



SEXUAL ABUSE LITIGATION & COVERAGE CONFERENCE

NEW YORK CITY BAR ASSOCIATION | OCTOBER 7, 2025

MEDIA ATTENTION AND SEXUAL ABUSE CASES



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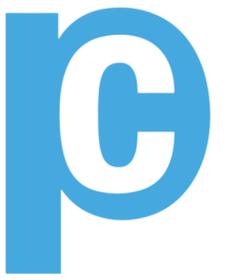
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How to Effectively Manage the Media: A Case Study

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Prosek Partners

Controlling the Narrative: Key Tactics



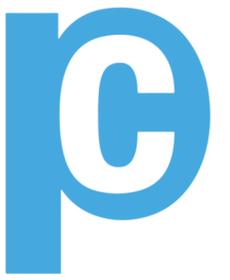
Consider an
Exclusive

IF APPROPRIATE:
Arrange Survivor
Interview(s)

Simplify the Legal
Story

Connect the
Macro and the
Micro

Pursuing an Exclusive



Your best opportunity to set the tone for coverage is by securing a strong, fulsome piece to publish in tandem with the initial complaint filing.

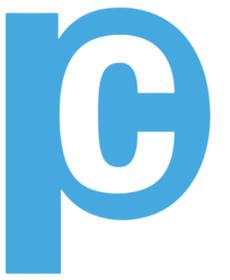
Steps to Take:

- Target an appropriate reporter, with plenty of time.
- Give reporter access to a final or near-final complaint and, if applicable, the press release; arrange for reporter to conduct interviews.

Once Exclusive Publishes:

- Share with **broadcast outlets** and **newsletters**.
- **Amplify** on social media.

Conducting Survivor Interviews



Tell the human element of the story—and allow survivors to share their voice—by sensitively arranging for trusted media to speak with plaintiff(s).

Steps to Take:

- Consider which survivor(s) to approach.
 - Will they feel empowered by speaking up? Are case facts straightforward for a reporter to cover?
- Prep the survivor.
 - This is their interview—they are in control.
 - Confirm if they are OK being named, or if they would prefer to use a pseudonym.
- Level set with the reporter.
 - Terms: Certain outlets allow use of pseudonyms for survivors of sexual assault.
 - Ensure they understand the sensitivity—especially if they do not have experience interviewing survivors.
 - Confirm if they would allow the survivor to change their mind about the information shared prior to print.
 - Confirm the scope of the conversation. Legal questions should be saved for a conversation with the attorney.
- Reiterate the terms to all parties to start the interview.
 - Go beyond the standard confirmation of “on the record” vs. “on-background.” Ensure the survivor knows—and knows that the reporter knows—that they have the power.

Simplifying the Legal Story



Enable reporters to efficiently report on complex matters by distilling the key legal concepts.

Steps to Take:

- Recognize that your target reporters—and their readers—are likely unfamiliar with the law at hand; plan and engage accordingly.
- Make the complaint available to reporters.
- Anticipate questions reporters are likely to have, and have answers prepared.
- When pitching, offer to share the complaint; follow up with an outline of key page numbers.
- Summarize the legal standard and ensure the reporter understands why this matters.
- Make the attorney(s) available to answer questions.

Connecting the Macro with the Micro

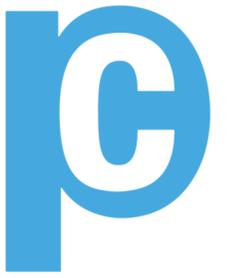


Explain the systemic significance, while emphasizing the personal cost.

Steps to Take:

- Help reporters and their readers understand the big picture—big trends like #MeToo, histories of systemic abuse, etc.
- Share third-party research, prior reports, other examples where appropriate.
- Keep reporters focused on the specifics of the underlying case
- ...At the same time, do not lose sight of the individual survivors' stories—and the multifaceted costs they have faced as a result of their abuse.

In Action: ASA Litigation Against New York State



Secured an Exclusive:

The New York Times

Hundreds of Women Set to Sue New York Over Allegations of Prison Sex Abuse

A law that takes effect on Nov. 24 allows people to sue over years-old assaults long past the criminal statute of limitations.

Empowered a Survivor to Share their Story:

She had never told anyone about what she says she endured — not her best friend, not her siblings, not her three sons and not even her mother. By mid-November, she had told about 10 confidants, and had decided to forge ahead with a lawsuit.

“I tried to leave that behind 30 years ago. And now here it is, all coming back,” Ms. Wiggins said during a recent interview at the law firm’s Midtown office. “I suppressed it. I kept it down in my gut. I didn’t think I was worthy. I didn’t think anyone would care.”

Connected the Dots:

The State Corrections Department has a long history of sexual abuse inside its prisons. The Department of Justice investigated allegations in the early 1980s at the now-shuttered Bayview Correctional Facility in Manhattan. The agency released a scathing report in 1985 about the abuse, and made recommendations to the state.

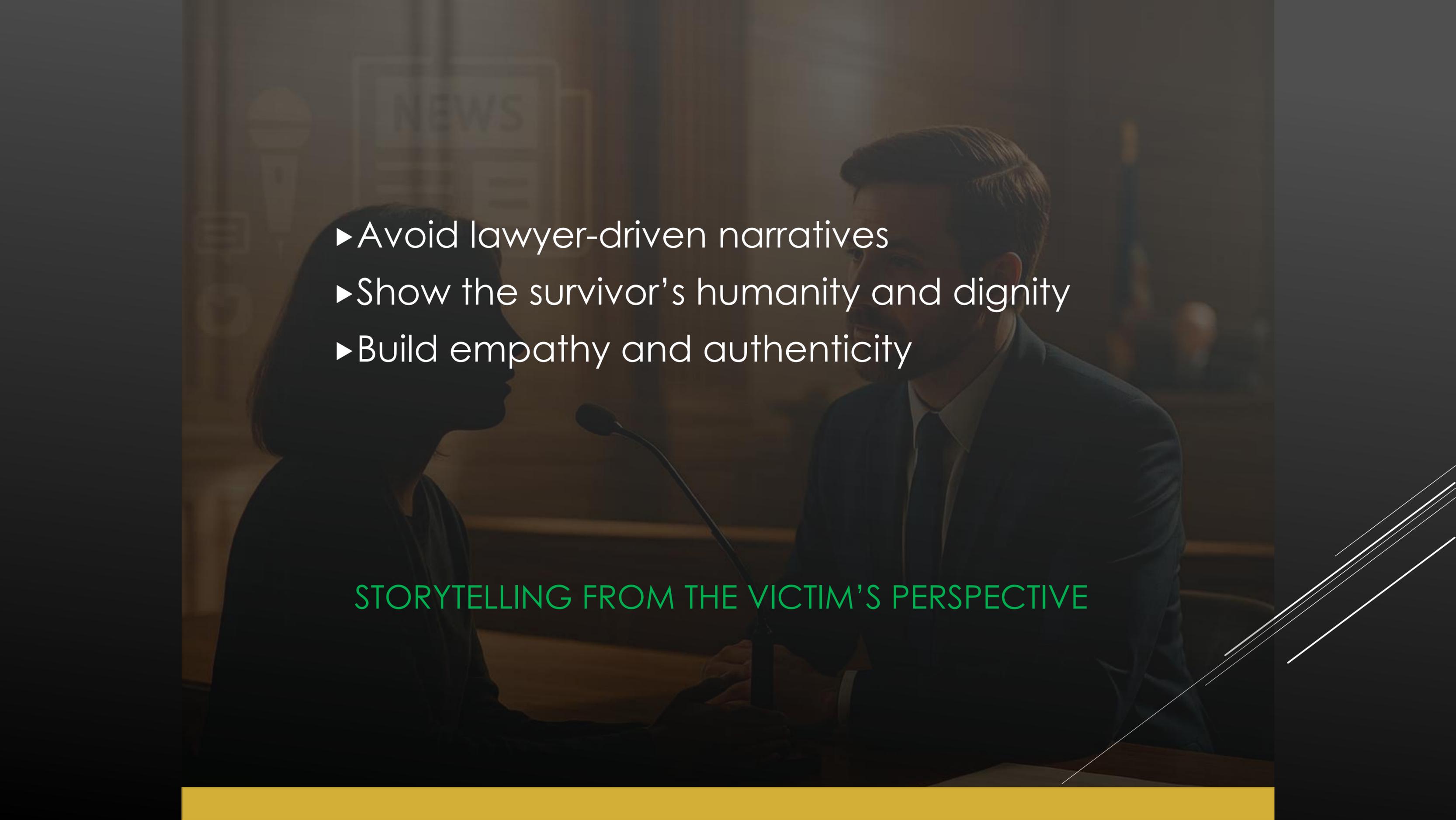


HUMANIZING LEGAL NARRATIVES & LEVERAGING MEDIA IN SEXUAL ABUSE CASES

Importance of storytelling in sexual abuse cases

Goals: Victim-centered narratives and media strategy

HUMANIZE THE STORY

- 
- ▶ Avoid lawyer-driven narratives
 - ▶ Show the survivor's humanity and dignity
 - ▶ Build empathy and authenticity

STORYTELLING FROM THE VICTIM'S PERSPECTIVE

CORE PRINCIPLES OF VICTIM-CENTERED NARRATIVES

PRIORITIZE
THE
VICTIM'S
VOICE

EMPHASIZE
HUMANITY
AND
DIGNITY

DETAIL
PERSONAL
IMPACT
AND HARM

BE
RESPECTFUL
AND
SENSITIVE

AVOID
RE-
TRAUMATIZI-
TION



- ▶ Who they were before the abuse
- ▶ What happened: the turning point
- ▶ The aftermath and impact
- ▶ Their resilience and courage

STRUCTURING THE SURVIVOR'S STORY

PRACTICAL TECHNIQUES FOR LAWYERS



Use trauma-informed interviews



Avoid over-rehearsing testimony



Use visuals and survivor's own words



- ▶ Identify the right journalists and outlets
- ▶ Align stories with investigative reporting
- ▶ Time exclusives with legal milestones

EXCLUSIVE MEDIA STRATEGIES



LEVERAGE MULTI-MEDIA TO BROADEN REACH

- ▶ Media as an amplifier of survivor voices
- ▶ Build public awareness and influence policy
- ▶ Support multi-plaintiff or systemic cases

ETHICAL & LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS



Protect survivor
privacy and
dignity



Balance advocacy
with legal strategy



Avoid prejudicial
publicity issues



CONCLUSION & KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ▶ Humanizing stories strengthens cases and empowers survivors
- ▶ Strategic media use amplifies impact
- ▶ Q&A Session

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LEWIS +
LLEWELLYN
LLP



*Media Attention and Sexual Abuse Cases:
How Not to Handle the Media – A Case Study*

Paul T. Llewellyn
Lewis & Llewellyn LLP

October 7, 2025







“Thompson attached his iPhone to a spot above a toilet seat and at an angle that captured the minor victims’ genitalia as they used the lavatory.”



United States
Attorney's Office
District of Massachusetts

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF NORTH CAROLINA
CHARLOTTE DIVISION
3:23-cv-819

JANE DOE, BY AND THROUGH HER
PARENTS JANE ROE AND JOHN ROE

Plaintiff,

vs.

AMERICAN AIRLINES GROUP, INC. and
DOES 1-10,

Defendants.

**COMPLAINT
(JURY TRIAL DEMANDED)**

“We take these allegations very seriously. They do not reflect our airline or our core mission of caring for people,” the airline said in a statement Tuesday. It added it has been fully cooperating with investigators.





2/6/2024 5:08 PM
Velva L. Price
District Clerk
Travis County
D-1-GN-24-000786
Ruben Tamez

D-1-GN-24-000786

NO. _____

JANE DOE and JOHN DOE, as parents
and next friends of MARY DOE, a minor,

Plaintiffs,

vs.

AMERICAN AIRLINES GROUP, INC.,
and ESTES CARTER THOMPSON III,

Defendants.

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§
§

IN THE DISTRICT COURT

261ST, DISTRICT COURT

_____ JUDICIAL DISTRICT

TRAVIS COUNTY, TEXAS

PLAINTIFFS' ORIGINAL PETITION

TO THE HONORABLE JUDGE OF SAID COURT:

Plaintiffs JANE DOE and JOHN DOE as parents and next friends of MARY DOE, a
minor,1 by and through the undersigned counsel, files this Original Petition complaining of the
Defendants, AMERICAN AIRLINES GROUP, INC., and ESTES CARTER THOMPSON III, and

FIFTH AFFIRMATIVE DEFENSE

The claims against the Defendant are barred by the doctrine of comparative negligence, contributory negligence, comparative responsibility and/or comparative causation. Defendant would show that any injuries or illnesses alleged to have been sustained by Plaintiff, Mary Doe, were proximately caused by Plaintiff's own fault and negligence, were proximately caused by Plaintiff's use of the compromised lavatory, which she knew or should have known contained a visible and illuminated recording device.





“American Airlines Blames 9-Year-Old Filmed In Lavatory By Flight Attendant: She ‘Knew’ And It Was The Girl’s ‘Fault’”

“Myopic stupidity as American Airlines blames 9-year-old”

“American Airlines blames a 9-year-old girl for not noticing the hidden camera being used to film her in jet bathroom”

“A shocking claim: American Airlines blames a 9-year-old girl for being secretly recorded by their employee”

"Our outside legal counsel retained by our insurance company made an error in this filing. The included defense is not representative of our airline and we have directed it be amended this morning. We do not believe this child is at fault and we take the allegations involving a former team member very seriously. Our core mission is to care for people – and the foundation of that is the safety and security of our customers and team."





ketrainis • 1y ago • Edited 1y ago

An American spokesperson said Thursday that outside lawyers working for the company “made an error in this filing.”

Oops I accidentally wrote a multi page filing with a very specific claim, proof read it, got it approved by the lead council, signed it and submitted it to a court. Happens to the best of us right?

⊖ ↑ 878 ↓ Reply ...





gus248 • 1y ago

Trying to blame a nine year old girl for being a victim is insane. I hope the judge on this case absolutely sticks it to American. Fucking disgusting.

⊖ ↑ 294 ↓ 🗨 Reply ...



Hiraeth1968 • 1y ago

Blaming ANY victim is wrong! Blaming a 9 year old is despicable!

↑ 36 ↓ 🗨 Reply ...

⊕ 7 more replies



TRAVEL NEWS

American Airlines fires legal team for 'blaming' 9-year-old girl recorded in bathroom

The company backpedaled after the comments in court documents gained public attention. Now, it has fired the lawyers who wrote the filing and hired new ones.

[Amaris Encinas](#) [Ahjané Forbes](#) USA TODAY



American Airlines claimed a child was at fault for being secretly recorded in a restroom. It has now changed its response





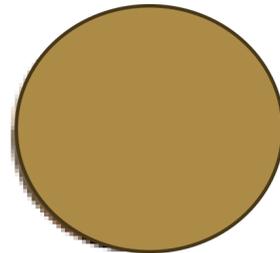


@bigpicturethinking5620 1 month ago

This attorney is acting like he is doing some legitimately noble and important work 😂



Reply



@magneticjanet 1 month ago

This money grubbing lawyer is a joke. 🤢



Reply



Questions



LEWIS +
LLEWELLYN
LLP