

Republic of the Philippines Department of Social Welfare and Development

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POLICIES FOR THE MEDIA COVERAGE OF VICTIMS OF ABUSE AND EXPLOITATION

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I. Rationale

The media plays a very crucial role in the prevention of crimes against women, children and other disadvantaged sectors. While the media is an important vehicle in providing information to and generating support from the public, it is also the duty and responsibility of the state to protect the privacy and dignity of the victims, especially during crisis and/or humiliating situations.

There are cases of abuse and exploitation covered by media and reported in a manner that disregards confidentiality of information which may endanger not only the lives of the victims but also of the suspected perpetrators/offenders. Sometimes, cases of death and other forms of violence are presented in a manner that violates the dignity of the victims. Thus, the need for a set of guidelines.

This set of guidelines will serve as a safeguard and mechanism to ensure that the rights of victims of abuse and exploitation are protected and upheld without prejudice to the rights of media practitioners to report news and events.

II. Legal Base

- 1. Article II. Section 11 of the Philippine Constitution provides that "the State values the dignity of every human person and guarantees full respect for human rights."
- 2. Section 29, Article IV of RA 7610 known as the Special Protection of Children Against Child Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act protects victims from undue and sensationalized publicity which results in the moral degradation and suffering of the offended party.
- 3. Article 149 of the Family Code states that the Family being the foundation of the nation, is a basic social institution which public policy cherishes and protects.
- 4. The Convention on the Rights of the Child which recognizes the right to privacy, honor and reputation of the child.

III. Objectives

General

To provide a comprehensive set of guidelines on the conduct of media coverage of victims of abuse, exploitation against women, children and other disadvantaged sectors under the custody and supervision of DSWD.

Specific

- 1. To ensure the protection and promotion of human rights and dignity of the victims during media coverages
- 2. To provide the procedural steps and documentation requirements before a media coverage can be approved and/or undertaken; and
- 3. To ensure that only factual information about the case being covered are reported.

IV. Policies and Procedures

A. Request for Coverage

- 1. Media practitioner/s covering the DSWD central office shall submit a written request for coverage to the Director of the Social Marketing Service stating the following:
 - 1.1. Purpose of the Coverage
 - 1.2. Persons to be covered/interviewed
 - 1.3. Content and Methods of coverage/interview
 - 1.4. Extent of coverage
 - 1.5. Date, time and place of coverage
 - 1.6. Persons/institutions requesting coverage and who will actually interview/cover the event

Media practitioners covering the DSWD Field Offices shall directly address their request for coverage to the Regional Director of the Field Office where the coverage will be done. If the Director is out of reach, the request maybe approved by the officer-in-charge of the concerned region.

- 2. At least three (3) days must be given between the date of request and the actual coverage to provide time for preparations and to ensure that:
 - 2.1. Clients to be interviewed should have been identified and consent/permission have been given by client and/or parents/guardian in case client is not in a position to give consent.

B. Conduct of the Coverage/Interview

- 1. Recognize the victim's right to decide whether to be identified or not and undertake the necessary steps to ensure confidentiality.
 - 1.1. Withhold the identity of the victim and suspect (until indictment).
 - 1.2. Make sure the consent given is free and informed.

- 1.2.1 Do not assume consent until expressly given. Consent must be in writing and in consultation with the lawyer, if possible. If the victim refuses to be interviewed, a social worker may just discuss with the media practitioners the services being provided by the DSWD to the victim and other information that will make the public understand the programs of DSWD.
- 1.2.2 Determine if the victim is in the right frame of mind to give consent.
- 2. Strict confidentiality must be observed in terms of the following:
 - 2.1. Use **pseudonyms** or aliases to protect the true identities of clients.
 - 2.2. Provide disguised data on the client's identification and personal circumstances such as names of parents and family members, addresses, neighbors and friends.
 - 2.3. Social case study reports, documents and other case records shall not be shared/disclosed to media practitioners.
- 3. No live telephone interviews shall be allowed to children victims, particularly the victims of sexual abuse and exploitation.
- 4. During the coverage, the following must be observed:
 - 4.1. Frontal shots shall be avoided. However, precautionary measures like silhouette shots, or focus on other parts of the body shall be adopted to ensure the protection of the client's true identity.
 - 4.2. Photos or shots of group activities of clients shall be preferred to individual client's photos or shots.
 - 4.3. Identify the concerned official or staff to be interviewed.
 - 4.4. Prepare needed materials such as statistics, fact sheets, brochures and others.
- 5. If the interview/taping is done in the studio, adequate security to the client must be provided while in transit and inside the studio.

C. Reportage

Crimes of violence against women and children should be reported factually and seriously. Broadcast reporters/editors should take care that filming/reporting of such crime do not violate the Rules and Regulations on Reporting and Investigation of Child Abuse and Section 29, Article XI of RA 7610. Any violation, thereof would be subject to the corresponding penalty. The DSWD shall protect the victim's right to dignity by ensuring that the media observe the following guidelines in their reportage of the case:

- Reporters should not use words and phrases which tend to pass judgment on the victim and/or suspect. Ex. Prostitute, pretty, sexy, former dancer, sex maniac, drug addict, etc.
- 2. Eliminate details/descriptions which tends to titillate readers/viewers and sensationalize the story or ridicule the victims.
- Do not use photos of victims who are naked, scantily dressed or otherwise in degrading states.
- 4. Do not photograph or use photos of minors/women victims or suspects.
- 5. Do not trivialize the reality of violent crimes with the use of humor, cartoons, etc.
- 6. Do not place reports of violence next to pin-ups and other items which heighten their titillating value.
- 7. Do not use photos or any visual deception of confrontations between the victim's family, and the accused in police stations and other law enforcement agencies.

D. Post-Coverage

- 1. The Social Marketing Service and the Regional Information Officers shall monitor the publication or airing of the specific case covered by media and acquire a copy of the article or video used.
- 2. The concerned staff shall conduct a debriefing to process the experience of the client and his/her family.

This Order will take effect immediately and supersedes, amends or modifies Department Order No. 22, series of 1998 and other previous issuances inconsistent herewith.

Issued in Quezon City, this 23rd day of March 2004.

ORAZON JULIANO-SOLIMAN

Secretary

SMS Doc SBA/PRV/MBM/Imz Lai2004: amended d.o. for media coverage

A CERTIFIED COPY:

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