

Telling Survivor Stories

Best Practices Guide



Survivor autonomy, choice, voice, and best interests must always be placed over any other considerations, including advocacy and the promotion of your work, cause, or organization.

Obtain Informed Consent	<p>Always obtain the survivor’s informed consent in clear and understandable terms prior to telling their story or sharing their image.</p> <p>Outline the purpose of the story (or post, etc.) and where it will be shared.</p> <p>Do not re-use old photos or stories without permission.</p> <p>Do not assume that a survivor’s consent to their story/image being shared on one platform means it can also be shared on another or in future. Always respect a survivor’s request to withdraw permission at any point in time.</p>
Take a Survivor-Led, Victim-Centered Approach to Interviewing and Storytelling	<p>Prioritize listening; avoid re-traumatization; respect the survivor’s autonomy; be nonjudgmental and receptive to the insights and opinions of survivors themselves.</p> <p>Do not generalize. Remember that each survivor only represents themselves, not all survivors.</p> <p>Allow survivors to tell their story in their own words. If a survivor themselves uses a problematic term, present it with quotes or indicate in some way that it is the speaker’s term.</p>
Be Trauma-Informed and Culturally Humble	<p>Understand the vulnerabilities and experiences of trauma survivors, including the prevalence and physical, social, and emotional impact of trauma.</p> <p>Recognize signs of trauma in staff, clients, and others and respond by integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, practices, and settings.</p> <p>Recognize that no individual can learn every single aspect of any culture, even their own; recognize that your reality may influence your perception of clients’ realities; and commit to a lifelong learning process.</p> <p>Assume nothing about a survivor, and create space for them to define their own cultural identity.</p>



**Wilbanks Child Endangerment
and Sexual Exploitation Clinic**

School of Law

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

<p>Avoid Problematic Language</p>	<p>Avoid language which suggests the survivor is to blame for their experiences, reinforces inaccurate perceptions, or is intended to provoke an emotional response for “shock value”.</p> <p>Avoid problematic terminology, including, but not limited to: referring to a survivor’s “rescue” or being “saved”; referring to a victim as “prey”; and terms such as “slavery”, “sex slavery”, “modern day slavery”.</p>
<p>Use Hopeful, Empowering Messaging</p>	<p>Focus on how survivors have overcome, healed, and succeeded, rather than on the story of their trauma or exploitation.</p> <p>Highlight a human trafficking hotline, service program, or law enforcement reporting mechanism.</p>

Additional Resources:



“Ethical Storytelling Guidelines”
United Way Center to Combat Human Trafficking



“Reporting on Rape and Sexual Violence”
Chicago Taskforce on Violence Against Girls & Young Women



“Human Trafficking and Exploitation Informational Guide for Media”
Minnesota Department of Health

For any questions, clarification, or further information about the Wilbanks CEASE Clinic, please visit our website at: <https://cease.law.uga.edu>

Children’s Advocacy Centers of Georgia’s CSEC Response Team:
<https://www.cacga.org/csec-response-team/>

National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC):
<http://www.missingkids.com/>

If you or someone you know is a victim of child sex trafficking, please call the CACGA CSEC Response Team hotline at 1-866-END-HTGA (363-4842). The hotline is operated 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

If you are a provider or Law Enforcement and you need assistance with a victim, please call 1-866-END-HTGA (363-4824).

