

Media 101 – The Basics



What the Media Can Do For You:

- Educate the community about your program/efforts.
- Increase your credibility.
- Build support among individuals, community leaders, potential funders, and taxpayers.
- Allow your program to serve as a model to other programs and communities.

ITEMS TO USE:

News Releases

- Typically feature “Hard” news.
 - News that impacts the community and is considered a pressing or relevant issue.
- Should be time sensitive and feature current events.
- The Format:
 - If possible, encourage your program/organization to create its own format and use it every time.
 - Shorter is better, try to keep it to one page.
 - If you must go on to a second page, do two things – (1) type the word “More” at the center of the bottom of the first page and (2) put your ID information at the top of the second page.
 - Put the date in the Release Line OR in the Date Line – not both. You should always strive to have your Release Line be “For Immediate Release.”
 - Use at least 10-point font type.
 - The contact information should always include name, phone, and email.
 - At the end of the release put ###. This signals the end of the news release.
 - Background information can follow the end of the release to provide context. Keep it short.
- The Structure:
 - Use the inverted pyramid structure – put your most compelling information at the top.
 - Use short sentences.
 - Short paragraphs are best – one thought per paragraph.
 - Put any quotes in separate paragraphs.
- The Language:
 - Keep it simple.
 - Avoid jargon – even if it’s related to your program/organization. If you must use it, please explain!
 - Use active instead of passive voice.
 - Spell out acronyms the first time they are used.
 - Tell the story up front. Keep background information in the background.
- The Lead:
 - The lead is the opening sentence or two that must attract attention up front, appeal to your audience, and pique their curiosity.

- Your Credibility:
 - Be honest and accurate.
 - Use specific dates, times, numbers, etc.
 - Tie in known personalities and organizations when appropriate.
 - Drop in a few (accurate) statistics.
 - Point out the results.

Media Advisories

- The purpose is to invite media to an event.
- Contains only the who, what, where, when, why, and background information.
- Can be laid out like an invitation.
- The Format:
 - If possible, encourage your program/organization to create its own format and use it every time.
 - Keep it to one page – no exceptions.
 - Put the date in the Release Line OR in the Date Line – not both. You should always strive to have your Release Line be “For Immediate Release.”
 - The contact information should always include name, phone, and email.
 - Background information can follow the end of the release to provide context. Keep it short.

News Release/Media Advisory Distribution Resources

- Find your local newspaper, radio, and television news contacts. Look for email addresses and/or fax numbers.
- Good website: www.mondotimes.com/world/usa.html.

DON'T FORGET:

News Release/Media Advisory Distribution & Follow-Up

- Send the release in the format preferred by each media outlet (fax, email, etc.).
- Don't pester the media after the release/advisory is sent.
- Make sure the person who answers the phone in your organization is:
 - Aware a news release/media advisory has been sent.
 - Knows who the contact person is for the release/advisory.
 - Has a copy of the release.
- Make sure the contact person and other key players identified in the release are available and prepared to talk with the media.
- If media do call, respond ASAP.
- If you can't get the information they need right away, let them know.
- If the media does cover your story, send a quick thank you.
- If inaccuracies are printed or aired, correct them right away.