This workshop was held at the 2017 Equal Justice Conference in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Title:
Building Relationships with Reporters and Lawmakers to Bolster Local Press

Presenters:
Dan Glazier, Legal Services of Eastern Missouri, St. Louis, MO
Melanie Shakarian, The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland, Cleveland, OH

This panel discussion will focus on ways legal aid providers can attract local press coverage, recruit lawmakers for press events, and foster ongoing engagement from both legislators and journalists. Topics will include: events most likely to attract press interest, and how to get coverage; moving beyond event coverage to ongoing engagement; recruiting lawmakers for press events or other forms of engagement; understanding the Congressional calendar and its importance in scheduling events; and proper protocol when dealing with legislators.
Legal Services of Eastern Missouri

Equal Justice Coalition
Building Relationships with Reporters and Lawmakers to Bolster Local Press
April, 2017
Evicted renter who ended up homeless gets her day in court
(St. Louis Post-Dispatch)

It was October 2015, and for one night, Latasha Johnson had run out of options.

Six months after being evicted from her Breckenridge Hills apartment, she was on the streets. No apartment. No car. No money for a hotel. She found a place for her daughter, Gabrielle, to stay for the night. Gabrielle was 9 at the time.

Kohner sued and started eviction proceedings. Johnson, with the help of Legal Services of Eastern Missouri, countersued, claiming a breach of contract under a section of law that gives renters a right to “implied warranty of habitability.”

http://www.stltoday.com/news/local/columns/tony-messenger/messenger-evicted-renter-who-ended-up-homeless-gets-her-day/article_5ad82ce0-5396-5847-bb52-1449b0c86b2d.html
In 2014, 1.8 million people appeared in New York courts without a lawyer. Included in that figure were 96 percent of eviction cases, 95 percent of child support cases, and two-thirds of the state's foreclosure cases that year.

The numbers are part of a broader "justice gap" in the civil courts, Legal Services Corporation president Jim Sandman told an audience at Saint Louis University law school on Tuesday. Declining federal money for legal aid programs, and a drop in other funding sources, mean the United States is no longer living up to a founding principle.

The justice gap is "what we live, what we experience," said Daniel Glazier, the executive director and general counsel of the eastern Missouri program. "The need for legal services is huge, and it's growing all the time, where the resources are lessening. We see the gap each and every day," Glazier said.
Sample Media Coverage: Topical issue - we initiated

The importance of equal access to justice for all
By Dan Glazier
(St. Louis Post-Dispatch)

One of the many lessons learned in Ferguson is something people living with low incomes and advocates who work alongside them know all too well: Equal access to justice is a fragile concept in this country, which for people of low income, is often difficult to obtain whether it’s in criminal, municipal or civil courts. Civil courts handle disputes between parties where one party feels harmed by another party. The consequences in civil court can be very high — loss of home, loss of safety, loss of health care, loss of income, and even loss of life. If you are not represented by legal counsel because you cannot afford an attorney, your chances of success are greatly diminished.

At Legal Services of Eastern Missouri, we provide free, high-quality civil legal assistance to people living with low income each and every day. In 2014 nearly 15,000 clients and their family members were helped with survival services such as preventing homelessness for a family facing eviction, providing safety and financial independence for victims of domestic violence and their children that would allow them to leave their abusers, affording access to health care for those who might not survive without it, and advocating for the right to an education that meets the unique issues of children with special needs.

http://www.stltoday.com/news/opinion/the-importance-of-equal-access-to-justice-for-all/article_7959e1f7-a3fc-50d1-821f-8b09e7e7f4dc.html
Sample Media Coverage: Topical issue - we initiated

Why she stayed
By Holly Yoakum
(St. Louis Post-Dispatch)

You’ve probably seen the videos of NFL star Ray Rice punching his fiancée, Janay Palmer, in the face and then dragging her limp, unconscious body out of a hotel elevator. The video has created a lot of questions: Why did Palmer marry him the day after the recorded attack? Why did she stay with him in the ensuing months? Why is she defending him now? We feel like we have a right to ask these questions because we feel like we’ve been inside that elevator with her. But not a single one of us has been inside the relationship.

One in four women will experience domestic violence during her lifetime, according to statistics from the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence. Along with my colleagues in the Lasting Solutions Unit of Legal Services of Eastern Missouri, I have the privilege of working with some of them in the St. Louis area as an attorney for the nonprofit legal aid organization. The numbers cited are estimates since domestic violence is a crime that is not frequently reported. Victims are scared of not being believed, scared of losing their families or their financial security, or scared of being blamed and judged.

Sample Media Coverage: Rural Papers

Legal Services of Eastern Missouri recognizes Philip York for pro bono efforts in Hannibal

Legal Services attorney to visit

Posted on Friday, December 16, 2016 at 12:00 pm

An attorney for Legal Services of Eastern Missouri Inc., will be at the office of the Lincoln County Health Department community room Wednesday, Jan. 18 from 10 a.m. to noon. The attorney will be available to provide no-cost legal assistance to low income persons experiencing civil legal problems. This excludes criminal and traffic court matters.

Please enter through the separate community room entrance.

Media Relations: Best Practices
What’s Your Job?

• View every interaction as an opportunity to tell your story
• Come prepared
  • Know your key messages
  • Anticipate potential questions
  • Supply background material
• Make the reporter’s job easier
• Build *trust and demonstrate credibility*
What Can Media Do for You?

• Provides opportunity to tell a story
• Establishes credibility and thought leadership
• Can be a gateway to other exposure
• Can enhance or damage your reputation
Managing a GREAT Media Interview

• Be accessible and responsive
• Be sincere, honest and helpful

• Know and focus on end-user, not reporter or outlet
• Share information in advance to frame interview and educate reporter about topics to be discussed

• Answer questions directly (short sound bites) without repeating questions
• Speak in layman’s terms; avoid jargon
• Identify others who may be a resource
What Else Should You Do?

• Practice beforehand
• Craft the most compelling message
  • Use plain English, active voice, short sentences, short words
• Remember the larger objective
• Demonstrate and narrate; make it memorable
A Reporter Calls...

• DON’T blow him or her off – you lose the chance to influence the story
• DON’T wait too long – reporters have tight deadlines
• DON’T speak off the cuff
• DON’T ask for specific interview questions or demand certain conditions for the interview
A Reporter Calls...

• First Steps
  • Ask for the reporter’s deadline
  • Ask what the topic is and the types of questions planned
  • Research the reporter
  • Coordinate interview opportunities
  • Note: Don’t go “off the record” unless you have a trusted relationship with a reporter. Assume everything you say will be made public. Be cautious.
  • If you have a trusted relationship, conversations framed as background that is off the record may help the reporter understand context of a complicated issue.
A Reporter Calls or Shows Up...

• DON’T speak off the cuff – everything is on the record
• DON’T say “no comment” or run away
• DON’T make promises you can’t keep
• DON’T keep talking
A Reporter Approaches You...

• DO politely ask what the deadline is
• DO ask for the reporter’s contact information
• DO take a few minutes to prepare
• DO make sure you know your agency’s policy about who speaks with reporters
• DO make sure you clear your messages and comments with the Executive Director or other designated member of leadership. It’s important that all people speaking on behalf of the organization are consistent in core messages.
Spokesperson Don’ts

Don’t:

• Ask for interview questions in advance (Accept if offered)
• Ask to review/approve the article (Accept if offered)
• Attempt to dictate when/where the story will appear
• Say anything you don’t want on the air
• Repeat negatives, interviewers’ questions or opponents’ views
  • For example, when a reporter asks a question that is framed negatively, consider how to reframe it.
  Q. “Are you still dumping deadly chemicals in the river?”
  A. “Our permit from the state requires that we protect the quality of water in the river near our plant, and that’s why we have built a plant that uses sustainable, clean materials.”
Spokesperson Bill of Rights

You have the right to:

• Know the topics, time and location of interview
• Know parameters for the interview
• Not answer confidential or proprietary questions
• Disagree with reporter’s inferences or facts
• Redirect the interview when it gets off track
• Provide background materials
• Stick to your key messages
• Be treated courteously and honestly
Media Bill of Rights

*Media has the right to:*

- Expect that you will respect their deadlines
- Receive timely, honest responses to questions
- Conduct follow up, as needed, for further information or clarification
- Evaluate and report news as they see it
- Reprint and repurpose their piece
Presentation

• Representation
  • Professional, polished
  • Healthy, well-rested

• Keep it simple
  • Minimal jewelry and makeup
  • Recent haircut, trimmed facial hair

• Body language
  • Make eye contact
  • Use natural gestures at the waist
  • Be aware of your body language
  • Keep your energy level high
Your Strategy: Delivering Your Message

Most people speak in pyramid style

Fact
Fact
CONCLUSION
Learn to speak in headlines, then provide supporting points.

HEADLINE (key message)

FACT

STORY (example)
Interview Techniques: It’s About Your Message

• Be prepared to tell your story. If the reporter goes in a different direction, bridge back to your key message.

• Examples
  • “What’s important to remember is that...”
  • “Yes ... (the answer) and in addition to that ...”
  • “That’s confidential ... but what I can tell you is ... (MESSAGE)”

• Bridging when you are boxed in
  • Answer the question simply (“No, and here’s why...”)
  • Make the bridge
  • Reframe to the message you want to deliver

• Example: “Why have you reneged on your promise to add jobs in the police and fire departments?”
  • *Questioner framed the question negatively, implying you are dishonest and weak.

• Reframe and bridge to: “Our city government is focused on finding better ways to reduce crime and make people safer, such as....”
  • *Your frame: We’re making people safer.
Interview Techniques

• Flagging (close/highlight)
  • The most important thing is to ...
  • First, next, last ...
  • For example ...

• Broadly interpret/restate the question
  • “What I think you’re really asking is…”

• Frame the question
  • “Maybe it would help if I explained…”
Why We Engage with the Media: To Make the Case for Equal Justice Under the Law

• Engagement should be strategic:
  • So people to know we may be able to help them
  • So policymakers understand the lives of people who struggle
  • We want communities to understand the importance of providing equal justice under the law, replacing stereotypes with empathy
Remember Why We Do This Work

• Americans pledge allegiance to two ideas:
  • Liberty, and
  • Justice for All

• Legal Services agencies are America’s lawyers who deliver justice for all.