



How to Engage the Media in Stories About Your Coalition

Your local news media outlets – print and broadcast – are always looking for good human-interest stories. Make it easy for them to learn about what your coalition is doing in the community and how it might be good material for articles. Here are a few steps you can take to engage the media:

- Determine which media outlets are most important to you. They will include, of course, your main city newspaper, smaller publications including suburban newspapers, community-focused radio and TV programs and other media that your primary audiences pay attention to.
- Read the papers and watch the programs so you know the names of reporters you want to reach. They might include reporters who cover health, seniors, community news or even business. Make a list and include phone numbers and email addresses.
- Get “on message.” What are the 4-5 key talking points you’d like to see appear in the media about your coalition? Write them down and share them with everyone in your coalition. You might focus on benefits to the community, the number of hours caregivers provide, how caregivers augment the work of medical professionals in caring for people and other topics. Use these talking points in all public communication: interviews, presentations, flyers, Web sites, etc.
- Choose a main spokesperson for your coalition. It is far better to have one well-informed individual delivering uniform messages consistently to the press than to have multiple people being interviewed whose information may conflict.
- Make a list of possible stories about your coalition’s activities. They can include:
 - Caregiver Awareness Day activities such as a governor’s proclamation or a special recognition event for caregivers in the community.
 - The way in which people balance family, work and caregiving in their personal lives.

- A profile of specific people who are interesting personalities and involved in local caregiving.
 - How human resources executives at local companies are paying greater attention to the needs of caregivers.
 - Caregiver of the Year Award (if you award such a recognition)
 - The economic impact that caregivers have on the community.
- Use NAC's template press release (it is available on the NAC Web site at <http://www.caregiving.org/coalition>) to put all of the important details into an easily readable format.
 - Call the 2-3 reporters who are most important to you and tell them your story ideas. Often, reporters are hard to reach by phone, so leave them a voice mail and then send an email with the information. But keep it short. You can either write up a couple of paragraphs that outline the news in the story idea or just email (not as an attachment) the press release.
 - Whether you are contacting print, radio or TV, you have a better chance of success if you can offer up a VIP as an interviewee. This may be a local legislator, a medical professional or anyone else with good name recognition.
 - Remember that TV needs good pictures to tell a story so they will be most likely to attend events with lots of activities and people involved.
 - The very best way to get your news covered is to establish a face-to-face relationship with reporters. Call and suggest a brief meeting. If a reporter will agree to meet, bring along a few pages of background information about your coalition and, most important, your press release or a factsheet with the news the reporter can use to create a story if he/she is interested.
 - Don't be daunted by failure to reach a reporter. They are busy. Ask the reporter by phone message or by email when would be the best time to contact them.
 - Don't be intimidated in talking with reporters. They need stories; you need media coverage. It is a good and fair trade!