

Monterey County Rape Crisis Center Sexual Assault, Human Trafficking & Child Abuse 2026 Media Guide

Role of the Media

The media plays a critical role in educating our community and shaping discourse at the national, state and local levels. Monterey County Rape Crisis Center created this guide to support local journalists and media outlets by providing straightforward and accurate information on sexual violence, human trafficking and child abuse, best practices for interviewing trauma survivors, and the most up-to-date resources to our local area.

Definitions

Sexual Assault (SA): Sexual assault takes many forms including attacks such as rape or attempted rape, as well as any unwanted sexual contact, sexual battery and/or threats.

Human Trafficking (HT): Human trafficking is when a person is compelled to work through force, fraud or coercion or when a minor is involved in commercial sex.

Child Abuse (CA): Child abuse is when an adult intentionally hurts a child or willfully fails to act so that harm to the child is a result. It includes neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse, and sexual abuse of a child by an adult.

Child Sexual Abuse Materials (CSAM): Any visual depiction of a child being sexually abused or exploited.

Statistics

Sexual Assault Statistics

The Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN) published the following statistics regarding the scope of sexual violence (RAINN 2017):

- 1 out of every 6 American women has been the victim of an attempted or completed rape in her lifetime (14.8% completed, 2.8% attempted).
- About 3% of American men--or 1 in 33--have experienced an attempted or completed rape in their lifetime.
- From 2009-2013, Child Protective Services agencies substantiated, or found strong evidence to indicate that, 63,000 children a year were victims of sexual abuse in the United States.
- A majority of child victims are 12-17. Of victims under the age of 18: 34% of victims of sexual assault and rape are under age 12, and 66% of victims of sexual assault and rape are age 12-17.

In 2025, MCRCC provided 7,586 services to 1,012 survivors of sexual violence and their significant others. These services include 619 calls to MCRCC's 24-hour crisis line, 117 accompaniments to Sexual Assault Forensic Exams (SAFE) and emergency medical care, counseling sessions, and much more.

Human Trafficking Statistics

- From 1/1/2021 - 12/31/2021, there were 10,359 trafficking situations reported to the National Human Trafficking Hotline. In those situations, a total of 16,554 likely victims of trafficking were identified. The top three types of trafficking reported in 2021 were Escort Services (10%), Pornography (8%), and Illicit Massage, Health & Beauty (8%). (<https://polarisproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Polaris-Analysis-of-2021-Data-from-the-National-Human-Trafficking-Hotline.pdf>)

In 2025, MCRCC provided 10 human trafficking survivors with 101 crisis intervention, advocacy, and accompaniment services.

Child Abuse Statistics

- In 2020, Monterey County reported 4,106 reports of child abuse and neglect.

The percentage of youth who received the most child abuse and neglect was 11-15 year olds with 30.6%, followed by 6-10 year olds with 29.5%. (<https://www.kidsdata.org/region/320/monterey-county/results#ind=&say=&cat=1>)

MCRCC Services & Resources

MCRCC's 24-HOUR HELP LINE:

Monterey Peninsula: (831) 375-HELP (4357)

Salinas/South County: (831) 424-HELP (4357)

MCRCC's helpline is free, confidential and available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week in English and Spanish. Advocates provide crisis intervention services and referrals to survivors, family, friends, and community members. These advocates have undergone a 40+ hour training in sexual violence, human trafficking and child abuse and are available to listen and to assist survivors in our community.

Advocacy

MCRCC is honored to provide compassionate advocacy services to survivors of sexual assault.

Under California law, survivors have the right to have a Sexual Assault Counselor present during all interviews with law enforcement and the District Attorney's Office; and during Sexual Assault Forensic Examinations (SAFE). Our trained Sexual Assault Counselors – or “advocates” – are here to ensure survivors never have to go through these moments alone.

Beyond immediate crisis support, MCRCC can also connect survivors with ongoing resources such as the Victim Witness Assistance Program, campus academic support, and other community services tailored to meet each survivor's unique needs.

Reporting

Survivors of sexual assault, human trafficking and child abuse often have questions about reporting the abuse they experienced. MCRCC Advocates can work with survivors to inform them of their options for reporting and help guide them through the process. Some survivors choose to never report. When survivors do report to law enforcement, we are able to accompany them.

Accompaniment

The Monterey County Rape Crisis Center trains staff and volunteers to become Sexual Assault Counselors - generally referred to as "advocates," which gives them the credentials to provide confidential and privileged services and communication to victims/survivors of sexual assault ([California Evidence Code 1035.4](#)).

MCRCC accompanies and provide support for survivors undergoing Sexual Assault Forensic Exams, interviews with law enforcement, and a variety of other venues in which a survivor chooses to have their advocate present ([California Penal Code 679.04](#)).

Anyone interested in having a Sexual Assault Counselor present to make a law enforcement report, to go to a law enforcement interview, or accompaniment to another venue, can contact us at our Salinas or Monterey office.

Counseling

MCRCC offers short-term, trauma-focused individual therapy and support groups designed to help survivors of sexual violence — as well as their loved ones — begin their healing journey in a safe, supportive environment. Anyone interested in our therapeutic services can call the Monterey or Salinas office to set up an appointment for an intake.

Once the intake has been reviewed by MCRCC's Clinical Director and an MCRCC Therapist will contact you with next steps.

Community Education and Prevention

At the Monterey County Rape Crisis Center, we believe prevention is possible. It is foundational to our agency and central to our mission to end gender-based violence. All prevention efforts are research-informed, evidence-based, and culturally relevant, designed to meet the needs of Monterey County's diverse communities. Using a public health approach, we promote protective factors that reduce the risk of sexual violence.

MCRCC provides age-appropriate prevention education to students from kindergarten through high school.

The Child Abuse Prevention Program (CAPP) brings safety information to students at least three times throughout their K-6th education journey. Students learn about safe touches, trusted adults, the bathing suit rule and boundary setting.

In high school, students can elect to be part of our high school club, Our Voice, to address harmful behaviors and see themselves as leaders in making their campus and communities safer.

At CSUMB, prevention programs are facilitated by our Campus Advocate Program Manager, who offers various services to higher education institutions.

Beginning a Conversation with Survivors

Before beginning a piece, it is best practice for reporters to talk to advocates and staff at local rape crisis centers to gain insight and forge connections with experts in the field. Remaining in contact with experts allows for the exploration of stories from new angles.

It is important to be transparent with the survivor regarding the interview - to explain the purpose of the story you are planning to write, to inform the survivor of the details of the interview, such as its time, place, location, and medium (phone, video, in-person, etc). In addition, ask the survivor for permission to report the story, and whether or not they wish for their identity to remain confidential. Make every attempt to keep the identity of the survivor confidential unless the survivor expresses that they wish to be identified. Something to keep in mind is that some survivors may want to be interviewed by the media, but not all will. Because of the nature of trauma, a survivor can relive the experience when being questioned or interviewed.

For those that do choose to be interviewed, it is then crucial to allow these survivors to share their story in their own way, their own words, and their own time. Remember that permission to write the story or to interview survivors may be withdrawn at any time, even if they had initially agreed. Whether or not the survivor initially consented to being interviewed or gave permission for the story to be written, it is best not to push boundaries and persist for approval. Remain caring and respectful of the survivor and their wishes throughout the entire process.

How to Interview the Survivor

Prior to the interview, ask the survivor if they would like to have a counselor, therapist or advocate present, as it may help the survivor feel more comfortable and well supported while being interviewed.

Take care to frame questions in a way that does not place blame or judgement on the survivor. No survivor is ever to blame for what happened to them. The more open-ended, considerate and non-judgemental the question is, the better.

Make sure to use appropriate language. Terms such as rape or sexual battery are more clear than euphemisms such as forced sex or groping. Also, avoid terms that stigmatize the victim, such as referring to a sex trafficking survivor as a prostitute or involved in prostitution. Note the chart with the suggested language below.

LANGUAGE CONSIDERATIONS

SAY THIS! 👍	NOT THAT... 🚫
TO DESCRIBE THE CRIME	
Rape	Forced sex/intercourse Unauthorized sex/intercourse Forced oral/anal sex
	Nonconsensual sex Violent non-consensual sex
	Legitimate rape
	Unconscious sex
	Intoxicated victim
	Coercive sex Sex against will Sex with incarcerated person
Sexual Battery (the unwanted touching of private body parts, and is not harassment but <u>sexual assault</u>)	Sexual harassment (touching of Private Body Parts - PBP's) Slap Ass Fridays Groping "A joke" "Funny" "Prank"
Drug facilitated sexual assault	Drunk nonconsensual sex Sex after given drugs Sex while drugged Intoxicated victim
Child Sexual Abuse	Sex with a person under 18 Forced sex with a person under 18 Sex with a babysitter/teacher/principal/person in power over the child

TO DESCRIBE SURVIVORS	
Survivor of sexual abuse Survivor of sexual assault	Victim Broken person Raped person Used/impure person Lying for attention
Survivor of child abuse	Neglected child Damaged child
Survivor of Human Trafficking	Prostitute Sex slave Hooker/Whore/Ho or equivalent Criminal
Commercially Sexually Exploited Child	Teen prostitute Teens making the wrong choice Transactional sex/Survival sex Delinquent
TO DESCRIBE THE PERPETRATOR	
Rapist Abuser Perpetrator Sexual Assailant	“Really promising <i>*insert any hobby/ profession/skill*</i> ” “They made a mistake/one bad choice” “I just couldn’t picture it from them...” Nice guy/gal/person “They just couldn’t control themselves!”
Trafficker Exploiter	Pimp “Boyfriend” Business partner Entrepreneur
Buyer Exploiter	John Trick Date