

Communicating *for Change*

4

Creating News that
Reaches Decision Makers



Communicating for Change | Module 4: Creating News that Reaches Decision Makers

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This manual was published by the Health ExChange Academy of the Center for Healthy Communities.

Special acknowledgments are given to the advocates and professionals who contributed to this manual including:

Kathy Bonk (Communications Consortium Media Center), Sana Chehimi (The Prevention Institute), Amy Cohen (Bay Area Environmental Health Collaborative), Joel Ervice (Regional Asthma Management and Prevention),

Barbara Grob (media consultant), Jenesse Miller (University of California), Jason Salzman (Cause Communications in Colorado), Amor Santiago (Healthy Silicon Valley), Lawrence Wallack (Portland State University), Ellen Wu (California Pan-Ethnic Health Network).

4

Communicating for Change

Creating News that Reaches Decision Makers



Center for Healthy Communities

Foreword

The California Endowment recognizes that no single policy or systems change will achieve our goals. Rather, we believe that many policy, system and organizational changes are necessary at the local, state and national levels to achieve these goals. We also believe that everyone has a role to play and that all organizations can contribute to a change process.

In order to help build the capacity of our partners to elevate our collective goals and put forth solutions, The Endowment's Communications and Public Affairs Department and the Center for Healthy Communities have developed *Communicating for Change* as part of the Center's Health ExChange Academy. The *Communicating for Change* series is designed to provide advocates with the resources they need to effectively use media advocacy and other strategic communications tools to ensure that their policy goals for improving the health of California's underserved communities remain in the spotlight.

Special thanks are due to the team at Berkeley Media Studies Group and all the other partners who participated in the design of this curriculum, which we hope will help you amplify your voices for change.

Sincerely,



Robert K. Ross, M.D.
*President and Chief Executive Officer
The California Endowment*

Curriculum Introduction

The California Endowment's *Communicating for Change* training series will help advocates learn to engage the news media strategically. Whether the goal is increasing state funding for physical education programs or requiring hospitals to provide language access services, advocates can harness the power of the news media to amplify their voices, reach policymakers, and advance their policy goals.

This seven-session training series, which combines advocacy case studies with hands-on activities and group worksheets, will help advocates develop the skills to engage the news media effectively. The goal is to learn how media advocacy strategies can best support policy-change efforts to create healthier communities.

This manual is for participants of the fourth training session of the *Communicating for Change* curriculum, Module 4: *Creating News that Reaches Decision Makers*. The topics for the other six training sessions are listed on the next page. We hope you enjoy this training and that it helps you reach your goals of creating healthier communities across California.

CURRICULUM OVERVIEW

Module 1: Making the Case for Health with Media Advocacy

Module 1 introduces how to use media advocacy strategically to advance policy. Participants will learn to recognize the news media's role in shaping debates on community health. They will clarify their overall strategy and learn how it relates to a media strategy, a message strategy, and a media access strategy. This will be the basis for subsequent trainings.

Module 2: Planning Ahead for Strategic Media Advocacy

Module 2 takes participants through each step of developing a media advocacy plan: setting goals and objectives, identifying strategies and tactics, assessing resources, determining timelines and specifying who will do what. Participants will learn to integrate communications planning organizationally and plan for timely, proactive news coverage.

Module 3: Shaping Public Debate with Framing and Messages

Module 3 explains framing—what it is and why it matters—and helps participants apply that knowledge to developing messages in advocacy campaigns. Participants will practice framing a range of community health issues to support policy change.

Module 4: Creating News that Reaches Decision Makers

Module 4 explores different news story elements so participants can get access to journalists by emphasizing what is newsworthy about their issue. Participants will explore how to create news, piggyback on breaking news, meet with editorial boards, submit op-eds and letters to the editor, and develop advocacy ads.

Module 5: Engaging Reporters to Advance Health Policy

Module 5 gives participants intensive practice being spokespeople for their issue, including on-camera training. Participants will learn to anticipate and practice answering the tough questions reporters ask.

Module 6: Targeting Audiences with New Communication Tools

Module 6 gives participants a tour of new communications tools, including blogs, e-flicks, and viral marketing, so they can tailor their advocacy communications to specific goals and audiences.

Module 7: Training Allies in Strategic Media Advocacy

In Module 7 those who want to train others in their organizations learn interactive techniques for teaching media advocacy.

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1

Introduction

Your advocacy campaign may include many communication tactics to reach your targeted decision makers, the people with the power to make the policy change you seek. Typically, advocates meet in person with decision makers, hold direct-action protests, organize and testify at legislative hearings, and conduct letter-writing campaigns, among other tactics. News coverage can strengthen the power of these actions by reaching decision makers who may not take notice of an issue or respond to advocates' demands outside the spotlight created by the media.

Every day, many important issues deserve our attention. By deciding which stories get widely told, journalists illuminate some problems while leaving others in the dark. This signals what is important, both to the public and policymakers. Community health advocates cannot afford to have their issues go unnoticed or to be caught unprepared when the events of the day catapult their issues into public discussion. This module focuses on developing a media access strategy so you can get attention when policy decisions are being made.

Getting your issue in the news, however, isn't enough. How the story is told matters too. For example, news coverage often focuses only on what individuals can do to improve their health, rather than considering what policies could be enacted to improve the health of an entire population. You want news coverage that supports and advances your efforts to improve community health. Your media access objectives, therefore, are to get media attention that:

- Will advance your advocacy goals;
- Will reach your targeted decision makers; and
- Appears at a time that can influence the policymaking process.

To create a media access strategy that meets these criteria, you must first develop your overall strategy, media strategy and message strategy. Your overall strategy clarifies the goal of your advocacy campaign, how you will reach it, and which targeted decision makers must act. Your media strategy identifies how and when media coverage might be an effective way to communicate with your target. Your message strategy involves deciding how you will frame the problem, what you will say and who

"If you don't like the news, go out and make some of your own."

— Scoop Nisker, news analyst

will say it. These layers of strategy are discussed in detail in the first three modules of this curriculum and listed in the Layers of Strategy table. We have also included a worksheet in the resource section of this manual to help your group discuss the key questions for each layer of strategy. Once the first three layers of strategy are in place, advocates can figure out how to attract news attention—the media access strategy.

Executing your media access strategy effectively means getting to know the media, preparing to make your case, seeking media attention, and making the most of any coverage you get. This module addresses these four themes. You will learn how to work effectively with journalists, emphasize the newsworthy angles of your story, create compelling story elements, and seize opportunities for getting your issue in the news.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES FOR MODULE 4

By the end of Module 4 participants will:

- **Recognize what makes a story newsworthy;**
 - **Be familiar with the professional needs of the news media;**
 - **Be prepared to link their overall strategy to a strategy for getting media attention;**
 - **Recognize the opportunities for creating news and piggybacking on current news; and**
 - **Have developed relationships with other California advocates.**
-

Successful media access strategies depend on well-thought-out overall strategies. But they also depend on having adequate resources. Few advocates have unlimited resources to proactively create news or even respond to journalists' calls. As you plan your media access strategies, be realistic about your staff capacity and budget constraints. Commit to what you know you can do but still outline a few tactics you would employ if circumstances changed. Knowing your overall advocacy goal and targets will help you prioritize your media efforts and put limited resources where they will count most. Throughout your campaign, evaluate your media access strategy and tactics based on how well each advances your policy goals.

MEDIA ADVOCACY LAYERS OF STRATEGY

OVERALL STRATEGY



- Define the problem you want to address.
- Clarify the policy solution for which you will advocate.
- Identify the target with the power to make that change.
- Name the allies who can help make your case.
- List the advocacy actions you will take to influence the target.

MEDIA STRATEGY



- Identify the best methods to communicate with your target.
- Decide whether or not engaging the media will advance your overall strategy.
- Find the media outlets that will best reach your target audiences.
- Compile the media tactics you will employ.

MESSAGE STRATEGY



- Frame the issue to reflect your values and support the policy goal.
- Create a message that describes the problem, the solution and why it matters.
- Develop a plan to assess and improve the effectiveness of your message.
- Decide who will convey your message.
- Identify the materials you will need to make your case.

MEDIA ACCESS STRATEGY



- Determine when media attention could affect the policy process.
- Figure out how you will gain access to the media.
- Prepare newsworthy story elements to offer reporters.
- Establish a plan for capturing and reusing coverage.

2

Getting to Know the Media

If you want to be taken seriously as a credible source for reporters, take the media seriously.

Your media advocacy efforts will be most effective if you spend time learning about the media before seeking coverage for your issue. We recommend getting to know the media by: exploring the range of available media outlets, identifying the right media outlets to reach your target audience, monitoring the selected sources, using bylines for a media contact database, and cultivating relationships with select reporters.

Explore the range of available media outlets.

Choose which media outlets to approach based on your policy goals, the targeted decision makers you are trying to reach, and who else must be mobilized to influence your target. First learn about the range of media outlets available, from national TV networks to radio talk shows, regional newspapers, trade publications, and popular Web sites. This chapter illustrates the range of options, as well as key contacts and the sample deadlines of each.

Identify the right media outlets for your target audiences.

If your target is a business leader, you may want contacts and news coverage at industry publications, local business newspapers, the Chamber of Commerce newsletter, and radio programs with a business focus. If possible, ask your target, or people who know your target, what news he or she reads, listens to or watches. Don't forget to ask if your target, or their staff members, follow particular Web logs. Blogs, written by political commentators, advocates, individuals, or even news outlets, have become a vital source of information and political discussions. Advocates can pitch their story ideas and issues directly to the host of the blog or often make posts themselves. Module 6 discusses the use of blogs in advocacy campaigns further.

Monitor selected media sources.

If you want to be taken seriously as a credible source for reporters, take the media seriously. Monitor news coverage to see who reports on your issues, what they cover, and how it could be expanded to include your perspective or policy solution. Since your goal is to get the attention of particular policymakers, monitor the media outlets they listen to, read,

or watch. As an advocate, you need to know what's in the news and how it's being discussed. This means reading the paper, watching the TV news, listening to radio news and viewing Web sites with a critical perspective. The Internet gives advocates many ways to monitor news coverage. Many news outlets post at least a selection of their stories on their own Web sites, often in a searchable database.

Advocates can sign up for automatic updates when new stories are posted on specific issues. If you have the computer capacity, you can sign up for RSS feeds to stream new content—such as TV news stories or new blog posts—directly to your email inbox. Free services such as Google News Alert help advocates track news coverage from multiple news outlets. Even traditional fee-based media content databases, such as LexisNexis, are easier to use with the Internet since advocates can now access the expansive database from their own computers. Services such as LexisNexis give advocates access to an expansive range of publications and allow for more complex, comprehensive searches.

Use bylines for a media contact database.

Use the news you monitor to create a list or database for all reporters covering your issue. Include names, affiliations and contact information. Note whether staff or allies have existing relationships with the contacts. In the back of this manual is a sample media contact worksheet. Advocates also can expand their media contact database by purchasing media directories and contact lists from specialized companies. These are available as printed directories, CD-roms and often as mailing labels. They list reporters by “beat” or interest area. Use your media list as a starting point for deciding who to contact when it's time to pitch a story. Advocates can update this list as they discover which reporters are still covering relevant issues and have responded to their media outreach.

Cultivate relationships with select reporters.

Every media advocate wants to become a trusted source for reporters. After you've identified one or two reporters who are most important to you (because they cover your issue or a related beat), ask to meet them. Beats are subject areas that news outlets cover and devote staff to, like health, politics, education, and environment. Fewer news outlets assign reporters to specialized beats these days but when they do, reporters can develop both expertise and valuable relationships with sources. An opportune time to contact reporters is after they've done a story you think is important. Email them and tell them why you think so. Ask if they'd meet you for lunch or coffee to talk about the issue more,

but don't be put off if they say no at first. Many reporters are on tight daily deadlines that limit their time to meet casually with potential sources. Take advantage of any opportunity to get to know a reporter. For example, many news outlets assign reporters to cover policy issues through their capital bureau. Introduce yourself when you see them at policy hearings or meetings. Take the opportunity to explain that your organization has something to offer on this issue—data, good sources, interesting perspectives and policy expertise. Think about how you can help a reporter do their job well. You can cut down the time they need to research a piece by providing reliable data or linking them to knowledgeable spokespeople.

MONITORING MEDIA COVERAGE

Monitor selected news sources so you know when they report on your issue, what they say, and who does the reporting. You can do this by subscribing to the newspaper, watching TV news, and listening to the radio news programs. You can also monitor the media electronically by using key word searches on selected sites that send results via email. Start with the Web sites of selected outlets or services such as Google News or Google Alerts. Pay attention to how your issue is covered and by whom. Both types of information will help you know how to prepare your case effectively for news coverage.

1. IS YOUR ISSUE BEING COVERED?

You need to know whether or not your issue is in the news.

2. IF NOT, ARE OTHER ISSUES BEING COVERED THAT RELATE TO YOUR ISSUE?

It is often possible to piggyback on a related topic to attract attention to your issue.

3. WHAT ARE THE MAIN THEMES AND ARGUMENTS PRESENTED ON VARIOUS SIDES OF THE ISSUE?

If your issue is covered, it's important to consider how it's covered so that you can better anticipate how it will be covered in the future and how to help shape or "frame" that coverage.

4. WHO IS REPORTING ON YOUR ISSUE OR STORIES RELATED TO IT?

Be sure to note the names of journalists who are reporting comprehensively on the subject, as well as those who need more information to improve their reporting.

5. WHO ARE APPEARING AS SPOKESPEOPLE ON YOUR ISSUE?

Knowing who is speaking on the issue can help you identify gaps to be filled and anticipate arguments you'll need to counter.

6. WHO IS WRITING OP-ED PIECES OR LETTERS TO THE EDITOR ON YOUR ISSUE? WHICH SIDE ARE THEY TAKING?

Opinion pieces have particular impact because these sections are considered to reveal the “pulse” of the community. Policymakers often turn to opinion sections to see what the community is concerned about and what positions people are taking.

7. ARE ANY SOLUTIONS PRESENTED TO THE PROBLEM?

Often news focuses on the problem without presenting solutions, or presents solutions you don’t agree with. Knowing this helps you plan how best to inform journalists about what you think should be done about your issue.

8. WHO IS NAMED OR IMPLIED AS HAVING RESPONSIBILITY FOR SOLVING THE PROBLEM? IS YOUR TARGET NAMED IN THE COVERAGE?

You will need to know whether the news spotlight is already fixed on your target or whether getting that attention will be one of your challenges.

9. WHAT STORIES, FACTS OR PERSPECTIVES COULD HELP IMPROVE THE CASE FOR YOUR SIDE?

While advocates tend to put a lot of faith in facts, they must be combined with compelling stories that illustrate the need for the policy solution.

10. WHAT'S MISSING FROM THE NEWS COVERAGE OF YOUR ISSUE?

An important part of monitoring the media is applying your intimate knowledge of the issue to determine what is not there that should be. Knowing what's missing will help you fill these gaps in your future media work.

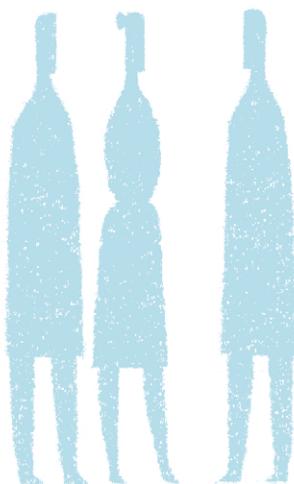
This table was adapted from *News for a Change: An Advocate's Guide to Working with the Media*, 1999.

EXPLORING YOUR MEDIA OUTLET OPTIONS

In developing your media access strategies, there is a range of media outlets to consider approaching, from national TV network news to radio talk shows and regional newspapers. As you identify which outlets will reach your target audience, find out more about how they function. Meet the people who work at various news outlets and ask:

- Who makes story assignment decisions?
- Which reporters cover beats related to your issue?
- When are the deadlines?
- Who is their audience and how does that affect content decisions?

You can also buy some of this information in published media directories and databases for print, broadcast and online media. The directories are designed to keep people abreast of media staff contacts, deadlines and guidelines for coverage. Some public libraries have media directories; check yours if you don't have the budget to purchase them.



In the resource section you will find worksheets to help you track your media outlet decisions and individual media contacts. You will also find a sample list of California media outlets, wire services and media resources. Given the increasing importance of the ethnic media in California, we have included a separate sidebar on working with ethnic media.

Finally, we list common deadlines for each type of outlet, but in many cases you'll be working with a reporter on a story days or weeks before it runs.

Television and Radio

NATIONAL BROADCAST TV NETWORK NEWS

Network television news remains one of the most coveted types of media coverage because it reaches so many people at once. The national networks all have evening news broadcasts and primetime, magazine-style news shows. Examples include "NBC Nightly News," CBS' "60 Minutes" and ABC's "World News Tonight." Given that news segments rarely last more than two minutes, it can be challenging to get network correspondents to cover your issue in much depth. Still, the national network news can be an attractive outlet because millions of people, including policymakers, watch it. These outlets are extremely hard to access because they get mountains of media kits every day. If you have breaking, hard news your chances of coverage improve.

NATIONAL CABLE TV NEWS

The national cable news channels such as CNN and MSNBC devote all their air time to news and current events shows, so they may be more receptive than their broadcast network counterparts to a broader range of news stories, longer features, and intriguing angles on the hot issues of the day. Because they have more time to fill, they have room for more stories. These networks reach a broad audience as well, though not as large as broadcast does.

TV TALK SHOWS

This broad category ranges from politically focused talk shows to morning programs that combine hard news segments with entertainment segments. Examples include PBS' "The News Hour with Jim Lehrer," ABC's "Good Morning America," CNN's "Paula Zahn Now," FOX's "Hannity and Colmes," and NBC's "Meet the Press" and "Today Show." Talk shows may allow a longer discussion of your policy issue, but make sure you know the style and format of the show before agreeing to participate. Many of these shows thrive on extreme controversy. You don't want to be surprised by a hostile host or a panel of guests opposing your position.

LOCAL TV NEWS/PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Local news is a good way to reach local targets like city council members, business owners or school board members. Most local stations are affiliated with national networks or cable outlets, which provide syndicated shows and national news reports. Local stations often also produce their own local news programs. The NBC affiliate in San Jose (KNTV), for example, has a news room and public affairs staff dedicated to reporting the news in the greater San Francisco Bay Area. KNTV's newscasts combine stories it gets from the national network and what it produces locally. Smaller stations often struggle to produce local news with increasingly limited resources, which may make them receptive to your pitch.

NATIONAL RADIO

Radio news programs are a great way to reach target audiences who consume news during their morning and evening “drive time” commutes. The major national radio networks are National Public Radio (NPR), CNN, ABC, CBS and Clear Channel. These outlets tend to have regular news updates and anchor-driven programming, such as NPR’s “Morning Edition” and “All Things Considered.”

LOCAL RADIO

Each media market is home to several local radio stations, which may have news reporters on staff and airtime devoted to public affairs shows. Stations affiliated with the national networks may carry both national and local news programming. NPR affiliates, for example, play national programming punctuated by local news, weather and traffic as well as statewide programs like the “California Report” and hour-long call-in programs such as “Health Dialogues” and “Forum.” You may pitch stories to both the local and national news programs if your issue has a newsworthy angle appropriate for both audiences.

KEY CONTACTS

Assignment Editor: Coordinates the day-to-day assignment of stories; good contact for breaking news, especially at local television stations.

News Director: Determines overall mission and what kind of news is produced, provides general leadership for the news department and accountability to the rest of the station, suggests story topics.

News Manager: Supervises assignment desk and reporters, approves scripts, coordinates resources with other stations, and participates in daily and long-range planning of news.



Incorporating Ethnic Media Outlets into a Media Advocacy Strategy

Consider whether your media advocacy strategy should include outreach to the ethnic media by determining whether the decision makers you are targeting, and the people who can influence those decision makers, pay attention to the communities served by ethnic media outlets. If so, you should too.

Chances are your issue will be important in communities and organizations that rely on ethnic media outlets. Given the demographic trends in California, chances are also good that your targeted policymaker answers to constituents that favor ethnic media outlets. Many health advocates, therefore, will decide to make outreach to ethnic media outlets a core component of their media advocacy strategy.

In the last census, 53 percent of Californians, or 18 million people, identified themselves as non-white, with 40 percent speaking a language other than English at home¹. According to Sandy Close, founder of New America Media (NAM), the largest nationwide association of ethnic media organizations, half of California's new majority depends on ethnic media for their news. Nationwide, the ethnic media reach 51 million people, about a quarter of the U.S. adult population.²

"Ethnic media outlets are the most trusted advocacy voice on behalf of communities that might otherwise be voiceless—communities that don't have sufficient political representation," says Close. Pilar Marrero, columnist for the daily Spanish-language newspaper *La Opinion*, explains that ethnic media outlets have "a point of view—and it is the point of view of 'us' instead of reporting about 'them.' We report about our community and its relationship to the broader community and society."³ "Ethnic media are the best-kept secret in community organizing," says NAM's Sandy Close.

Policymakers have also taken notice of the increasing reach and role of ethnic media outlets. In Los Angeles, for example, it would be hard to imagine a policymaker not monitoring and actively reaching out to the Spanish-language TV station Univision, which has a larger audience than any of the English-speaking stations. In recent years, ethnic media outlets have played an important role in mobilizing ethnic communities in moments of policy change and public health disaster. For example,

- During the immigration reform debates in March 2006, Spanish-language radio played a critical role in mobilizing thousands of advocates to join demonstrations that took place in many U.S. cities.
- After Hurricane Katrina struck New Orleans in 2005, Vietnamese radio broadcast in-language, round-the-clock announcements, enabling thousands of displaced refugees to access aid and shelters in Texas.

Public health officials and policymakers also have a responsibility to reach out to the ethnic media in times of crisis. When *E. coli* bacteria found in spinach initiated a nationwide panic in fall 2006 and the product was pulled from grocery stores and restaurants nationwide, many Asian businesses continued to sell it for days. The FDA had neglected to communicate about the potential health crisis to ethnic media.⁴ In developing your media strategy, remember that ethnic media outlets can be helpful in reaching both the targeted policymaker directly and the potential allies that can be mobilized to put pressure on that target. Depending on your goals, you may choose to reach out to outlets ranging from neighborhood newsletters to statewide agenda-setting outlets.

If the ethnic media can help you reach targeted communities and policymakers, the next step is to start making inroads to these news organizations. Perhaps no single organization has greater expertise in facilitating partnerships with ethnic media than New America Media, a collective voice for a rapidly growing media sector. NAM's goal is to "promote the editorial visibility and economic viability of this critical sector of American journalism as a way to build inclusive public discourse" in an increasingly diverse society. New America Media does this by:

- Organizing events to give ethnic media direct access to decision makers in government, business, universities, foundations and nonprofits;
- Producing and aggregating editorial content from and for the ethnic media sector;
- Developing marketing services on behalf of corporations, foundations and nonprofits who are targeting ethnic media and ethnic communities; and
- Distributing multilingual polling to bring the voices of ethnic audiences into national focus.

NAM's Web site (www.newamericamedia.org) can help you start becoming familiar with ethnic media outlets. NAM publishes a directory (and maintains an online version) of ethnic media organizations that can help you find media outlets that reach the specific populations with the greatest influence on your policy change target.

The following are a few of NAM's tips for working with ethnic media:

- Find out the ethnic media news organizations in your area and develop relationships with them. Once you establish relationships with ethnic media practitioners, communicate with them on a regular basis, not just when you have news to pitch.
- Target your event, story or news release to specific ethnic media audiences. Tailor generic information (statistics, studies, etc.) whenever possible to make it relevant to ethnic communities.
- Find ways to partner with and engage ethnic media practitioners in your work. Ethnic media in many ways are like community-based organizations with a mandate to publicize.
- Create opportunities for ethnic media to access decision makers and experts in the areas you work on. Teleconference calls, newsmaker briefings, roundtable exchanges that solicit ethnic media perspectives work well.
- Cross the language barrier and provide translations whenever possible.
- Provide ethnic media with a list of your own staff experts whom they can call when they need information on the issues you cover. See if you can find representatives from their community who could illustrate your issues.⁵

As with any journalist, establishing and maintaining a relationship is key. Use NAM's resources to identify and meet the reporters at ethnic media outlets that reach the community members your target listens to. The ethnic media can help everyone join in the public conversation about creating healthy communities.

¹ "California's Changing Audience." The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer, October 14, 2002. Accessed at http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/media/july-dec02/ethnic_10-14.html

² "Ethnic Media in America: The Giant Hidden in Plain Sight." New America Media and Bendixen & Associates, June 7, 2005. Accessed at <http://www.ncmonline.com/polls/executivesummary.pdf>

³ Excerpted from an interview on WETA Radio 90.9 FM, Washington, D.C., November 15, 2006.

⁴ "When Disaster Strikes Ethnic Media Mobilizes." New America Media, October 30, 2006. Accessed at <http://www.newamericamedia.org>

⁵ Excerpted from "Ten Tips for Working with Ethnic Media." New America Media, September 2006.

News Planner: Suggests story topics, sets up stories, collects story elements and conducts research and pre-interviews by phone.

Producer: The executive producer is roughly equivalent to the managing editor at a newspaper. The story producer researches, writes, interviews and oversees the camera crew for TV stories, and may work closely with a specific reporter. The show producer decides which stories will appear on the news and in what order, and works closely with the writers who create the anchor's scripts.

Reporters: TV reporters appear on air reporting the news and are generally the main gatherers of that news. If they are “general assignment” reporters it may make sense to pitch only breaking news, but if the station has a dedicated health, political, or consumer reporter, it may be more effective to establish a relationship and pitch more in-depth stories on an ongoing basis. Radio reporters are often behind the scenes gathering the news, conducting interviews and recording audio for pre-recorded segments.

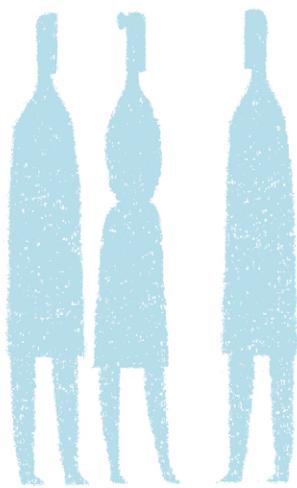
Public Service Announcement (PSA) Director: Contact at radio and TV stations responsible for airing PSA and other community messages.

Public Affairs Director: Contact at local radio and television stations who books guests from community organizations to describe their events and activities during segments that last anywhere from a few minutes up to an hour; the FCC requires a certain amount of airtime to be devoted to this as part of broadcast licensing (not required of print media and other outlets that do not use public airwaves).

DEADLINES

The deadlines for TV and radio vary depending on whether you are trying to pitch your story to the news department or, for example, a weekly talk show. Find out the deadlines for each outlet and type of program you want to approach by contacting the producer or reporter for that program.

Pitch stories you want covered that day early in the morning, if possible before the morning story meeting held at 9 or 10 a.m. in many newsrooms. Hold news conferences in the late morning, after the morning meeting but well before the afternoon deadlines, because reporters need time to gather the story elements (interviews, etc.) and return to the station in time to put the story together for the broadcast. Many TV stations have multiple news broadcasts each day, providing different opportunities for coverage: morning, noon,



early evening, and a final late-night report. The lead time needed depends on the type of story being produced: breaking news is reported quickly while reporters may take a few days to research an in-depth policy or health story. In general, the deadline to finish a show is two hours before airtime. Don't call during or immediately before a broadcast unless you have major breaking news. TV reporters and editors are busiest in the late afternoon before the evening newscasts.

Newspapers

DAILY NEWSPAPERS

Gaining coverage of your topic by major daily newspapers is still a critical way to convince decision makers that your issue should be at the top of their priority list. Depending on your focus, you may approach national newspapers (*USA Today, The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, The Washington Post*), California newspapers that reach opinion leaders outside their geographic circulation (*Los Angeles Times or Sacramento Bee*), and regional newspapers that are read by local elected officials and their constituents (*San Jose Mercury News, San Francisco Chronicle, Orange County Register, Fresno Bee*, etc.).

COMMUNITY NEWSPAPERS

Many communities across California have weekly or monthly newspapers that are read by community residents, local business owners and regional policymakers. These can be important outlets for building awareness of your issue, increasing community support for your solution, and reaching local decision makers.

KEY CONTACTS

Managing Editor: Supervises editors and, usually with a team of editors, decides which stories get published on the front page.

Editor(s): Coordinates and assigns stories for a particular section including news, business, features and opinion sections. City editors handle news assignments for the urban area; newspapers may have editors responsible for entertainment, arts, sports, etc.

Reporters: Gather information and write stories. Cultivate relationships with reporters who are responsible for beats connected to your issue such as health, politics, crime and metro news, or those who have covered a related issue recently. (See "Cultivate relationships with select reporters" on page 5.)

Calendar Editor: Responsible for events listings and announcements, and often a vital source of free publicity. A one-page release specifying

just the basics of your event is the most effective way to communicate with this contact.

Freelance Writers: Freelancers generally write for a variety of publications. Many editors have a regular group of freelancers with whom they work frequently. Establish relationships with freelancers in the same way you do with an outlet's staff writers. Freelancers are often more likely to have a special interest in, and more time to get to know, your organization.

DEADLINES

For breaking news, pitch as early as possible the morning before the day you'd like your story to run. Special sections in the Sunday edition may require submissions by late afternoon on the Wednesday before. Weekly papers often prefer story ideas three or four days before they go to print. Find out the deadlines for different sections you want to approach by contacting the editor or reporter for that section.

Wire Services

NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL

Wire services file news around the clock to subscribers such as daily newspapers, radio stations, television stations, online Web sites and commercial customers. Wire services provide content in a variety of formats including print news, graphics, audio and video. Media outlets subscribe to wire services, paying a fee to receive wire stories along with permission to reprint or broadcast these stories as part of their coverage. If your story appears on a wire service, it may get picked up by many of its subscribers, which can include hundreds of newspapers, broadcast outlets and Web sites around the country. The best-known, largest and oldest wire service is Associated Press, with bureaus in almost every media market in the United States. Other wires work like syndication services tied to specific newspaper groups, such as Gannett, Knight Ridder, Copley, and Pacific News Service.

"Day books" are the daily listings wire services compile of all news events taking place that day. They are extremely important for successful news conferences because assignment editors read them every morning to help plan where they will send their reporters to gather news. Send media advisories with information about your news event to the day book editors at Associated Press and other selected wire services.

Find out the key contacts and deadlines for each wire service you want to approach. The resource list in the back of this manual lists contact information for many wire services.

Another resource for advocates is PR Newswire, a commercial firm that feeds news releases into newsrooms for a fee. Advocates can use PR Newswire to send information to a wide variety of media outlets quickly. Fees depend on the amount of information you want wired to their national network.

Magazines

NATIONAL

Weekly magazines that may fit into your media advocacy strategy include publications such as *Newsweek*, *Time*, *U.S. News and World Report*, *The Atlantic Monthly* and *The New Yorker*. Some focus on breaking political news, while others provide longer coverage of a wider range of social or policy issues.

REGIONAL/LOCAL

These magazines are often monthly or quarterly and may be a good place to pitch stories of interest to local community decision makers like mayors or city council members. Examples include *San Francisco Magazine* or *Los Angeles Magazine*.

KEY CONTACTS

Editor: Coordinates and assigns stories for his or her section of a magazine. Regional magazine editors handle news assignments for urban areas; publications may also have editors responsible for entertainment, arts, health, sports, business, etc.

Reporters: Finding the right reporter at a magazine can be tricky; magazines have fewer staff writers than newspapers, and even fewer writers assigned to specific beats. Many rely on freelancers for their copy. Be familiar with your target magazine and identify a reporter who covers your issue or issues similar to yours.

DEADLINES

Monthly magazines can require three to six months lead time. Many weekly magazines that hit the newsstands on Mondays are already in production by Thursday the week before. For most magazine stories, you may need to pitch the idea several weeks—sometimes months—in advance. Find out the deadlines and key contacts for each outlet you want to approach by contacting the editors of the sections at the magazine.

Professional or Trade Press

Getting to know your target will help clarify whether you need to include any trade publications or professional journals in your media outreach plans. For example, if you are trying to get local business leaders to adopt a health promoting policy, you may want to approach the *East Bay Business Times* or try to get an article in the local chamber of commerce newsletter. If you are trying to change a school board policy, you may want coverage in the regional PTA newsletter or the newsletter of the National School Boards Association. Find out what your targets subscribe to and determine if that outlet would be a good way to get their attention. For example, in a campaign to make restaurants smoke-free, advocates purchased ads in *Nation's Restaurant News* and *Restaurant Business*.

Internet

Most major news outlets also provide some of their news content online, in the form of printed news stories, audio and/or video files. Some content can be downloaded as a podcast, allowing people to watch or listen to it at their convenience. Major news stations also produce some news content for their Web sites, or at least provide links to related resources or past coverage that would not be available in a traditional broadcast or print version. In addition, Web sites such as Slate.com and Salon.com produce news and opinion pieces exclusively for the Web. Find out what blogs are read by key reporters and policymakers in your area. Then pitch your policy issue to those bloggers. Often issues that first appear on blogs or Web-only news sites such as Salon and Slate will later resurface in traditional news outlets. Web sites such as Rough and Tumble, CNN, Yahoo, MSNBC and Google News that provide headlines and quick news summaries offer a way to track breaking news stories throughout the day.

Most newspapers and TV stations now have online editorial staff that choose the content for the Web site, though the stories are often written or produced by the reporters working in print or TV. You can pitch stories directly to the Web version of the news outlet as well as news outlets that have only Web sites. On blogs you can add a post to an ongoing conversation or send an email to the blogger the way you would pitch any other reporter.

The bottom line is to get to know what outlets your target, and those who have influence with your target, pay attention to. Then, find out the deadlines and key contacts for each outlet you want to approach.

NEWSWORTHINESS

Becoming a trusted source for reporters takes a familiarity with the news outlets, an investment in building relationships, and an understanding of what reporters need professionally. Reporters are more likely to be interested in and able to tell your story, for example, if it meet the tenets of newsworthiness.

The issue you work on is important to advancing the health of communities; otherwise you would not be working so hard. But journalists cannot possibly cover every important issue. To get in the news you have to offer a story that is interesting, as well as important.

- **What would make your story compelling, timely, and meaningful to the audience of the news outlet?**
- **Could you describe your issue in a way that maximizes newsworthy traits such as: controversy or conflict, broad public interest, injustice, irony, a local angle, a personal angle, a breakthrough, an anniversary or seasonal link, a celebrity, or compelling visuals?**

The more newsworthy traits your story has, the greater the chance a reporter will want to cover it.

NEWSWORTHY ELEMENTS

| | |
|--|--|
| CONTROVERSY / CONFLICT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What drama or controversy do you want to highlight? • What is at stake? For whom? • Should a business, institution or government agency be doing something differently? • Are rules or regulations being violated? • Who is benefiting from this problem not being solved? • Who is losing out? How? <p>Example: Advocates appeal and draw media attention to HMO decisions to retroactively deny coverage to patients once they become ill.</p> | IRONY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is ironic about this story? • Is there a contradiction to point out between how things should work and how they are really happening? • Is there hypocrisy to reveal? <p>Example: <i>Where's the Fruit?</i>, a study released by the Strategic Alliance, played up the irony—and hypocrisy—of companies using fruit on labels but not in the products themselves.</p> |
|--|--|

To get in the news you have to offer a story that is interesting, as well as important.

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| <p>INJUSTICE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is inequitable or unfair about a particular situation? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - About the decision of an institution or government agency? - About the treatment of a vulnerable group? • Is this injustice serious enough for the media to adopt an ongoing watchdog roll? <p>Example:</p> <p>Advocates use a report showing that low-income communities of color are more likely to be exposed to air pollution to demand that local regulators restrict new pollution permits.</p> |
| <p>ANNIVERSARY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can your story be connected to the anniversary of a local, national, or historical milestone? • Was legislation or a regulation passed previously that has made a difference to this problem or should have? • Does the anniversary offer the opportunity to ask what happened then and where are we now? • What progress has been, or should have been made? <p>Example:</p> <p>One year after Hurricane Katrina ravaged New Orleans, California news stories ranged from coverage of individual stories of struggle, to investigations of government failings, to the <i>Sacramento Bee</i> article that took a very local angle on the theme by running a front-page story called “Tempting Fate: Still Awash in Doubt” about the risk of flooding being faced by Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta residents.</p> |
| <p>LOCAL ANGLE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What about your story is important to local residents or the targeted outlet’s audience? • Are there any local angles to a national story? <p>Example:</p> <p>A local school board decides to remove sodas from schools just as national beverage companies adopt a voluntary code to limit soda availability in schools. The school board’s decision, made in the context of the national news, prompts coverage by a local news outlet.</p> |
| <p>BROAD PUBLIC INTEREST</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does this story affect a lot of people, or does it relate to groups of special concern such as children or the elderly? • How can your story emphasize the aspects of your issue that are important, interesting or appealing to the broadest number of viewers or readers? <p>Example:</p> <p>Advocates working to secure universal health insurance in California highlight how many people in a variety of circumstances across the state have been without health insurance at some point in the past few years.</p> |

| | | |
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| SEASONAL/ HOLIDAY LINK | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What about your story, issue, or policy goal can be connected to a holiday or seasonal event? <p>Example:</p> <p>The Orange County Community Foundation used Valentine's Day as an opportunity to pitch stories about its donations to a free clinic to start a new program called <i>Mi Corazon/Mi Vida</i> (My Heart/My Life), which will provide services to reduce women's risks for heart disease. Environmental advocates also used Valentine's Day to highlight the high use of dangerous pesticides in flower production. Gay rights advocates used the holiday to stage a protest in front of San Francisco City Hall, where two years before they had been allowed to marry.</p> | |
| BREAKTHROUGH/ MILESTONE | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the story mark an important medical, political, or historical "first"? • Can you make the case that given a particular event, decision, or action, things will never be the same on this issue or in your community? <p>Example:</p> <p>The adoption of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) by the World Health Organization was framed as a milestone in the history of corporate accountability and public health. After three years of negotiations, 192 countries agreed to the adoption of the first-ever global public health treaty.</p> | |
| PERSONAL ANGLE | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a person who can serve as a representative example of a broader problem—a person with direct experience with the issue who can provide an authentic voice in the story? • Is that person prepared to talk to a reporter about the problem in a manner that emphasizes the necessary policy solutions? <p>Example:</p> <p>Mothers residing near the port of Long Beach became effective advocates when they decided to talk publicly about the toll air pollution takes on their families and the need for policy solutions.</p> | |
| CELEBRITY | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do any celebrities support your issue and policy goal? • Would they be willing to lend a hand to your efforts? • If you are able to form a partnership with celebrities, will the relationship be worthwhile—and predictable? <p>Example:</p> <p>Former Pittsburgh Steelers' running back Jerome Bettis has used his celebrity status to promote asthma education and treatment. He asks those with asthma to take the "Asthma Control Test" and talk to their doctor if their asthma is not under control.</p> | |

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| VISUALS | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What compelling visuals would explain the problem and policy goals? <p>Example:</p> <p>Childcare teachers show up at a state budget hearing with dozens of preschool children bearing signs in support of their teachers. The slogans on their signs, such as "Support our teachers so they can support us," clearly link to the policy goal of increasing teacher salaries.</p> |
|----------------|---|

This table was adapted from *News for A Change: An Advocate's Guide to Working with the Media*, 1999.

EVEN THE BEST STORIES FACE TOUGH COMPETITION

At its core, news is a competition. There are more stories on any given day than there are reporters to cover them, meaning even the best stories face tough competition. You may have an imminently newsworthy story to tell, but the chances of it getting news attention will depend in part on what else is happening that day. That is why it's all the more important you make your issue as newsworthy as possible.

3

Preparing to Make Your Case

To prepare to make your case to reporters, collect the materials created for other advocacy strategies such as meeting with decision makers, testifying at hearings and mobilizing your allies. How can these materials be revised to serve your media advocacy goals? Use them as your starting point to develop internal materials to prepare your allies and public materials to distribute to reporters.

For advocates, create materials that they can use to prepare for discussions with policymakers or contact with the media, including:

- ***Talking points*** tailored for each type of spokesperson.
- ***A tip sheet*** with answers to frequently asked and hard questions.
- ***Sample letters to the editor or opinion pieces.***

For reporters, prepare materials to include in media kits or to send them after an interview or as background on the issue such as:

- ***Fact sheets*** that describe your issue and policy solution.
- ***A briefing sheet*** with quotes from allies, political leaders, and organizations on why they support this approach.
- ***A contact sheet*** with information on your organization and each spokesperson.
- ***A Web site*** providing easy access to reports, press materials, and news clippings. (For more on creating a press-friendly Web site, see the Fenton Communications publication *A Room with a Viewpoint: How to Create an Online Press Center that Reporters Return to Again and Again*, 2006.)
- ***Compelling story elements*** including: authentic voices to make your case, media bites that provide newsworthy quotes, social math that communicates your data in accessible ways, and visuals that illustrate the problem and policy solution.
- ***A media advisory and press release*** for specific news events.

By developing story elements before talking with reporters, advocates can help reporters tell the story in ways that illustrate the advocate's frame.

Good stories have a scene, a plot, action, and characters, even stories about policy.

Many organizations use variations on the materials listed above for different audiences: their own coalition members, others they are trying to recruit to the advocacy work, or decision makers they are trying to influence. But when designed for reporters, or for advocates who are using them to talk with reporters, the materials should highlight the elements that reporters can use as they develop stories.

STORY ELEMENTS

Reporters tell stories more than they describe general issues. For example, a story about a family struggling to pay for asthma medications holds more interest than a news piece simply discussing the high price of medications. But as we know from framing research, a story that focuses too narrowly on individuals won't help the audience understand the policy or environmental factors at work. Learn to talk about your issue using stories that not only provide dramatic elements reporters need to tell stories, but also support the social and policy changes you want to see. Good stories have a scene, a plot, action, and characters, even stories about policy.

- **What struggle or event will you describe?**
- **Where does it take place?**
- **Who is involved?**
- **What is at stake?**
- **What story elements can help illustrate your case?**

Story elements are the pieces that reporters put together to tell a story—a picture, an interesting fact, a compelling statement from a source. By developing story elements before talking with reporters, advocates can help reporters tell the story in ways that illustrate the advocate's frame. You can't control how the reporter frames the issue, but you can control who you put forward to make your case, what they say, and how they illustrate the problem and solution. Think about what you can provide to reporters to help them tell an interesting story that supports your overall policy goal using four story elements: authentic voices, media bites, social math, and visuals.

Authentic Voices

Authentic voices are spokespeople who can provide a unique perspective on the problem and need for the solution based on their personal or professional life experiences. They might have suffered from the problem directly (typically referred to as “victims” or “real people” by reporters). Or they might have other direct experience, as researchers, business people, service providers, or community members. Think carefully about the range of authentic voices you can prepare to make your case because, as the saying goes, “the messenger is the message.” News professionals and your targeted decision makers will respond to who is speaking, not just to what they say. Once you have cultivated and trained the right spokespeople, they can make your case in a variety of settings, from community meetings and policy hearings to press events.

TIPS FOR IDENTIFYING AND PREPARING AUTHENTIC VOICES

- 1. Cultivate authentic voices among your allies early.** Being strategic means not waiting until a reporter calls or a policy hearing date is set to look for spokespeople. Build your advocacy strength by cultivating a range of allies—individuals and organizations—who can lend their political weight and public support to your efforts by speaking publicly. Consider who will have credibility explaining the causes of the problem, the consequences, who is affected, and why the policy solution makes sense. Remember, you will need more than people who have suffered from the problem to frame your case effectively. Brainstorm who can make the case, and prepare them to respond to the hard questions they may face in policy hearings or reporter interviews.
- 2. Consider your target.** Who are the decision makers with the power to make the change you want to see? Who will they listen to? If you are trying to reach a governor who responds to the concerns of the Chamber of Commerce, for example, cultivate business people or financial experts as allies and spokespeople. You may rely on different authentic voices depending on the setting, audience or immediate goal. Your community mobilization efforts, for example, may call for different spokespeople than your testimony at a policy hearing.
- 3. Sketch out the storyline and who will present it.** Once you know what case you need to make, figure out who will say what. Researchers and government spokespeople can present public health data. Policy experts can affirm the feasibility of your solution. People directly affected by the problem can become effective spokespeople by linking their

experience to the need for a population-wide policy solution. Prepare a contact sheet for reporters with a range of spokespeople and a few sentences describing each person's area of expertise.

4. Coordinate the messages. Your message briefly explains the problem, solution and why it matters. Not every spokesperson has to say exactly the same thing, but they have to mean the same thing. Their statements should reflect a shared understanding of what causes the problem, what policy change will solve it, and why it matters. Since authentic voices are speaking from their own personal perspective they may have different reasons for supporting the policy. Be sure they articulate those reasons in a way that supports your overall strategy.

5. Prepare spokespeople to make the case with confidence. Don't hand a reporter the name of a patient, client, or researcher who hasn't been trained to answer hard questions and link their personal story to the policy goal. Making a smooth transition from a question about personal responsibility to an answer that includes institutional accountability takes practice. Anticipate the hard questions and prepare possible responses ahead of time. For each spokesperson, consider: Are they prepared to be interviewed? What stories can they tell? What areas can they speak to, and what questions should they refer to others? After you have identified your range of authentic voices, be sure they are prepared for talking with reporters in different settings (TV, radio, newspaper) or in different venues (public hearings, neighborhood meetings, etc.). Help them practice answering tough questions, out loud and with feedback.

Authentic voices can pitch stories to a reporter and respond to their questions. But that's not all they can do. They can be spokespeople at events such as policy hearings or at visits with potential financial contributors. That is why it is so important to prepare them well. Module 5 of this curriculum is designed to do just that. Once trained, of course, authentic voices have to have something to say.

BRAINSTORMING A RANGE OF AUTHENTIC VOICES

Take a moment to identify the range of authentic voices that could speak for your campaign. For example, imagine a group of advocates that are planning on doing a news conference to showcase a new study showing unacceptable levels of air pollution in a community. The advocates want to demonstrate that air pollution aggravates asthma and to push the local air quality regulators to tighten their permit process. Who could speak to reporters about this? Let's take a look at some possible options:

A RESEARCHER WHO STUDIED THE PROBLEM

A researcher can explain the health consequences of air pollution using clear, easy to understand terms. Because of his or her research background, this authentic voice adds credibility to the group's findings and demands.

A DOCTOR WITH EXPERTISE IN AIR QUALITY

Using stories from his or her own practice, a doctor can describe the impact of air pollution on the public's health, describing, for example, the role that air pollution plays in the onset of asthma or the development of cancer. Such "white coat credibility" can be very powerful.

A COMMUNITY RESIDENT

Community residents can elucidate the daily realities and ramifications of living with air pollution. If the researcher provides a birds-eye view of the situation, the community resident can speak to what the situation is like at the neighborhood level. Someone who is personally affected by a problem—and can talk about how the problem affects his or her family and community—has a moral authority that can considerably strengthen the call for solutions.

A PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT REPRESENTATIVE

A health officer can talk about the broad public health issues related to air pollution. For example, asthma prevalence or hospitalization rates may be higher in an affected area. Such information helps make the case that the problems associated with air pollution are widespread.

A LOCAL BUSINESS LEADER

Perhaps not the most likely ally, but there may be a case to be made that air pollution is making the overall quality of life in the area so poor that it threatens the region's ability to attract new businesses, employees, and jobs. Or perhaps business owners are concerned about the lost work productivity due to employees being out sick with breathing problems. It's important to look for and support such non-traditional allies, as they make the story more newsworthy.

A POLICY EXPERT OR POLICYMAKER

If you are proposing policy solutions, you will want professionals who can speak to the feasibility and cost effectiveness of your proposals.

This isn't an exhaustive list; different authentic voices could be used depending upon the issue at hand or the specific circumstances of a news event. Figuring out that mix is part of the challenge—and the fun! Take a minute to brainstorm potential authentic voices for your campaign and what each could say.

AUTHENTIC VOICE:

COULD DESCRIBE:

AUTHENTIC VOICE:

COULD DESCRIBE:

AUTHENTIC VOICE:

COULD DESCRIBE:

Media Bites

Reporters face serious time and space constraints in their stories. No matter how complicated your issue, only a few sentences from the most compelling spokespeople are likely to appear in any given story. Your challenge is to be strategic in what you say to increase the chance that your most important points are quoted.

In Module 3, we described the process of establishing a frame and a core message to support your policy goal. Your media bites are based on that foundation. The core message answers three questions: What is the problem? What is the policy solution? Why does it matter? Media bites communicate that core message, but may be tailored to respond to a specific hard question or be shortened to emphasize one key point.

Brainstorm media bites with colleagues by listing typical questions a reporter might ask. Then, apply the tips below to try out different ways to describe the problem, the solution, and what is at stake.

TIPS FOR CREATING MEDIA BITES

- 1. Keep it short and simple.** Media bites should be shorter than 15 seconds or two to three sentences. As Fox News pundit Joe Scarborough said, “If you let someone talk for more than seven seconds on your show without interruption then you are a failure.”⁶ Talk shows are an extreme example of the need to speak succinctly, but even in print, a few sentences should do the trick. One punchy sentence is even better.
- 2. Speak to shared values.** Stress themes that link your values to those shared by others, such as fairness, common sense, or protection of children.
- 3. Talk about what is at stake.** Who is affected? What will this mean for their lives? Make your values explicit so other people recognize them too.
- 4. Use reasonable language.** Don’t use jargon or acronyms.
- 5. Use irony.** Irony can highlight the absurdity of an assertion by your opposition.
- 6. Evoke pictures.** If you can make your audience see what you are talking about, your point is more memorable and has more impact.
- 7. Take a stand—present a solution.**
- 8. Frame the problem and your proposed solution in terms of institutional accountability, rather than just individual responsibility.**

⁶*New York Times*, October 12, 2005.

You won't always speak in media bites when you talk with reporters. Depending on where they are in developing their story, you'll provide background information or longer explanations. But it's always useful to have a media bite summarizing your position—to use on-camera or even in larger discussions so they have a good quote to use to punctuate the story.

SAMPLE MEDIA BITES

"We cannot say we have made true progress in the field of medicine until we fix the appalling inequities of America's health care system." Ellen Wu, executive director of the California Pan-Ethnic Health Network, speaking out for universal health care.⁷

"I'm tired of Cadillac prisons and jalopy schools." Former California Superintendent of Education Delaine Eastin.⁸

"What society exploits its children and teenagers for money? This is an example where public health really has to trump capitalism." Dr. Victor Strasburger, speaking out against junk food marketing to kids.⁹

"Any 5-year-old knows it's wrong to lie and any 6-year-old knows they will be punished for it. The food companies that put fruit on the label but not in the product should be made to stand in the corner." University of California Professor Richard Jackson, commenting on the *Where's the Fruit?* study released by the Strategic Alliance.¹⁰

"Our kids are getting asthma so someone in Nebraska can get a cheaper TV?" Bob Foster, mayor of Long Beach, explaining why cargo ships using the Long Beach port should pay a fee to reduce their health-compromising pollution.¹¹

"It took vision to save Yosemite, dig the Panama Canal, build the Golden Gate Bridge, or go to the moon, but we did it. Some believe universal preschool is the next big idea. Count me in as one of those who believes." Former California Superintendent of Education Delaine Eastin.¹²

"It's like two jumbo airliners crashing every day with no survivors." Tobacco advocates illustrating the number of deaths from cigarettes every day.

⁷ *Time*, 2005.

⁸ Television interview, Sacramento. June 8, 1998.

⁹ http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/98720/are_tv_ads_really_influencing_young.html

¹⁰ Remarks at the 2007 California Childhood Obesity Conference.

¹¹ *Los Angeles Times*, September 23, 2006.

¹² *San Mateo County Times*, May 30, 2003.

Social Math

Every day we are bombarded with news stories involving very large numbers. We hear about billions of dollars funding various programs or we might learn that hundreds of thousands of people are at risk for a particular disease. More often than not we are numbed rather than informed because we don't have a way of putting these numbers into a meaningful context. After a certain point, the numbers stop making sense, which is why advocates must become skilled at social math. "Social math" is the practice of translating statistics and other data so they become interesting to the journalist, meaningful to the audience, and helpful in advancing public policy. Put another way, "social math is the practice of making large numbers comprehensible and compelling by placing them in a social context that provides meaning."¹³ The best social math surprises people and provokes an emotional response. The examples paint a picture that helps people see what you are saying.

Before a journalist interviews you, decide what numbers you need to have ready, as stand-alone statistics and as social math comparisons. Choose the numbers that will support your policy goals and answer a reporter's tough questions. For example,

- **How will you describe or quantify the problem?**
- **What comparisons—to other issues, populations, geographic areas, changes over time, or policy solutions—might help you?**
- **Will you need fiscal estimates to clarify the cost of the problem or policy solution?**

Get ready to make your case by collecting all the numbers you may need, but then choose carefully. Don't drown a reporter in statistics or graphs. Remember, you can't be comprehensive and strategic at the same time. Decide which numbers will make your case best, and then make them count by presenting them creatively.

Look at the numbers you have selected and decide what advocacy point you are trying to make with them. What does each show about the way the world works now or about what should be different? Knowing the answer will help you decide what type of social math to create. Another approach is using irony to make a point about misplaced societal values, such as how we spend more on products with little social value than we do on solving a core health concern. Social math can also be created by restating large numbers in terms of time or place, personalizing or localizing numbers, or making comparisons that help bring a picture to mind.

¹³ Wallack, et al. *News for a Change: An Advocate's Guide to Working with the Media*, 1999.

TIPS FOR CALCULATING SOCIAL MATH

- 1. Break the number down by time.** If you know the amount over the course of one year, what does that look like per day, per hour, or per minute?

“The food and beverage industry spends \$10–12 billion a year—that’s one million dollars every hour of every day—just to reach children and youth.”¹⁴

- 2. Break the number down by place.** Comparing a statistic with a well-known place can give people a sense of the statistic’s magnitude.

“If the 13.5 million poor children in America were gathered in one place, they would form a city bigger than New York.”¹⁵

- 3. Localize your number.** Make it meaningful to community members and policymakers in a specific region. Rather than using state or federal statistics, use local data. For example, using population figures, you can calculate your county’s share of the annual costs of nationwide health issues. Breaking the numbers down by legislative district can help hold the legislator whose district is affected accountable.

“Experts estimate there are more than 100,000 obese children in the San Diego region. It would take two Qualcomm Stadiums to hold all those children,” said Jeffrey Schwimmer, an assistant professor of pediatrics at UCSD.”¹⁶

- 4. Provide comparisons to familiar things.** Compare and contrast your numbers with something easily identifiable to the audience.

“A child consuming a can of regular caffeinated soda receives a caffeine equivalent of about four cups of coffee.”¹⁷

- 5. Provide ironic comparisons** in order to draw attention to an unmet need, suggest more appropriate use of resources, point out skewed priorities, or make a case for a policy change.

“The average child-care teacher makes \$15,430 each year—only half as much as correctional facility officers and jailers.”¹⁸

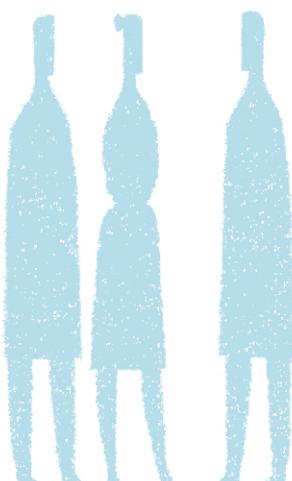
¹⁴ Berkeley Media Studies Group, *Fighting Junk Food Marketing to Kids: a Toolkit for Advocates*, 2006.

¹⁵ Senator Bill Bradley, quoted in *The New York Times*, August 17, 2000.

¹⁶ San Diego Union-Tribune, April 23, 2003.

¹⁷ Tara Parker-Pope, *The Wall Street Journal*, February 27, 2007.

¹⁸ Berkeley Media Studies Group, *Making the Case for Early Care and Education: A Message Development Guide for Advocates*, 2003.





Illustrating Your Case with Social Math: Preventing Back-over Deaths

It's been called the "bye-bye syndrome"—a small child runs up to the family car to say goodbye to a parent. But in the age of large sport utility vehicles (SUVs), some drivers are unable to see the child behind the car until it is too late. Ironically, many parents purchase SUVs thinking they will keep their children safe, unaware that SUVs have much larger rear "blind zones—the area behind a vehicle that the driver cannot see using the vehicle's rear view mirror or window—that increase the risk of injury or death from back-over accidents. Such tragedies motivated the child safety organization KIDS AND CARS and the nonprofit publisher and advocacy organization Consumer's Union to propose policies to solve this preventable public health problem.

The Policy Solutions

Given that approximately half of all new cars sold annually in the United States are SUVs, pickup trucks and minivans, vehicle safety advocates believe it is time to institute population-level policy solutions that could reduce the risk of this tragic problem. Advocates would like the federal government to track non-traffic auto injuries and deaths, set federal visibility performance standards for vehicles, and require vehicle manufacturers to provide technology or redesign their product to improve rearward visibility as standard features.

Making the Case

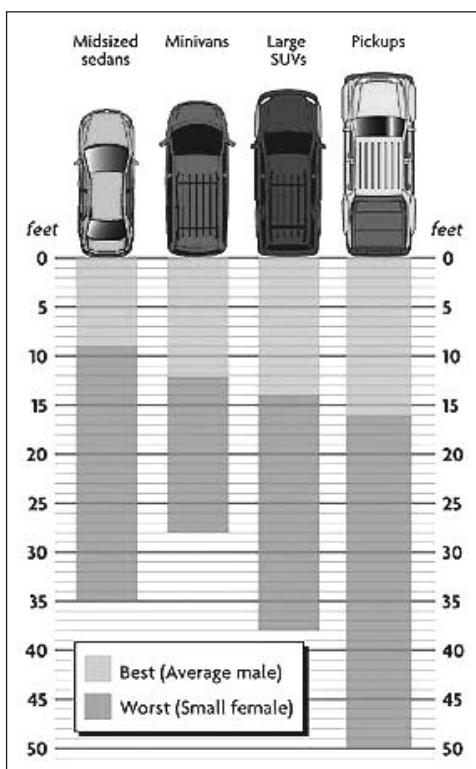
KIDS AND CARS and Consumers Union developed a media strategy to begin a high-profile public debate to support their federal policy efforts. One challenge was demonstrating the seriousness of the problem in a way that could build a case for policy solutions. Without reliable federal

data on the extent of the problem, the advocates focused on showing that anyone with an SUV is potentially at risk.

Consumer's Union tested the blind zones of dozens of popular vehicles and released the data in the April 2003 automobile issue of its popular magazine *Consumer Reports*. Testing visibility with 28-inch traffic cones, the height of an average 2-year-old, the study demonstrated blind zones of up to 50 feet in some of the largest vehicles. The report, and in particular a graphic illustrating the blind zones of various vehicle models (see facing page), received widespread media attention when it was released. Consumers and policymakers taught to think of a narrow "blind spot" were shocked to learn that the danger zone could be twice the length of the vehicle. The report itself may have influenced the purchasing decisions of some consumers who read it. But even more important, the report illustrated the need for an industry-wide solution that would benefit everyone who purchased an SUV, whether they knew about the problem or not.

Strengthening Your Story with Social Math

A typical starting point for a news story on the "bye-bye syndrome" would be to tell a personal story featuring a family who had lost a child this way; indeed, KIDS AND CARS identified those families who were willing to talk to journalists. The problem is, if the story illustrated only the family's tragedy, viewers would be likely to focus on blaming the parents for not being more careful. Indeed, parents should be careful, but advocates wanted to reinforce the widespread nature of this risk and the fact that it could be prevented at the factory, before the parent ever got in the car.



The Consumers Union report demonstrated the length of typical blind zones with a very clear graphic. Advocates gave this information a more powerful punch by using social math, the practice of making creative comparisons so numbers have impact. They calculated approximately how many children could be

car is invisible to the person in the driver's seat. Creative social math successfully demonstrated that the equivalent of an entire classroom of children could be killed or injured by a driver unaware of the size of his or her blind spot. The social math made the blind zone visible.

Successes

Through their creative media strategy, advocates were successful in raising the profile of this vehicle safety issue. Many of the news reports also framed the issue in a way that emphasized the role of the federal government and the automobile industry in solving this problem. For example, in a story on back-over injuries that aired on CNN in November 2005, the anchor described the issue as: "A tragedy for families; a blind spot for the industry." Such coverage is helping to spur policymakers and the industry to begin to consider changes.

KIDS AND CARS, Consumers Union and other groups continue to ask Congress to enact federal legislation to require a rearward visibility standard for all vehicles. The advocates have thus far achieved at least one significant success on the back-over issue: federal transportation legislation passed in 2005 contained a provision requiring the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) to collect data on back-over accidents and to study ways of reducing them. The resulting NHTSA report, "Vehicle Backover Avoidance Technology Study," was released in November 2006. As KIDS AND CARS founder Janette Fennell puts it: "It took an act of Congress for them to do their job!" An act of Congress, and a little creative social math.

in the blind zone behind a large vehicle, and held blind zone demonstrations that targeted the media. Safety advocates knew showing kids at risk would make for more powerful television than a graphic marking out the distance.

Due to ongoing outreach efforts by KIDS AND CARS, Consumers Union and other advocates, attention to the issue gained momentum after the release of the report. Investigative reporters for "Good Morning America," "NBC Nightly News," CNN's "Paula Zahn Now," and other television news programs took that extra step of showing viewers just how many children could occupy that dangerous space.

The result: Dramatic footage of more than two-dozen toddlers lined up behind an SUV, all of them potential victims of an unexpected blind zone. As the camera zooms on the car's rear-view mirror, it becomes clear that every single child behind the

In creating social math, make sure you can back up your sources and your calculations. Social math examples can be a powerful tool because striking comparisons stay with people and can become part of the policy debate. As the sidebar on SUV safety shows, social math can help communicate your message quickly, effectively, and in a way that provides newsworthy visuals.

Visuals

Whether they are broadcast, print, or Web-based, media stories rely on images in our increasingly visual culture. When you are pitching an event or story, reporters will often ask, “What will I see when I get there?” What they are really asking is, “What can I show my viewers or readers if I do this story?” Make sure you have something visual to offer. Good visuals can capture a reporter’s attention and convince an editor to give the story a more prominent position in the paper or on the newscast. Both will help you reach your targeted decision makers. Developing the right visuals for your story is a strategic decision, as well as a creative endeavor. Brainstorm all the visuals options you can and then choose which best illustrate your frame. Pick visuals that don’t just get your issue in the news, but get attention for your policy goal.

TIPS FOR DEVELOPING VISUALS TO ILLUSTRATE YOUR STORY

1. Look at your event through the eyes of a camera. If you are bringing people together for an event, use visuals such as t-shirts, hats, or signs to unite them as a group. Packing a legislative hearing room with supporters, for example, is more powerful if the legislators or press can see, at a glance, that everyone there is supporting your bill. At press events, make sure there is a banner or podium sign positioned so that it is part of any picture taken of your speakers.

2. Make sure your visual tells the right story. Every story has many potential pictures. Make sure you pick one that reinforces your frame and policy goal. If you want a story about the environmental causes of community health problems, help reporters see past an individual portrait to the landscape. Show the neighborhood that promotes eating fast food, but has no place to exercise safely. If your policy goal is to reduce the pollution that causes high rates of asthma, hold a press conference outside so that reporters can photograph the sources of pollution, such as a refinery spewing toxic exhaust or a highway filled with diesel trucks. In selecting your visuals, ask:



"Will the reporter, and eventually the reader or viewer, connect this picture to the policy issue at stake?"

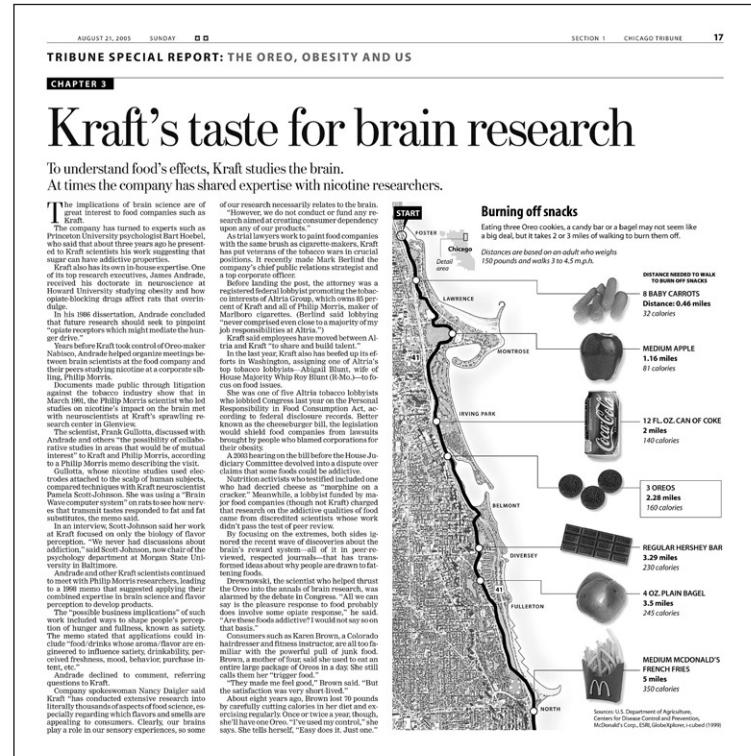
3. Show the solution. Help your target see that the solution you are promoting is achievable. Health access advocates can show children taking advantage of their new school-based clinic. Nutrition advocates can take reporters on tours of schools that have created gardens, opened salad bars or installed vending machines with healthy choices. The success you show may have happened in another city or state, but it can still help explain your vision.

4. Consider your target. Illustrate your arguments in a way that feels familiar to your audience. If your target is a state legislator, show conditions in the lawmaker's region or legislative district. Reporters from the *Chicago Tribune* investigating how junk food contributes to obesity showed on a map how far a person would have to walk around Lake Michigan to burn off the calories contained in three Oreo cookies. That picture made the number, just over two miles for three cookies, visible and meaningful to the readers in Chicago.

5. Develop drama. Television producers will want to know what action they can tape. Advocates trying to get San Francisco MUNI to replace dirty diesel buses created a visual at a press event when members of the board of supervisors poured out coal dust to demonstrate the amount of dangerous soot spewed by one bus in one day. Car safety advocates had camera crews film children lining up behind an SUV to demonstrate how many kids could be hidden in the blind zone. Make the problem and your goals come to life.

6. Advertise your assets. If you've gone to the trouble of creating compelling visuals, let reporters and editors know. When you pitch the story, tell them what they will be able to film at the event. Include this list in your media advisory and press kit.

Develop campaign materials and story elements before the policy debate heats up. Later on, you will be glad to have a range of potential media bites, social math, and visuals to illustrate your points. Certain press materials, however, such as media advisories and press releases, must be developed right before you pitch a particular story.



Media Advisory

A media advisory is your invitation to a reporter to attend a press event. You may decide not to use a media advisory for every event, but if you do the goal is to provide in one page the time, location and reason for your event. Let reporters know why the event is important, what will happen, who they can interview, and what they can film or photograph. Format your media advisory with a clear, attention-grabbing headline. This is crucial—a busy reporter or editor may not get past your headline so it must succinctly make your case and grab their attention. Make sure you include a contact name and phone number. After you have prepared your advisory, fax, email or mail it any time from a few weeks (for monthly or weekly publications) to a few days (for daily newspapers) to 24 hours (for broadcast media) prior to the event. Follow up with a phone call and press release a day or two before the event.

Press Release

A well-written press release can help frame your media event accurately. You can send a press release without holding a news conference; the Strategic Alliance garnered terrific news coverage for its study *Where's the Fruit?* by sending a press release only. Unlike a media advisory, which focuses on an event's logistical details, a press release should read like your ideal news story. As best you can, use the language style you see in newspapers and the conventions of news reporting to create a story that sparks the interest of reporters. Highlight what is newsworthy at the top of the story. Remember that busy journalists get hundreds of news releases every day and may not read past the first paragraph. You'll need an attention-grabbing headline, a catchy lead paragraph, facts to support your case, interesting quotes, a clear statement of your policy goal, and a newsworthy hook to make it interesting enough for the reporters and editors to include in that day's selection of news stories. Based on your press release alone, reporters may have to convince their editor or producer that this story is worth covering rather than another. In smaller news outlets, reporters may even borrow directly from your release for the story, so make sure what you send out is what you want to see in print. More often, and in larger news outlets, reporters will use a quote, statistic, or graphic from your release. Help reporters do their job by writing a good news release.

HOW TO WRITE A MEDIA ADVISORY

Put on Your Letterhead

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Today's date

CONTACT: *Name*

Phone #: *Cell #:*

Email

MEDIA ADVISORY

HEADLINE: KEEP IT SHORT, ALL CAPITAL LETTERS

WHAT: *2–3 sentences on what is happening*

WHEN: *Date and time*

WHERE: *Address*

WHO: *Names of people or organizations involved*

WHY: *2–3 sentences that highlight why this event is important and newsworthy*

#

(to indicate end)

Notes: Fax or mail the media advisory anywhere from three weeks to the day before the event. Follow up with a phone call and/or a more detailed press release within a couple days of the event. Be sure to include wire service day books.

HOW TO WRITE A PRESS RELEASE

Put on Your Letterhead

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Today's date

CONTACT: *Name*

Phone #: *Cell #:*

Email

HEADLINE: KEEP IT SHORT, ALL CAPITAL LETTERS

1st Paragraph: *What is happening, who is involved, where and when (briefly)*

2nd Paragraph: *Why this event is significant and newsworthy*

3rd Paragraph: *Quotes from authentic voices and experts involved that emphasize the significance of this event and issue*

4th Paragraph: *More details on where and when the event is happening.*

5th+ Paragraphs: *Other pertinent details, including speakers' names and affiliations; description of any photo opportunities*

Final Paragraph: *One-sentence "boiler plate" description of the organization(s) involved in the event*

MORE

(if release goes to a second page)

#

(to indicate end)

TIPS FOR CREATING A PRESS RELEASE

1. Write your ideal news story. Frame the problem from your perspective and make the case for your solution. Write an interesting story, with compelling quotes from a range of authentic voices and social math to support your case. Keep your headline short and catchy.

2. Follow the sample format. The template on the facing page will help you identify and organize all the necessary information. The paragraphs should be no longer than four or five lines. Don't split paragraphs between pages and limit the length of the entire release to two pages. Format the press release on your letterhead and include background information on your organization and each speaker. If you are making an announcement or releasing a report, let reporters know if the information is "embargoed"—that is, if it should be held until a specified date. Including contact information at the top of the release is important—just be sure you include a number (such as a cell phone) so an interested reporter can reach you easily at the event. At the bottom of the release center the symbol "###" or "30," which are the traditional cues to reporters that signal the end of the story. If you have interesting visuals, let the reporters know what the "photo op" will be in a separate line at the end of the release. If you are sending the release by email, include all information in the body of the email. Emails with attachments may get blocked by email security programs.

3. Get the information into the right hands. Send the press release directly to reporters you have cultivated, as well as the assignment editors or producers. Depending on their preferences, you can fax or email the release. Make sure it gets to them a day or two before the event and then again on the morning of the event. Follow up with an email or phone call. Be prepared to make your pitch when you contact them. Also, be sure to include a copy of your release in any media packets provided at the event itself. Finally, post your press release, media kit, and background information in a well-organized section of your Web site. Reporters may check that first before deciding to attend the event, or call you for more information.

Particularly if you are trying to attract TV coverage, you may consider creating a video news release (VNR). VNRs provide TV stations with content that they can broadcast directly, sometimes known as "B roll." Prepared by professional PR firms, VNRs can cost \$10,000–\$20,000 to produce since they have to be high quality enough for TV broadcast. According to media watchdog groups, VNRs produced by corporations have aired more frequently in recent years as TV stations' production

budgets have been cut. The Project for Excellence in Journalism reported that 23 percent of TV news came from VNRs in 2002. For better or worse, the source of the video is often not revealed by the TV stations on air. This leads some media watchdogs to label VNRs “fake news.” Still, investing in a VNR could be worth the effort if it gets your report or policy issue airtime on TV news.



Where's the Fruit?

Study Unveils Widespread Deceptive Packaging in Children's Foods

Oakland, CA—January 26, 2007...Over half of the most aggressively advertised children's foods that prominently feature fruit on their packaging contain no fruit at all, according to a study released today by the Strategic Alliance for Healthy Food and Activity Environments. The study, *Where's the Fruit?*, reveals that 51 percent of these products do not contain fruit, and another 16 percent contain only minimal amounts of fruit despite prominent fruit promotions on the packaging.

“Parents drawn to products that seem healthier for their children based on references to fruit on the packaging are being deceived,” explains Leslie Mikkelsen, a registered dietician with the Strategic Alliance and lead author of the study. “Food and beverage companies are some of the most sophisticated communicators in the world and are clearly capable of accurately reflecting what is in their products if they wanted to.”

Where's the Fruit? identifies the most heavily advertised children's food products that include words and images of fruit and/or fruit ingredients on the packaging. A total of 37 products were included in the final study, and their ingredient lists were analyzed to determine the presence of fruit ingredients.

Nineteen (51 percent) of the products contained no fruit ingredients at all despite the images of fruits and use of words such as “fruity,” “fruit flavors” and “berry” on the packaging.

“One of the biggest surprises was Yoplait’s Strawberry Splash Go-Gurt Yogurt which does not contain any actual fruit,” said Mikkelsen. “Yogurt is regarded by most people as being healthy, and one would naturally expect Strawberry Splash-flavored yogurt to contain strawberries, particularly when it is a food product advertised directly to children.”

Berry Berry Kix is another product that, despite fruit images and reference to “natural fruit flavors,” contains no fruit.

“My kids love fruit,” says Luz Maria Rodriguez, a parent in Sacramento. “It’s pretty hard to explain to an excited five-year-old in a supermarket why they can’t have the package with the strawberry on it when I’ve been encouraging them to eat strawberries at home.”

Only 27 percent of the products examined contained fruit (in the form of fruit puree or fruit from concentrate). Six percent were 100 percent fruit juice; however fruit juice does not contain

the equivalent fiber, vitamins and minerals of whole fruit.

"The nation is facing a staggering epidemic of chronic diseases that result from poor eating and physical inactivity," cautions Dr. Andria Ruth, a pediatrician for the Diabetes Resource Center of Santa Barbara. "Children are particularly affected and these food companies are making parents' jobs even harder by using misleading packaging to lead them to think that they are making a healthy choice when they are not."

To support healthy eating habits, the Strategic Alliance is calling on food manufacturers to stop marketing children's food products as something that they are not and to begin providing more

nutritious food options. The Strategic Alliance has prepared "Setting the Bar: Actions to Improve Food and Beverage Offerings" to guide food companies in their marketing ethics. The Strategic Alliance insists that at a minimum, if companies put fruit on the label, there should be fruit in the product.

The Strategic Alliance for Healthy Food and Activity Environments is a coalition of California's leading public health and health care, parks and recreation, transportation, and nutrition organizations committed to promoting environmental and policy changes to support healthy eating and physical activity. The study is available online at <http://www.preventioninstitute.org/sa/fruit/>

4

Getting Attention

*What you do to
create news need not
be elaborate, but it
must be newsworthy,
which means it must
have relevance now.*

Now that you know what materials to prepare for the press—such as story elements, media advisories, and press releases—the question is how and when you will get your issue into the news. There are four general strategies to draw on: creating news, piggybacking on breaking news, purchasing paid advertisements, and developing editorial strategies. Each approach is described here in detail. You may use any combination of these approaches in your campaign. Many advocates start their media access strategies by submitting letters to the editor, which trains them to regularly watch for opportunities to get in the news and can get their issue or perspective onto the radar of newsmakers. Once the advocates have practiced making their case and have developed relationships with reporters they start to pitch original stories. Later in their campaign they may approach an editorial board about taking a position on their issue or policy goal. Then as the policy debate heats up, they may place a paid ad to make a hard-hitting demand of their targeted policymaker or institution.

Before jumping at the opportunities for getting in the news, remember the key media strategy question: How and when will news coverage advance your policy goals? That will help you choose your media access tactics and plan when to use them.

Your efforts to seek news attention can build on your other advocacy actions. For example, the Californians for Healthy Kids campaign held a town hall meeting that brought together thousands of advocates interested in securing health insurance for all children in California, and invited the press to report on the event. It was a rally to mobilize advocates, a visible demonstration to policymakers that many constituents care about the issue, and an opportunity for a news story.

In the back of this manual is a calendar worksheet to help you jointly plan your advocacy actions and media access tactics. The calendar includes holidays and newsworthy dates that could provide a hook for your news story.

CREATING NEWS

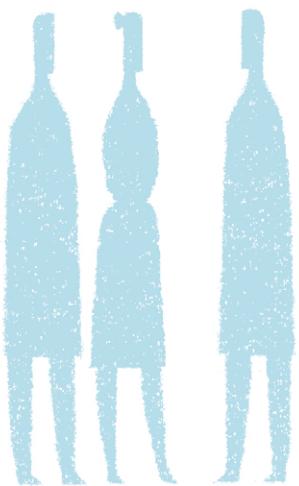
Once you know when news coverage will help your goals, figure out how to get a reporter's attention. Will you have a press conference, hold a demonstration, make a demand to a policymaker, release an important report, or simply pitch the idea to a reporter you have gotten to know? You may use some combination of these tactics. Review the elements of newsworthiness described earlier—controversy or conflict, broad public interest, injustice, irony, a local angle, a personal angle, a breakthrough, a celebrity, an anniversary or seasonal link. Think also about the story elements you developed—authentic voices, media bites, social math, and visuals. How can you turn your issue into a story idea that is compelling, timely and meaningful to the audience of the news outlet? What you do to create news need not be elaborate, but it must be newsworthy, which means it must have relevance now.

Once you create your story idea and news hook, it is time to let reporters know about it. This can be done through holding a media event, sending out a media advisory and/or press release, and by pitching the story directly to reporters. Sometimes you will do all of these things, other times you will get coverage by doing only one or two. In this module, we provide tips and worksheets for all three activities.

Pitching your story

Reporters won't know about your newsworthy story unless you tell them about it. Contacting a reporter to tell them about your story is called "pitching." The idea is to let them know that news is about to happen so they can be "in" on the story.

Sometimes advocates are timid when they talk to reporters, asking gently for coverage as if the reporter is doing them a favor by listening or showing up. Avoid that attitude. Remember that reporters rely on sources for good stories. Be a good source by waiting to pitch a story until you know you have news—and then pitch with confidence. If you've done your homework and identified clearly what is newsworthy about your story, the reporter will be eager to cover it. And if one reporter doesn't jump at the pitch, try another. The proliferation of news outlets and the constant need for fresh news on Web sites means that reporters need more help than ever. Reliable, authoritative sources can take advantage of the competitive 24-hour news cycle by thinking creatively and visually. How can you provide audio and visual aspects of a good story? Anyone who helps bring compelling stories to life is well positioned to make news.



Naturally, a pitch is more difficult if it's a "cold call" and the reporter is hearing your name or your organization's concern for the first time. That's why monitoring the media and cultivating relationships with reporters is so important. If you've previously made contact with the reporter, you'll be able to pick up the phone or send an email to someone who recognizes who you are and the importance of what you are doing. One of the reasons public relations firms are good at pitching stories is because they invest a lot of time in maintaining their relationships with reporters.

Advocates on tight budgets can develop relationships and pitch successfully too. In fact, some reporters say they give more credence to groups they know are deeply connected to the community, though perhaps not as polished as a PR professional. Think of yourself as a good source—you have the connections to the community and important health issues that reporters need to tell the newsworthy stories of the day. Pitching the story is how you remind the reporter who you are, what you have that the reporter needs, and why it's important and interesting now.

TIPS FOR PITCHING YOUR STORY

1. Pitch to reporters you know. By getting to know reporters and their interests before you have something to pitch, you will increase the chances that they will take your call and cover your story. By knowing a reporter's work, you can link your story to something they have already covered. You can say, for example, "Last month you reported on X; I'm calling to talk to you about Y, which expands on your news story by explaining Z."

2. Provide a compelling story. Don't approach a reporter to talk about an "issue," but rather, help them create a story. Let them know what drama they can describe, spokespeople they can quote, and visuals they can show. Tailor your story elements to work for their news outlet: Pictures for television, good audio for radio, informative graphics for newspapers, or an interactive component for online media.

3. Emphasize newsworthiness. Reporters will want to know what makes this story newsworthy now. Emphasize elements such as timeliness, conflict, controversy, injustice, irony, broad interest, breakthroughs, local pegs, and/or milestones. Tailor your pitch so it will be interesting to the audience of each news outlet. For example, a local reporter may cover a statewide health care reform plan in terms of the impact on local communities or populations. A reporter with a national news outlet, however, may only be interested in the story if that local situation represents a national trend or has implications for federal policy. Pitch with the media outlet's audience in mind. Your policy target may be one

person, but to get news coverage your story has to be relevant to a wide audience of a particular media outlet.

4. Be respectful. Always start by asking if now is a good time to talk. If the reporter is on a deadline, arrange a better time. Learn how each reporter prefers to be contacted—by phone or email. Before you talk with reporters, be prepared to fax or email brief background materials such as a concise fact sheet or your press release. If you get a reporter on the phone, be ready to make your case quickly, right then and there. Also, be prepared for voicemail. Leave your name, organization, and phone number up front before giving a two-sentence pitch.

5. Practice your pitch. Practice your pitch out loud before making a call or sending an email. Describe your story to a colleague, emphasizing the most compelling reasons why a reporter should cover your news story. Be able to describe your issue and policy solution in clear, basic language without acronyms or technical jargon. Imagine you are making your case to a high-school student. Make it easy for a reporter to translate what you are saying into a news story that resonates with their audience. Tailor the sample script below to help you practice.

SAMPLE PITCHING SCRIPT

Advocate: “Hello, I’m (your name) calling from (your organization). We’re introducing legislation tomorrow that will (your goal). Do you have a few minutes to talk about this now?”

Reporter: “Okay, tell me about it.”

Advocate: “I thought you might be interested in this legislation since you reported recently on (X). We’ve been working with Senator Q, as well as local businesspeople, community leaders, teachers, and medical professionals to start solving that problem. This legislation will be an important first step since it (allows, requires, or pays for Z)

Reporter: “Sounds interesting. Who can I interview?”

You: At our event tomorrow, we’ll have on hand a range of spokespeople including Senators XYZ, the president of the California PTA, members of the state managed care association, and the chairman of the California Chamber of Commerce.

– Pitching conversation continued...etc.

Remember, before you end your call, ask if they need more information about the event or issue. Be ready to provide it or if you don’t know the answer, say you’ll get right back to them—then follow up as promised.

Creating a Media Event

You may be calling a reporter to pitch a media event. This could be a press conference or an advocacy action that would make an interesting news story. Before you invest in creating an event, consider whether it will offer the best bang for your buck. Press events can require a tremendous amount of time, energy, and resources. Remember, there's more than one way to get media attention. Perhaps you could get the same results by simply talking to reporters on the phone, pitching an "exclusive" story to one interested reporter or news organization, or holding a Web-based news conference. Like conference phone calls, Web conferences let you determine who is invited to participate and how interactive they can be during the session. Advocates can send or post to their Web site background materials in advance, offer a short presentation, and then invite reporters to ask questions. Live online Web conferencing and conference calls can encourage reporters to learn more about your issue when they are too busy to attend an event in person. Before holding an in-person event, consider the following questions:

- **Why do you want to have a media event?**
- **Are there good visuals or live action that are likely to attract broadcast coverage?**
- **Does your story have enough newsworthy elements to make press attendance likely?**
- **Can you tie your event to another event or issue already in the news?**
- **Do you have relationships with reporters at important outlets who would cover your issue without an event?**
- **What do you want your target to do after seeing or reading the news coverage?**
- **What will your organization have to prepare or do to hold this event? Do you have sufficient staff or resources to accomplish that well?**
- **Do you have a range of authentic voices who are trained to speak with the media? If not, do you have time to recruit or prepare them?**

If you decide to organize a press conference or other media event, plan it systematically. Follow the tips in the media event planning chart. As shown in the case study of the Bay Area Environmental Health Collaborative, when designed and executed well, press events can spotlight

your advocacy issue in a way that reporters, editors and producers find newsworthy. News coverage will then encourage policymakers to take your effort seriously.

MEDIA EVENT PLANNING TIMELINE

| | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| ONE MONTH IN ADVANCE | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decide on objective and key messages of the event. • Identify a newsworthy “hook” for the event. • Find a site for the event. • Brainstorm some interesting visual elements that will reinforce the key messages of the event: charts, ads, demonstrators with signs, etc. • Arrange for speakers and hold a speakers training session. • Begin planning press kit materials. • Consider whether you want to produce a video news release or B roll for TV coverage. If so, identify and hire a firm. |
| TWO WEEKS IN ADVANCE | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update media list, if necessary. • Draft media advisory and news release. • Assign roles for people at the event (media greeter, MC, speakers, etc.). |
| ONE WEEK TO THREE DAYS BEFORE | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fax media advisory (including directions to event site) and press release to your media contacts, including the day book editors at wire services. • Follow-up by calling journalists to pitch the story. • Compile press kits. • Create sign-in sheet for attending journalists. • Create table tents, nametags or other means of identifying speakers. |
| THE DAY BEFORE | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make follow-up calls and re-fax the advisory to key media contacts. • Deliver press kits to any journalists who requested materials in advance. • Make sure journalists have directions to the site. • Run through the event with speakers, if possible. • Make sure press kits and all other conference materials are ready. |
| AT THE EVENT | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See News Conference Checklist on next page. |
| AFTER THE EVENT | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send press kits to any journalists who didn’t attend. • Call journalists who attended, offering to answer further questions. |

AT THE NEWS CONFERENCE: A CHECKLIST

- **Make sure your office is staffed before, during and after the conference.**
The media may want to reach someone to get directions or additional information.
- **Set up a press table near the entrance where you can greet arriving journalists.**
Your room should be large enough to hold the invited number of journalists. Make sure you have extra press kits and other background materials.
- **Have a complete list of invited media.**
Check them off as they arrive, or create a sign-in sheet for names, addresses and affiliations of all attendees. Keep track of every media representative there, and use the information to update your files later.
- **Give each attendee a press kit, including an agenda for the conference.**
Have spare pens and paper available. If possible, give video "B roll" to broadcast outlets in attendance.
- **Can the conference site accommodate TV cameras?**
Are there enough (and powerful enough) electrical outlets and extension cords for cameras and microphones?
- **Do the speakers know the order of events and have their talking points?**
Clarify each speaker's role before the event and have extra talking points on hand.
- **Identify speakers via table tents or nametags.**
Make your speakers and guests available for post-conference interviews, in person and by phone.
- **Are presentation materials prepared?**
Make sure the electronic equipment, microphones, and presentation materials work. Have two copies of any video or audiotapes you are going to play in case one of them breaks.
- **Plan for what attendees might need.**
Refreshments, restrooms, accessible parking or public transportation.



Still Toxic After All These Years: Air Quality and Environmental Justice in the San Francisco Bay Area

Regional Collaboration for Regulatory Goals

In 2005 a wide range of environmental justice and public health coalitions from communities throughout the San Francisco Bay Area formed the Bay Area Environmental Health Collaborative (BAEHC) (see sidebar for list of participating coalitions). BAEHC members knew that many Bay Area neighborhoods are burdened with multiple sources of pollution. Members also knew that these communities tended to be poorer, with higher percentages of people of color. In addition, their neighborhoods had higher rates of health problems, like asthma and other chronic diseases. However, despite such community knowledge and impassioned commitment to community health, advocates had long felt stymied by an antiquated regulatory process that didn't take neighborhood realities into account. BAEHC hoped to change that.

BAEHC's overall goal was simple to identify but difficult to achieve: the group wanted to reform the Air District's regulations so the total amount of pollution in a neighborhood was considered before a new pollution source was added. This "cumulative" approach to regulating air quality was considerably different from the Air District's current approach, which regulates stationary sources of air pollution such as oil refineries, dry cleaners, back-up diesel generators, etc., primarily on a source-by-source basis. BAEHC knew that a little bit of pollution here and a little bit of pollution there can, over a short period of time, add up to a lot of pollution everywhere; it wanted the regulations to reflect reality.

BAEHC had its work cut out for it. According to advocates, the Air District was generally conservative, and tended to focus on potential barriers such as the technical challenges of any new regulatory approach. Additionally, strong opposition

could be expected from the regulated industries themselves, as a new approach to air quality regulations would likely result in less flexibility in their business choices.

Still, BAEHC demanded that the Air District adopt a new approach to health risk regulation by considering the real health impact of the accumulated toxic exposures in communities; impose pollution limits and seek reductions in already burdened areas; and ensure better community engagement in the regulatory process so that the public could have a greater say in decision making. The problem was clear: too many communities were breathing a disproportionate amount of air pollution, due in large part to a narrow regulatory process. Based on the frame of that problem, the solution was clear, too: the Air District—the entity responsible for regulating certain kinds of pollution sources—needed to update its regulatory process to reflect the reality in communities.

BAEHC MEMBER COALITIONS

- Environmental Justice Air Quality Coalition
- Immigrant Power for Health and Environmental Justice
- Bay Area Clean Air Task Force
- Contra Costa Asthma Coalition
- Ditching Dirty Diesel Collaborative
- Regional Asthma Management and Prevention Initiative
- Environmental Law and Justice Clinic at Golden Gate University School of Law

Going Public With a Purpose

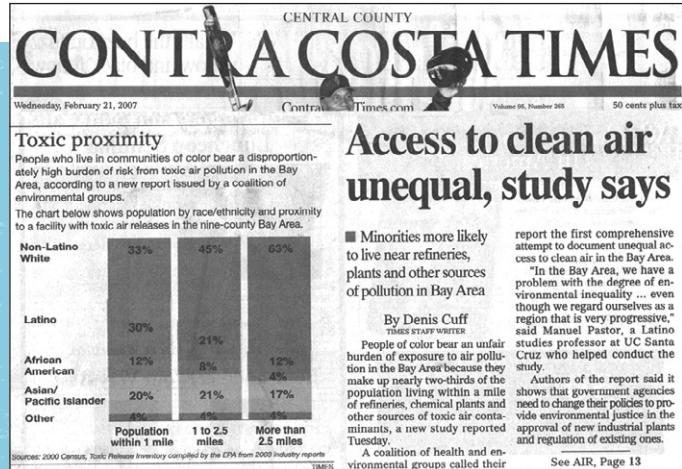
With their goals identified, BAEHC members decided to hold a media event to raise public awareness of the problem and increase the pressure on the Air District to take BAEHC's demands more seriously. In the past the district had largely ignored or marginalized small groups or organizations pushing for regulatory change. BAEHC now hoped that its bigger, broader collaborative, coupled with the pressure from the media attention, wouldn't be so easily side-stepped.

Since BAEHC had done its homework to determine its overall strategy—including establishing the problem and solutions, and identifying the decision-making body with the power to make the desired change—the next step was to establish a media strategy to launch the campaign. BAEHC decided to frame the pollution problem to highlight who it affected and how, as well as to point to the agency responsible for the solution. All that BAEHC needed was a newsworthy hook. One was found by timing the launch of the campaign with the release of a research report that quantified the scope of the problem and pointed to the appropriate solutions.

The News Hook

The report, entitled *Still Toxic After All These Years: Air Quality and Environmental Justice in the San Francisco Bay Area*, was scheduled to be released near the 20-year anniversary of one of the first statistical analyses that showed a link between toxic waste sites and communities of color. The news hook provided by the anniversary allowed researchers and advocates to reopen a conversation about justice and environmental equity. It provided a perfect platform from which BAEHC could make its demands known publicly.

The new report was a statistical analysis conducted by the University of California, Santa Cruz's Center for Justice, Tolerance, and Community. It examined two large government databases of air pollution data, and overlaid that information with demographic data for the Bay Area. The resulting maps, tables, and text showed that residents living in



TIMES STAFF WRITER

Access to clean air unequal, study says

■ Minorities more likely to live near refineries, plants and other sources of pollution in Bay Area

By Denis Cuff

TIMES STAFF WRITER

People of color bear an unfair burden of exposure to air pollution in the Bay Area because they make up nearly two-thirds of the population living within a mile of refineries, chemical plants and other sources of toxic air contaminants, a new study reported Tuesday.

A coalition of health and environmental groups called their

report the first comprehensive attempt to document unequal access to clean air in the Bay Area.

"In the Bay Area, we have a problem with the degree of environmental inequality ... even though we regard ourselves as a region that is very progressive," said Manuel Pastor, a Latino studies professor at UC Santa Cruz, who helped conduct the study.

Authors of the report said it shows that government agencies need to change their policies to provide environmental justice in the approval of new industrial plants and regulation of existing ones.

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areas with the highest health risk and closest to toxic releases were more likely to be people of color, and that recent immigrants were far more likely to live within one mile of a large pollution source than other residents.

The new report was a stunning statistical confirmation of what community advocates had known for years: that when it comes to air pollution, race matters. The report also included a list of policy solutions, which were consistent with BAEHC's overall goals. Members moved quickly to plan a press conference to showcase the research findings and make their solutions known.

Planning the Media Event

BAEHC had only four weeks to prepare for its press event. Given the short time-frame, advocates focused their energies on a few key steps: 1. Developing media materials, spokespeople, and visuals; 2. Selecting media outlets and contacting the press; and 3. Making logistical arrangements for the event itself.

Developing Media Materials, Spokespeople, and Visuals

Media materials: BAEHC used its core messages to write press materials including a media advisory, press release, fact sheet and talking points for press conference speakers. All of these materials would help BAEHC members stay on message while speaking to the press, and maximize the newsworthiness of its issue to best attract reporters. Since data provided the newsworthy hook, BAEHC included the executive summary of the report and a summary of the key findings and statistics in

the press kit, and a summary of compelling health information—such as local asthma prevalence and hospitalization rates—in the talking points.

Spokespeople: BAEHC identified the key spokespeople, both those who would speak at the event and those who would be on hand to answer reporters' questions afterwards. BAEHC wanted its presentation to reflect its membership. Organizers worked out ahead of time who would speak, in what order, and what each person would emphasize. Given the extremely tight timeline, spokesperson training was conducted somewhat informally: talking points were reviewed in conference calls and one-to-one conversations. The media materials included quotes from authentic voices that highlighted different aspects of the problem and focused on the solution. Since the press release read like the advocates' ideal story, and since reporters sometimes lift quotes directly from the release, it was important that the quotes be powerful.

Visuals: BAEHC members identified compelling visuals that would reinforce their key messages, help explain the report findings, and showcase the solution. The location of the conference, for example, emphasized the cumulative nature of the air pollution problem facing certain communities: from a residential street corner in Richmond, reporters could see an oil refinery, train tracks, and a busy thoroughfare with diesel trucks rumbling by. Also, large maps were reproduced and enlarged and provided good visuals for the press conference itself. During the event, members held signs to reinforce their messages.

Selecting Media Outlets and Contacting the Press

Since the research report focused on the Bay Area, and since BAEHC's overall goals targeted an agency based in the Bay Area, it was only natural that the targeted media outlets would be those in the Bay Area, too. BAEHC members identified the major papers, TV stations, wire services and radio stations in the area and sent the media advisory and press release to the contacts that coalition

members had at those outlets. The media list was compiled and updated in advance. Given the implications of the report, members conducted active outreach to ethnic media outlets, too.

After BAEHC sent out a media advisory and press release to reporters at selected media outlets, the campaign coordinator as well as BAEHC members followed up with phone calls to personally pitch the story. In all of the conversations, members emphasized the newsworthy aspects of the issue, such as the anniversary of the earlier report and evidence demonstrating the injustice of certain communities bearing more air pollution burden than others.



At the Event

On the day of the event, just about everything BAEHC had control over fell into place. The logistical issues were covered: there was a podium, microphones and speakers, a table with press materials, etc. A press sign-in sheet was ready for reporters. The speakers and the rest of the BAEHC members arrived early. It was what the advocates couldn't control, however, that made them the most nervous: the reporters. No one knew exactly how many—if any—would show up to cover the event. Since one reporter had published a story about the research findings two days before, there was some nervousness that the day's event would be seen as "old" news and wouldn't be covered.

As it happened, more than a dozen media outlets covered the event, including major TV and radio stations and Spanish and Chinese news. Several newspaper reporters were on hand, many with photographers. TV cameras seemed to be everywhere, and several radio reporters were walking around with microphones in hand. All that was left was for the BAEHC members to conduct the press conference and make the case.

BAEHC didn't disappoint. The event flowed smoothly. Speakers spoke passionately, stayed on message, and kept their remarks short. Other BAEHC members stood by the speakers holding large signs with messages such as "No more air pollution," which added to the visuals of the location. Reporters asked numerous questions afterwards, well after the TV news crews had packed up. BAEHC members stayed until the last reporter's question was answered.

That day and next, advocates eagerly watched TV news, listened to the radio, and checked the local newspapers for coverage. After weeks of frenzied preparations, all of their hard work had paid off. In all, the story was covered by at least seven TV

news outlets and six radio stations, and reprinted by over 35 print and online news sources. Overall, the coverage included BAEHC's perspective. The problem was generally described accurately, several great media bites were used extensively, and the solution—that the district needed to change its ways—noted.

After the event, BAEHC used the coverage and the researcher's report to further advance its cause. In the first few days following the media coverage, several BAEHC members submitted letters to the editor to those newspapers covering the event to try to keep the public conversation going. Most importantly, publicly releasing the report and issuing BAEHC's demands helped to open the doors at the Air District a bit further. The agency invited the research team and BAEHC to present their findings to several staff and board member committees, and BAEHC members have since pursued opportunities to engage the Air District in a dialog about the problem and proposed solutions. There's still a long way to go before the district formally adopts a new approach to air pollution regulation. But for BAEHC, the first steps have been promising.

PIGGYBACKING ON BREAKING NEWS

When advocates identify a connection between an issue and news of the day, they should make the story known to journalists. Family planning advocates used news hype about Viagra to point out that health insurance plans were not covering contraceptives for women, though they covered Viagra. Piggybacking on breaking news can be achieved in a letter to the editor, with a news conference, or by the same types of actions advocates use to create news. In the example shown on the next page, The California Endowment's President Robert K. Ross, M.D. used piggybacking to focus attention on the need to secure health insurance for all children in California. The news hook was the Governor's State of the State address, in which he prioritized building the physical infrastructure of California through investments in transportation, public safety and water. While the Governor did talk about the need for children's health insurance a few days later, it wasn't given the same level of importance as a key building block of the state's infrastructure. The opinion piece makes that point.

PAID ADVERTISEMENTS

Buying advertising space is sometimes the only way to be sure your message gets out in an unfiltered manner. You can place ads in newspapers, on billboards, on radio, on TV, or on Web sites. You control what the ad says, where it appears, and when it runs. While news coverage can provide external legitimacy for your perspective, paid ads can be a very effective way to reach your target audience at critical moments in the policymaking timeline. Ads in targeted publications, like the daily newspaper in a state capital, reach a group of opinion leaders including state legislators and the governor, as well as capital news reporters from dailies throughout the state. The ads are a way to educate many of the people who in turn influence others. Paid ads are a high-profile and expensive tactic, though, so be clear on how an ad will advance your overall strategy. The three examples below illustrate ways that advocates have used paid ads strategically.

Case #1: Getting attention in a crowded news environment. Leading up to the Governor's Summit on Health, Nutrition, and Obesity in 2005, the Strategic Alliance wanted to highlight its policy agenda for improving nutrition and physical activity in California. The advocates had tough competition for news attention, however, with the Governor's Office offering high-profile spokespeople such as Governor Schwarzenegger, Maria



Published January 22, 2006, *Daily Breeze*

Lets Give All Kids Health Care

California's future needs more than improved infrastructure, it needs a healthy, educated workforce.

By Robert K. Ross

In Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's recent State of the State address, he outlined plans to secure California's future by fortifying key infrastructure in education, transportation, public safety and water. He missed an opportunity, however, to make the smart investment in our state's human infrastructure: health care for all of California's children.

Four days later, on Jan. 9, the governor created a new opportunity in a press conference to address uninsured children. He pledged \$72.2 million "to find and enroll" the 400,000 eligible kids in state health insurance programs. The proposal is necessary but falls short because it gets the job only half done. California would still have another 400,000 children lacking health care.

The lion's share of these children are right here in Los Angeles County. A 2003 California Health Interview survey showed that 235,000 kids weren't insured at the time of the report.

If, as the governor said, we are a "compassionate society," then we cannot abandon half the state's children. What's more, an independent poll has shown that about 80 percent of Californians think providing health care for all children is the "right thing to do." They also said that combined efforts among families, employers and government are the best way to go to make this goal a reality.

It's also the smart thing to do. The state's children are our future—they are the ones who will design and build the state's infrastructure, the freeways, ports, classrooms and waterways. This cannot be any more clear: We need our children to be healthy to be productive.

Studies show that health coverage for children is the best complement to quality education. Studies also show that kids with health insurance have better school attendance and perform better academically. Where's the sense in building a new school and equipping it with new desks when kids are home sick

because their parents cannot, for example, afford health insurance?

Among the leading causes of absenteeism are untreated dental problems and poorly controlled asthma. Undiagnosed or untreated hearing, vision and developmental problems may have a pervasive and lasting effect on a child's success in the classroom. We are undercutting our future if we ignore this insidious health care problem.

Insuring all 800,000 kids is not some pie-in-the-sky, fiscally irresponsible dream. This amount represents only about 1 percent of the state's current \$35 billion Medi-Cal annual budget, which includes federal funding. This translates to about \$9 for every Californian each year to insure all of our children.

A great majority of us agree: The compassionate thing to do, the right thing to do, is to not forget half of our children who go without health coverage.

Consider that it is not only unwise to exclude a segment of children from timely health care; it is, in fact, dangerous. Cases of hepatitis and whooping cough, for example, still permeate our communities, and the incidents of the latter are on the rise. It's not difficult to imagine communicable diseases transmitted in public places such as child-care settings, shopping malls and movie theaters. It's an epidemic waiting to happen.

California would only benefit fiscally from a systemic health care plan for early and timely screening of various health problems in all children. The high cost of overcrowded emergency rooms, visited when the children are far too sick, only contributes to the failure of our expensive health care system. The later these health problems are detected, the more we pay to remedy them.

Robert K. Ross, M.D. is the president and chief executive officer of The California Endowment, a private statewide health foundation.

Shriver, and Lance Armstrong. The Strategic Alliance ensured its message was part of the mix by taking out a full-page ad in the Sacramento Bee the morning of the summit. The ad trumpeted the nutrition and physical activity crisis in California and then asked, “What can business and government leaders do about it?” That question was answered with the policy agenda, entitled “Taking Action.” The ad put the advocates’ priorities in front of everyone in Sacramento that day, whether or not they attended the Governor’s Summit. A key audience who did not attend the summit—California state legislators and their staff—could find in the Strategic Alliance’s ad reasonable answers to some of the toughest questions on the issue. (For more information on this effort, see the case study in Module 2).

Case #2: Choosing your outlet carefully. In 2004, the Safe Cosmetics Campaign decided to place a paid ad to publicly pressure cosmetic industry executives to reformulate their products to eliminate health-compromising toxins. Advocates could have placed the ad in an industry-specific trade publication that is read by the target audience. Instead, the campaign purchased space in the New York edition of USA Today on a day when all cosmetic industry executives would be attending an industry conference in New York City. The advocates knew that the executives would see the ad because USA Today would be delivered to their hotel doorsteps.

Since the ad ran in a mainstream news outlet, industry executives would assume it had also been seen by their customers and the policymakers who regulate their industry. The advocates’ strategic choice increased the pressure on the industry to act. (For more information on this effort, see the case study in Module 1).



Case #3: Making your message count. In the summer of 2003, the Dump Diesel Coalition purchased ad space on San Francisco bus shelters to increase public pressure on MUNI to replace the oldest diesel buses in its fleet with cleaner-burning alternatives. The coalition placed the ads outside MUNI headquarters, city hall, and in the financial district because they

would be seen by a large number of MUNI riders, political decision makers, and MUNI officials. The hard-hitting ad took the form of a “Wanted” poster, showing the pollutants spewing from MUNI buses. The tone of this ad was intentionally confrontational. The coalition wanted quick,

Poor nutrition and physical inactivity have created a public health crisis in California.

What can business and government leaders do about it?

Factors that influence eating and activity are shaped by the decisions of businesses and government—decisions that affect us all, from our parents or family. We can solve this public health crisis—but only if we join in promoting what works.

- Squandered by time and money, California’s public health system is failing to a lifestyle marked by physical inactivity and poor nutrition. Americans eat high-sugar foods that are more available, affordable and convenient than ever before. Inactivity is costing California to serious health problems—including cancer. While everyone is affected by these health concerns, limited access to healthy food and physical activity options affect a disproportionate number of communities of color and low-income families.
- The mounting costs and consequences of the public health crisis—among individuals, employees, the overwhelmed health care system, families and individuals—will continue to grow unless we act now. Not only that parents and individuals need to know about eating and physical activity, but also that we must change approaches for California’s public and private sectors.

Today, Governor Schwarzenegger kicks off his Summit on Health, Nutrition and Obesity. There is no better time to inform the Governor, his administration, and civic and business leaders of the changes that are needed to stem the obesity crisis.

Together we can ensure a healthier future for California.



tangible action from MUNI officials. MUNI responded by quietly pressuring the company in charge of bus-shelter advertising to reject the ads. Advocates told reporters about it; they jumped at the chance to cover the story. But the controversy over the ad wasn't the only thing reported. The coalition also got the opportunity to explain why they purchased the ads and to repeat its policy goal: to eliminate diesel buses. (For more information on this effort, see the case study in Module 2).

If you decide paid ads will help advance your advocacy goals, these tips should help you get started.

TIPS FOR USING PAID MEDIA

- 1. Clarify your goals.** Will a paid ad advance your overall strategy? If so, what decision makers are you trying to reach and what will the ad ask them to do? If the goal of your ad is to mobilize your allies, make it easy for them to act. Include a phone number to call, a Web site to register their support, or a coupon to send to the target demanding action.
- 2. Make your message count.** Paid ads are a high-profile, high-price media tactic. Say something strong. State your position clearly and demand specific action by named individuals or organizations. Have influential supporters sign the ad to give your objective more legitimacy. Be prepared for a range of responses from interested reporters, allies, opponents and your target.
- 3. Pick the right outlet.** Your goal isn't to get in the newspaper with the widest circulation or on the broadcast outlet with the largest audience. Place your ad where it will best reach your particular target. That may be the op-ed page of a leading paper, a Web site that reaches state policymakers or a billboard outside city hall. Being strategic about your targeted audience can also save you money. Perhaps you only need the local edition of a national paper or a one-time slot in a cable news show such as CNN.

The image is a wanted poster with a black background. At the top, the word "WANTED" is written in large, bold, white letters. Below it, in smaller white letters, is "OFF THE STREETS OF SAN FRANCISCO...". In the center, there's a black and white photo of a white Muni bus with the number 8823 on its front. Below the bus, the text "1988 New Flyer" is visible. To the left of the main bus photo, there are two smaller photos of buses: one labeled "1989 New Flyer" and another labeled "1984 Flyer". To the right, there's a photo labeled "1990 Orion". Above the buses, the text "LOOK OUT FOR THESE OLD DIESEL BUSES. BEWARE: THEY MAY BE UNRELIABLE AND HAZARDOUS TO YOUR HEALTH." is written. Below the buses, there are two bullet points: "Pollution from MUNI's old, unhealthy diesel buses is known as a major contributor to Asthma and Lung Cancer." and "A recent study found that 1 out of 3 of MUNI's diesel buses are so old that they should be replaced immediately." At the bottom, a box contains the text "IF YOU RIDE THESE BUSES CONTACT MUNI GENERAL MANAGER MICHAEL BURNS AT (415) 554-4129 IMMEDIATELY AND URGE HIM TO GET THE OLD DIESEL BUSES OFF THE ROAD NOW!" followed by a small note "This information is brought to you by Our Children's Earth Foundation".

4. Know the rules. Find out if the news outlet or company has legal requirements regarding ad content. Decide if you will alter your advocacy ad to have it approved or try to create news if the company refuses to run it.

5. Time your placement well. Running your ad at a strategic time—before an important city council vote or a business shareholders' meeting—can increase its impact. It may also lead to news coverage as reporters look for new angles on a breaking policy story. If you place your ad on radio or TV, decide what time slot will best reach your target. Prime time on TV and during the morning and evening drive times on radio are favorite times to place ads.

6. Design to get attention. Keep your target from turning the page or changing the channel until they have absorbed your message. Use compelling visuals, catchy headlines, and easy-to-read fonts. Tell a powerful story quickly: who is affected? Why does the problem matter? Who should solve it? Find out the design requirements for the target outlet and then be creative. Paid ads are an expensive strategy, so the content and look of the ad is critical. You may want to hire a firm that specializes in public-interest advertising.

7. Invest in your strategy. Call the newspaper, radio station, TV station, or billboard company to find out the costs of placing ads. Ask about discounts for nonprofit groups and special pricing structures if your ad runs only in targeted markets. If you are placing a newspaper ad, aim for a half- or full-page ad or for space on the op-ed page—a section that most policymakers pay attention to. If your budget will only support an ad that is too small or short to get noticed, consider another media strategy or recruit allies to share the cost.

8. Capitalize on your investment. Let reporters know when you are making a high-profile demand of a policymaker or using a paid ad to jumpstart a public conversation on a controversial issue. The paid ad could result in additional news coverage. Also consider reusing the ad in your advocacy materials.

Policymakers, in particular, pay a great deal of attention to the opinion pages, which they take as an indication of the public's concerns, perspectives and agenda.

EDITORIAL PAGE STRATEGIES

Editorials, op-eds (opinion editorials, or opinion pieces found opposite the editorial page) and letters to the editor provide excellent opportunities for bringing community health issues into the spotlight, extending the debate started by a news story, and promoting concrete policy solutions. After the front page, the editorial pages are the most-read section of newspapers. Policymakers, in particular, pay a great deal of attention to the opinion pages, which they take as an indication of the public's concerns, perspectives and agenda. State legislators review the front pages and editorial pages of all the local newspapers in their districts each morning so they can keep abreast of key issues in the community. Advocates have three opportunities to get their perspective onto the editorial page: masthead editorials, op-eds and letters to the editor. Paid ads may also be placed on the editorial page of some newspapers.

Editorials

Editorials are unsigned and written by the editorial board of the newspaper; that is why they are referred to as masthead editorials (they represent those individuals on the newspaper's masthead, like the publisher). In an editorial the leadership of the newspaper is taking an official position on, for example, an emerging social issue, political proposal or candidate for elected office. A newspaper's editorial position can sway the opinions of readers and decision makers, so it is important for advocates to invest in meeting with editorial boards. Editorial boards often decide to focus on an issue after receiving input from community groups, professional associations and political officials who present their perspective at an editorial board meeting or through letters, emails or phone calls. The tips below and the planning worksheet at the back of this manual should get you started.

TIPS FOR MEETING WITH EDITORIAL BOARDS

1. Prioritize your editorial board visits. Identify the newspapers read by the decision makers you are trying to reach and the allies who can be mobilized to influence that target. Research the newspaper's recent editorial positions on your issue and related issues. If you are approaching multiple papers, visiting those that are likely to take a favorable position first may give you a published editorial supporting your perspective to bring to the next editorial board visit.

2. Request the meeting. Get the editorial page editor's name from the newspaper's masthead, or just call to ask how to meet with the editorial

board. When you request a meeting, be prepared to describe the issue you want to discuss, your group's position on it, and who will attend the meeting. You can write a letter describing the purpose of the meeting, but follow up by phone. Be sure to explain why this is a timely issue. Editorial boards can have from two to 15 members including the managing editor, the city news editor, the editorial page editor, the letters editor, the op-ed editor, and possibly reporters who cover a related beat. Each newspaper is slightly different; you can ask who will be there from the paper.

3. Decide who will represent your group. Bring two to four people who can provide unique perspectives on the issue and the proposed solution. Editorial boards may give higher priority to community leaders, policymakers, respected researchers and directors of agencies. But, just like legislators, editorial boards also appreciate hearing from an "authentic voice" who has had direct personal experience with the issue. Let them know who will attend the meeting and leave them with complete contact information so they can follow up if they have more questions.

4. Prepare to make your case. Confirm your message (the problem, the solution, and why it matters), decide who will say what, and determine what facts or materials they will provide to back up their case. Brainstorm how you will respond to the tough questions and opposition arguments. Leave the editorial board with background information so they can understand your organization, position and policy goals.

5. Put your best foot forward. At the meeting, introduce all the members of your team, including their particular perspectives on the issue. Be respectful of the editorial board's style and process, but strongly advocate for your position. Explain what is at stake, why your solution is the best approach, and why action is needed. Make it clear why an editorial on the issue would be timely.

6. Follow up quickly. Within a few days, thank the editorial board for the meeting. Take the opportunity to restate your case and request that they write an editorial. If you have agreed to follow up with additional facts, enclose them in your letter or email. Be cordial even if the meeting doesn't yield the results you hoped for. A good relationship with the editorial board can be invaluable for future efforts.

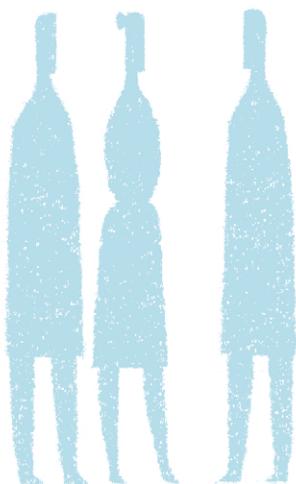
7. Pursue a backup plan. If the newspaper decides not to write an editorial or publishes an opinion in conflict with your perspective, ask if the newspaper would publish an op-ed in which you can make your case. Also, even if the newspaper does not publish a supportive editorial, continue asking reporters to cover your side of the story.

Opinion Pieces

One excellent way for advocates to be heard is by having an opinion piece published in a newspaper. These are referred to as “op-eds” since they usually run opposite the editorial page. Op-eds provide advocates with a blank canvas to present their perspective on a problem and paint in the solution. You can argue strongly from your personal or professional perspective and state adamantly why a particular individual or organization should take specific action. Since you write the text yourself, you can make your case directly without ceding space to less important facts or the opposition’s perspective, as a reporter might in regular news stories. Given that an op-ed can be an ideal way to present your issue, it’s no surprise that getting one selected for publication is quite competitive. Some papers, in fact, receive dozens, if not hundreds, of submissions per day when they only have space to run a few. Faced with such competition, preparation is key to getting your op-ed chosen. As with just about every aspect of working with the media, there may not be a recipe to guarantee the coverage you want but there certainly are techniques you can employ to increase the likelihood your op-ed will rise to the top of the submission pile. The tips below and the planning worksheet at the back of this manual should help you get started.

TIPS FOR CREATING OP-EDS

- 1. Consider newsworthiness.** Make sure your op-ed meets a few tenets of newsworthiness. The qualities that attract a reporter to a news issue can also convince an opinion page editor to run your piece. Your op-ed is more likely to be published if it's timely, takes a strong stand, localizes a national story, presents new information, connects to a personal story, is relevant to the newspaper's readership and/or relates to a meaningful anniversary or milestone.
- 2. Make a compelling case.** The op-ed is a way to elaborate on the components of your message: what's wrong, why it matters, and what should be done. Explain what is at stake for the individuals, organizations or communities involved. Describe what should be done, when, and by whom to solve this issue. Speak from personal experience or professional authority. Tell stories, paint pictures and demand action. Say something striking in an impassioned tone. Don't weigh your piece down with too many facts or neutral language. Stand up for what you believe in, loudly and clearly. Invite influential individuals or organizations to submit or co-author your op-ed.



3. Follow the directions. Each newspaper has specific guidelines for submissions. Check online, on the editorial pages, or call the paper to find out the specifics. Most have word limits in the 500–750 range. They'll also tell you how you can submit the article, be it by email, fax, mail, etc. Most newspapers cannot accept attachments, so if you email your op-ed, paste it into the body of the email. Be sure to stick to the published guidelines: a newspaper isn't likely to break its own rules, no matter how important your issue. Some newspapers will require "exclusivity," meaning they will consider publishing your op-ed only if it hasn't been submitted to other papers. When you're ready, you can send in your op-ed "cold" or call the opinion editor to pitch it beforehand by explaining your topic and its importance. There's no firm rule as to which approach works best. If you decide to make a pitch, be sure you practice. If you send it by email, the "subject" line is an abbreviated pitch, so craft it to reflect your position.

4. Provide contact information. Newspapers often want to check that the op-ed was actually submitted by the signed author, so make sure you give them a few ways to reach you. Include your name, title, organization, phone number, and email. Once you have submitted your op-ed, be patient. You can check that your submission was received but you may not hear anything unless it was selected.

5. Reuse the news or try again. If your op-ed gets printed, increase its impact by circulating it to allies, policymakers, reporters, funders, and editorial boards with whom you plan to meet. If your op-ed was not selected, look for other newsworthy opportunities to submit a revised version of your piece.

The case study in the sidebar on the next page describes how nutrition advocates pursued and secured an op-ed in the *San Jose Mercury News*.

In addition to print media, some broadcast media outlets also air opinion pieces. They tend to run only for a minute or two and feature a community leader speaking on a policy issue. Many of the same tips apply for preparing broadcast opinion pieces. But, of course, it is even more important for TV and radio that you know your goals and can vocalize them clearly. Practice reading your statement aloud with colleagues and on tape. Broadcast stations may also offer your organization time for a public service announcement that can be recorded at the station. They tend to promote things like health screenings or other community events rather than an individual's point of view on an issue.



Responding Rapidly to Breaking News

Responding successfully to news stories involves a combination of planning for action and serendipity. The tale of how public health advocacy organization Healthy Silicon Valley was able to get an op-ed placed in the *San Jose Mercury News* includes a healthy dose of both.

Healthy Silicon Valley (HSV) is a community collaborative seeking to improve the region's health by fostering changes that increase opportunities for healthy nutrition and exercise. HSV is part of the Strategic Alliance for Healthy Foods and Activity Environments (Strategic Alliance), a statewide coalition of nutrition and physical activity advocates in California.

The Strategic Alliance engages in long-range planning to affect the food and exercise environment in California by initiating discussions of how to talk about the obesity epidemic, tracking local advocacy efforts and their success, and responding to harmful food industry advances. Working with Berkeley Media Studies Group (BMSG), the Strategic Alliance developed a Rapid Response Network to help itself become more proactive and responsive to media advocacy opportunities. The Strategic Alliance has encouraged all of its member organizations to monitor the news media and respond when news stories come out that pertain to the food or physical activity environment. The Strategic Alliance wants to make sure that the public conversation about nutrition and physical activity goes beyond individual responsibility to include ways that government and business can create environments that make the healthiest choices the easiest ones.

In January 2006, the Prevention Institute, one of the steering committee members of the Strategic Alliance, held a Web forum to showcase local and

state policy efforts to improve nutrition and physical activity environments throughout California. The Web forum engaged about 75 participants from 50 sites across the state; it served as an organizing opportunity to come together on Strategic Alliance's policy goals, recently released in a report called "Taking Action."

Dr. Amor Santiago, director of Healthy Silicon Valley, participated in the Web forum. Earlier that day, he had read a story in the *San Jose Mercury News* that the Albertsons grocery store in downtown San Jose was closing. This worried Dr. Santiago because Albertsons was the only grocery store in the downtown area. Its closure would mean the area's residents, who were mostly low-income, Latino, and elderly, would have a harder time finding affordable, healthy food. Following the Web forum, Dr. Santiago, with guidance from the Strategic Alliance's Rapid Response Network, drafted a letter to the editor of the *San Jose Mercury News* to protest the Albertson's closing. But the newspaper did not publish the letter.

Because one of the Strategic Alliance's target policies for neighborhoods is to increase supermarkets in low-income areas and because Dr. Santiago was enthusiastic about rectifying the problem Albertsons' closing posed, the Rapid Response Network decided to push ahead and try to get an editorial or an op-ed placed. An op-ed was submitted by Dr. Santiago and Ellen Wu, executive director of the California Pan-Ethnic Health Network, who is also a member of the Strategic Alliance steering committee. The authors wanted to use the legitimacy, credibility and visibility the op-ed or editorial would provide to make the case to San Jose lawmakers to take action to restore a supermarket to downtown.

The first draft of the op-ed outlined the problem well: with nutrition-related chronic diseases rising, it was unacceptable to leave a vulnerable community without a source of healthy food. The first draft also laid out short-term and long-term solutions: opening a farmer's market, setting up delivery services with nearby food stores, and creating a long-term plan to recruit a large food store. However, the advocates failed to hold a specific person or institution accountable. Upon editing the op-ed, BMSG suggested they specify what exactly they wanted a specific decision maker to do. Dr. Santiago decided that Cindy Chavez, the city council member for the downtown area in question who was also running for mayor, would be the most logical person to identify in the op-ed as someone who could, and should, take responsibility.

Healthy Silicon Valley was working with council member Chavez and knew that her office was encouraging another grocery store to take over Albertsons' lease. Dr. Santiago had to make a judgment call about publicly naming Chavez as the responsible party to move forward on Healthy Silicon Valley's suggestions. In the end, Santiago decided to go for it and the op-ed was published.

"What this op-ed did was raise awareness about the issue of access to nutritious food and the effect access has on health. While City Council and other politicians often think about the economic aspect of encouraging businesses to locate downtown, they don't consider the larger health issue of obesity and how placement of a market can impact a community's health. We were able to link those issues," Dr. Santiago told us. And even though Chavez was disgruntled about being "called out," Santiago feels that the only thing he would have done differently is to notify her office about the op-ed. His decision was risky because it might have damaged his relationship with a policymaker Healthy Silicon Valley wants

to work with in the future. Organizations should always consider: when is the right time to publicly pressure your target?

Only days later, owners of the Super Mercado Mexicano announced that in May 2006 they would open a store in the building left vacant by Albertsons. Also, Zanotto's, a higher-end grocery store nearby, expanded its inventory to include more affordable choices. These changes were in the works before the op-ed was published, so it is unlikely that the op-ed alone spurred these actions. However, Dr. Santiago felt that the op-ed successfully and publicly made the case that access to healthy food is linked to health. It reinforced the value of businesses taking action to improve the nutrition environment in downtown San Jose. Many low-income neighborhoods face this same challenge, so the published op-ed may be a useful tool for making the case clearly to policymakers in the future.

The Strategic Alliance's work to define the obesity epidemic as a community health concern that can be addressed with public policy change helped them respond quickly. When the story on the grocery store closing ran, they knew right away what policy action needed to be taken. The ongoing networking component of the Strategic Alliance's coalition meant that Dr. Santiago of Healthy Silicon Valley had immediate access to the expertise at the Prevention Institute and Berkeley Media Studies Group, who helped draft the op-ed and revise it to make the strongest public health case. In addition, Dr. Santiago had the support and advice of many food policy advocates across the state. Serendipity also came into play, as Dr. Santiago happened to read the story in a moment he was prepared and had the time to immediately act.

The Mercury News

Found on BayArea.com

February 13, 2006 Monday

Downtown residents need access to healthful foods

BYLINE: Amor Santiago and Ellen Wu

SECTION: A; Pg. OP2

Today, something as simple as shopping for healthful groceries in downtown San Jose became much harder. Albertsons' closure leaves residents – many of whom are elderly, low-income and represent diverse ethnicities – without access to the foods they need to stay healthy.

But Mayor Ron Gonzales and Councilwoman Cindy Chavez, in whose district Albertsons is located, have a chance to do something about it.

Supermarket closures in low-income and neighborhoods of color are nothing new, and we already know what will happen as a result: The elderly shoppers who live in the senior housing complexes nearby will no longer be able to do their own shopping.

Low-income, African-American and Latino shoppers, who are less likely to own cars, will have to travel far to buy healthful foods for their kids.

And while convenience stores may be accessible in downtown San Jose, they offer high prices and few healthful options.

It's not surprising that low-income and urban communities of color are hardest hit by diabetes and other nutrition-related diseases when their neighborhoods lack supermarkets and instead are dominated by fast-food restaurants and corner stores. We also know that shoppers of color, in particular, eat more fruits and vegetables when they have easy access to a supermarket.

While Albertsons has already closed its doors for good, Gonzales and Chavez can still mitigate the health impacts by taking three immediate actions:

Immediately dedicate city funds to open a farmer's market on the Albertsons site until a permanent solution is found.

Facilitate van services to provide access to nearby supermarkets.

Create a long-term plan to recruit another affordable supermarket to downtown San Jose using a portion of the city's existing economic development funds.

Rebecca Flournoy, a senior associate at PolicyLink, recently wrote a report on how to improve access to healthful food in under-served, low-income communities. Flournoy writes, ``Food retail investment is a win-win for businesses and communities, and state and local government should take leadership in working toward these solutions. Healthy food retailing can result in profits for food retailers, and social, economic and health benefits for local residents.''

The residents of downtown San Jose deserve immediate attention. It is only fair that the city do everything it can to be sure that its citizens have access to the basic necessities for life. We pledge to do everything we can to help the mayor and the council member restore access to healthful food to downtown San Jose.

San Jose has once again been named the safest large city in the United States. Let's all work together to also make it the healthiest.

AMOR SANTIAGO is the director of Healthy Silicon Valley, a community coalition focused on the growing obesity epidemic in the region. ELLEN WU is the executive director of the California Pan-Ethnic Health Network. They wrote this article for the Mercury News.

Letters to the Editor

Letters to the editor are a simple and effective way for advocates to voice their perspectives publicly to the newspaper, readers, and, potentially, policymakers. Like opinion pieces, most newspapers provide space for readers' letters. It's an exceptionally popular section, both in terms of number of readers and the number of letters submitted. The *New York Times*, for example, receives over 1,000 submissions daily, while only publishing about a dozen. Less widely read papers receive far fewer submissions, of course, but the competition is still strong. As with all aspects of media advocacy, there are no recipes that will guarantee you coverage, but there are steps you can follow to maximize the chances your efforts will pay off.

TIPS FOR LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

1. Be timely. When responding to a published article, submit your letter (by email or fax) by the next day. Don't wait a week to ponder the right phrase or find a new fact, or you will lose the chance for your voice to be heard. Let the newspaper know they hit a nerve immediately, by acting fast. Reference the title, author and date the article was published in the first sentence of your letter.

2. Extend the life of the story. Letters can be used to continue a conversation started with a news story. If you are planning to hold a press event or release a report, prepare your allies to respond immediately to the breaking news coverage. Commend the newspaper for covering an important issue and take the opportunity to re-emphasize your key points or perspectives.

3. Broaden the coverage. Letters are also an effective way to let the newspaper know what fact, perspective, or solution was left out of their original coverage. As such, the letters provide the opportunity to "extend the frame" of the story by offering a critical missing perspective. For example, perhaps a story on the treatment of asthma covered clinical interventions adequately, but failed to mention that even the best clinical management in the world won't help people with asthma if they're forced to breathe air pollution. Point out such omissions with a letter.

4. Piggyback on news coverage to introduce a related issue. By finding the right connection, letters offer the opportunity to "piggyback" on a news story or opinion piece to raise a new issue. Often, this means taking an article that's focused narrowly on a person or event and linking it to a new but related concern. For a fine example of piggybacking, look no further than the letter written soon after Vice President Dick Cheney

Cheney's health coverage differs from many others'

It's good to see that Vice President Cheney is doing well after his recent heart surgery and I hope and pray he continues to recover ("Cheney hospitalized to re-open artery." News, Tuesday).

However, there is something I've been thinking about since this story began. When Cheney realized he needed heart surgery, did he ask the questions many Americans must ask when faced with such problems?

- ▶ Will my insurance cover this?
- ▶ What's my deductible?
- ▶ Can I get along without it for a while until I can afford to have it done?
- ▶ How will my family survive while I'm recovering?

Perhaps, with the government sponsored health-care program in which he is enrolled, these questions are unnecessary. Maybe such a program could be expanded so that all Americans don't have to ask such questions.

Dan Henning
Fremont, Ohio

was hospitalized for a heart attack. The author of the letter hooked the narrow facts of Cheney's hospitalization to broader questions about our nation's health care.

5. Say something strong, succinctly. Make your case quickly and creatively. You can't respond to every point in the article. Focus on your goals—how should this problem be understood and who do you want to take what action, when? If you have clever social math or media bites that communicate your perspective well, include one in the letter. That creativity may help your letter stand out.

6. The messenger matters. The author of the letter can affect its chances of being published. Ask the letters editor how they prioritize submissions. Some newspapers prefer letters from regular readers or community residents, while others are more likely to run letters signed by famous individuals, community leaders, respected experts or political officials. It may depend on the topic or the balance of recently published letters. When in doubt, have multiple allies draft letters from their unique perspectives.

7. Rally your allies. Newspapers that receive many letters on one topic are more likely to print at least one letter, if not a variety of perspectives. Strong reader response may also encourage the newspaper to continue covering the issue in their regular news sections. Newspapers look at the letters received as an indication of community concerns. Tell them what matters to you by taking the time to write. Once you know your frame, message and policy goal, writing a letter to the editor is a quick exercise in expressing yourself succinctly.

8. Write by the rules. Each newspaper will have specific guidelines for submissions. Check the requirements, either on the letters page itself or online. Make sure your letter is under the specified limit—250 words in most papers. The shorter your letter, the more likely it will be published unchanged. Make the one or two points you want to see in print, rather than risking that the newspaper will choose what to cut. Also follow their guidelines for submission. Many newspapers now prefer readers to submit letters by email, rather than fax. If you send it by email, the "subject" line is an abbreviated pitch, so craft it to reflect your position. Finally, be sure to send the letter to the right person or email address at the newspaper. Start your letter with "Dear Editor" and be sure to include your full contact information so the paper's staff can get in touch with you to verify your letter.

Making the Most of Media Attention

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By now you know that attracting news attention takes work. Now make sure your efforts pay off by circulating the news coverage you get—we call it “reusing the news”—and by evaluating what you’ve done to be sure it’s on track. You can collect the coverage by reading the local newspapers after the event and clipping the articles (newsprint tends to deteriorate quickly so if you want hard copies we recommend copying the articles onto bond paper). You can also record TV news shows and create a tape with the stories from your event. You can collect stories easily from around the country by signing up for “Google Alerts” or other similar electronic clipping services, which will email you articles based on the key words you select. Finally, if your budget allows you can hire companies to track and collect coverage for you. Whatever means you choose, examine the coverage and share it with others.

REUSE THE NEWS

When you are strategic about creating news you are using a mass medium like a newspaper to reach a very small target—sometimes just one person. The power comes from the fact that a large audience has been privy to this conversation between the advocates and the target. It is a public conversation, not a private one. To ensure the target understands this, share the coverage with your primary target, and with those who can influence the target in as many ways as make sense for your campaign:

- If your op-ed is published, clip it, copy it, and send it to the target. Be sure to include the masthead so your target knows which newspaper published it.
- Have your supporters copy and send news stories and letters to the editor that have been published to the target, asking the target to take action. This is even more effective, when your target is an elected official, if those sending in the copies are the target’s constituents.
- Use copies of the pieces to educate reporters who are new to the issue, and use it in future media kits.

Media advocates reuse the news to remind the target that the public is paying attention and knows what it wants done.

- Use published news and opinion pieces to educate new advocates. In meetings, share clippings and discuss them to help everyone become better at understanding the news, framing issues, and anticipating the opposition's questions and challenges.¹⁶

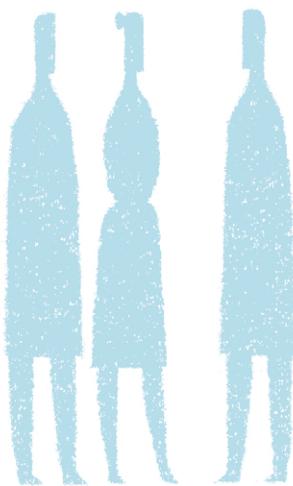
News, simply by virtue of its having been published, confers legitimacy and credibility on issues. Media advocates reuse the news to remind the target that the public is paying attention and knows what it wants done.

EVALUATING YOUR EFFORTS

Time spent determining your message, seeing that it promotes your values and specific policy goals, preparing news events and messengers, and delivering the message at opportune moments is usually time well spent. But be sure that it is. Evaluate what you do, refine your frames, learn from your news coverage what works and what doesn't. Simple reflection among key players in the effort can help you determine how you'll approach your next media advocacy effort and what media access strategies are appropriate.

As we mentioned in Module 2, you'll need to revisit your media advocacy plan periodically to make sure it still reflects your overall strategy. Immediately following a news event you organized, or after you get news coverage for another reason, is a good time to reflect on and evaluate your progress to date. Assess your campaign or an individual media event by asking yourself such questions as:

- Did our target see this coverage, or get wind of our event? How did our target respond?
- Did the news stories reflect our perspective? Is our frame apparent in the coverage? Did we say what we wanted to say?
- Did we establish new relationships, or cement old relationships, with reporters? Are we starting to be considered a trusted source?
- Did we get better, as an organization, at contacting and talking with reporters and creating news?



¹⁶ Dorfman, L. "Using Media Advocacy to Influence Policy." Chapter 15 in R. J. Bensley and J. Brookins-Fisher (Eds.), *Community Health Education Methods: A Practitioner's Guide* (2nd edition). Sudbury, MA: Jones & Bartlett Publishers, 2003.

6

Conclusion

We hope that after reading this module, your head is now brimming with creative ideas to attract the media's attention and help you talk about your policy in terms of a compelling story. We're also hopeful that the excitement that often surrounds news conferences, a sharp editorial, clever media bites and well-prepared spokespeople hasn't clouded one of our earlier and most important points: It's not (just) about the news coverage.

Your media work will be more efficient, more focused, and most importantly, more effective if you continually keep your policy goal at the forefront of your planning. After all, it's policy improvements, and not simply media exposure, that will ultimately improve the community's health. An interested reporter or a great story alone may feel like a success—and on one level it certainly is—but without the clear call for policy change, and without the necessary community pressure to push for that change, the amplified voice provided by the media might be forgotten and fade away.

So, always base your media access strategy on well-developed overall, media, and message strategies. Working with the media takes time, sweat, creativity and resources. Make sure it's worthwhile by being strategic.

Your media work will be more efficient, more focused, and most importantly, more effective if you continually keep your policy goal at the forefront of your planning.

7

Resources

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www.preventioninstitute.org/sa

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Cutting, H.; M. Themba-Nixon. *Talking the Walk: A Communications Guide for Racial Justice*. Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2006.

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Salzman, J. *Making the News: A Guide for Nonprofits and Activists.* Cause Communications, 2003.

Spitfire Strategies. *Breaking Through to Great: Smart Strategies for Developing Winning Communications Campaigns.*

Organizations

Berkeley Media Studies Group

www.bmsg.org

Communications Consortium Media Center

www.ccmc.org/main.htm

Fenton Communications

www.fenton.com

FrameWorks Institute

www.frameworksinstitute.org

Green Media Toolshed

www.greenmediatoolshed.org

Media Alliance

www.media-alliance.org

The Opportunity Agenda

www.opportunityagenda.org

The Praxis Project

www.thepraxisproject.org

Public Media Center

www.publicmediacenter.org

The Spin Project

www.spinproject.org

Media Resources

Cision Media Directories

www.us.cision.com

Google News Alerts

www.google.com/alerts

LexisNexis Subscription Service

www.lexisnexis.com

New America Media

www.newamericamedia.org

On the Media (National Public Radio)

www.onthemedia.org

PR Newswire

www.prnewswire.com

News Outlets and Services

Many local TV stations syndicate stories to other stations around the state. Several public radio stations (e.g., KPBS-FM in San Diego or KQED-FM in San Francisco) produce programs to be broadcast statewide on other stations. Look for these opportunities.

News Services and Syndicates

Alternet

www.alternet.org, (415) 284-1420

Associated Press

www.ap.org, (212) 621-1600

La Opinion News Service

www.laopinion.com, (213) 896-2270

Pacific News Service

www.pacificnews.org, (415) 503-4170

Reuters

www.reuters.com, (646) 223-4000

United Press International,

<http://about.upi.com>, (202) 898-8000

Newspapers

Bakersfield Californian

www.bakersfield.com, (661) 395-7384

Chico Enterprise Record

www.chicoer.com, (530) 896-7754

Contra Costa Times

www.contracostatimes.com, (925) 943-8235

Fresno Bee

www.fresnobee.com, (559) 441-6330

Imperial Valley Press

www.ivpressonline.com, (760) 337-3447

Inland Valley Daily Bulletin

www.dailybulletin.com, (909) 483-9331

La Opinion

www.laopinion.com, (213) 896-2011

Lodi News-Sentinel

www.lodinews.com, (209) 369-7035

Lompoc Record

www.lompocrecord.com, (805) 736-2313

Los Angeles Times

www.latimes.com, (213) 237-7092

Marin Independent Journal

www.marinij.com, (415) 382-7271

Merced Sun Star

www.mercedsun-star.com, (209) 385-2457

Modesto Bee

www.modbee.com, (209) 578-2330

Monterey County Herald

www.montereyherald.com, (831) 648-4352

Napa Valley Register

www.napavalleyregister.com, (707) 226-3711

Oakland Tribune

www.oaklandtribune.com, (510) 208-6300

Orange County Register

www.ocregister.com, (714) 796-7951

The Press Democrat (Santa Rosa)

www.pressdemocrat.com, (707) 526-8585

The Press-Enterprise (Riverside)

www.pe.com, (951) 368-9460

Press Telegram (Long Beach)

www.presstelegram.com, (562) 499-1337

The Record (Stockton)

www.recordnet.com, (209) 943-6568

Register Pajaronian (Watsonville)

www.register-pajaronian.com, (831) 761-7326

Sacramento Bee

www.sacbee.com, (916) 321-1020

The Salinas Californian

www.thecalifornian.com, (831) 754-4260

San Diego Union Tribune

www.signonsandiego.com, (619) 293-1211

San Francisco Chronicle

www.sfgate.com, (415) 777-7102

San Jose Mercury News

www.mercurynews.com, (408) 920-5444

Santa Barbara News Press

www.newspress.com, (805) 564-5273

Santa Cruz Sentinel

www.santacruzsentinel.com, (831) 429-2445

The Sun (San Bernardino)

www.sbsun.com, (909) 386-3891

Times Standard (Eureka)

www.times-standard.com, (707) 441-0507

The Tribune (San Luis Obispo)

www.sanluisobispo.com, (805) 781-7902

The Union (Grass Valley)

www.theunion.com, (530) 477-4203

Ventura County Star

www.venturacountystar.com, (805) 655-5825

Wall Street Journal

www.wsj.com, L.A. (323) 658-3821, S.F. (415) 986-6886

TV/Radio

ABC

www.abcnews.go.com

The California Channel (Sacramento Legislature)

www.calchannel.com

CBS

www.cbs.com

NBC

www.nbc.com

NPR

www.npr.org (lists local affiliates)

Pacifica Radio Network (Berkeley, CA)

www.pacifica.org (lists local affiliates)

Telemundo (Burbank bureau)

www.telemundo52.com, (818) 260-5700

Univision

www.univision.com

Notes:

8

Worksheets

The worksheets outline tasks that will help to organize your research, writing, decision making and actions. Your answers will provide a convenient summary of your findings and strategy, and will form the basis for your plan.

| | |
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| 1. STRAGIC MEDIA ADVOCACY PLANNING QUESTIONS | 76 |
| 2. SELECTING A MEDIA OUTLET | 84 |
| 3. SAMPLE MEDIA CONTACT FORM | 86 |
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1. Strategic Media Advocacy Planning Questions

We recommend planning your media advocacy efforts by discussing four layers of strategy: overall strategy, media strategy, message strategy and media access strategy. Discussing the key questions for each layer in order will give you a clear sense of your larger goals before you attract news attention. As your advocacy campaign changes course, you can revisit each layer of strategy.



OVERALL STRATEGY

What is the problem?

What is the solution?

Who has the power to make that change?

What is the target's position on your policy goal?

What allies must be mobilized to apply the necessary pressure?

Who opposes the policy and what will they say or do?

What advocacy actions will you take to reach or influence your target?

1. Strategic Media Advocacy Planning Questions *cont.*



MEDIA STRATEGY

What is the best way to reach your target(s) at each stage of the campaign?

If it is through the media, which outlets would reach your target audience?

When would media attention make a difference in the policymaking process?

Who will be involved in developing your media advocacy strategies?

What communications protocol do you have in place?

How will you build your organizational communications capacity?

How will you evaluate your media efforts and decide when to change course?

How will you capture news clippings and track coverage?

Who will you send the news clips to (journalists, allies, targets, financial contributors) and what will you say?

How will you follow up with your target(s) after media coverage?

1. Strategic Media Advocacy Planning Questions *cont.*



MESSAGE STRATEGY

If your issue is currently in the news, how is it framed?

Who is portrayed as responsible for the problem?

Who is portrayed as responsible for the solution?

What is left out of current coverage?

Who or what types of people are quoted often?

Who could make the case for the policy solution?

What values support your perspective and policy solution?

What is the most important message that would help convince your target to act?

Make sure to answer the questions: What is the problem? What is the policy solution? Why does it matter?

What will you need to make your case (data, visuals, social math, policy research)?

What will your opposition say? How will you respond to those arguments?

1. Strategic Media Advocacy Planning Questions *cont.*



MEDIA ACCESS STRATEGY

What aspects of your story are interesting, unusual or otherwise newsworthy?

When might be a good time of year to attract attention to this story?

What can you do to get your story in the media?

- Create news (release a report, hold an event)
- Piggyback on a breaking story
- Use editorial strategies (op-eds, editorial board visits, letters to the editor)
- Purchase paid ads

What story elements (social math, visuals, authentic voices) can support your frame and package the story for journalists?

What will you say when you call to pitch the story to reporters?

How will you develop and nurture ongoing relationships with reporters? What authentic voices, information, perspectives or contacts can you offer them?

2. Selecting a Media Outlet

→ Our policy goal is to:

.....
.....

→ The target (person or institution) that can make this change is:

(You may complete one sheet for your targeted decision maker and another for the secondary targets that can be mobilized to influence your primary target.)

→ The media outlets that could reach this target are:

(Add actual programs or columns where known.)

a. Newspapers (Daily, Weekly, Monthly)

National:

.....

State:

.....

Local:

.....

Ethnic media outlets:

.....

Other:

.....

b. Radio Stations and Programs

National:

.....

State:

.....

Local:

Ethnic media outlets:

Other:

c. Television Stations and Programs

National:

State:

Local:

Ethnic media outlets:

Cable programs:

Other:

d. Alternative Press

Online options (*Web sites, blogs, listservs*):

Professional or trade publications:

Community or organizational newsletters:

3. Sample Media Contact Form

Date: _____ Time: _____

Contact initiated by: _____ Staff Media

Staff name: _____

Follow-up needed: _____

Follow-up needed by: _____

Follow-up completed: _____

Name: _____

Title (*reporter, producer, news director, assignment editor, columnist*): _____

Specialty areas/beats (*political, health, education, metro*): _____

Affiliation: _____

TV

Print

Radio

Online

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Fax: _____

E-mail: _____

Request/comments/notes: _____

Add to Media List Added to Media List Date: _____

4. Media Advocacy Activity Timeline

| POLICYMAKING CALENDAR | ADVOCACY ACTIONS | POSSIBLE NEWS HOOKS | MEDIA ACTIONS | NEXT STEPS |
|-----------------------|------------------|---|---------------|------------|
| JANUARY | | New Year's Day Martin Luther King Day (third Monday) Cervical Cancer Awareness Month National Birth Defects Prevention Month | | |
| FEBRUARY | | February 14, Valentine's Day Presidents Day (third Monday) Chinese New Year (date changes) The Oscars (date changes) American Heart Month National Cancer Prevention Month National Condom Month National Children's Dental Health Month | | |
| MARCH | | March 8, International Women's Day Spring break (date changes) March 31, Cesar Chavez Day National Youth Violence Prevention Week (dates change) | | |

4. Media Advocacy Activity Timeline *cont.*

| POLICYMAKING CALENDAR | ADVOCACY ACTIONS | POSSIBLE NEWS HOOKS | MEDIA ACTIONS | NEXT STEPS |
|-----------------------|------------------|--|---------------|------------|
| APRIL | | Passover (date changes) Easter (date changes) April 7, World Health Day April 15, Taxes due April 22, Earth Day Asthma and Allergy Awareness Month National Alcohol Awareness Month National Minority Health and Health Disparities Month National STD/Family Planning Awareness Month Sexual Assault Awareness Month National Public Health Week (first full week) National Infant Immunization Week (last full week) National TV Turn-off Week (last full week) Cover the Uninsured Week (dates change) | | |

| POLICYMAKING CALENDAR | ADVOCACY ACTIONS | POSSIBLE NEWS HOOKS | MEDIA ACTIONS | NEXT STEPS |
|-----------------------|------------------|--|---------------|------------|
| MAY | | May 1, May Day Mother's Day (second Sunday) May 17, Anniversary of the Brown vs. Board of Education Supreme Court decision Memorial Day (last Monday) National Physical Fitness Month National Women's Health Week (second full week) Bike to Work Week (second full week) | | |
| JUNE | | June 14, Flag Day Father's Day (third Sunday) | | |
| JULY | | July 4, Independence Day July 26, Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act | | |
| AUGUST | | Back to school (late August, dates vary) | | |
| SEPTEMBER | | Labor Day (first Monday) September 1–7, Childhood Injury Prevention Week Suicide Prevention Week (second full week) | | |

4. Media Advocacy Activity Timeline *cont.*

| POLICYMAKING CALENDAR | ADVOCACY ACTIONS | POSSIBLE NEWS HOOKS | MEDIA ACTIONS | NEXT STEPS |
|-----------------------|------------------|---|---------------|------------|
| OCTOBER | | Indigenous People's Day (second Monday) Domestic Violence Awareness Month National AIDS Awareness Month National Breast Cancer Awareness Month National Health Education Week (third full week) | | |
| NOVEMBER | | Election Day (date changes) November 11, Veteran's Day Thanksgiving Day (third Thursday) American Diabetes Month | | |
| DECEMBER | | December 1, World AIDS Day Hanukkah (date changes, may begin in November) December 10, International Human Rights Day December 25, Christmas Day December 26–January 1, Kwanzaa | | |

To find more health-related days, weeks and months, visit the following Web sites:

National Health Information Center (2007 National Health Observances):
www.healthfinder.gov/library/nho/nhoyear.asp?year=2007

National Wellness Institute (2007 Health and Wellness Observances Calendar):
www.nationalwellness.org/pdf/2007hoc.pdf

5. Pitching Worksheet

Reporters don't have as much time as they used to for scoping out neighborhoods to find good stories. These days, they must rely on what others bring to their attention. When you have a good story, use this worksheet to prepare for telling a journalist about it. Remember, when you call a journalist to pitch a story, you are not asking for a favor. Rather, you are helping reporters do their job, which is to report the news.

Before you call, fill out all the aspects of the story you want to pitch.

You can use these questions as a starting point.

→ Who is the story about?

→ What is going to happen?

→ Where is it going to happen?

→ How is it going to happen?

→ When will it happen?

→ Why is it interesting or important?

6. Editorial Board Visits Worksheet

Before you set up a meeting with an editorial board, it is a good idea to plan what you want to say about why the board should meet with your group. Editorial boards typically get many more requests for meetings than they can fulfill, so you should be prepared to explain why the issue is important and why it matters now. Use the following questions to focus your thoughts and draft a letter describing your group's objectives.

Newspaper we want to meet with:

Past editorials on related issues:

Contact person for editorial board meetings:

Phone number/address:

Dear [Name]:

We would like to meet with your editorial board to discuss an issue of great importance for your readers. We are a coalition of _____ working to _____. Our coalition includes [list type of participants or number of community members represented].

The specific issue we would like to discuss with you is _____. This is an important issue because _____.

It is particularly urgent/timely for your paper to take a stand on this issue at this time because _____.

We would be happy to provide you with additional material on this issue. We look forward to hearing from you soon about when we can meet.

Sincerely,

[Your name, address, and phone number]

This worksheet was adapted from *News for a Change: An Advocate's Guide to Working with the Media*, 1999.

7. Op-Ed Planning Worksheet

Use the following questions to organize your thoughts about a potential op-ed you would like to write. After making your notes, it may be helpful to write without stopping or editing for several minutes to get your thoughts flowing. Then you can begin to shape a first draft.

- The subject I would like to cover in my op-ed is:

- The personal or professional stories I can tell to illustrate the importance of this problem are:

- The policy solution I want to advocate for is:

- The key points that would convince policymakers that this is the right solution are:

(Address the core message questions: What's wrong? Why does it matter? And, what should be done?)

7. Op-Ed Planning Worksheet *cont.*

- The compelling facts or social math that can help make my case are:

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.....

- The metaphors or images that might help reinforce the point are:

(Consider what picture should come to mind when the target reads the op-ed)

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- The colleagues or allies who could submit or co-author this op-ed to give it the most weight with the newspaper and the target policymaker are:

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.....
.....
.....

This worksheet was adapted from *News for a Change: An Advocate's Guide to Working with the Media*, 1999.

7. Op-Ed Draft

Notes:

Notes:

Notes:



Center for Healthy Communities