



Sexual Violence & Journalism: Collaboration Beyond the News

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Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault

The Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MECASA) is organized to put an end to sexual violence in Maine and to ensure that there will be ongoing support and services for victims and survivors.

MECASA works toward ending sexual violence by providing public policy advocacy, assistance to Maine's sexual violence service providers, public awareness and prevention activities, and statewide training.

Bangor Daily News

The Bangor Daily News has the largest print and digital audience in Maine, with a print circulation of 40,000 daily and a digital audience of approximately 400,000 unique visitors monthly. It reports on news, sports and lifestyle topics spanning Maine; provides the largest state platform for opinion and politics content; serves as the home of about 100 blogs; organizes events in the community; and even has a research and innovation team.

"The Bangor Daily News will keep right on doing what it has done, standing up for the right and fighting the wrong without fear or favor; advocating with all its might for the best interests of Maine; giving all the news of the day, every day."

-- from the BDN mission, 1890

Today's Objectives

- Talk about the dynamics that make partnerships between news organizations & advocacy organizations difficult.
- Discuss opportunities for success by working with journalists.
- Identify five key strategies to develop & foster effective relationships with media partners.
- Develop an action plan to enhance media relationships.

Relationships

For advocates, relationships with journalists analogous to relationships with law enforcement: Very important and increasingly better with more mutual understanding.

- Acknowledge that you both have expertise.
- Assume best intentions from the outset.



What makes building these relationships difficult?

- Distrust
- Unsure of who you might/should build a relationship with
- Difficulty getting a meeting
- Lack of precedent
- Hard to get journalists to think beyond news to broader issues

So what works?

- Help each other out
- Acknowledge good work
- If possible, have face-to-face meetings
- Keep your promises and follow-up when you say you will
- Be open in conversations - assume best intentions
- Approach the editorial department first

A note on objectivity

As advocates build relationships with journalists, we have to acknowledge where our roles overlap and where they diverge.

Journalists have to maintain objectivity, especially with regard to reporting the criminal justice process. Just like law enforcement, they have a job to do that requires objectivity. Part of our relationship building should acknowledge this need - you may not reach a common understanding about a particular case or issue, but that's part of building the relationship!

Results of Our Collaboration

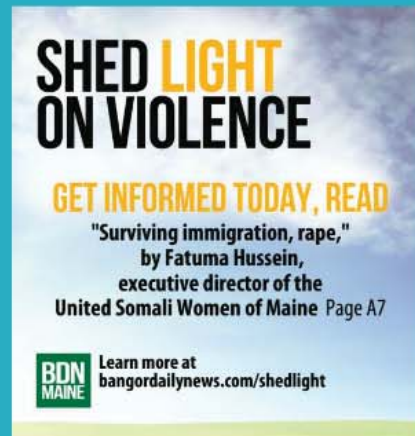
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To reach a sexual assault advocate, call the Statewide Sexual Assault Crisis and Support Line at 800-871-7741, TTY 888-458-5599. This free and confidential 24-hour service is accessible from anywhere in Maine. Calls are automatically routed to the closest sexual violence service provider.

Sexual Assault Awareness Month website banner



Newspaper ad



Results Continued

BDN staff take 40 hour advocate training

40 hours: Rape Response Services Advocate training

July 10, 2013 by Natalie Feulner

DOMESTIC AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE

For Sexual Assault Awareness Month in April 2013, BDN Newroom Administrator Natalie Feulner and Editorial Page Editor Erin Rhoda took 40 hours of training to become advocates for victims of sexual assault. The training was provided by Rape Response Services, a subsidiary of Penquis in Bangor, to ready volunteers to meet victims at the hospital and accompany them through an examination of their physical injuries and any evidence collection.

Proof - multimedia project



Results Continued

MaineFocus - Solutions Journalism



Ongoing MaineFocus Platform

A video player showing a man in a blue shirt and khaki pants standing in front of a chalkboard. He is holding a slide that says "Am I Hungry?" and shows a baseball and a plate of food. The video player has a play button in the center and a progress bar at the bottom showing 0:00 / 0:22. The video title is "Sex has a new metaphor: It's what's for dinner" and the author is "September 9, 2013 by Cara Courchane". The category is "DOMESTIC AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE".

Al Vannacchio: Sex needs a new metaphor. Here's...

Sex has a new metaphor: It's what's for dinner

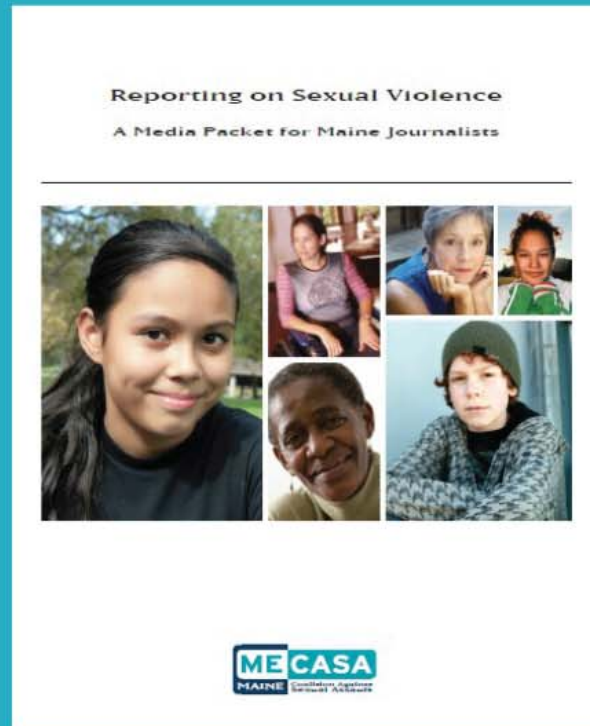
September 9, 2013 by Cara Courchane

DOMESTIC AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Between all these Blurred Lines and a rape case where a teacher who admits to raping his (now dead by suicide) student gets sentenced to only 30 days in prison. It's hard to imagine there are open and positive conversations happening about sex.

But they are happening! And really, they have to.

Results Continued



- MECASA media packet
- Ripple effect with other Maine media
- Communications training for MECASA member center staff

Lessons Learned & Action Plan!

Your Turn!

- Acknowledge there will be things you don't know - and ask for advice!
- Assume best intent.
- Identify your goals and your point of contact.
- Open the door and create collaboration opportunities together.

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