Social stigma and discomfort combined with shame or reluctance on the part of a survivor make sexual assault, rape, and sexual harassment difficult topics to cover, even for the most seasoned reporter. Following are five tips chosen by BARCC staff from *Reporting Sexual Assault: A Guide for Journalists*, published by the Michigan Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence.

1. In your published pieces, **provide information** about local resources and where survivors can go for help.

2. **Balance** the victim's right to privacy with the public's right to know.

3. **Judge** when details are needed for public safety and when they only serve to retraumatize the survivor or reinforce myths about the survivor's role in the attack.
   - **Details about the offender are relevant**: physical description, how access was gained, whether a weapon was used, and if additional physical violence was involved.
   - **Details about the victim's private life are not relevant**: habits, sexual history or physical appearance, for example, do not contribute to the public's safety and usually lead to victim blaming.

4. **Carefully choose words and phrases** to avoid furthering the notion that the survivor is culpable for the crime. Consider using alternative terms:
   - “Victim” (or even better: “survivor”) instead of “innocent victim”—all crime victims are innocent.
   - “Reported rape” instead of “rape allegation.” The word “allegation” is not a neutral term and strongly implies doubt.
   - “Acquaintance rape” instead of “date rape.”

5. **Reflect trends and realities** of sexual assault, including the frequency with which it occurs, and the frequency with which it is committed by an acquaintance as opposed to a stranger. Go to [barcc.org/information/statistics](http://barcc.org/information/statistics) for up-to-date statistics.