

Have you worked with communications agencies in the past, and if so, what worked well and what were the challenges in your previous partnerships? Are previous agency partners also submitting a proposal for this RFP?

The Hotline has had a public relations firm of record for at least the last ten years. We are required by our federal funding to engage in an RFP every three years or when a certain financial threshold has been reached. The RFP process is open to any firm headquartered or with operations in the United States, including any past firms we have worked with. What has worked well in the past is when our PR firm of record has invested in getting to know and understand our organization, mission, and the impact to those we serve. There are many complexities surrounding domestic violence that influence our PR and marketing strategies, and understanding this nuanced approach is paramount in a successful relationship. We value close thought partnership and collaboration.

Who are your most important audiences for this communications effort? How would you rank those audiences in terms of importance?

Our primary audience is anyone impacted by relationship abuse, and this includes “helpers” – friends, family, co-workers, etc. who want to support someone experiencing or at-risk for abuse. Other key audiences include those who can influence change for survivors, and this includes policymakers, elected officials, other response organizations and funders (federal, foundation and individuals).

How are you currently attracting and retaining your target audience(s)?

Survivors and helpers: We use a combination of social media campaigns, thought partnership with key funders and sponsors, employee and volunteer training, education through news and entertainment outlets, robust web content and resources, and other integrated communications efforts. Our information is featured by many other organizations as a primary resource for those experiencing or at-risk for relationship abuse. All of this has resulted in the highest contact volume in our 26-year history.

Policymakers and elected officials: Our policy team in Washington, D.C. is actively working to affect change at the national level. Our Communications team works closely with that team to craft action alerts, social campaigns, and other calls-to-action.

Other response organizations: We collaborate to ensure the most up-to-date content and statistics are communicated across organizations, so we provide resources and information in a united front.

Funders: Our Communications team partners with our Development team to develop integrated campaigns to steward current donors and diversify our funding pool.

Who will be the main spokesperson/people for this effort?

CEO, Katie Ray-Jones; Chief External Affairs Officer, Crystal L. Justice; President of Public Affairs, Ruth Glenn; Vice President of Communications, Kerri Qunell; and various members of the organization's internal spokesperson program of youth council members and survivors.

Who do you consider your biggest competitor(s)?

We work in a field that is marked more by collaboration than competition and The Hotline is considered a thought partner and leader in the field of domestic violence response and prevention. We are the only 24/7 national hotline serving those impacted by abuse in the US, so there are no direct competitors per say. However, all non-profit organizations (NPOs) do compete for share of voice in a crowded space. In particular, similar national, social-services NPOs serving women and families in crisis may qualify as "competitors" when it comes to share of voice. The field of domestic violence response has long been overburdened and under-resourced and as such, competition for funding and resources is unfortunately a reality for most NPOs in this space.

Are there peers or other organizations whose communications/social media efforts you admire?

Futures Without Violence, Vera House Inc., One, The Humane Society of the United States, Planned Parenthood Federation of America, and United Nations Population Fund, to name a few.

Due to the nature of our work, we are unable to share a full client list. Will you accept an extensive list of past case studies with relevant clients?

Yes

Our firm works on a monthly retainer model, as opposed to day rates or hourly fees. Is it acceptable to provide a monthly retainer fee (noting any services that fall outside of that fee + their pricing)?

Yes

How many spokespeople would need formal media training?

Anywhere between 10 and 25

What is your favorite media placement to date?

Some of our favorites include:

Gabby Petito's mom announces \$100K donation to help domestic violence hotline
Nichole Schmidt is honoring her daughter's legacy with a \$100,000 donation to the National Domestic Violence Hotline that the CEO said will help add more staff.

<https://www.today.com/news/news/gabby-petito-mom-donation-domestic-violence-hotline-rcna41468>

Domestic Violence Cases Surge Amid Covid-19 Crisis

<https://www.msnbc.com/hallie-jackson/watch/domestic-violence-cases-surge-amid-covid-19-crisis-82070085551>

Get That Life: How I'm Helping Domestic Violence Victims Every Day

Katie Ray-Jones won't stop working until every message the organization gets is answered.

<https://www.cosmopolitan.com/career/a58774/national-domestic-violence-hotline-katie-ray-jones-get-that-life/>

What is your dream placement? Dream headline?

Our dream placement is concurrent placement on all top tier outlets.

Our dream headline reflects the impact that The Hotline wants to make – for example, “Rates of Domestic Violence in the U.S. are Declining.” What makes this dream headline possible is that we are holding those who cause harm accountable, survivors have access to the support they need to pursue a path to a safe future, and we have educated all people on what makes a healthy relationship and how to recognize the warning signs of potential harm before abuse takes place.

Using metrics or markers, how will you feel like your agency partner has been a successful extension of your team?

If our PR firm strategically places media, helps us proactively pitch stories to the media, maintains regular communications, and provides meaningful, regular reports and data, we will consider that success. Key performance indicators measuring media mentions, stories placed, etc. will be a crucial part of this assessment.

What media opportunities have you missed?

The intersections of domestic violence and other social issues are often missed; for example, how mass violence is often perpetrated by those with a history of domestic violence. There are also missed opportunities around how racism, misogyny, sexism, and other power structures often lead to situations where domestic violence (and specifically the harms to those who identify as women) are tolerated – and even worse – validated. Often, the media use and perpetuate outdated and clichéd understandings of domestic violence without understanding root causes and how this issue truly impacts society.

On your current media hits, do you feel the coverage is reflecting your key messages?

It depends! In network and local news, not usually, but when it's more nuanced coverage or we

have longer lead times, yes. Many news outlets use outdated, clichéd, and harmful stock imagery and footage to depict domestic violence. Building relationships and better understanding of the movement is especially important, especially for quick lead outlets.

What's most important to you? Quantity, quality, diversity in coverage, local, regional, national, spokesperson positioning?

In no particular order: quality, national, and spokesperson positioning

Do you have existing FAQs for your spokespeople?

Yes

Do you have a youth board or spokespeople for love is respect?

Yes, we have a national youth council through our healthy relationship and prevention program love is respect. There are currently 23 members with truly diverse backgrounds and lived experiences.

How are you currently defining Tier One media?

We define Tier One stories as mentions or features in any print, online, TV or radio story or episode from a select list of media outlets that have considerable national or international reach.

To inform how we would approach this work, what areas for improvement do you see with current or recent firm(s) with which you've engaged? We want to understand where your needs are not being met so we can respond to them.

Rather than look to the past, we prefer to look toward the future and the unique opportunity our organization has to expand our mission, empower survivors, and create true and lasting change for those experiencing DV/IPV. We desire to shift the narrative around domestic violence and counter the harmful stigma and shame associated with the issue. This impact goes beyond our programs and services; it extends to the way we influence culture, entertainment, and media as subject matter experts. We desire to work with a firm that has passion for the cause and is our strategic thought partner. We want a firm that is consistently driving strategy and challenging us to be our best. We also want a firm that holds high standards for quality and whose work consistently reflects that.

What are you looking for in an agency partner; what does the ideal relationship look like?

The agency must have experience with advising and guiding high-profile PR work for a large non-profit organization and working with national social justice nonprofit organizations. The agency should have expertise in crisis communications and solid working relationships with various media outlets (e.g. journalists, bloggers, podcasters, etc). Those working directly on our account must have diverse lived experiences and demonstrate a commitment to anti-oppression principles.

Is there a timeframe you would like us to stay within for the case studies?

Case studies may be from any timeframe but must include at least one example of a non-profit organization and – as is applicable – align with the SOW outlined in the RFP so we can compare agencies' previous work to what will be required for The Hotline.

What would you say are your unique differentiators?

We are the only national hotline solely focused on responding to relationship abuse and intimate partner violence. As a result, we have some of the most relevant and compelling data available regarding the most pressing and emerging issues for survivors and are often looked to as subject matter experts on national trends.

What are your key strengths? What is working well and why? How do you know these things are working well?

To date we have answered more than **6.4 million** calls, chats, and texts. Services are provided in English and Spanish through bilingual advocates and in more than 200 other languages through translation services. The Hotline is a frontline resource for survivors and often the first source to validate that abuse is being experienced.

What are you currently doing for thought leadership?

Our senior leadership is sought after for media interviews, webinars, podcasts, and other opportunities across the country to serve as subject-matter experts in the field. We have seen success in this area and elevating and increasing this is a key strategic goal that our PR firm will partner with us on.

Are there any wishlist media outlets for the organization?

CNN, NPR, Wall Street Journal, USA Today, Washington Post, The New York Times, BBC News.

What are your main pain points / challenges?

Because of several factors, including the launch of Google's crisis search optimization, our contact volume has doubled in the last 12 months—a powerful and somber illustration

of how many are impacted by relationship abuse and need access to 24/7 support. The Hotline has been scaling our workforce and technology to meet the need. But it is still not enough. The increased call volume continues to significantly impact our wait times across all channels, and many who are reaching out for support are unable to wait.

Our PR and marketing needs have grown significantly as our organizations seek to expand our mission and capacity rapidly. It is paramount that we are seen as the leading expert in the nation when it comes to domestic violence response and prevention.

Can you provide an overview of your current in-house team and/or external communications partners?

The PR firm will work primarily with three members of the Communications Team: Kerri Qunell, Vice President, Communications; Torrie Bethany, Communications Director; and Lynn Brewer, Communications and Media Manager. There will also be meetings and communications with Crystal Justice, Chief External Affairs Officer.

What areas of communications capacity does The Hotline feel it has covered with its in-house team, and what specific areas of support is the organization hoping to add from an external consultant?

With respect to PR and media relations, our in-house team manages incoming requests for spokespeople, ad-hoc requests from the media for quotes and interviews, social media, speech writing, and some press release copywriting. Specific areas of support most needed from an external consultant are strategic media relations and placement, agency/client communications, brand opportunities, and reporting.

What are The Hotline's organizational priorities for 2023 which it hopes to amplify through external communications?

As outlined in our three-year strategic plan, our priorities are to connect survivors to advocates and resources, transform love is respect by prioritizing diverse youth voices and experiences, and advance data-driven survivor-centered advocacy and policies.