

THE EJN 6-POINT GUIDE TO

ethical reporting on domestic violence

1. Accountability

- Hold the perpetrator accountable for their abuse - and don't blame the person who is abused; Know the law and how it is applied and call it out as the crime it is.
- Recognise journalists can play a role in reducing the prevalence of domestic and gender-based violence.

2. Accuracy

- Stick to the facts, even if the facts are minimal: ie. 'Man convicted of murdering wife and daughter'
- Avoid labels and euphemisms that might be seen to offer an excuse for perpetrator's behaviour – ie. 'monster', or references such as 'crime of passion'.
- Avoid casting judgement on the choices, behaviour, race, religion, clothing, background, role, or relationships of the abused person.
- Be particularly conscious of the framing of headlines.
- Consider the use of the active tense v passive and how it can alter perspectives. ie. He assaulted her v she was assaulted by him.

3. Provide Context

- Domestic violence is about control. It often follows a pattern of behaviour, of which fatal domestic violence is the final act in a spectrum of abuse that culminates when the victim tries to escape and the abuser reasserts control.
- Domestic abuse is not always physical, but financial, emotional, sexual too. Remember this when choosing images, consider using other images than those which only portray DV as physical.
- Use reliable facts and data to give context to the scale of domestic violence. Acknowledge that DV can happen to anyone, but women are most at risk.

4. Link to Resources

- Provide links to safe resources for individuals at risk of domestic violence, and for those who may know people who are experiencing it. [add resources here]
- Know the law and how it is applied or how it is absent and what role the media might play in countering impunity, raising awareness if there is absence of domestic law, or ineffectual legislative practices, or law enforcement.

5. Humanity

- Treat those affected by domestic violence with humanity. This includes those abused and their loved ones. Respect their privacy. Check with survivors how they wish to be known - ie. survivor or victim (note these sometimes have legal implications).
- Take note of sensitive approaches to interviewing, to give survivors and families time, respect and as much autonomy as possible. Reflect on what this means for interviewing survivors of trauma - ie. who conducts the interview, where and when it occurs, how questions are framed, choice of images, confidentiality.
- While noting the need to hold perpetrators accountable, do not amplify their behaviour or choices, or give them excessive publicity. Recognise the need to remember the person affected by the crime and not amplify the abuser's name and behaviour.

6. Impartiality

- Take care when covering court cases. Avoid writing from the perspective of the perpetrator, and amplifying testimony or copy and pasting evidence. Avoid unsubstantiated comments and rumours from members of the public, neighbours etc. Avoid speculating, and repeating rumours.