

“A Reporter is on the Phone!”

When a reporter contacts you, find out the following:

- The reporter’s name.
- The reporter’s organization/program.
- The focus of the story.
- Who else the reporter will speak to for this story.
- The reporter’s deadline.
- The interview format (live or taped).
- When and where the interview will take place.

REMEMBER: *You don’t have to give the interview right away. Find out the reporter’s deadline and assure him/her that you will call back before then. Immediately contact your Public Affairs Office.*

Prepare:

- Use your Public Affairs staff!
- Learn about the reporter, program or publication.
- Research what else has been published or aired recently on this topic.
- Develop key messages to communicate during the interview.
- Jot down likely questions and appropriate answers, incorporating your key messages whenever possible.

PRACTICE: *Conduct mock interviews with the Public Affairs Officer, your spouse or a friend.*

Important facts to remember during ...

Television interviews:

- Appearance is vital! Take a minute to check your hair, tie, shirt, etc.
- Don’t wear tinted glasses. If you own contacts, wear them.
- Look at the interviewer and not the camera, unless instructed otherwise.
- If possible, choose a location that reinforces your messages.
- Your body language tells a story. If the topic is solemn, avoid smiles. If the topic is exciting, use nonverbal communication to express passion.

Radio interviews:

- Use vivid, colorful words and phrases.
- Ensure your pitch, tone and rate of speed match the subject matter.

Print interviews:

- Prepare yourself for a more in-depth interview.
- Interview location always affects the reporter’s impression of you and the Armed Services Blood Program.
- Feel free to record the interview.
- Ask the reporter for feedback to ensure they understood.
- Listen to your recording and follow-up with additional information when appropriate.

Phone interviews:

- First, determine the focus of the interview.
- Prepare and then call the reporter back.
- Be animated – stand up and walk around if it helps your energy.
- Keep it simple but offer detailed written material via fax or email.

Interview DOs and DON'Ts

- **DO** respect a reporter's deadline.
- **DO** project a positive image – be confident and relaxed.
- **DO** be animated – express that hidden energy.
- **DO** correct misstatements.
- **DO** set ground rules for the topic and length of the interview.
- **DO** pause and think about your answers – silence can be edited.
- **DO** keep your answers short, simple and people-oriented.
- **DO** say “I don't know the answer” – it's OK to get back to them with an answer later.
- **DO** put YOUR points first, then support.

- **DON'T** lie.
- **DON'T** speak “off the record.”
- **DON'T** repeat negative words or statements – make the correction.
- **DON'T** use acronyms.
- **DON'T** say “no comment” – explain why you can't answer a question.
- **DON'T** be question-driven – be message-driven.

REMEMBER: Every Soldier, Sailor, Airman, Marine, Coast Guardsman, family member and DOD civilian has a story to tell. If you don't tell the military blood program's story ... then who will?

You are the Armed Services Blood Program!