

Tips for Meeting the Media

Remember that providing tips to the media or responding to media calls are an opportunity for you to tell your story and highlight your programs and issues. Here are some tips for preparing for your media encounter.

Gather basic details

- Write down the reporter's name, media outlet, phone number and story deadline.
- Ask what the story will be about and how the interview will be used.
- If TV or radio is calling, inquire about the interview format (live, taped, etc.).
- If you're the appropriate expert but aren't prepared to talk, set a later time, but respect the reporter's deadline. Even 15 minutes will help you get ready.
- If you're not the best expert, refer the reporter to someone who is.
- If you don't know, say so.
- Never say, "No comment."

Prepare for the interview

- Write down the brief message(s) you want to convey (generally no more than 3).
- Develop or locate any background material to share with the reporter.
- Avoid technical jargon and acronyms, use lay terms.
- Make sure your points are clear and succinct.
- Be ready to support your message with a few examples and facts.
- Keep in mind what the public needs to know, and how the topic impacts people's lives.
- Anticipate tough questions the reporter might ask.
- Practice delivering your message(s).

Speak with authority, clarity, energy

- Offer brief background on the subject at hand if the reporter seems to need it.
- Assume everything you say is on the record, from the time you meet or talk with the reporter until he or she leaves the room or hangs up.
- Listen carefully to the reporter's questions.
- Speak with authority and energy, particularly for TV or radio interviews.
- State your position in positive terms, even if a reporter's questions turn negative.
- If the reporter's questions veer off track, politely steer the interview back to your message(s).

Building Relationships with Reporters

Building relationships with reporters is an exchange of value. You want a mention in their publication, website, or broadcast; they want news from someone they trust.

Good relationships= better communications with your ultimate audience

Do your homework

- Learn about reporters in your area; what they cover and their interests.
- Prepare background information and fact sheets. Don't assume reporters know the background.

Follow-up

- Provide story tips.
- Comment and complement other stories.
- Invite reporters to an event where they can get contacts or get story ideas.

Add Value

- Provide a list of helpful contacts in your county.
- Offer fact sheets.
- Provide photos or ideas for photos or illustrations for the story, especially for TV.
- Give reporters an opportunity for hands-on experience.