



**Section 9:
Getting the Most from
the Media**

Highlights of Section 9: Getting the Most from the Media

<input type="checkbox"/> Working with Your Local Media	175
<input type="checkbox"/> Proactive vs. Reactive Media Relations	175
<input type="checkbox"/> Proactive Media Relations	175
<input type="checkbox"/> Reactive Media Relations	176
<input type="checkbox"/> Developing a Media Plan	176
<input type="checkbox"/> Define Your Communications Objectives	176
<input type="checkbox"/> Identify Your Target Audience(s)	176
<input type="checkbox"/> Develop Your Key Messages	177
<input type="checkbox"/> Sample Media Plan	177
<input type="checkbox"/> Developing Your Media Materials	177
<input type="checkbox"/> Determine Whether Your Information Is Newsworthy	177
<input type="checkbox"/> Create a Media Kit	178
<input type="checkbox"/> Contacting the Media	180
<input type="checkbox"/> Working with Your Local Newspapers	182
<input type="checkbox"/> Working with Your Local Television Stations	182
<input type="checkbox"/> Working with Your Local Radio Stations	182
<input type="checkbox"/> Create a Contact List	185
<input type="checkbox"/> Distributing Your Information	187
<input type="checkbox"/> Developing Talking Points for Follow-up Calls	188
<input type="checkbox"/> Tips for Working with Reporters	188
<input type="checkbox"/> Monitoring Media Coverage	189
<input type="checkbox"/> Perseverance Pays Off	189

Getting the Most from the Media

Working with Your Local Media

No matter how simple or complex, broad or targeted your overall program objectives may be, the media—the print press, television, radio, and the Internet—can help you achieve them. Whether you want to publicize a new program established at your center or highlight how your program is helping residents and center users, the media are a valuable tool. By forming a strong partnership with your local media, you will enhance goodwill and positive public perception for your center and ensure continued stakeholder, community, and partner support. You will also spread the word among potential volunteers.

In addition, media coverage can:

- Increase credibility for your message/event that cannot be obtained through expensive advertising.
- Provide the opportunity to reach people who may wish to participate in your center's programs or attend a center event.
- Attract new partners and supporters.

Proactive vs. Reactive Media Relations

Your interactions with the media will be either proactive (you contact the media) or reactive (the media contact you). Each type of interaction is discussed below. Regardless of the approach, any type of interaction with the media offers you an opportunity to inform and educate.

Proactive Media Relations

Proactive media relations occur when you initiate contact with the media. For example, you may want to draw media attention to a new partnership you

formed with a local business to bring a much-needed program to your center. Or you may want to publicize a program your center offered that had a positive impact on residents and the community.

Typically, the steps for proactively contacting the media are:

- **Determine your communications objectives.**
This includes developing your key messages and identifying the audiences for those messages.
- **Prepare your spokesperson(s) for interviews.**
Interviews provide an opportunity to explain your program activities to the media. When selecting a spokesperson, make sure the individual thoroughly understands your organization's program goals, objectives, and tactics. Your spokesperson should be able to clearly and consistently communicate your issues to the media. To prepare your spokesperson for interacting with the media, rehearse delivery of key messages, fine-tune the story, and anticipate potentially difficult questions.
- **Distribute your information to the media.**
Using your contact list, determine the best way to distribute your information to these contacts. The preferred means of contact varies by outlet and reporter. If you are contacting more than 20 media professionals, distribute your information and then place a follow-up call to each recipient.
- **Follow up and pitch your information.**
A follow-up call to the media contact after you have sent him or her your information serves two purposes. It allows you to ask the media professional whether he/she received the information and whether more is needed. It also gives you the opportunity to provide the media contact with additional information and to pitch your story in a more personal manner.

Reactive Media Relations

Reactive media relations occur when a reporter or journalist contacts you without any prompting from you or your center. The inquiry may be related to a specific incident or it may concern a larger community issue. The journalist may be writing a story that relates to your center—such as a feature on self-sufficiency, community technology centers, or innovative job-training programs—and feels the story would benefit from your input. Reactive media relations may also be necessary if an immediate crisis occurs. If you have a comprehensive media plan supported by materials, you can be confident in your ability to respond to impromptu media requests.

Typically, reactive media relations include:

- **Responding to general requests for information.** People in the media are constantly searching for new story ideas. Their search for information may lead them to you. Managing media inquiries can be easy if you ask a few questions of your own:
 - What do the media representatives want? Typically, they want to know the who, what, when, where, why, and how of a story idea.
 - Are you the appropriate person to respond to the request?
 - Is there someone else you should notify if the request requires a broader scope?
 - What are the media professional's time constraints and deadlines? Will you be able to respond in the required amount of time? If you can't, consider your options, which may include referring the reporter to someone else or asking the reporter to delay using the information needed from you by recasting the story.

The media are always in a hurry. Haste is the nature of the news business. Because news is dynamic and situations constantly change, reporters must frequently update their stories to accommodate that change. Remember to be as prompt as possible in answering questions from the media. However, if you feel you do not have enough

information about a particular issue, do not feel pressured to comment or to answer questions. When necessary, tell the reporter you will be back in touch as soon as you have the information or the appropriate contact for the reporter.

- **Responding to a crisis.** The media may come to you for information about and/or reactions to unanticipated local or national events. These events could be related to policy or to current trends. The media may seek your opinion or ask how your program is dealing with these issues. Whatever the exact details, you and your team can be prepared by developing a comprehensive media plan.

Developing a Media Plan

A media plan is your roadmap for working with the media. Before you write a single line of press material or contact your first reporter, you will want to develop a plan that provides a step-by-step guide for working with the media. Below are three basic steps to follow when developing your media plan, as well as a sample media plan.

Define Your Communications Objectives

Think about what you want to accomplish. Do you want the public to understand the Neighborhood Networks Initiative and its mission? Do you want to highlight that your center is part of a larger national initiative focused on moving residents toward self-sufficiency? Are you trying to build community and stakeholder support? Do you want residents and the community to participate in your programs and use your services?

Identify Your Target Audience(s)

Who should receive your information? Your target audience may comprise several subgroups, such as partners, businesses, government agencies, residents, and the general public. Who you want to reach will determine how you will reach them.

Develop Your Key Messages

What are the key messages you want your target audience to receive? Keep your messages to a minimum. They should be simple and brief, and include a call to action—that is, what you would like the audience to do—whenever possible.

Sample Media Plan

GOAL:

To build a press portfolio that will ensure community support and strengthen chances for additional funding.

OBJECTIVE:

To showcase the breadth and depth of community support and involvement in center programs.

AUDIENCES:

General public, potential partners (local businesses, nonprofit organizations, government agencies, community organizations), funders.

KEY MESSAGES:

ABC Neighborhood Networks Center helps residents move toward self-sufficiency.

STORY IDEAS:

- 1) Local business donates four computers and printers to center.
- 2) Center hosts community job fair.
- 3) Interns from local college help at center's afterschool program.

MAKING IT HAPPEN:

- 1) Contact local newspaper education and business writers. Contact local TV network affiliates. Contact producer of most popular radio stations among above audiences. Make these by phone as a general introduction.
- 2) Follow up with a backgrounder, briefly explaining the Neighborhood Networks Initiative and outlining five events you consider newsworthy.

- 3) Invite reporters to a center event or to meet with appropriate center stakeholders to discuss how these partnerships are supporting the mission of Neighborhood Networks.

While it may not be realistic to set specific deadlines, it is a good idea to have a rough schedule in mind. For example, one of your media plan goals can be "Please do a good-news story for the winter holiday season." In addition, as your plan takes shape, keep notes on what you can do to follow up.

Developing Your Media Materials

In most professions, your ability to get the job done well depends on the quality of your tools. The same is true in media relations. Every day, editors and producers receive hundreds of press kits. To distinguish your media materials from the rest of the pack, the materials must provide the information that editors and producers are seeking. Writing for the press is different from writing for other audiences. Your audience for this style of writing is the reporter, editor, or TV or radio news or show producer who will, in the end, translate your information to the public. Therefore, your writing should be concise and to the point.

Determine Whether Your Information Is Newsworthy

Before you even begin contacting the media, it is vital that you determine whether your information is newsworthy. If you do not evaluate the newsworthiness of your story—and merely create and distribute any and all stories to your local media—before long your local media will simply discard your materials

Remember to Make It Audience-Appropriate

Translate materials into other languages, as appropriate, to reach your community's minority and ethnic populations.

before reading them, and your chances of getting coverage will severely decline.

A newsworthy story should meet most of the following criteria:

- Appeal to the audience.
- Address issues that directly affect or are relevant to the community.
- Stimulate debate, controversy, or differences of opinion.
- Generate high ratings or increase readership.
- Include fresh angles that will sustain public interest.
- Distinguish your media outlet from its competitors.

Create a Media Kit

Once you have determined that your information is newsworthy, it is time to create a media kit. Be sure to include the Neighborhood Networks Web site and the Neighborhood Networks Information Center toll-free number on all media materials to reinforce your participation in a national initiative. A standard media kit should include the following components:

Pitch Letter

A pitch letter should be brief—no more than one page. You should make your point quickly, but engagingly. In the letter, show how and why the issue is important to the people in your community and specify who is supporting the center program. Also, include a call to action. Ask that the information be included in their coverage of local/community, health, or education news. Finally, end your pitch letter by mentioning that you will contact the recipient in a few days to follow up on your request.

Media Advisory

A media advisory is a brief—less than one page—notice that provides reporters with early notification of an event. Like the news release, it explains who, what, when, where, and why, and provides the

name and telephone number of a contact person for your organization. While media advisories are short and simple, they are designed to spark the reporter's interest. A sample of a media advisory is provided (Exhibit 1).

Press Release

A staple of the press kit, the press release is the most cost-effective way to alert the media about a news event. The press release is sent after the media advisory, and provides more details than the advisory, usually in two to three double-spaced typed pages. The press release, which should be reproduced on standard-size paper, should explain who is involved, what is happening, when it is happening, where it is happening, and why it is happening. Because a press release faces intense competition when it arrives on an editor's desk, the entire release must be sharp and to the point. Stories that showcase resources and programs that are providing something worthwhile in the community are of particular interest to local media professionals.

Depending on the news of the day and conflicting deadlines, news organizations may decide not to cover your story. In that case, a press release provides reporters with context and detail for a follow-up story.

Components of the press release include:

- **Headline.** The headline is the most important element of the press release. The headline should grab the reporter's attention immediately. An ideal headline should summarize what your story is all about in less than 10 words and in a maximum of two lines. Avoid writing clever headlines that require the reporter to decipher them.
- **Subheads.** You may also write a subhead that supports the headline. The subhead allows you to provide additional information without going into great detail. Subheads can also be used throughout the press release to allow reporters to scan the release for the key points without having to read every word.

Exhibit 1. Media Advisory

MEDIA ADVISORY

Bay Ridge Apartment Neighborhood Networks Center
One Bens Drive
Annapolis, MD 21403

For Immediate Release

August 9, 2006

Contact

Mr. Kenny Hart
(410) 555-1000

Annapolis Neighborhood Networks Center Holds Open House

What: Community Open House
Where: Bay Ridge Apartments Neighborhood Networks Center
One Bens Drive
Annapolis, MD 21403
When: August 12, 2006; 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.
Who: Kenny Hart, Center Coordinator

Annapolis, MD—As part of its Neighborhood Networks Week activities, the Bay Ridge Apartments Neighborhood Networks Center, located at One Bens Drive in Annapolis, Maryland, will host an Open House from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday, August 12, 2006. Bay Ridge Apartments invites local residents, potential and existing supporters and partners, and the media to visit the center to see its programs in action.

The Bay Ridge Neighborhood Networks Center is one of hundreds of Neighborhood Networks centers that have opened nationwide. Launched by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in 1995, Neighborhood Networks is a community-based initiative that provides residents of HUD Federal Housing Administration (FHA)-insured and -assisted housing with onsite access to computer technology, resources, and job-training skills as a vehicle to self-sufficiency.

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Additional information is available from the HUD Neighborhood Networks Web site at www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org or by calling the Neighborhood Networks Information Center toll-free at (888) 312-2743.

- **Release date.** This should appear on the left side of the release below the address and should contain the date on which you are releasing the information.
- **Contact.** The contact(s) should appear on the right side of the release and should list the person(s) whom you want reporters to call and a phone number. For example, a news release issued by a HUD office would include a local HUD public affairs representative or HUD Neighborhood Networks Coordinator as a contact since they know about Neighborhood Networks and have experience working with the media.
- **Dateline.** Datelines tell the media where the story happened. A dateline should contain the city name in bold capital letters, followed in most cases by the state. No state is needed for major cities. Use post office abbreviations for states.
- **Lead.** The lead or first paragraph should summarize what your press release is all about, in less than 30 words if possible. Keep your lead simple, and try to use a unique news angle that sparks local interest. Most reporters decide whether to read the entire release based on the first paragraph, so it should be concise and attention grabbing.
- **Release body.** The rest of the press release, known as the body, should include more detailed information. You may also use quotes to make your press release more colorful. Your entire release should be clear, concise, and informative. Use the active voice and attribute reports, statements, and facts when necessary to add credibility. Typically, press releases include at least one quote.
- **Closing.** To end your release, include an end paragraph sign (#). You may also want to include your center's Web site address, if you have one, or list the HUD Neighborhood Networks Web site (*www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org*). Also, you should list the Neighborhood Networks Information Center toll-free line at (888) 312-2743.

An example of a press release is provided (Exhibit 2).

Media Backgrounder

A media backgrounder is an effective way to focus media attention on a specific component of your program, activity, or event. A backgrounder may assume various formats, such as a fact sheet, organization profile, biographies of key individuals or spokespeople, or a list of contacts or resources for additional information.

Contacting the Media

Once you determine your story is newsworthy and develop your materials, the next step is to get them into the hands of the right media professionals. The summaries that follow briefly explain how the media operate.

Useful Resources

Media Directories

- **Bacon's Media Directories.** *Bacon's Newspaper/Magazine Directory, Radio/TV/Cable Directory, and Internet Media Directory* list publications, stations, and Web sites with address, phone number, and key contacts.
- **BurrellesLuce.** Like Bacon's, BurrellesLuce compiles contact information for TV and radio stations, magazines, and newspapers across the country.
- **Newspapers.com.** This Web site allows you to search for U.S. and international newspapers, trade journals, online papers, news services, and more.

Web Sites of Public Opinion Survey Groups

The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research
<http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/>

The Gallup Organization
www.gallup.com

Exhibit 2. Sample Press Release

PRESS RELEASE

Town Park Plaza North Neighborhood Networks Center
535 NW 19th Street
Miami, FL 33136

For Immediate Release

August 10, 2006

Contact

Kris Smith
(305) 555-1000

Florida Center Hosts Health Fair for the Community

MIAMI, FL—In an attempt to address the health concerns of the community, the Town Park Plaza North Neighborhood Networks Center will host a community health fair on Monday, August 14, 2006, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. as part of their Neighborhood Networks Week observance.

The health fair will provide an excellent opportunity to give residents accurate health information and introduce them to some of the resources available in the community. Residents will learn from medical professionals about the dangers of drinking alcohol and smoking, and local organizations will set up exhibits and workshops to inform participants about issues related to asthma, nutrition, cancer, and HIV/AIDS awareness.

Among the invited guests are the Area Health Education Center, a local organization dedicated to improving access to healthcare in rural and underserved communities; the local chapter of the National Black Leadership Institute; and the Miami Health Department.

“This community is an underserved, low-income population that does not receive the proper medical and health-related information,” said Center Director Kris Smith. “And, with 40 percent of the children living at Town Park Plaza North suffering from asthma-related symptoms, this information is critical to their well-being.”

The Town Park Plaza North Neighborhood Networks Center is one of hundreds of Neighborhood Networks centers that have opened nationwide. Launched by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in 1995, Neighborhood Networks is a community-based initiative that provides residents of HUD Federal Housing Administration (FHA)-insured and -assisted housing with onsite access to computer technology, resources, and job-training skills as a vehicle to self-sufficiency.

Neighborhood Networks centers nationwide offer multifamily housing residents a variety of resources such as computer training, Internet access, job-readiness support, microenterprise development, General Educational Development (GED) certification, healthcare and social services, adult education classes, and youth services.

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Working with Your Local Newspapers

Newspapers generally provide more in-depth treatment of a subject than does television or radio. Typically, newspapers are organized by beats, or sections, such as national news, local news, education, business, health, features/lifestyle, travel, and sports. Reporters who cover local issues are most likely to be interested in your information; however, individuals who cover education and health beats also may be interested, depending upon the center program or event.

To increase the chances of having your information published in your local newspaper:

- Familiarize yourself with the various beats or sections of your newspaper, and learn the names of the individuals who write for those sections.
- Contact those writers to begin developing a relationship. Learn what issues are of most interest to them. Ask them if they would be interested in receiving your materials and, if so, how would they like to receive them—via fax, e-mail, or regular mail—and when.
- Maintain regular contact with these individuals, even when you do not need their assistance. To ensure regular contact with your media representatives, it is recommended that you create a Local Press Worksheet (Exhibit 3) that indicates your date of last contact and any other relevant information.

Working with Your Local Television Stations

Television relies on attention-grabbing visuals. Anything that involves action, movement, or a group that has intrinsic local interest will give your story visual space. Even a special room, such as a computer lab at a center, has value because most viewers will never have seen it. Activities involving students, especially in tandem with your partners, have appeal. When you are planning such events, let the stations know in advance so they can reserve a camera crew.

The chances that your story will be featured on your local television station are greatly increased if you can offer the station access to visuals. If you want to have your story featured on the evening news program, your visuals may show students participating in an afterschool program. If your goal is to have a more in-depth discussion about your program and its benefits, you may want to offer participants or partners involved in your program as guests on talk shows or phone-in programs.

To increase your chances of having your center featured on your local television stations:

- Familiarize yourself with your local television news programs to learn the types of stories they typically feature.
- Make sure you have appealing visuals, such as photographs of students participating in an afterschool program or residents attending a job-preparation class, to accompany your materials.
- Learn the names of the feature/local reporters who cover stories and contact them to begin developing a relationship. Learn what issues are of most interest to them. Ask them if they would be interested in receiving your materials, and, if so, how they would like to receive them—via fax, e-mail, or regular mail—and when.
- Maintain regular contact with these individuals, even when you do not need their assistance. To ensure regular contact with your media representatives, it is recommended that you create a Local TV Worksheet (Exhibit 4) that indicates your date of last contact and any other relevant information.

Working with Your Local Radio Stations

Radio requires a constant, but varied, stream of news and information. This presents you with many opportunities to have your messages aired, including news and talk programs, listener call-in programs, morning and afternoon drive-time deejay participation shows, and public service announcements.

Exhibit 3. Local Press Worksheet

LOCAL PRESS WORKSHEET					
Publication	How Often Is It Published?	Name, phone, fax, and mailing address for media interested in:			
		Education	Youth	Social Issues	Community Events

Exhibit 4. Local TV Worksheet

LOCAL TV WORKSHEET					
Station	How Often Does Program Air?	Name, phone, fax, and mailing address for media interested in:			
		Education	Youth	Social Issues	Community Events

As with print media and television, you will need to contact the appropriate individuals. This not only saves you time, it also minimizes the time your local media representatives spend in channeling your story to the right people.

To increase your chances of having your information aired on the radio:

- Familiarize yourself with your local radio stations to understand what types of stories they routinely feature.
- Learn the name of the individuals who report stories and contact them to begin developing a relationship. Learn what issues are of most interest to them. Ask them if they would be interested in receiving your materials, and, if so, how

Roles of Radio Professionals

The **news director** is the senior gatekeeper and often the senior news editor. This person is ultimately responsible for what stories are aired, but you should not pitch your story to the news director. News directors operate under extremely tight timeframes, so pitching calls may not be positively received.

The **program director** coordinates talk shows and programs. If the program director deems your story to be of interest to listeners, he/she will direct you to the talk show contact or host.

The **assignment editor** generates story ideas, finds angles and features to add variety to the newscasts, and assigns stories to reporters. The assignment editor often receives a great deal of input from the producers and news directors.

A **reporter** covers stories on location or by telephone from the studio.

The **public service/community** affairs director arranges public service announcements to be read or played over the air.

they would like to receive them—via fax, e-mail, or regular mail—and when.

- Maintain regular contact with these individuals, even when you do not need their assistance. To ensure regular contact with your media representatives, it is recommended that you create a Local Radio Worksheet (Exhibit 5) that indicates your date of last contact and any other relevant information.

Create a Contact List

A well-organized contact list is essential for establishing and maintaining good relationships with the media. It should include your contact's name, address, e-mail address, and telephone and fax numbers.

When creating a media contact list:

- Identify all local media sources, including radio, cable, and television stations; weekly and daily newspapers; magazines; and wire services, such as the Associated Press (AP). Note that not all areas have a local AP bureau. Most larger towns and cities have at least one daily newspaper and three television stations, usually ABC, NBC, and CBS affiliates. Some cities and towns also have a FOX television station. Do not forget radio, cable, magazines, and weekly newspapers, which traditionally cover community events. Include all ethnic and religious media and public or community affairs programs that serve your local community.
- Check a telephone book or do an Internet search for a media list for your area. If you have access to the Internet, you can search specifically for media organizations in your area. If a list is available, you can print it out directly. Once you have obtained local phone numbers for media outlets, you can start building your own list.
- Call local radio and television stations and ask for the news department. Ask the news department to provide you with the name, phone number, fax number, and mailing address of the assignment editor/reporter for your area. If possible, you

Exhibit 5. Local Radio Worksheet

LOCAL RADIO WORKSHEET						
Station	How Often Does Program Air?	Name, phone, fax, and mailing address for:				
		News Director	Program Director	Assign. Editor	Reporter	Public Service

might want to introduce yourself to that editor/reporter while you are on the line.

- Organize your gathered contact information into an electronic mailing list on your computer at the center. If possible, use a software program that prints mailing labels to make future mailings easier.
- Update your mailing list. Since newsroom staffing constantly changes, it is a good idea to update your media list at least every 6 months by making a quick round of phone calls. Add new names and contact information as needed.
- Make a separate mailing list that includes local officials, partners, and community stakeholders. It is important to keep these groups abreast of the latest news about your center.

If you do not have the time or resources to develop your own list, your local HUD Field Office or

the Neighborhood Networks media relations/communications team may have a list already available.

You can also purchase several media directories to help you develop a comprehensive list of contacts in your community or state. However, these directories usually are expensive and are updated annually, so you may want to contact your local library to find out if they have current copies.

Distributing Your Information

Now that you have your contact list compiled, it's time to put it to use. Whether you fax or e-mail your materials is your own decision. Generally speaking, most news organizations prefer to receive faxes. However, an increasing number of large news organizations, such as *The New York Times*, no longer accept faxes unless they are requested by a direct

General Deadlines for Media Channels

Print

For daily morning newspapers	2 p.m. to 3 p.m. the afternoon before you would like it to appear
For daily evening newspapers	Early morning the day of the issue in which you would like it to appear
For weekly newspapers	Five to seven days before the issue date
For monthly magazines	Four to six months before publication

Television

For breaking news	Day of event
For the 6 p.m. news	By 10 a.m. that day
For talk shows and phone-in shows	One to two weeks to two months

Radio

For breaking news	Day of event
For public events	Five to seven days before event
For talk shows and phone-in shows	One to two weeks, occasionally longer

contact at the newspaper. In addition, an increasing number of reporters are beginning to request news releases via e-mail. Your approach will depend on your available time and resources.

If you fax your media materials, remember to include a cover sheet. It should include contact name, title, organization, fax number, and a brief description of what you are faxing.

Developing Talking Points for Follow-up Calls

To increase the chances of having your story covered, it is always a good idea to conduct follow-up phone calls with contacts. Follow-up calls allow you to confirm that the reporter has received your information, answer any questions, set up interviews for the reporter, emphasize the importance of having your story covered, and encourage coverage. Follow-up calls also help you to begin building relationships with media contacts. When conducting follow-up calls, be careful not to be too demanding. Your relationship with members of the media is one of give and take. They need you to provide them with information and ideas for stories—and you need them to help you get the word out about your center and its programs.

Whether it will only be you or a team of people contacting the media, develop a list of talking points to ensure that everyone in contact with the media delivers consistent messages. Talking points should be concise, bulleted messages that are capsule versions of your issues.

Tips for Working with Reporters

If you want to build good working relationships with reporters, there are some good basic principles you should practice:

- **Be responsive.** If reporters call, call them back within an hour, if possible. Find out what reporters want and help them. Nothing annoys reporters more than someone who ignores phone calls or is evasive. Remember, you want to forge a partnership with the media.

- **Know the reporter's deadline.** Reporters work on deadlines and they frequently will ask for information on a tight schedule. Try to meet their deadline. Most daily newspapers have noon or 4 p.m. deadlines, while many television stations prefer to have news footage back by 3 p.m. for the 6 o'clock news and 8 p.m. for the 11 o'clock news. Some news segments can go live anytime via satellite.
- **Honesty is the best policy.** Be sincere and always be truthful. Present the facts and try to make them interesting.
- **Answer directly and follow up.** If you do not know the answer to a question, do not fake it. Tell the reporter that you will get back to him/her with the correct information.
- **Keep your demeanor with reporters professional.** Do not say or do anything negative in the presence of a reporter that could be used in the media. Never lose your cool or argue with a media representative. Treat a reporter as you would want to be treated yourself.
- **Brief residents and others for interviews.** Reporters will often prefer to interview residents directly. Advise residents to relax and be themselves. Let their personality and experiences come out in the interview. Give some thought in advance to the questions that might be asked and share that insight with residents prior to their interviews.
- **Keep your message simple.** Your comments to reporters should be brief, to the point, and easily understood. Avoid long rambling answers. Have key talking points and messages ready.
- **Use anecdotes and success stories.** People love stories and they are likely to remember them longer than they remember mere facts. With a profile or a success story, you can present a strong message. By telling a story, you will appear warmer and down-to-earth.
- **Do not demand and never beg.** Respect the reporter's opinion and do not tell him or her what is or is not news. You can suggest a news story and its importance to the listening, viewing, or

reading audience, but do not push it. Do not complain about the treatment of a story as long as it is accurate and fair.

- **Dress for success.** Whether on camera or speaking with a print journalist, you want to look your best. Experts advise their clients to wear low-key interview attire. Solid colors are best. Stress eye contact and have a relaxed but professional demeanor. Use your hands to stress particular points, but avoid becoming too theatrical.
- **Stay in touch.** Once you have worked with a reporter, call him or her back occasionally. Keep the media informed about your center's programs and activities. Develop a lasting relationship built on respect and professional courtesy. Periodic contact will also help keep your story fresh in the reporter's mind.

Monitoring Media Coverage

Tracking the amount of media coverage you received from your efforts helps you measure the success of your efforts and streamline future efforts. Press clippings and television coverage also serve as valuable tools to prepare marketing packets, increase awareness about your center, recruit partners, and engage residents and community volunteers.

You can monitor media coverage on your own by watching the television news, reading newspapers, and listening to the radio.

For a fee (usually \$20 to \$35), audio or videotape versions of media coverage can be ordered from local television or radio stations. Newspapers also will provide copies of past issues at minimal cost.

Perseverance Pays Off

Media relations, even basic media relations, are a big undertaking. As you work with your local media, you will discover that a great deal of time and effort—not to mention trial and error—are required to familiarize yourself with your local media outlets and professionals. And if all your time and effort do not get you the coverage you had hoped for, do not be discouraged. Sometimes, breaking news may bump your story, or other stories have more of an immediate impact on the community. Do not become frustrated and do not give up. Establishing effective partnerships with the media takes time and energy. Your hard work will eventually pay off.

A Snapshot of the Process

- Create media materials, including pitch letter, press release, media alert/advisory, and media backgrounder.
- Assemble press kit. In addition to media materials, your press kit may include a Neighborhood Networks brochure, Neighborhood Networks fact sheets, photographs of your center and staff, copies of articles that have been written about your center, Neighborhood Networks and center newsletters, and copies of certificates of commendation or other honors the center has received.
- Develop a media contact list that includes local radio, cable, and television stations; weekly and daily newspapers; magazines; and wire services.
- Fax, e-mail, or mail press release and/or media alert to contacts.
- Respond to media inquiries and conduct follow-up phone calls with contacts.
- Track coverage.

