

CSAM Media guidelines

This guide is intended for media outlets and control standards to ensure that Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM) stories follow best practises set by child protection organisations.

1) Privacy & Protection

Identity protection should cover all crimes against children, including CSA. The media must exclude naming specific locations, the age/gender of both the perpetrator and victim, the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim, and other identifiable details that can put the victim in real danger. This is an essential practice as collectors of CSAM have been known to circulate publicly identifiable information. Our US member hotline, NCMEC, have seen cases where the mere presence of law enforcement, coupled with media coverage, led to the uncovering of the victim's identity.

Issuing a release too early about a joint case could jeopardize an investigation and/or victim services and Support. Juveniles deserve a special level of privacy protection. Crime victims and juveniles below teenage years deserve more protection because of their vulnerability. OMIT any visual material/evidence from the case to the media and take all possible measure to remove the material online

Offenders keep up with the latest investigative techniques in order to adopt specific security measures and avoid detection. Offenders often use TOR and the Darknet to share videos and articles where investigators explain how they "broke" a case. Failing to protect the victim/survivor's identity can impact their recovery and discourage others from reporting cases. In addition, OMIT the name of the internet platform where the material was published

Tip: speak to all agencies involved have a coordinated media plan in place for unified and consistent messaging.

2) Language

The media is responsible for setting the tone, using the appropriate terminology and selective content as they shape the public's perception of the crime.

Using sensationalist vocabulary conveys the wrong message about the online sexual exploitation of children, and could harm victims and survivors. While these cases are highly emotional for all involved, including investigators, it is important to report facts without bias or innuendo.

Be precise about the severity of the crime without being sensationalist. Possession of CSAM is often dismissed while CSA is described with an extreme level of graphic details. People want details when they know the victim but not when it's an image. How do graphic details benefit survivors? Who are these details for?

It's important to make the offender the subject of sentences and the victim/survivor the object. This is especially important in criminal cases involving children by assigning complete responsibility to the offender because children lack legal capacity to consent.

Tip: Use appropriate terminology defined by the [Luxembourg Guidelines](#).

3) Narrative

Child sexual abuse is not isolated. In fact, many more cases of CSA go unreported than those we read about. Strictly episodic narratives do not inspire readers to consider the issue in a broader social context.

Expand the focus of the story to encourage work on prevention (include objective information on the causes of the problem), education (include trends and statistics on CSA cases) and solutions (solutions-focused stories increase desire and support for collective action around children's issues and inspire actions on children's behalf). However, promoting solutions requires advocacy beyond criminal justice responses, ask the appropriate authorities what they are doing to tackle CSA and CSAM cases. Researchers, practitioners, and community-based organizations can be good resources.

Insist on welfare measures to stress the positive results of the investigation and avoid sensationalism. Focus on the future and next steps for the survivors, rather than the horrors of the abuse. In addition, mention the support and leadership of the agency and government entities in fighting child sexual abuse and dedicating resources and staffing to this crime. This crime is not fought by one agency alone - it takes partnerships and cross-sector cooperation to fight this crime.

Tip: you can take the opportunity to raise awareness when appropriate laws, education & prevention efforts are not available.

For additional insight visit our resources

- NCMEC
- CDC [Suggested Practices for Journalists Reporting on Child Abuse and Neglect](#)
- INTERPOL: SGCAC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT WHEN ENGAGING WITH THE MEDIA
- RTDNA - https://www.rtdna.org/content/identifying_juveniles
- Utah Department of Human Services [A Journalist's Guide to Reporting on Child Abuse](#)
- [MNCASA REPORTING ON SEXUAL VIOLENCE: A GUIDE FOR JOURNALISTS](#)
- [Case by Case: News coverage of child sexual abuse. 2007-2009](#)
- MCEDSV - [Reporting Sexual Assault: A Guide for Journalists](#)