor progressive reporters with a yearly award for journalists performing outstanding work
  - **Recommendation:** Adjust your content based on how reporters cover topics (i.e. some prefer hard numbers and data, while others prefer anecdotal pieces)
- Create a VOICES Chapter in your Center
  - **Recommendation:** Partner with survivors to identify the proper messages your Center wants to share and engage survivors in external and public statements (i.e. interviews, press releases, and marketing pieces for victims, survivors, donors, and partners)