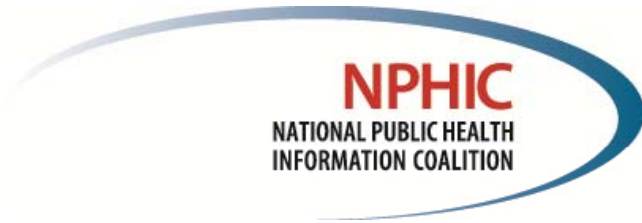


Media Preparation & Engagement

Brad Christensen
Health Promotion Project Director
National Public Health Information Coalition

Visit us at www.nphic.org





Media can be a valuable public health tool

Credibility and lasting reach - Advertising is only one-third as effective as a news story.

“There are only two forces that can carry light to all corners of the globe – the sun in the heavens and the Associated Press down here” – Mark Twain

“If you don’t exist in the media, for all practical purposes, you don’t exist.” – Daniel Schorr



Avenues of Engagement

- News Releases
- News Conferences
- Op-Ed pieces
- Social media
- Public Service Announcements*

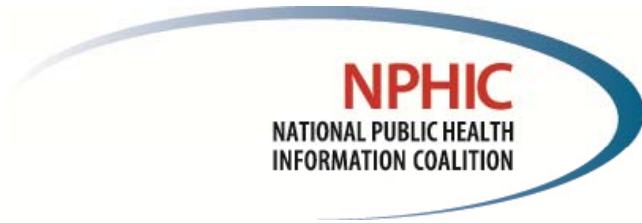
* AKA People Sound Asleep



News Releases

- Must break through the clutter
- Written 3rd person news style
- Action verbs yes, exclamation marks no
- Easily understood – no technical jargon
- Must contain actual news





What is News

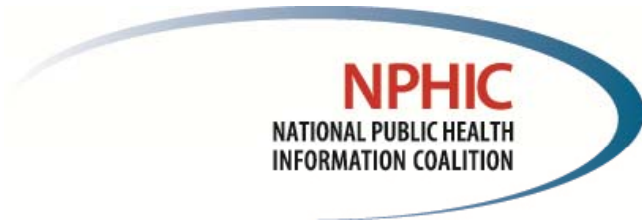
- Any grant as long as it's clear why important to the public
- Introduction or passage of legislation aimed at injury prevention
- Release of statistical report on injuries
- Announcement of start or completion of any injury prevention campaign
- Any public health warning
- Unique or unusual activity or event



What isn't News

- Most new hires and promotions
- Observances such as Safe Kids Week
- Most conferences





News Conferences

- Use only for major news
- Herd mentality can be advantage
- Colorful, relevant visual setting needed
- Prepare key message(s) as colorful sound bites
- Have bona fide expert on hand as safety valve



Op-Ed Pieces

- Ability to address an issue your way, unadulterated
- Written for appearance in one newspaper or magazine
- Best to start the piece with a story
- Author's title important



Social Media

- Impact depends on who is following you on FB and Twitter
- Text must be short; no room for details/explanation
- You Tube good reach and longevity for visuals
- Blogs devoted to specific injury prevention topics may be useful
conduits for your communications outreach
- Overall impact may be overstated, but certain to accelerate



Interview Tips – Preparation

- First, interview the interviewer. Ask what the story is about, who else is being interviewed, reporter's deadline, when the story will run, etc.
- Prepare one or two key messages beforehand as compelling and quotable sound bites.
- Practice answering questions. It is helpful to rehearse and hear yourself state the key messages.



Interview Tips – Preparation

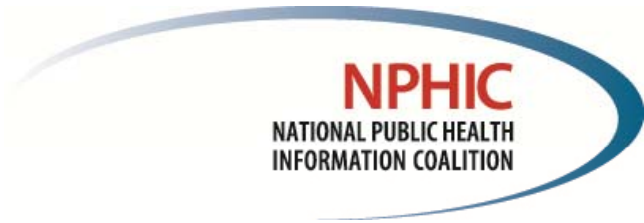
- Don't wait for a specific question to deliver your main message.
- On virtually any question, it's possible to simply touch on the answer and then use a bridging phrase such as “it's also important to know” to go to your message
- Prepare beforehand for the toughest questions and for the “bridges” you may use.



Interview Tips - I

- Reporters have extremely tight deadlines. Return their calls promptly, even if just to ask what the story is about and schedule a future interview.
- Accuracy is paramount. If you don't know the answer to a question, say so and offer to quickly get back to the reporter with the answer.
- Don't use words or phrases like "apparently" and "to the best of my knowledge" that make you appear uncertain.





Interview Tips - 2

- Speak plain English. Explain a project as if you were talking to your neighbor or grocer.
- Don't use technical terms, acronyms and abbreviations that aren't familiar to the general public or the targeted audience.
- Be enthusiastic. If you can't get excited about what you're doing, don't expect anyone else to.



Interview Tips - 3

- Remember that you're always on the record.
- Never say "No comment," which makes it sound like you're uncooperative or hiding embarrassing information.
- If you cannot disclose information, explain why rather than leave a reporter speculating about the purity of your motivations.



Interview Tips - 4

- Never appear arrogant, indifferent or incompetent. For the media (and the public) these traits are the three unforgivables.
- Tell the whole story and take the time to provide background information. Print reporters offer much more comprehensive coverage than radio or TV reporters.



DOs and DON'Ts

- Do – Use colorful words and analogies to be “quotable.”
- Do – Develop quotable quotes that emphasize your key point(s) before the interview.
- Do – Be positive in making your points
- Do – Be likable and engaging
- Do – Stop talking when you’ve answered a point.



DOs and DON'Ts

Don't – Become angry, frustrated or provoked

Don't – Speculate or guess

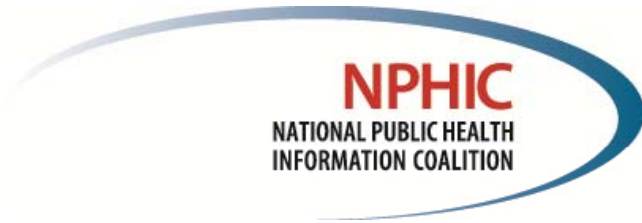
Don't – Speak for someone else

Don't – Speak off the record

Don't – Use scientific terms or phrases without explaining them in terms an eighth grader would understand.

Don't – Use acronyms





Types of Questions - I

- Do you prefer “A” or “B?” Don’t let the reporter limit your choices. You can say, “I think ‘C’ is a good choice because...”
- Multiple or rapid questions: When confronted with multiple questions at once, pick the one you want to answer and ignore the rest.
- “What if?” questions: Don’t speculate or play the guessing game. Say, “We’ll cross that bridge if and when we get to it.”



Types of Questions – 2

- False assumption question: Do not repeat an error in your response, even to deny it. Simply say, “That’s not true. What is correct...”
- Irrelevant questions: If a reporter strays from the topic at hand or your area of expertise, say that’s outside your area of expertise.
- When asked at end of interview if there’s anything else you’d like to add, be sure to **ALWAYS** repeat your most important and quotable message.





Thank you!

Brad Christensen
Health Promotion Project Director
National Public Health Information Coalition
Phone: 770-509-5555
E-mail: bchristensen@nphic.org

Be sure to visit www.nphic.org
Annual memberships only \$75
The Media & You booklet with membership

