



## MEDIA BASICS

Media is a powerful tool that can help you gain support for implementing the *Michigan Nutrition Standards*. Media, such as newspapers, radio, and TV can help you reach key audiences, reinforce your messages and increase public support for creating a healthier school environment. Becoming familiar with the basics will help you navigate the media world.

Media is continually changing. Traditional media outlets such as newspapers, television and radio are joined by digital news articles, social networking, podcasts, and blogs. Due to the 24-hour news cycle, media is a competitive industry, news outlets are competing to be the first and most accurate to file a story. Stories that grab a reporter's attention and entice them to write tend to fall into the following categories: change, controversy, conflict, drama, "firsts," and localizing current events.

### STAY POSITIVE

Despite the abundance of negative stories in the news, the media are generally looking for good news and aren't always fishing for drama. Media stories can help to inform your audience and encourage their support. When promoting the good work your school is doing to make students healthier by implementing the standards, be sure to talk about the positive. If you are being interviewed, your tone and enthusiasm will control the interview and set the course for the story.

As your district implements the *Michigan Nutrition Standards* in different areas, find ways to utilize media to showcase all the positive things you are doing such as improvements to school meals, healthier choices in vending machines, nutritious foods at holiday celebrations, offering a variety of healthy foods sold at concession stands, and more.

### GETTING THE WORD OUT

There are lots of different ways you can use the media to tell your school or district's *Michigan Nutrition Standards* success story. You might...

- **Work with your school district's media relations staff** to determine if the district has an existing relationship with local newspaper, television, and radio station. Make sure to coordinate communication within the district so reporters get only one call.
- **Write a feature story or local interest story** for print media describing the standards and what your school or district is doing to implement them.
- **Write a letter to the editor of a newspaper.** The letters can be in response to a current event (i.e. the new standards) or a recent story. A letter to the editor is written to agree, disagree or just to express an opinion. This can be a powerful tool for responding to negative press about school meals or foods served at school.
- **Use broadcast media (TV, or radio)** to promote the *Michigan Nutrition Standards*. Invite the local TV or radio station to cover a nutrition-related event such as a student taste-test of new healthy lunch options, a nutrition assembly, a healthy classroom party, or the new healthy choices sold at concession stands and as fundraisers.





## TIPS FOR TALKING TO REPORTERS

- 1. PITCH A TIMELY STORY.** Reporters won't pay attention to news that isn't current. You might want to piggyback on other nutrition-related happenings or timely events such as National School Lunch Week, National Nutrition Month, back to school, or holidays.
- 2. DO A LITTLE RESEARCH BEFORE YOU TALK TO A REPORTER.** Make sure you know your subject well. If a reporter asks you a question you can't answer don't be afraid to tell him or her you'll get back with them later; then do it.
- 3. KNOW WHICH REPORTERS USUALLY COVER SCHOOL OR HEALTH NEWS.** Contact that reporter first with your story idea and interview request.

## PREPARING FOR AN INTERVIEW

- Write down and prepare to emphasize 3-4 key messages.
- Be familiar with your topic.
- Prepare a brief opening summary to help you set the frame for the discussion.
- Use supporting points for each message:
  - Facts
  - Statistics
  - Personal examples or anecdotes
- Practice.
- Use short, direct sentences.
- Avoid jargon and acronyms.
- Be honest.
- Immediately challenge questionable facts.
- Take a moment to respond. Pausing is a normal part of conversation.
- Stay consistent and on the subject.
- Don't be afraid to rephrase or correct something you said if you need to.

## TV APPEARANCES

- Sit up straight and lean slightly forward.
- Keep your eyes on the interviewer, not the camera or the floor.
- Avoid being distracted by monitors and camera movements.
- Keep your chin pointing forward, not down.
- Relax, act as natural as possible.
- Smile, be friendly (as appropriate).
- ALWAYS assume the camera and microphone are on.
- Watch for nervous mannerisms.
- Talk in a regular voice.
- Use the reporter's name.
- Listen for directions and cues.
- Avoid wearing a lot of jewelry—it can cause glare and be distracting.
- Do not over apply make up.
- Get to the interview early.

*Adapted from USDA Changing the Scene; North Carolina Successful Students – Working with the Media; Lambert, Edwards & Associates – Nutrition Standards Media Training*

