

WORKING WITH THE MEDIA: A GUIDE

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I. Project IMPACT

Project IMPACT aims to equip community based organizations (CBOs) to re-frame our understanding of health disparities as a problem that can be addressed by solutions that focus on changing the social environment and creating the opportunity for individuals to maintain good health. The specific focus in the initial stages of this project is to target inequalities in tobacco use and health consequences of tobacco use by promoting improved access to cessation resources, promoting tobacco control policies, and reducing gaps in treatment.

This training manual is meant to aid community-based practitioners and volunteers in understanding the importance of strategic communications, especially working with local news media. The manual provides a basic starting point for practitioners looking to develop effective messages, build media relations, and frame news articles. It includes tips for creating and disseminating materials such as news releases and advisories, as well as pointers on the art of interviewing, and samples of media products.

II. What are Health Inequalities?

The health of the U.S. population has improved markedly over time, yet for millions of Americans, a healthy life is still out of reach. Racial and ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, residents of rural areas, and other vulnerable groups more often experience unequal access to health care, worse health outcomes and higher rates of disease. These differences in health are called *health inequalities* or *health disparities*. Although personal lifestyle choices contribute to some of these differences, a number of other factors such as variations in income, language proficiency, health insurance status, culture, neighborhood features are also important contributing factors.

To reduce health inequalities, action needs to be taken on the *social determinants* of health. According to the World Health Organization, “The social determinants of health are the circumstances in which people are born, grow up, live, work and age, and the systems put in place to deal with illness.” These circumstances are shaped by a wider range of factors such as economics, policies, and politics. Often policies that promote higher-wage jobs, safe, walkable neighborhoods, efficient public transportation, good schools, easy access to healthcare facilities, and quality, affordable housing are effective ways to improve health and reduce these inequalities. But in order for us to promote policies that improve the built-environment and provide access to healthcare, the focus of the public and policymakers has to be on collective solutions instead of on individual health behaviors alone.

a) How Can Media Relations Help?

All of us -- the public and policymakers alike -- are influenced by what the media reports. By building media relations, community-based professionals can first help journalists and editors understand some of the complexities of public health issues, including the role that social determinants play in contributing to health inequalities. The media in turn can then educate the public and policymakers through their stories about the root causes of health inequalities in a manner that emphasizes the need for collective solutions instead of just individual responsibility.

III. Laying the Foundation for Media Relations

a) How Do Journalists Work?

Before you approach the media, it is best to learn a little about how journalists work. Journalists are individuals covering specific issues such as health, politics, arts, and science. They want to understand a topic, tell a compelling story, and create awareness among their audience. However, often they are not experts on the issues they cover and instead rely on credible sources to provide them with facts and figures. Journalists are driven by the newsworthiness of an item, but it is important to remember what is considered to be news by community-based practitioners may not always be of interest to a media outlet and the audience that it serves. It's your job to make the item attractive to a journalist by highlighting elements that journalists are likely to find newsworthy. We will discuss what makes a story newsworthy later in this manual when we talk about how to “pitch” or “suggest” a news story to journalists.

b) Developing a Strategic Communication Plan

Before you can reach out to the media, you first need to have your organization's strategic communication plan in place. Having a clear overall strategy in place makes it easier for the organization to prioritize goals and effectively allocate resources.

To develop a strategic plan, ask the following questions:

- **What is my organization's overall goal?** For instance, are you trying to motivate the community to take action on a particular health issue? Are you advocating for a new policy or law? Or are you trying to change public outlook on a particular issue?
- **Who are the people I'm trying to reach out to?** The next step is to determine the audience. Rather than try and educate the entire population about a public health issue, you will be more successful if you select a few key audiences. For instance, if you are trying to advocate for a new policy to be considered, your target audience may be a particular group of concerned citizens. By building local support and identifying allies, your policy initiative will get more support. But if the proposed policy already has a groundswell of public support and is in front of a legislative subcommittee, then your audience can be narrowed down to a few key legislators.
- **What is my message?** You need to develop a simple and clear message that will echo with the audience and capture the interest of media professionals. While crafting your message, consider the following questions:
 - a. **What is the problem that I am highlighting?** You need to think through your problem carefully and be able to define it based on your strategic goals. As an example, let us consider the following problem: High exposure of youth to retail tobacco product marketing. We will use this same example as we discuss the steps below.
 - b. **Why does it matter?** In your message you need to be able to tell both journalists and the public why they need to care about your issue. For the above problem, you could explain to journalists and the public that exposure to tobacco marketing in retail stores increases the chances that youth will experiment with tobacco use. Some of these youth will go on to become regular smokers. It also prevents current users from successfully quitting.

- c. **What is the solution to the problem?** Here you provide a solution to the problem. If you don't offer a solution, it is easy to lose the attention of media personnel and the target audience. A possible solution for this problem could be the banning of tobacco "point of purchase" promotions in convenience stores and drug stores.
 - d. **What is the call to action?** After defining the problem and offering a solution, you need to tell the target audience how they can contribute to achieving the solution. In this case, a call to action could be getting the target audience to write to their legislators seeking a ban on "point of purchase" promotions. Or, it could be testifying at a legislative hearing. Or showing up in support of hearings on restrictions on point of purchase programs. Or, write an opinion piece or a letter to the editor of a local newspaper or call into a talk show.
 - e. **From whom do they need to hear the message?** Messages can have very different impact based on who communicates it. In some cases, messages are best delivered by celebrities and in some other scenarios the most compelling messages have a "community voice." If you have decided to partner with other organizations, be sure to consider their credibility. For example, do not consider organizations that have accepted money from tobacco and beverage companies. This can give the appearance of a conflict of interest when they weigh in on related issues such as smoking and obesity.
- **How do you reach your audience?** Once you have created your message, you need to decide on the best channels to get your message to your audience. Apart from using the media, other channels include advertising, trade publications and interpersonal communication channels. More information on the pros and cons of different channels can be found as Appendix 1.
 - **How do you tell if your message is working?** As with any plan, your strategic communication plan needs to be evaluated to ensure that it effectively influences the target audience and is in keeping with the organization's goals. Your organization may not always have a lot of resources to do a perfect evaluation, but it is still important to try to assess whether your message had the effect you intended. For example, in our earlier example with tobacco promotion, you could follow-up and see how many people contacted their politicians. More information on evaluation tools can be found in our [Project IMPACT wiki](#).

c) Framing the Message

Have you or your organization approached the media before? Did the article turn out the way that you imagined it would? Contacting the media is not just about getting publicity for you and your organization, it is about presenting a message, an opinion, or a fact that you think will make a difference in how people think about your cause. A key to getting information published in a manner consistent with your organization's vision is to properly frame your message.

What is a frame?

The frame is the central organizing principle the helps our minds make sense of the world around us. Words, actions, pictures and images that come to life through news stories and conversations, activate specific cues in our minds that can influence our understanding of the issue. Framing is therefore an interaction with the internal ideas and assumptions we hold and the cues that we encounter in media articles and discussions.

As an example, let us consider tobacco control frames over the past few decades. In the early 1980s to 1990s, smoking was framed as an individual choice. Public opinion of the dangers to the smoker's health were viewed as one of personal responsibility, thereby putting all the focus on smokers and their lifestyle

choices. However, as our understanding of the impact of smoking on others, say “second-hand smoking,” evolved, it was seen as a threat to others in a community. This newer understanding and consequent activism, changed the focus from just being about individual lifestyle choice to being about the public’s health. More articles and conversations began to frame the issue of smoking around protecting the public’s health by emphasizing that everyone has the right to “clean” air and should not be exposed to the carcinogenic substances in tobacco smoke. As the focus shifted away from personal responsibility, community demand and support for smoke-free environments increased. The thinking about solutions widened to include legislative policies such as smoke free policies.

Why Does the Frame Matter?

In a news story, the frame determines the boundaries of the story - what gets left in, and what gets left out. When a journalist frames a public health story, he/she emphasizes one dimension of a complex issue over others. To the audience, it conveys what is important and relevant to the given issue. How an issue is framed in the media also influences the kinds of solutions that people consider.

News stories can use two kinds of frames: portrait and landscape. In a portrait frame, the audience learns a great deal about an individual person or event. For instance, an article on a local celebrity who died young of lung cancer that focuses only on the individual would be an example of a portrait story. A landscape story on the other hand provides more detail and expands the coverage to include additional contextual information. For example a story that includes information on how low sales tax on cigarette packs is contributing to more individuals smoking at a younger age and also mentions the young celebrity and her tobacco use is a story that is framed in landscape mode.

News stories framed as portraits tend to reinforce a strong American cultural tendency to focus on individual behavior and inspire interpretations of personal responsibility in their audiences. Landscape stories on the other hand help audiences see that the responsibility for a health issue does not lie solely with an individual’s choices and that the government and other institutions have a part to play in solving the problem. To counter the portrait frame, advocates must help reporters do a better job in describing the landscape themes impacting individuals and events so that the context of public health problems becomes visible. When community- based professionals create or develop a media message, they should consider whether the cues they are triggering through their story will help people understand that factors beyond individual responsibility contribute to health disparities.

Creating a “Landscape” Frame for the Media

In developing a story for the media, it is essential for community-based professionals to ask “are we triggering the right frame in getting our audience to think about our issue?” A first step is to identify the frames and messages that are already common in media articles. It may come as no surprise that most stories elevate the notion of personal responsibility and not collective responsibility. This is because this is a default frame most individuals’ operate within. This comes from the high value we place in our hard work, skill, work ethic. This personal responsibility frame evokes the idea that we all can achieve anything we set out to if we put our mind to it no matter what the conditions and situations surrounding us. The next step is to identify how the opponents to your cause talk about the issue in the media. This will help community-based professionals be prepared for any questions that journalists may ask when you pitch a story to them. It will also help you develop and sharpen your counter arguments to the kinds of frames that are already prevalent in stories. The final step is to create a frame that will help change public discourse on

the issue. To do this you need to consider the cues that your message may trigger and the values that they are activating in your target audience.

Storytelling and Anecdotes

Community-based professionals and journalists often use personal anecdotes when they tell a story. These may be heart-breaking or inspiring stories of individuals and families who suffer deadly diseases or face great hardship in getting the proper care they need. These personal stories help the journalist connect with his or her audience and draw readers into the story. They help explain complex social problems in a simple and empathetic manner. While personal anecdotes have their merits, a story that focuses only on an individual or family is a “portrait” that can contribute to idea that health outcomes are all due to individual choices and actions. Therefore, while using a personal story to pitch an idea to the journalist, community-based professionals should be sure to provide enough of a context so that the audience and the journalist understand the environmental factors that influence the story.

IV. Contacting the Media

One of the best ways to work with the media is to develop relationships with editors and journalists.

- **Create a media list:** The first step is to familiarize yourself with media professionals in your area. You can do this by watching and listening to media broadcasts and reading newspapers to find out which organizations and which reporter cover issues of interest to your organization. Professional directories can also provide the information. Be aware that media contact information can change frequently, so it is important to keep the list up to date.
- **Get to know your list:** Meet with the journalists and editors on your list and introduce yourself and your organization. When you first meet with journalists, take it as an opportunity to engage them in conversation and do not force them to listen to your story ideas. By getting to know the journalist’s interests you can learn to pitch stories more effectively. Also always be polite even if a journalist is not interested in a particular story idea. The journalist may always be prepared to listen to another idea at a later time.
- **Develop yourself as a credible source:** To gain respect as a reliable source and become someone that reporters will turn to for stories, you need to be an expert in your domain. You need to develop yourself as a source who has accurate information, meets deadlines, and can be counted on to provide a good quote or sound bite.

A list of position and titles of individuals in the newsroom is available as Appendix 2.

Identifying a Spokesperson

Seek out an individual who is well-versed with your program. Look for someone who can speak genuinely, credibly, and confidently in order to effectively voice your key messages. Also, seek someone who won’t get easily flustered when opposing points of view are expressed. When recruiting a spokesperson, you may need to identify experts from different fields. While some stories are best served if the spokesperson is a medical professional, others may require a celebrity or a community voice.

V. Pitching Newsworthy Stories

Your story idea will compete with several hundred others that media outlets receive every day. In order to improve your chances of getting published, you need to understand what editors and journalists consider as “newsworthy.”

a) What is News?

Here are some general questions that journalists, editors and producers ask themselves while deciding a potential story’s newsworthiness:

- Is the story timely? Is the story about a topic of current interest to viewers or readers? Is the story timed to coincide with an important event or occasion (e.g., lung cancer awareness month).
- Is it an important anniversary? A year or a decade after an eventful incident makes for a compelling story.
- Is the story new? Does the story have any new elements to it? Is it a “first” or has it already been reported elsewhere?
- Is there a local angle to a national story? Often journalists like to frame a nationally broadcast “breaking story” by emphasizing its local impact. Community-based practitioners can do the same by emphasizing local events for national days such as “World No Tobacco Day” or the “Great American Smokeout.”
- Is there built-in conflict? Are there two sides to the story? News media are often attracted to conflict and cover stories that reflect it. For instance, a story on proposed ballot vote to raise sales tax on tobacco packets has built-in-conflict with the tobacco industry working hard to defeat such a ballot measure. In these cases, you want to be especially aware of what the other side’s message is likely to be so that you are able to anticipate and respond to it.
- Is there a good picture? A good photo opportunity may give newspapers an additional reason to cover your story. And, of course, you need good visuals to attract television coverage.
- Is there a personal angle? Is it a compelling story of an individual or a family and their struggles or triumph in the face of adversity? Again, be careful in this case not to solely focus on the portrait frame, but to instead link the personal angle to the larger social context.
- Is it an important medical development? Science and medical journalists are committed to providing their audience with stories of potential medical importance that are new. Editors are always looking for a local angle to an important story or event.
- Does it have any economic impact? Some journalists find the economic impact of an issue to be newsworthy. If it is a national level story that has already been published, then consider if it has any relevance to the local community.

A checklist for newsworthiness is available as Appendix 3.

b) Pitching a Story

Once you have created your message and developed media contacts, it is time to pitch a story idea. We have found that most journalists say their initial idea for a news story came from a “source” or a press event. This gives you an idea of the importance of a building trust and creating a good pitch.

You can pitch an idea in several ways, e.g., via email, phone, or in-person conversation. In all cases you need to be prepared to respond quickly to any follow-up questions from journalists. A pitch letter or email lets

you outline what you are doing and why it is newsworthy. A good pitch letter also has staying power. If it does not generate a story today, it may do so tomorrow.

Here are some tips on how to pitch:

- Pitch a story to reporters only when you feel you have something newsworthy (criteria for newsworthiness are provided above).
- Keep it brief. Reporters have only a few minutes for your call. Therefore keep it short. The purpose of a story pitch is to grab the interest of a journalist, not to communicate everything there is to know about a subject.
- Start pitching to journalists and media outlets that you have already established contacts with and then widen your network. When you call, ask if the journalist has the time to take the call. If the journalist doesn't have time to talk, ask for a better time to call but do not push your issue.
- For each media outlet, you may need to revise your pitch to suit the style of that particular media outlet. Have a back-up idea ready. If the journalist does not seem excited about your first idea, try another pitch.
- Get your timing right and do not call a journalist immediately before a deadline needs to be met.
- Finally, ask how the reporter will like to receive any information from your organization (email, fax or snail mail).

A media planning worksheet is available as Appendix 4.

C) Following up with Journalists

While follow-ups are important, you should not call a reporter or an editor just to check to see if they received a press release or invite. Reporters receive a large number of emails every day and they don't want to spend their time responding to multiple calls to check the status of a press release. This is one of the biggest peeves for journalists.

Here are some tips that can make follow-up easier:

- **Do follow up.** If you plan to follow up, call and pitch a news story and provide a few facts. Then tell the journalist that more details of the story are in a press release that you had sent earlier. Your follow up is one way to get the attention of the reporter.
- **Don't nag.** Do not call or email the media outlet or the reporter multiple times in a day to see if they are interested in your press release.
- **Let some time pass.** Following up the next day may not be very useful. Chances are that a journalist would not have had the time to look through his or her email. Give the journalist a few days to process the press release and figure out where it may fit in the publication. Three to four days before initialing follow-up is a reasonable strategy.
- **Provide added value.** To make your follow-up message more enticing, provide the journalist with an extra set of statistics, an additional interview, or something else that will help make their story better.

VI. Reaching out to the media

There are several avenues by which community-based professionals can reach out to journalists. Many are described below.

a) Writing a Press Release

A press release is a brief written summary or update, alerting the local media about your group's news and activities. It is an important tool that CBOs can utilize to announce events, such as volunteer drives or organizational changes, and to share information on newsworthy issues such as a receipt of grant funding and awards.

In order to grab the attention of journalists, the press release should be concise and well-written. The most important information should be readily available at the top of the press release thereby making it easier for a journalist to see the news value in the release.

A press release usually follows a standard format (shown below) to allow journalists to skim through the information quickly.

- **Organization's name.** The name of your organization should run across the top of the release. To look professional, the release should be printed on an official letterhead.
- **Contact information.** The press release should include complete contact details of the organization including a contact person that a journalist can get in touch with for follow-up questions. This is usually located on the top right-hand corner.
- **Release date.** This tells the reporter when the information in the release can be published or broadcast. Press releases should include whether it is "For immediate release" or "Embargoed until (release date and/or time)." The release date is usually located on the top left-hand corner.
- **Headline.** Start with a headline that will grab the reader's attention.
- **Lead paragraph.** This is where you tell the journalist the who, what, where, when and why of your story. Similar to a news story, the press release too should follow an "inverted pyramid" style of writing with the most important information presented first, followed by supporting statements.
- **Nut paragraph.** Use a nut paragraph to frame your story. This is where you describe the essence of your story. It's often the second paragraph of your release, but not always.
- **Quote(s).** Reporters love good quotes. Try and include a quote or two in your press release. The quote should be from a significant person and should substantiate the main information.
- **Boilerplate.** A closing paragraph describing the organization issuing the release.
- **End.** Reporters and editors look for a symbol to signify the end of the news release. The most commonly used symbols in press releases include "-30-", "END", or "###." This information is usually centered at the bottom of the page below the boilerplate.

A press release template is available as Appendix 5 and 5a. Tips for a successful press release submission are available as Appendix 6.

What is a Media Advisory?

A media advisory is an abbreviated form of a press release often written in a bulleted format. It reminds the media of the event by providing basic facts: who, what, when, where and why.

When Should You Send a Press Release?

Do not send a release the day before an event and expect coverage. If you want a reporter and/or photographer to come to an event and cover it as a news story, you should issue a media advisory 5-7 days before the event. For instance, if your organization is planning some community activities for "World No Tobacco Day on March 31" then you can issue a media advisory a week before the event. On the day of the event, you can send a press release highlighting the organization's activities to chosen media outlets.

Press Release Mistakes

There are some common press release mistakes that CBOs should try to avoid.

- Do not send attachments. Most reporters dislike receiving unsolicited attachments and will not open them. Copy and paste the text of your release into the e-mail.
- Do not send mass emails. Make sure you personalize every email sent to a media outlet. If you have to send mass emails make sure you create a listserv for your contacts or put the addresses in the BCC (blind carbon copy) address line.
- Avoid spelling errors. Always remember to spell-check your press release. If there are any spelling errors there is a good chance that your press release will be discarded.

b) Letters to the Editor

Letters to the editor are an effective way to voice an opinion about an issue and educate the community about your organization's involvement in a public health issue. They are also particularly useful in correcting inaccuracies in articles or praising recent events or policies that were reported in the paper.

- **Make it short and concise.** Many newspaper organizations will impose a word limit for letters to the editor, typically 150-300 words. The *Eagle Tribune* allows up to 300 words. Some also reserve the right to edit your letters. Find out about the media organization's policy for letters to the editor before submitting to increase the chances of it being published.
- **Keep it simple and succinct.** Make sure that your first sentence is compelling. Be direct and engaging.
- **Get local.** Demonstrate local relevance with your letter. Use local statistics and personal stories as needed to make your point.
- **Be timely.** Most published letters to the editor are in response to a recent event or article. If you are responding to a recently published article, provide the headline of the article and the date that it was published in your letter to the editor.
- **Provide contact details.** Always provide your complete contact details including a phone number at the end of the letter.
- **Follow-up:** If your letter does not get published, try and revise the letter and re-send it. Alternatively, you can also try and approach other news outlets with the letter to the editor. However, do not call a journalist to ask if they received the letter or why they didn't publish it.

c) Op-eds

The opinion page appears opposite the editorial pages of the newspaper. Unlike editorials, op-eds are written by members of the community rather than by journalists. But like editorials, they present the author the opportunity to present an extended argument about a particular issue.

Before you submit your op-ed, you will want to:

- **Obtain guidelines.** Media outlets often have different op-ed policies regarding submission guidelines and length. Call the organization to find out about their policy or check their website.
- **Talk to the editor.** Sometimes talking to the editor of the paper directly and discussing an op-ed idea and highlighting your unique qualifications to write it, improves the chance of being published.
- **Time it well and localize it.** Try and link your op-ed to an issue that is currently being debated in the news. Adopt a local angle in your op-ed, even on a national issue.
- **Use the active voice.** It makes it easier to read.

- **Avoid tedious rebuttals.** If the op-ed is in response to a story that was published earlier that you disagree with, avoid using the op-ed for a point-by-point rebuttal. This will make your organization seem petty and limit the amount of space you are able to dedicate to getting across your own message.
- **Connect with the audience.** Explain to the newspaper's readers why they should care about the issue. Be clear and provide statistics if needed to substantiate your arguments. However, use statistics judiciously and do not overload the reader with a long list of numbers that come at the expense of clearly conveying your larger point.
- **Offer specific recommendations.** The op-ed is not a news story. It is an opinion piece. Therefore offer your recommendations even if they are controversial.
- **Make it exclusive.** Don't send the same op-ed to multiple media outlets. Most newspapers will publish an op-ed piece only if it hasn't been published earlier. If they decline to print it, you may submit your article to another newspaper organization.
- **Follow-up.** Be sure to follow-up within a week after submitting the article to see if there are any questions that you can answer.

d) Interviews

Community based practitioners may be asked by journalists to take part in talk shows or may be interviewed for a story. Following are some tips to help you arrange and prepare for an interview.

- **Familiarize yourself with the program.** Watch the program a few times and familiarize yourself with the host and the show's content. Find out if the show is broadcast live or pre-recorded and if there will be call-in questions.
- **Prepare for the interview.** Have all the facts ready for the interview and write out the most important points that you definitely want to cover during the interview. Most journalists love a good "sound bite," so rehearse a few interesting "sound bites" that you can use during the interview. A "sound-bite" is a very short statement – often a catchy phrase – that conveys the essence of your overall argument or message. If possible, organize a role play session answering questions with a colleague in your organization. This will help you anticipate questions and come up with counter-arguments.
- **Speak naturally.** Speak slowly and clearly. Do not let the interviewer fluster you and do not get defensive during the interview. Remember that in recorded shows, these moments may be highlighted through some artful editing.
- **Be Enthusiastic.** Passion is contagious. The reporter and the public may have trouble latching on to your subject if your excitement and commitment don't come through. Get in touch with why you believe the topic impacts the lives of the audience and make sure that passion comes through in your messages.
- **Avoid jargon and acronyms.** Remember, not everyone is an expert on your issue. You should use language that will be easily understood by someone outside of your field of expertise. You may want to test out your language with someone who is not in your field (for example, someone in your target audience) ahead of time to make sure that they understand what you are trying to say.
- **State your message.** Stick to your message and repeat your main point a few times during the interview.
- **Never repeat a negative frame.** It is important not to repeat a negative frame even if it is in response to a question. For instance, imagine a journalist argues that obesity in teenagers is primarily due to the fact that "children are getting less exercise, because parents are allowing them

to spend all their time in front of the TV or playing video games instead of being out on their bikes and playing outdoors.” In this case, do not repeat any part of the negative frame such as “It’s true that children are spending more time in front of the TV.” Instead bring the journalist and the audience’s attention to the broader issues that contribute to obesity. For instance, a suitable response could be, “...When children live in a violent neighborhood with no safe outdoor spaces for children, they can’t play outdoors.”

- **It’s Not Over ‘Til It’s Over.** Reporters often get people to say things they hadn’t intended by ending the interview and then continuing to talk in a friendly, conversational style. As long as a reporter is present, the interview is not over. Again, don’t say anything you wouldn’t want to see in print.
- **Practice, Practice, Practice.** Even seasoned interviewees need to practice their interview skills. If you are new to interviewing, take a class or start out on public affairs programs-reporters for these programs are usually friendly and helpful. Tape the session and review it with others to determine how well your messages came across. If you are in a crisis or a high stakes situation, get professional help.

When being interviewed for television, there are several additional things to remember.

- **Clothing:** Avoid solid white or black clothing and anything with tight stripes. Solid designs in gray, blue and brown look best.
- **Avoid large, flashy jewelry.** Large jewelry will create undesirable reflections of the TV lights
- **Look at the interviewer.** Unless otherwise instructed, look directly at the host. Do not look at the camera.
- **Sit straight.** You want to sit up straight. Do not lean into the microphone. Avoid swiveling in your chair.

Tips on how to handle different types of interviewers is available as Appendix 7.

Sound Bites/Quotes

Sound bites are 10 to 15 second quotes or catchphrases that give the gist of a story and are used to grab the audience's attention. When it comes to creating a snappy sound bite, preparation is the key. Before going into an interview, rehearse the sound bite a few times so that it sounds natural. Also, practice answering some anticipated questions in a manner in which you can include the sound bite. The more times that you include sound bites during the interview, the more likely you will be successful in communicating your viewpoint to the journalist.

e) Radio Formats

Radio plays an important role in giving a voice to issues of local concern. A broad range of radio formats are available for use to address a broad range of health issues. Some of the most popular formats used to create awareness and highlight health messages include radio magazines, talk shows, radio spots, and radio phone-ins.

Magazines, Talk Shows, and Phone-ins: These are mainstays of radio broadcasting. Magazine formats are often a mix of features stories, competitions, music and drama. Health related stories get reported during this show. A phone-in is a related format in which a studio presenter along with a community based practitioner or doctor answer questions from individuals who call into the show. Health related talk shows are studio based interviews that address relevant health issues in detail.

Spots and Slogans: These are short simple messages of between 30 seconds and two minutes that can feature a short dialogue, announcement or interview. Spots are designed to address broad health issues that are relatively simple to convey. For instance, a spot could be used to convey the importance of getting a flu vaccine.

Radio Interviews

When participating in a radio interview, remember that the audience cannot take cues from your body language. To ensure that your listeners stay engaged and get your message:

- Stay on message and keep answers short, usually about 20 seconds.
- Use a strong voice and answer with clarity, conviction and authority.

Get personal. If it is a call-in radio show, use the caller's name when answering his or her questions. Never talk down to or try to argue with the caller even if you disagree with what he or she says.

f) Public Service Announcements (PSAs)

PSAs can be a great way of combining free placement with a controlled message. Radio PSAs can be very inexpensive, especially if read by an announcer who works at the station. To increase the chances of your PSA being used, be sure that your print ads are standard size and that broadcast ads are the right format and length (generally 15-second, 30-second or one-minute spots).

g) Organizing a Media Event

A media event is an activity intended to generate news coverage. Typically community organizations hold press conferences when they want to announce a major story such as the release of a new report, the support of a celebrity to their cause, the receipt of a national award or to voice their reaction to a crisis. Since organizing a press conference is a large task, it is best to get started as early as possible. Below are some tips to hold a successful press conference:

- **Send a news release about one week in advance.** The announcement should describe what the event is about, where and when it is to be held, who the speakers will be, and who the contact person is.
- **Schedule it at a convenient time.** As far as possible, try to avoid holding press conferences on Mondays and Fridays. If possible, try to hold the press conference early in the day to meet the deadlines of afternoon papers and the evening news.
- **Select credible, competent spokespersons.** The more high profile the spokespersons, the better the chances of media coverage.
- **Convenient Location.** Use a location that is convenient to members of the media including broadcast media.
- **Keep it short.** Limit the news conference to 20-30 minutes. Allow plenty of time for journalists to ask follow-up questions.
- **Provide a press kit.** Give journalists who attend the event a press kit that contains information on the organization and a press release.
- **Follow-up** with organizations by sending them a good quality photograph of the event along with the highlights of the event.

VII. Social Media and Non Profits

In addition to relying on human sources when developing stories, journalists and editors use resources such as print materials, websites and social media in their reporting. Social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter, Linked-In and text messaging allow CBOs to reach out and foster engagement with multiple audiences, disseminate information in a timely manner, leverage networks of people to make information sharing easier, and highlight key activities.

To decide which social media tools to utilize, CBOs must create a social media strategy that can be integrated into the organization's overall communication planning, activities and data collection. This will help CBOs outline their social media outreach goals, target audience and time and effort that can be invested in social media channels. An important aspect to remember while using social media is that CBO's need consistent engagement to be successful. Unlike issuing a press release once in a quarter to inform the public about your activities, community-based professionals need to spend a little time almost every day of the week engaging with their audience. As with any communication activity, it is important to evaluate your social media efforts. There are many tools available to evaluate your social media presence. We will discuss some of them later in this guide.

A) Social Media Tools

Some of the most popular social media tools include:

- **Facebook** is the largest and one of the most prominent social networking applications. CBOs can create a page very similar to personal profile pages. Apart from posting updates on the organization's activities, CBOs can use Facebook for a variety of tasks including conducting a survey, sharing testimonials, linking to press coverage, creating a petition for target members to sign, and fundraising.
- **Twitter** is increasing in popularity. Twitter allows people, organizations and businesses to post 140 character updates in real time. Through Twitter, people can sign up to follow a CBO that they are interested in. To engage the audience, CBOs need to update their Twitter content on a regular schedule. Aside from developing their own tweet feeds, CBOs can also re-tweet relevant content from other organizations and individuals.
- **YouTube** is a video sharing site. CBOs can use the donate button on their videos to get people to donate to their cause immediately. They can also use a call to action button on their videos that lead individuals who view their video directly to their website, thereby increasing awareness of the organization and its causes.
- **Pinterest** is gaining ground among many CBOs. It provides a way for CBOs to connect with their audiences through visuals. Nonprofits can "pin" photographs, infographics and other visuals to Pinterest.

Tips on the advantages and disadvantages of different social media platforms as well as information on Twitter Syntax and Blogging Platforms are available as Appendix 8,9, & 10 respectively.

b) Writing for your Social Media Audience

In writing for social media, you need to be careful to strike up an interesting, conversation with your audience and not speak down to them. It is also important to try and engage the audience in the message either by asking questions or by responding to one of your followers comments. Some other tips to consider in writing messages are:

- Keep it simple. Limit use of jargon, or scientific language.
- Keep messages short and make every word count. Your message is more likely to be shared if it is short and well-written.
- Write like you speak. A conversational tone is the best approach to social media.
- Provide context by using hashtags or providing links to background information.
- Paint a picture. Many people who use social media are visual. So consider using pictures or graphical images instead of text.

c) Social Media Evaluation Tools

Evaluation is a very important aspect of any communication plan. Listed below are some useful tools.

- Google Analytics is a very popular tool to analyze traffic to your website or blogs. Google Analytics generates statistics about your website's traffic and sources, giving you an idea of click-through rates from LinkedIn, Facebook or other social media sites that provide links to your site. Another tool, Google Trends shows how often a search-term is entered into the search engine over time.
- Klout is one of a series of social media metric tools. You grant Klout permission to automatically access your user statistics from your website or other social media services (e.g., Facebook, Twitter). The analytic tool provides an overall score that helps determine your overall relative influence in the social media sphere. One of the disadvantages of Klout is that the statistics are not entirely verifiable.
- Facebook Insights provides information on how many people engaged with your Facebook page and how influential the page is. It allows a user to keep track of information such as page views, unique views, fan statistics, wall posts, video and audio plays and photo views.

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Appendix 1. Communication Channels and Activities: Pros and Cons

<i>Communication Channels and Activities: Pros and Cons</i>			
<i>Type of Channel</i>	<i>Activities</i>	<i>Pros</i>	<i>Cons</i>
Interpersonal Channels	Hotline counseling Patient counseling Instruction Informal discussion	Can be credible Permit two-way discussion Can be motivational, influential, supportive Most effective for teaching and helping/caring	Can be expensive Can be time-consuming Can have limited intended audience reach Can be difficult to link into interpersonal channels; sources need to be convinced and taught about the message themselves
Organizational and Community Channels	Town hall meetings and other events Organizational meetings and conferences Workplace campaigns	May be familiar, trusted, and influential May provide more motivation/support than media alone Can sometimes be inexpensive Can offer shared experiences Can reach larger intended audience in one place	Can be costly, time consuming to establish May not provide personalized attention Organizational constraints may require message approval May lose control of message if adapted to fit organizational needs
Mass Media Channels <i>Newspapers</i>	Ads Inserted sections on a health topic (paid) News Feature stories Letters to the editor Op/ed pieces	Can reach broad intended audiences rapidly Can convey health news/breakthroughs more thoroughly than TV or radio and faster than magazines Intended audience has chance to clip, reread, contemplate, and pass along material Small circulation papers may take PSAs	Coverage demands a newsworthy item Larger circulation papers may take only paid ads and inserts Exposure usually limited to one day Article placement requires contacts and may be time-consuming
<i>Radio</i>	Ads (paid or public service placement) News Public affairs/talk shows Dramatic programming	Range of formats available to intended audiences with known listening preferences Opportunity for direct intended audience involvement (through call-in shows)	Reaches smaller intended audiences than TV Public service ads run infrequently and at low listening times

	(entertainment education)	<p>Can distribute ad scripts (termed "live-copy ads"), which are flexible and inexpensive</p> <p>Paid ads or specific programming can reach intended audience when they are most receptive</p> <p>Paid ads can be relatively inexpensive</p> <p>Ad production costs are low relative to TV</p> <p>Ads allow message and its execution to be controlled</p>	<p>Many stations have limited formats that may not be conducive to health messages</p> <p>Difficult for intended audiences to retain or pass on material</p>
Television	<p>Ads (paid or public service placement)</p> <p>News</p> <p>Public affairs/talk shows</p> <p>Dramatic programming (entertainment education)</p>	<p>Reaches potentially the largest and widest range of intended audiences</p> <p>Visual combined with audio good for emotional appeals and demonstrating behaviors</p> <p>Can reach low income intended audiences</p> <p>Paid ads or specific programming can reach intended audience when most receptive</p> <p>Ads allow message and its execution to be controlled</p> <p>Opportunity for direct intended audience involvement (through call-in shows)</p>	<p>Ads are expensive to produce</p> <p>Paid advertising is expensive</p> <p>PSAs run infrequently and at low viewing times</p> <p>Message may be obscured by commercial clutter</p> <p>Some stations reach very small intended audiences</p> <p>Promotion can result in huge demand</p> <p>Can be difficult for intended audiences to retain or pass on material</p>
Internet	<p>Web sites</p> <p>E-mail mailing lists</p> <p>Chat rooms</p> <p>Newsgroups</p> <p>Ads (paid or public service placement)</p>	<p>Can reach large numbers of people rapidly</p> <p>Can instantaneously update and disseminate information</p> <p>Can control information provided</p> <p>Can tailor information specifically for intended audiences</p> <p>Can be interactive</p>	<p>Can be expensive</p> <p>Many intended audiences do not have access to Internet</p> <p>Intended audience must be proactive--must search or sign up for information</p> <p>Newsgroups and chat rooms may require monitoring</p> <p>Can require maintenance over time</p>

		<p>Can provide health information in a graphically appealing way</p> <p>Can combine the audio/visual benefits of TV or radio with the self-paced benefits of print media</p> <p>Can use banner ads to direct intended audience to your program's Web site</p>	
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Source: *Making Health Communication Programs Work* by National Cancer Institute
Website: <http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/cancerlibrary/pinkbook/page1>

Appendix 2. Who's Who in the Media

Glossary of position titles and responsibilities of media professionals:

- **Assignment Editor:** Coordinates day-to-day assignments of stories. Random calls to the newsroom are directed to this desk.
- **Calendar Editor:** Responsible for events listings and announcements, and is usually a good source of free publicity for activities open to the public.
- **City Desk Editor:** Handles news assignments in urban areas.
- **Editor:** Coordinates and assigns stories for his or her section of a newspaper or magazine. Publications may have specific editors responsible for health, entertainment, arts, sports, business, the environment, and so on.
- **Freelance Writer, Photographer (stringer):** Generally write news, or take pictures for a variety of news outlets without being employed by any single outlet. Many editors and producers have a regular group of freelancers with whom they work frequently.
- **General Manager:** The leading position in a broadcast facility (TV or radio station). This person manages and directs the business of the entire station, from advertising to news and program production.
- **Managing Editor:** Manages editors and operations of the whole newspaper.
- **Producer:** Researches and writes stories, conducts interviews, and oversees the camera crew and writing and editing process for broadcast stories. He or she works closely with reporters and, in some cases, does much of the work to create a story (local news reporters are responsible for this themselves). The producer decides which stories appear on the news and in what order. The executive producer is similar to the managing editor at a newspaper.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Media Access Guide: A Resource for Community Health Promotion. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Division of Adult and Community Health, Healthy Communities Program; 2008.

Appendix 3. Newsworthy Checklist

Use this checklist to determine if your story is newsworthy.

Yes/No	Your story is newsworthy when it...
	Is timely
	Is an important anniversary
	Is groundbreaking
	Is novel
	Impacts the community
	Has not been done before
	Is a trend
	Is a seasonal issue
	Is a local perspective on a national issue
	Is an importance medical development
	Has an economic impact
	Other:

Appendix 4. Media Planning Worksheet

Please circle all the appropriate responses.

PURPOSE				
What is the purpose of the story	Persuade	Inform	Entertain	Other
What is your story category	Breaking news	Human interest	Trends	Other
What is your message? Explain your key message in 1-2 lines				
Why should the journalist care about the story? Explain it in 1-2 lines				
Why should the local community care about the story? Explain it in 1-2 lines				
Who is the audience for the story? Explain it in 1-2 lines				
What is the frame of the story?	Portrait	Landscape		
Write down some key points that provide context and frame the message?				
Are there visual elements to include	Yes	No		
What data do you need to support your message and story?				

Source: Adapted from [KQED Media Toolkit](#)

Appendix 5. Press Release Template

Contact	Bruff, Carmenza	FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Telephone	[Company Phone]	
Cell	[Cell Phone]	[Date]
Email	[Company E-mail]	
Website	[Website]	

[MAIN TITLE OF PRESS RELEASE IN ALL CAPS]

[Subtitle of Press Release]

[City], [ST], [Date]–

First section: *In a line or two explain why this issue or event is important. Use the inverted pyramid style of writing.*

Second section: *Include 2-3 more lines detailing what is happening and framing your message. At the end of the paragraph include a quote from someone directly involved in the activity or someone affected by the issue.*

[Insert your company's boilerplate message.]

#

If you would like more information about this topic, please contact Bruff, Carmenza at [Company Phone] or email at [Company E-mail].

Appendix 5a. Press Release Template (Spanish)



Logo

PARA HACER PUBLICO IMEDIATAMENTE:

Contacto:

[Nombre del contacto]

[Nombre de la compañía]

[Numero de teléfono]

[Numero de fax]

[Correo electrónico]

[Sitio web]

Titulo

[Ciudad], [Estado], [Fecha] — Primer Párrafo *(Debe contener: quién, qué, cuándo, dónde, y porqué.)*

Resto del texto *(Debe de incluir toda la información relevante sobre su servicio o evento. Incluya cuales son los beneficios, porque su servicio o evento es distinto o único. También incluya testimonios de empleados, expertos o clientes satisfechos.)*

Si hay más de una página agregue:

-mas-

(En la parte de abajo al centro de la pagina.)

(En la parte superior de la página):

Titulo Abreviado (Segunda página)

Resto del texto.

(Repita la información de la persona a contactar después del último párrafo)

Para más información o para obtener una copia, Contacte a: *(Toda la información de la persona a quien deben contactar)*

(Resuma el servicio, evento o especificaciones una última vez.)

La Historia de la Compañía *(Trate de hacer esto un párrafo corto.)*

###

(Estos símbolos indican que el comunicado de prensa ha terminado)

Appendix 6. Tips for a successful press release submission

The press release sent by your organization should stand out among the other releases so that they are easily picked up by journalists. Sometimes the most important releases are never reported because they are poorly written or framed. *Remember the problem is not the journalist but the press release itself!*

While no one can guarantee that the press release will be published or used for an article, the chances are better if all the above points have been addressed. Here are some tips that can help:

- Make sure the press release is newsworthy.
- Tell the audience that the information is intended for them and why they should continue to read it.
- Start with a brief description of the news, and then distinguish who announced it, and not the other way around.
- Ask yourself, "How are people going to relate to this and will they be able to connect?"
- Make sure the first 10 words of your release are effective, as they are the most important.
- Avoid excessive use of adjectives and fancy language.
- Deal with the facts.
- Provide as much Contact information as possible: Name of contact person, address, phone, fax, email, and Web site address.
- Make sure you wait until you have something with enough substance to issue a release.
- Make it as easy as possible for media representatives to do their jobs.

Appendix 7. Types of Media Interview

Here are some tips to deal with different and challenging interview styles.

The Rapid Fire or Machine Gunner Questioner: This type of interviewer asks several questions very quickly and all at once. The best way to deal with this kind of interview is to answer one of the key questions with your message.

The Paraphrasing Parrot: The interviewer paraphrases what you have said. You need to be carefully listens to the interviewer's comments and be quick to correct any misinformation. Also, remember not to use any negative frames in answering questions.

The Disrupter: The interviewer keeps asking question or interrupts before you are finished answering an earlier question. In this kind of situation you can ask politely tell the interviewer, , "please let me finish my answer..."

Negative Leader: This type of interview will pin negative labels on you. Correct the negatives with the positives.

The Bully: This type of interviewer is out to annoy you. Do not get upset. Answer the questions patiently at your own pace. If the interviewer frames a question negatively, do not use the same frame. Remember to re-phrase the question positively and answer the question with your key message. Remember always stick to key messages.

The overly friendly interviewer: Either they enjoy meeting you or enjoy disarming you, especially in the pre-interview and then go 'in for the kill' while recording. Be cautious, but not cold.

The 'last minute' interviewer: This interviewer has not really studied your organization and come prepared. This gives you the opportunity to take control of the interview.

Adapted from [Program Training and Consultation Center's](#) "Tips for Dealing with Challenging Media Interview Styles."

Appendix 8. Social Media Tools; advantages and disadvantages

Social Media Tools	Features	Social Media Platforms	Advantages
Blogs	Easy to publish website in which you can publish information easily on an ongoing basis.	Wordpress, Blogger, Posterous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blogs can help provide up to date news about your organization. • Helps the organization reach out to a larger audience • Improves visibility of the organization • Makes it easier for individuals searching on Google to find your organization
Microblogging	Messages of 140 characters or less	Twitter. There are other microblogging sites which aren't as popular as Twitter including Google Buzz and FriendFeed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easily accessible and quick to update • Helps monitor what other organizations in the same area are talking about • Can garner response from your target audience on an issue very quickly
Rss	Real Simple Syndication is an easy way for individuals to keep up with news and information that is important to them.	Feed43, Feedmarklet, Page2RSS	It allows the content from regularly updated websites (like blogs or podcasts) to be aggregated and posted to one website (often called a "reader") or mobile device.
Social Networking Sites	Sites that allow you to connect with friends, family and others who share similar interests.	Facebook, Linked-In, Pintrest, GooglePlus, Meetup, Causes, Ning, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helps target message to audience • Reaches a wider audience • Facilitates fundraising efforts

Podcasts	Audio and video files distributed through websites	Itunes, Podbean, etc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audio is an engaging way to communicate with the target audience • Audience members can listen to experts deliberate on an issue at a place and time of their choosing
Video/photo sharing	Sites that allow users to post videos and photos	YouTube, Pintrest, Flickr, Vimeo, etc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engages audience through visuals

Appendix 9. Twitter Syntax

The Twitter community has created its own short-form syntax. When communicating on Twitter, you'll need to know these essential terms:

- **Message (or tweet):** Messages are composed of up to 140 characters of text or links.
- **Username (or handle):** Twitter users identify themselves by their username or "handle"
- **Retweet:** If a tweet (or message) from another Twitter user is relevant, the retweet function allows you to forward their message to your network.
- **Hat tip:** Hat tips are similar to retweets but used when you add new commentary to a tweet or link from someone else.
- **Mention:** A way to mention another user by his handle on Twitter. This is a useful way to conduct a discussion in the Tweetosphere. To mention a person use need to use the @ symbol in front of the username in a message. Persons mentioned will be notified.
- **Hashtag:** Similar to a mention, a hashtag is created automatically when you put the # symbol before a word. Using a hashtag enables other people to join in a larger conversation on a topic or find information quickly. You can click on the hashtag to see all the tweets on that particular issue, even from people you don't follow.
- **Direct Message (DM):** A private, 140-character message between two people. You may only DM a user who follows you.

For more information visit the [Twitter Glossary](#)

Appendix 10. Blogging Platforms

- **Blogger:** If you're serious about starting a blog but don't know much about hosting a website or coding HTML, Google's Blogger is one of the easiest tools for you to use. Google Blogger has only a few templates that you can use but it lets you customize plenty of details, such as fonts, colors, page widths, and background images. Other Google tools, like Analytics, integrate seamlessly and are available right from the main dashboard.
- **Wordpress:** This is another blogging platform that allows for easy set-up for those who don't know HTML. It also provides numerous templates to choose from but does not allow the same level as customization as Blogger. Like Blogger, Wordpress has its own analytics system built right into the dashboard. If you want your own domain name, you can buy it from Wordpress.
- **Posterous:** Posterous is an ideal place for beginning bloggers and microbloggers. It simplifies the process of designing and maintaining a blog. However, because of this, it does not allow some of the deeper controls that can be found in Blogger and Wordpress.. One of Posterous' signature features is that it lets you post to your blog from any email account or mobile device, thereby letting you add content quickly and easily. Another way Posterous sets itself apart is that it integrates exceptionally well with other forms of online social media and social networking.
- **Tumblr:** This is popular among visual bloggers who post artwork, photography, and design-themed content, and do not have too much text.