

A press release is a written announcement to the media. It should:

- Answer the who, what, when, where, and why of a story;
- Include the date, contact person and a headline;
- Ensure key points are in the first paragraph;
- Be no more than two pages in total; and
- Be sent to the appropriate editorial desk, with a follow up call to confirm receipt.

Letters to the Editor are less formal than a press release. But they should still:

- Be typewritten;
- Include a topic paragraph, a paragraph elaborating on the writer's views, and a conclusion;
- Be no more than 150-250 words;
- Be factual; and
- Point out what's going on in the broader community on the issue.

Editorials in support of your issue can be very effective for gaining community support for your initiative. You'll need to:

- Determine whether the newspaper has already published a piece on the issue;
- Make an appointment with the editor to discuss what type of editorial you'd like to see written;
- Prepare background materials for the meeting, such as information on your facility's healthy choices initiative and the rationale behind it;
- State your points clearly during your meeting; and
- Follow up with a note of thanks.



Working with the Media

The media can greatly influence public opinion on any one issue.

Consequently, it's important to know how to work with the media to raise awareness as well as influence decision makers.

The movement to support healthy food and beverage choices has grown, and the media have played an important role in getting the message out. There are certain protocols involved when working with media however, and it helps to know what they are.

Getting in the News

- Contact local reporters at newspapers, television and/or radio stations and tell them about your healthy choices initiative.
- Keep them updated as your facility progresses. If you supply them with regular ideas for stories, they are more likely to report on your efforts.
- Connect your story with broader issues or initiatives (e.g. healthy choices in schools or public buildings).
- Be willing to give an interview.
- Write a press release (See sample Press Release on Page 76).
- Write a letter to the editor (see "Writing Letters to the Editor" and the sample on page 75).
- Convince your local newspaper to write an editorial about your healthy choices facility.

Giving an Interview

- Be prepared; know what type of story the reporter plans to write.
- Find out whether the interview will be in person, over the phone, or live on television.
- Set a time limit.
- Develop clear, short statements and speak with confidence.
- Be cautious about jokes, sarcasm, or exaggerations, as these can be taken out of context and be damaging.
- Never speak "off the record." Assume that anything you say will be used.

OTHER OPTIONS

Radio

Whether you choose to purchase a "spot" or ad, call into a radio talk show, or organize a public service announcement, you can reach a large audience through radio.

Web Media

Blogs are an increasingly popular way to communicate with a broad audience. They are essentially online journals that are regularly updated. They are often highly personal, representing the views of individual authors. Be sure to check to see if your facility/employer has a policy on blogs.

Facility websites are common now among recreation facilities. They are often linked to other related sites. Increasingly, the public relies on websites to find out about an organization or facility, its initiatives and resources.

Online Newsletters are another increasingly common way to communicate with an audience. These are usually posted on the website, which people can access regularly. Often, they are PDF versions of the regular “paper” newsletter, but they allow for broader readership.