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Developing Press Materials

When you are conducting media outreach, it is important that you have materials to provide reporters as a resource to help them write their articles. Outlined below are common and effective materials used in working with the media. Please note that the CDC has many of these products already available for partners to use. To access CDC press materials, please contact Curtis Allen at (404) 639-8487 or at cea6@cdc.gov.

Press Releases

A press release is a one-page description of your news or event designed to inform media of high-level information—the “who,” “what,” where,” “when,” “why,” and “how.” A press release should include the partner’s contact information, a captivating headline, and a quote from your organization’s president or spokesperson and should only include essential information about your issue or event. Other tips for writing a press release include:

- Ensure your press release is only one page.
- Describe the main news in the first paragraph.
- Check your facts two or three times.
- Type “FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE” at the top of the page in the left margin and “# # #” centered at the bottom of the release.

For more information on writing press releases, see Appendix B.

Public Service Announcements (PSAs)

PSAs are non-commercial, unpaid radio and television messages used to promote information intended for the public good. Before pitching a PSA to the local radio or television stations, ask how long, in number of words and in time, your PSA can be, as different stations tend to prefer different lengths depending on their other advertising constraints. There are generally four different lengths: 15 seconds (40 words), 20 seconds (50 words), 30 seconds (75 words), and 60 seconds (150 words).

A selection of radio and television PSAs are available to partners to pitch to their local media outlets and/or post on their Web sites. The PSAs currently available target African American grandparents, Latino families, Latina friends, and mothers of young children. The PSAs are available in 15-, 30-, and 60-second spots and some are available open-ended (or untagged) so that you can tailor them to your group’s needs. For example, you could add local information such as a flu clinic date and time or a mention of your organization and contact information.

Available PSAs can be viewed at: www.cdc.gov/flu.

For more tips on distributing PSAs, see Appendix C.

Letters to the Editor or Op-eds

Letters to the editor are letters that can be written by any reader of the publication in response to an issue that has been covered in the publication or of interest to its readers. Letters to the editor provide a wide public forum that can be used to your advantage, before and after your event. Newspapers are most likely to publish a letter to the editor if it addresses an article that has been published in the paper. When creating your letter, make sure to reference the article you are referring to in your letter.

TV PSAs:

English “Why Flu Vaccination Matters: Personal Stories of Families Affected by Flu” (:60, 6:47)

English: “Grandkids” (:15, :30, :60)

Spanish: “Hazlo por ellos” (:30)

English and Spanish: “Stop” (:60, :30)

Radio PSAs:

English: “Grandkids” (:30, :60)

Spanish: “Hazlo por ellos” (:30, :60)

English: “Dinner Party” (:30, :60)

Spanish: “La Cena” (:30, :60)

English: “Flu Vaccine for Big Kids?” (:30, :60)

English: “Don’t Let the Flu Ruin Your Holidays” (:15, :30, :60)

Op-ed is the abbreviation for “opposite editorial” because these opinionated pieces are usually placed on the page opposite the editorial page. While an editorial is written by the news organization that expresses the opinion of the editor, editorial board, or publisher; an op-ed represents the opinion of an individual contributor, such as an “expert,” public official, or anyone who represents an organization.

For both letters to the editor and op-eds, contact your local newspapers to find out about any length restrictions (word count limits) or deadlines. All letters must be signed and include an address.

Matte Articles

Matte articles, also known as drop-in articles, repro-proofs, or camera-ready news, are an effective, cost-efficient way to spread information on influenza vaccination, as well as your success stories. A matte article is a type of news article that is written for direct insertion in community and weekly newspapers. Similar to a feature story in content, your matte article should focus on “soft” news and have a longer shelf life than more time-sensitive news releases.



Tips for creating effective matte articles:

- Keep articles to one page.
- Offer solutions.
- Include a photo or graphic.
- Link your article to the local audience.

Before sending your article, find out what format the publications prefer. Some prefer to receive camera-ready materials on slick paper, while others prefer electronic layouts, usually in PDF format. Still others prefer to lay out the articles themselves, so they will want to receive articles as Word documents.

For an example of a matte article that was developed by CDC for use during flu season, see Appendix D.

Events Calendar

Many newspapers and radio and TV stations have community calendars or bulletin boards that feature listings of local events. By assembling a local calendar of vaccination events and activities, you can provide a service to the media and save them the time of collecting the information. Be sure to include NIVW on your calendar lists.

News Conference or Special Events

When planning an event such as a community flu clinic, send a media advisory to the local media before the event and again the day of the event to entice press attendance and coverage. Call reporters and news desks the morning of the event as a reminder and to confirm attendance.

If press representatives have confirmed their attendance, set up a media hospitality area where reporters can sign in and gather media materials such as a fact sheet or bio of the special guest speaker(s). Make sure you know when and where your spokespeople will be available.

Please see Appendix E for a Checklist for Conducting a News Conference and Appendix F for information on writing a Media Advisory.