



MAXIMIZING YOUR MEDIA COVERAGE

MEDIA ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

Know what issues and events different publications, TV, and radio stations typically cover, as well as which staff, editors, and reporters work your beat. Pitching your story to the right outlets and gatekeepers—and showing that you know their work—will improve the likelihood of coverage. Keep your local media inventory and contact list up to date. (See "Identifying Media Opportunities.")

Example:

If you are promoting a new nutrition program for a senior center, you will want to communicate directly with writers and editors who cover food, health, and aging issues.

Understand your media market. Some media outlets maintain more of a national or regional perspective than a local one. Some are more policy- and issue-oriented, and some serve specific ethnic groups. When deciding where to pitch your story or issue, consider whom you want to reach, what you want them to hear, and what you would like them to do when they have received your message.

Respond quickly to requests for information. This is extremely important because reporters have deadlines to meet. When you talk with a reporter, ask her what her deadline is so you know the time you have to provide the information.

Provide information the media can use. If you are promoting a particular campaign or problem, develop high-impact sound bites that frame the issue the way you would like it to be covered. Avoid language that is technical or academic; it could create messages that are boring or misunderstood.

Be honest and straightforward about your issue, your organization, what you know, what you can do for the media, and what you would like from them. If you don't know the answer to a question you are asked, say so, and offer to get the answer quickly or refer the reporter to a person who can provide the information they seek.

Work personally with reporters to help them understand your issue; simply sending out news releases or PSAs is much less effective. As in any other business, reporters like to work with people they know and trust. Provide background information and interesting vignettes that can make bare facts come alive. If you are promoting a news conference, call the media outlets when the media advisory has gone out and try to speak personally with reporters to remind them about your event and its impact on their audience.

If you don't know the audiences that media outlets reach, do the research to find out. This will help you choose the best channels and frame the story for its highest impact. Whenever you pitch a national story to a local media outlet, give it a local spin.

