

Media Advocacy Guide

What is Media Advocacy?

Media Advocacy is an important consideration in your overall advocacy plan. It is defined as the strategic use of news making through different media venues – TV, radio, Newspapers, and social media options. Use of the media allows for issues to be communicated to the community and provides the potential to generate support. Policy makers monitor different media for issues and providing a broader discussion for issues can generate more support for your position. The news media, as a primary source of information, plays a very powerful role in shaping the public discussion that will lead to new regulation and laws.ⁱ

What Interests the Media?

- Timely stories that tie-in to current events such as breaking news, trends and holidays.
- Human interest stories that put a human face on issues and programs.
- A story that is visually compelling.

Top Tips (Adapted from the Berkeley Media Studies Group)

- You cannot have a media strategy if you don't have an overall strategy.
- The issues we address are too important not to be framed correctly in the news.
- A reporter is not your friend or enemy, just a professional trying to do a good job.
- An interview is not a conversation.
- It is not enough to know your arguments; you must know the opposition's arguments.
- The evil of media bites is that we have to use them.
- Never compromise your credibility.
- When developing a media advocacy strategy identify the issues, possible solutions, and who has the power to make it happen.
- Controversy, conflict, injustice, irony, uniqueness, popular interest, breakthroughs, milestones and great pictures are all newsworthy.ⁱⁱ

Connecting with the Media

A good relationship with your community's media is critical to the success of your advocacy. Building relationships means contacting producers, editors, and reporters at your local cable television shows, radio talk shows, newspapers, and magazines.

Your persistent media relations efforts will generate local and regional print and broadcast publicity. You can successfully deliver your local message by crafting an effective strategy. Sometimes that means "out-of-the-box" thinking—perhaps something with an unconventional news hook.

Identify local, regional and national media.

Compiling a media list is the critical first step toward effectively working with the media. Developing a list takes time and effort, but the benefits and coverage of your issue, far outweigh the work. Entering all media contact data into a simple spreadsheet in a program like Excel allows for easy list management. Turn to your local telephone book first. List all newspapers, magazines and broadcast stations, including radio and television. Then turn to the Internet if needed.ⁱⁱⁱ

Thoughts on Local Media

- Get to know your local health reporter. General news goes to a "city desk" or an assignment editor.
- Compile a list of newspapers, broadcast stations, and other news outlets in your community. Be sure to include the following:
 - Weeklies
 - Community bulletins
 - Business newspapers
 - College papers
 - Special audience newspapers
 - Religious organization newsletters
 - Magazines
 - Cable and public access stations
 - Community Web sites with bulletin boards or ads
- Gather details about the media outlets you plan on targeting, including:
 - First and last names of proper contacts (news editors, assignment editors, and community affairs reporters)
 - Mailing addresses (office and email)
 - Phone and fax numbers
 - Deadline information
 - Photography requirements
 - Policies
- Determine the best way your local reporter likes to receive news releases (snail mail, email, or fax).
- Update your contact list regularly.

- Be a media resource. When you hear of a newsworthy story, inform your contacts, even if it is not about a clinical nurse specialist issue.
- Provide information upon request. If you don't know the answer, try to find out and respond to the request as soon as you can. It's okay to say, "I don't know the answer, but I'd be happy to find out and get back to you as soon as possible."
- Respect and honor reporters' deadlines. Understand it's a 24/7 news world. You are competing for time and attention.
- Make your "pitch" brief and highlight the most pertinent information about your activity.
- Do not call reporters inquiring as to whether they received your fax.^{iv}

Media Outreach Ideas

- Develop a pitch letter to the media informing them about why they should cover your issue. Be sure to include a media alert and/or press release along with this letter.
- Pitch local health reporters—both print and broadcast—a story on your local American Education Week celebration activities and offer interviews with your spokespeople.

Writing a Press Release

A press release communicates the details and important information associated with your issue, event and/or activity. It also informs readers what the event or issue is, why your news is important, who is involved or making a statement, and how readers can get more information.

Because reporters receive hundreds of press releases every day, your release should cut through the clutter. Catch the attention of busy readers. Be simple, concise, and factual. Here are some tips on writing a press release. (www.nacns.org for sample)

- Print the press release on your Association's letterhead. If you don't have letterhead, call NACNS to learn if you can use theirs.
- Press releases answer the questions of who, what, when, where, why, and how. Present the information in descending order of importance.
- The last paragraph typically includes a statement about the local Association.
- Keep it short. In general, a news release should not be longer than two pages.
- Use wide margins (1 to 1.5 inches on both sides) in order for media readers to edit.
- Avoid self-serving comments and phrases, unsubstantiated opinions, and superlatives associated with marketing a product.
- If announcements are being made or opinions are expressed, they should be attributed to the person who is saying them.
- Ensure the release is grammatically correct. Double-check spelling.

- After your story appears in your local paper, city magazine, community newspaper, or newsletter, **send a copy of the story to the NACNS main office.**

Distributing Your Press Release

Follow these guidelines to ensure a successful distribution of your press release:

- Send an accompanying "fact sheet" to provide context for your release. NOTE: If you send attachments, itemize them at the end of the release. Send a photograph with your release if it's appropriate.
- Don't send your release to more than one editor per publication. Determine in advance who will receive it.
- Send the release to several media outlets.
- Know the deadline and publishing or broadcasting schedules of your local media outlets in order for you to distribute your release or event in a timely manner.
- In addition to the media, keep other people informed such as legislators, members of boards, business people, civic and religious leaders, and local associations.
- Do not fax more than two pages unless requested.
- Don't be disappointed if your press release does not result in coverage. The media did, in fact, receive the information that may influence when and how they cover subsequent stories.

Developing a Press Kit

A press kit provides reporters with comprehensive background information about an issue or potentially an event. A press kit is generally comprised of the following elements:

- A folder to hold all the press materials. Press kit folders usually include the organization's logo on the cover.
- A news release announcing the newsworthy details of your event or activity. The news release highlights why the reporter should cover your story.
- Fact sheets to provide more thorough background information about your celebration and school or organization. (Fact sheets help put your releases into context.)
- Biographies of your spokesperson(s) to familiarize reporters with your experts.
- Brochures or other promotional materials that help provide more details about your event or activity.

Other elements to consider include one-page documents that:

- Explain the nature and extent of involvement or partnerships with the community (including schools, businesses, foundations, nonprofits, social service agencies, community-based organizations, and civic groups).
- Provide a sample of anecdotes (with quotes) from patients, CNSs or other colleagues. These quotes should highlight their participation and involvement in your event/activity.^v

Develop a Digital Press Kit

CD and/or online press kits are a necessity in the electronic age of communications. The electronic press kit should include press releases on the event or issue, including contact information on event/association personnel; media contact information; images; logos; line art. Also make the information easy to find on line.

ⁱ Adapted from http://www.alcoholpolicymd.com/take_action/what_is_ma.htm, Accessed 1-17-2012.

ⁱⁱ Adapted from http://www.civicpartnerships.org/docs/tools_resources/media_advocacy.htm, Accessed 1-17-2012

ⁱⁱⁱ Adapted from <http://www.nhfd.org/Page/Media-Tips.aspx>, Accessed 1-17-2012.

^{iv} Adapted from <http://www.nea.org/grants/34860.htm>, Accessed 1-17-2012

^v Adapted from <http://www.nea.org/grants/34860.htm>, Access 1-17-2012