

MEDIA OUTREACH GUIDE

**Parents Are the Key:
Safe Teen Driving
Communication Campaign**



National Center for Injury Prevention and Control
Division of Unintentional Injury Prevention



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**A primer on using the
media to raise awareness
of the importance of
safe teen driving**

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Section 1

BASIC MEDIA RELATIONS: BUILDING PUBLICITY

One of the most effective ways to raise awareness about the importance of promoting safe teen driving as part of the “Parents Are The Key” campaign is to work with the media. Media representatives are vital partners that can help raise awareness and knowledge of an issue. In many cases, they are the single most effective mode for delivering key messages to targeted populations.

Getting access to the media is a daunting task with so many organizations vying for publicity from media outlets. What can you do to help create the coverage that will bring the information about keeping teens safe on the roads to the forefront in your community’s news? You can start by practicing proven media relations strategies. This Media Outreach Guide and its components will provide step-by-step instructions for developing a media campaign and stimulating the public’s interest in learning what they can do to promote safe teen driving.

What is Media Relations?

Media relations is, simply put, building relationships and working with newsmakers (for example, print and television journalists) to seek publicity for your issue, program, or event. As you begin to reach out to the media contacts in your community, you’ll start learning how they can play a vital role in getting the word out about your campaign or event. As an advocate for teen driver safety in your community, it’s your responsibility to let the media know when you have a story that would make good news. You’ll excel in media relations as members of the media come to know you as a responsive, reliable, and credible information source.

What are the Benefits of Engaging the Media?

There are many benefits of working with the media to get the word out about your efforts to promote safe teen driving. Media coverage will help you make the most of the campaign’s resources. The news media reach more individuals than a single, paid advertisement, and the media can be your most efficient way to get information to the largest audience possible in the least amount of time.

Consider that:

- If a newspaper, for example, publishes one story about your community’s activities to promote safe teen driving, you’ve “earned” media. “Earned media” costs you absolutely nothing but the time it takes to create and share information with your media contacts.

- By comparison, a paid advertisement could have cost you several thousands of dollars and may not have reached as many people in your target audience.

Earned media, or free coverage, is obtained by having good media relations strategies and securing the media's interest in the activities you are doing, or the "story" you are trying to tell the public.

How Do You Get The Media Interested?

Materials, like press releases and press kits, are important—but it takes more than press materials to generate media interest and excitement. Just because a journalist finds your initiative interesting, that doesn't ensure that he or she will conduct an interview, write a story, or film an event you're having and show it on the evening news. Ensuring coverage requires pitching story angles and following up with persistence.

Consider the following suggestions that can help the media view you as a very valuable resource:

- Provide useful, timely, and accurate information that could be used in general news stories or in-depth feature pieces.
- Offer statistics (local if possible) that can help show proof of the burden of the problem. For example, share local statistics on how many teens are hospitalized each year as a result of motor vehicle crashes.
- Localize your story. Show how improving teen driver safety and reducing the burden of injury can help and improve your community.

- Provide human-interest story ideas. For example, offer reporters opportunities to interview the parent of a teen who was injured in a motor vehicle crash.

Understanding the Diverse Roles of Media Professionals

Once you have thought of the story you want to tell the media, you need to decide what media sources to reach with your story ideas. Some organizations send press releases to every broadcaster and newspaper in their communities. One tip: you're likely to have greater success if you specifically reach out to the news professionals whose papers and programs reach your target audience.

Over time, you'll begin to understand that your media contacts may vary from story to story. It will require some research to determine the right person, or people, to contact at different media outlets. With print media, like newspapers, you may work with general assignment reporters, reporters assigned to "beats" (or topics of interest, such as lifestyle or health, etc.), or section editors. For radio, you may want to reach the news director or the general manager, depending on the size of the station's staff. In television, you may work with the public service director, health segment reporter or producer, field reporter, news anchor, or general manager. You can always pitch several different story angles to various editors, reporters, and producers based on their beats. You don't have to reach just one person at each outlet with one story.

To help you get started, the following is a tip sheet for print and broadcast media that can help you make the right contacts.

Who's Who in Print and Broadcast Media

Position	Responsibilities
Assignment Editor	Coordinates the day-to-day assignment of stories and manages random calls to the newsroom.
Calendar Editor	Organizes community event listings and announcements. Calendar listings are good sources of free publicity for events that are open to the public. Typically calendar editors are contacts within magazine and newspaper outlets, but they also can be found within radio and TV stations.
City Desk Editor	Handle news assignments for urban areas.
Editor	Assigns stories at newspapers and magazines. Most assign editors to specific sections, such as education, health, entertainment, and lifestyle.
Freelance Writer or Photographer	Writes and produces news stories or takes photographs for a variety of media outlets without being employed by a single organization. Many editors and TV producers have a regular group of freelancers that they work with often.
General Manager	Manages and directs the operations of the entire TV or radio station, ranging from advertising to news and program production.
Managing Editor	Manages the section editors and operations of the whole newspaper.
Producer	Researches, writes, and edits news stories and oversees camera crew for broadcast stories. In network news, this person works closely with reporters, and in some cases does much of the work to create a story. (At local stations, news reporters are responsible for this process themselves.) Producers also decide which stories appear on the news and in what order.
Promotions Director	Develops media sponsorships and partnerships to promote the station's charitable commitment and positive image.
Public or Community Affairs Director	Oversees the airing of PSAs and general community relations, such as arranging newsroom tours. In some cases, this person also handles media sponsorships.
Reporter	Conducts interviews and writes stories for newspapers and magazines. Broadcast reporters deliver stories on the air.

Making the Right Connections

There is a great variety of media sources, including:

- Daily and weekly newspapers
- Radio stations aimed at specific age groups
- TV stations broadcasting in different languages.

To identify the media contacts you'll want to reach with information about your activities to promote teen driver safety, begin by identifying and prioritizing your best media prospects. For instance, you may want to get messages out about the graduated drivers licensing (GDL) laws in your state. To do so, you'll want to think carefully about all of the different sources of news in your community and determine where parents turn for information.

Media Contact List

Once you have identified the media that you want to reach, create a detailed media contact list or database. An up-to-date contact list is an invaluable tool, because media professionals often change beats and positions. Keep notes next to each contact's name to help identify specific issues that reporter likes to cover.

For each media professional, you should have the following information:

- ☐ Name
- ☐ Media affiliation (for example, The Miami Herald or The Boston Globe)
- ☐ Job Title (for example, Healthy Living section reporter)
- ☐ Phone number (office and cell)

- ☐ Email address
- ☐ Mailing address
- ☐ Beat or topic of interest
- ☐ Date of last contact
- ☐ Articles that have generated from contact

It's best to update your contact list at least twice a year to keep it current. Often, when a reporter you have built a relationship with is planning to change positions, he or she will let you know before the change. You can always make contact with a station or a publication's office and request updated information.

How to Make Contact: Action Steps

- 1. Call the Reporter:** Introduce yourself, and state why you're making contact. Ask the reporter if he or she is on deadline. If so, find a time to call back.
- 2. Have a Good Story:** Plan out what you want to tell the reporter carefully. You should know your topic well and be ready to answer any questions.
- 3. Plan a Good Strategy:** Don't use the same news angle or story for every media outlet. Tailor your pitch to that specific media outlet or reporter. Provide new and fresh ideas about your activities and events related to teen driver safety.
- 4. Be Ready to Respond:** When local or national stories break on teen driving, including stories about crashes, consider writing an opinion piece on the importance of prevention in your community.
- 5. Keep Your Word:** Building a good reputation with media professionals is really important. If you promised that



you would follow up with a reporter with local statistics, for example, keep your word and keep his or her deadline in mind. Also, keep business cards on hand when you see reporters, and constantly remind them that you're a source of information for future stories.

- 6. Send a thank you note:** Whether by mail or by email, express thanks when a reporter covers your story.

Some journalists prefer talking on the telephone, while others are comfortable receiving information via e-mail. You'll learn how to best communicate with different media professionals as you build working relationships with them.

Your Media Contact Checklist:

To wrap up Section 1, refer to the following checklist each time you prepare to reach out to the media and see if your answer to each question is "yes":

- ☐ Have you thoroughly outlined ways that you can create newsworthy events that highlight the importance of promoting teen driver safety?
- ☐ Are you ready to offer local or regional news angles and background information for stories?
- ☐ Are you prepared to respond to news stories about teen driving when they break, such as stories about a local teen involved in a motor vehicle crash?
- ☐ Before you call a reporter, do you check your media contact list to make sure you are reaching out to the right person?
- ☐ Have you practiced your telephone or personal approach to media representatives so that you can be brief and have information that can help reporters make sense of the issue(s)?
- ☐ Before you email important materials to a reporter, are you sure this person likes to work with email correspondence?
- ☐ When you make follow-up calls, do you have good additional facts or a new story angle to encourage journalists to cover your event?
- ☐ If a journalist agrees to do a story, are you truly prepared to answer questions and provide materials and appropriate spokespeople?



Section 2

PUBLICITY TOOLS, SAMPLES, AND CHECKLISTS

Writing for the Media: Know Your Audience

Now that you have a media strategy, you are ready to develop press materials for your community's initiative. When you write for the media, the key goal is to produce well-written materials with strong messages or story angles. To achieve this, write in newspaper style or use the inverted-pyramid format. Media professionals are used to reading materials that start off with the most crucial facts; namely, the "who, what, where, when, and how" information. This is followed by supporting information.

Writing in this style will help you and the media. When space- or time- is at a premium, and a news release has to be edited, chances are the last paragraphs will be cut off. By placing your most important facts near the beginning, you'll help make sure they make it into the news.

Is Your Story Newsworthy?

In addition to producing well-organized materials, remember that your primary goal is to provide newsworthy information. When writing press materials, ask yourself, "Is this story newsworthy?" The media will cover your story or event if it looks like one of the

most important or interesting topics scheduled that day. To make your story more interesting than others you should include at least two of the following angles:

- Local interest
- New information
- Interesting personalities or important people to your community
- Hot topic
- Timing/special historical day
- Human interest

Also, be brief, accurate, and to the point. Reporters only pay attention to credible and interesting stories, and your job is to provide them with compelling facts so they can clearly see the "news." One easy way to create a news angle is to tie your story to a new statistic, local celebration, anniversary, or unique community program. Since national newspapers, as well as TV and radio stations, cover national news thoroughly, many local media outlets limit themselves to local news stories.

Localizing your press materials will increase your opportunity for story placement. News about your activities can be localized in several ways, including by state, region, or community. Once you create several local news angles, you can focus on presenting information in a way that compels the media to cover your story.

Putting Together a Press Kit

Press materials, like press releases, media advisories, backgrounders, and fact sheets can be compiled in a folder to create a press kit. Press kits can be sent to media outlets before an event or can be distributed at press conferences. This compilation of materials also can be distributed electronically or posted on your organization's website.

The goal of a press kit is to provide background information that can help reporters develop their stories. Press kits should contain up to 10 documents, including one or two press releases, a fact sheet, and biographies of spokespersons or featured speakers, among other pieces. Here are brief descriptions of the recommended components (an overview of the "Parents Are The Key" campaign and related fact sheets can be found at www.cdc.gov/parentsarethekey):

Backgrounder/Overview: A one-page overview that summarizes the mission and objectives.

Fact Sheet: A one- or two-page document that includes anecdotal and statistical information that can help reporters develop in-depth articles. Fact sheets should include short paragraphs and also reference ways to find out more information about a topic.

Media Advisory: This document announces an upcoming event and, like a press release, covers the "who, what, when, where, why, and how". Media advisories serve as reminders of happenings and should be sent about twenty-four hours before an event.

Press Release: A press release, or news release, provides members of the media useful, accurate, and interesting information about any newsworthy activity. The first paragraph should answer all the important questions - who, what, where, when, why, and how. Typically, press releases are emailed to individuals in a media contact list. Press releases can be sent for the purposes of announcing news conferences or events. On some occasions, some or all of a press release's content will be reprinted in a news vehicle.

Feature or Human Interest Story: These stories are newsworthy, but are relatively timeless and can run any time. They are longer in format, which allows reporters to more thoroughly explain complex issues or state a point of view.

Highlights of Upcoming Events: This brief listing provides up-to-date information on programs relevant to your activities. This is usually sent to the calendar editor. Check with the media source on deadlines for submitting calendar items.

Biographies of Spokespersons: Biographies should include only three or four paragraphs on the event's featured speakers or media spokesperson(s).

Photographs: You can include a high-quality, 5 x 7, glossy black and white print, or make a note on the accompanying media advisory stating if and where electronic photographs are available. Electronic photos are ideal for small weekly, monthly, and newsletter publications. Ask the publication in advance if you can send photos electronically and, if so, in what file format they prefer. Daily publications

and large media outlets may send their own photographer or cameraperson to events.

Quotable Quotes: This one-pager contains a list of remarks that spokespersons or influential community leaders have made about the importance of promoting safe teen driving. Editors can use these quotes in news stories without requesting permission. The quotes also serve as an endorsement of the campaign.

Letters of Community Support: Letters that endorse the “Parents Are The Key” campaign or stress the overall importance of helping ensure that teen drivers stay safe and injury-free can help reporters realize the strength of the campaign.

Speeches: Copies of speeches delivered by spokespersons or well-known supporters of safe teen driving efforts may increase the opportunity for news coverage.

Press Releases — Fundamentally Important Outreach Tools

A press release is the most efficient and economical way to attract media attention. Press releases have an established format. To help you develop your own press releases, keep these basic format guidelines in mind:

1. **Date Instructions:**

- “For Immediate Release”
- “For Release Before [date]”
- “For Release After [date]”
- “Embargoed Until [date]”

Use one of the latter three if your press release is of a time sensitive nature. For example, if you are holding an event, you will want to use the “For Release Before [date]” and make sure you include the date for event registration. Also, ensure that you are sensitive to media deadlines and send your release out well in advance. If you want to distribute the release early but do not want it to be published until a later date, be sure to indicate that at the top of the release with “For Release After [date]” or “Embargoed Until [date]”. For example, “Embargoed Until 11 a.m. EST, Wednesday, July 23.” Receiving the embargoed press release gives reporters a heads-up on upcoming news that allows them to develop a longer, in-depth news story or feature piece by a certain date.

2. **Headline:** Write an attention-grabbing headline. Make it benefits-oriented (explain why it would be of interest to the local community) and descriptive.
3. **Contact Information:** Include as much information as possible here. Make it easy for the media to contact you. Include your office phone number, cell phone number (if you have one), address, organization name, fax number, e-mail address, and website URL. Include the hours you are available at the listed phone number(s).
4. **Content:** This is the meat of your press release. Again, be brief, accurate, and to the point. Write a benefits-oriented story that highlights the “news” for the editor or reporter who will be reading the release. The first paragraph should answer all the important questions - who, what, where, when, why, and how. Use the

“inverted pyramid format” to answer the following questions: What is the event or news? Why is it being held? Who is involved? What is the local angle? Where is the event taking place?

5. **Ending Your Press Release:** The end of your press release is shown by adding ### or (THE END) to the last page of the release. If the release is more than one page, type the word “MORE” at the bottom center of the first page.
6. **Use Standard Newspaper Style:** Use standard newspaper style when writing your release. Keep paragraphs short with an average of four to five lines or 60 words. Avoid jargon. Instead, use layman’s terms or easy to understand explanations.
7. **Use a Boilerplate:** Include the “Parents Are The Key” boilerplate at the end of all press materials. The boilerplate, which is a short paragraph that provides a brief, standard overview of the campaign, reinforces the main point of the campaign. Use the following approved boilerplate in your materials:

“Parents Are the Key” is a communications campaign developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to raise awareness about proven steps parents can take to reduce serious injury and death among teen drivers. For more information, visit www.cdc.gov/parentsarethekey, and for more about CDC’s work in injury prevention, visit www.cdc.gov/injury.

Creating an Email-ready Press Release

A talented press release writer can capture the media’s interest within a few sentences. Web experts advise that you have only 10 seconds to make your point. Here are some pointers to remember when you are writing your press release to send via the Internet or e-mail:

- Utilize the release as a teaser to entice the reporter to visit your website.
- Introduce the press release in the email subject line with information that identifies what the release is about.
- Don’t send the release as an attachment; send it to your contacts within the body of the e-mail.
- Provide a contact name, telephone number, e-mail address, and URL for additional information above the headline or at the bottom of the release.
- Use bulleted points to convey your key points.

(Source: Wilcox 2001)





Creating a Media Advisory/Photo Opportunity

Similar to a press release, a media advisory is a one-page announcement informing the media of an opportunity to send a photographer or TV cameraperson to an event. A media advisory, which is sometimes called a photo op (opportunity), should be released one day before a planned event to announce that the event is occurring. It should highlight ways the media can capture the major visual elements of a newsworthy event. A media advisory should include the following information:

- Media contact;
- An appealing headline;
- Bullet points that cover the who, what, where, when, and why format;

- A sentence indicating names or titles of individuals available for photographs;
- A short paragraph with key background information or any special instructions for the media; and
- The “Parents Are The Key” boilerplate.

On the next page, you’ll find a media advisory template to use as a guide.

Media Advisory Local/Community Template

[Place on your letterhead]

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date:
Contact:
Telephone:
E-mail:
Website:

Action-oriented Headline Summarizing the Event

Who: Provide the names and titles of person who will attend the event.

What: Briefly describe the event.

Where: Provide the name of the building, suite number, street address, and city.

When: Include the date and time of the event.

Why: Explain the purpose of the event and why this news will be of interest to the local community.

Photo Op: Identify potential photo opportunities and highlight key spokespersons and other persons who will be available for photographs. Indicate when key persons will be available, such as before or after the event.

A short, concluding paragraph should include how the media can obtain more information about the event and the “Parents Are The Key” campaign.

Section 3

COMMUNICATION TOOLS

This section provides samples and templates of a fact sheet, letter to the editor, talking points, and other communication tools to help develop materials tailored for your community. The documents are designed to illustrate the appropriate format and style of particular communication tools and offer suggestions on how to customize the language for your effort. Note: All press materials should be placed on your letterhead and follow your organization's style guidelines.



Fact Sheets

When you have a wealth of information to give the press, but a press release can only be one or two pages, how should you package the rest of your information? The answer is to create fact sheets. Fact sheets can be up to two pages and include the historical, factual, and statistical data a journalist can use to develop in-depth stories or general assignment pieces. Fact sheets should be well written with short sentences and paragraphs and wide margins. You may even want to highlight items using bullets or numbers.

Letter to the Editor (LTE)

An LTE can be a powerful and persuasive tool in elevating the important issues of your campaign. An LTE is written to comment on a past story or to add additional information to a story, such as what an organization is doing about an issue. An LTE is often written to express opinions for or against an issue.

Guidelines for creating an LTE:

- Check each news outlet for LTE guidelines for length and submission requirements.
- Limit letters to 200 to 300 words on one page with a hard copy signature from the author. Letters should include the logos of your organization.
- The LTE should be authored or signed by a reputable and leading participant or supporter of the initiative, such as a distinguished health care professional, or influential community partner with whom you work closely.
- Include the author's contact information or the contact information for your initiative on a separate cover page so the media representative can verify the content.

Opinion Editorial


An Op-Ed, which literally means “opposite the editorial” page, should be written as if it were a stand-alone piece and accompanied by a pitch letter. Check with each newspaper to determine the requirements for Op-Eds. Most have word limits. The Op-Ed should be signed by a well-known community leader, decision maker, or health official. After sending the Op-Ed, follow up within three days to determine whether the piece is being considered for publication. Remember, editors may make minor revisions to the Op-Ed.

Talking Points

Talking points are short phrases or statements that are designed to be used repeatedly in speeches, media interviews, or written correspondence. The purpose of talking points is to ensure that your representatives have coherent, unified messages to use that emphasize the same point or idea. Talking points are created primarily for internal usage and can be used by spokespersons, administrators, or supporters.

Sample Fact Sheet

Front



HANDING YOUR TEEN THE CAR KEYS- ARE YOU CONFIDENT OR CONCERNED?

8 DANGER ZONES FOR TEENS BEHIND THE WHEEL

Nine teens a day are killed in car crashes. Make sure your young driver is aware of the leading causes of teen crashes, and put rules in place to help your teen stay safe.

- **No. 1: Driver inexperience.** Most crashes happen during the first year a teen has a license. Provide at least 30 to 50 hours of supervised driving practice over at least six months. Make sure to practice on a variety of roads, at different times of day, and in varied weather and traffic conditions. This will help your teen gain the skills he or she needs to be safe.
- **No. 2: Driving with teen passengers.** Crash risk goes up when teens drive with other teens in the car. Follow your state's teen driving law for passenger restrictions. If your state doesn't have such a rule, limit the number of teen passengers your child can have to zero or one. Keep this rule for at least the first six months.
- **No. 3: Nighttime driving.** For all ages, fatal crashes are more likely to occur at night; but the risk is highest for teens. Make sure your teen is off the road by 9 or 10 p.m. for at least the first six months of licensed driving.
- **No. 4: Not using seat belts.** The simplest way to prevent car crash deaths is to buckle up. Require your teen to wear a seat belt on every trip. This simple step can reduce your teen's risk of dying or being badly injured in a crash by about half.
- **No. 5: Distracted driving.** Distractions increase your teen's risk of being in a crash. Don't allow activities that may take your teen's attention away from driving, such as talking on a cell phone, texting, eating, or playing with the radio.

VISIT WWW.CDC.GOV/PARENTSARETHEKEY TO GET GOING.

PARENTS ARE THE KEY

Back

- **No. 6: Drowsy driving.** Young drivers are at highest risk for drowsy driving, which causes thousands of crashes every year. Teens are most tired and at risk when driving in the early morning or late at night. Be sure your teen is fully rested before he or she gets behind the wheel.
- **No. 7: Reckless driving.** Research shows that teens lack the experience, judgment, and maturity to assess risky situations. Help your teen avoid the following unsafe behaviors.
 - **Speeding:** Make sure your teen knows to follow the speed limit and adjust speed to road conditions.
 - **Tailgating:** Remind your teen to maintain enough space behind the vehicle ahead to avoid a crash in case of a sudden stop.
 - **Insufficient scanning:** Stress the importance of always knowing the location of other vehicles on the road.
- **No. 8: Impaired driving.** Even one drink will impair your teen's driving ability and increase the risk of a crash. Be a good role model: don't drink and drive, and reinforce this message with your teen.

Take the next step by sharing this information on Facebook and Twitter.

VISIT WWW.CDC.GOV/PARENTSARETHEKEY TO GET GOING.



Letter to the Editor Template

[Place on your letterhead]

Date:

Newspaper name:

Newspaper address:

Newspaper fax number:

E-mail address:

RE: [Headline and author if you are referencing a story in your local newspaper]

Dear Editor: **[This should be general. You don't need to include the name of the editor.]**

First Paragraph: State why you are writing. If you want to challenge points made in earlier articles or letters about teen driving, reference the original documents and briefly state your point of view. To add information to an earlier article or letter, again reference the original article, and briefly cite the new data.

Second Paragraph: This paragraph should convey some brief background material. You can add supporting information, such as recent data or statistics on motor vehicle crashes involving teen drivers. You also can explain how the "Parents Are The Key" campaign is dedicated to encouraging all of us to keep teens safe on the road and help them live to their full potential.

Third Paragraph: Your opinion should be included in this paragraph. Summarize what you want readers to know about teen driving in general. In conclusion, re-emphasize the main point of your letter and tell readers how they can help prevent the pain and suffering that teen motor vehicle crashes can cause.

Sincerely,

[Your signature here]

Name (typed) and title(s)

Telephone Number and e-mail address

Opinion-Editorial Template

[Place on your letterhead]

Date:

Contact:

Telephone:

E-mail:

Website:

Title: Suggest a title that emphasizes the main point and attracts attention. The newspaper may rewrite the title.

Opening: The introductory paragraph should engage the reader and clearly state the importance of promoting teen driver safety. You might begin with a statement of fact, a true-life story from a third-person perspective, or a reference to current events.

Body: This paragraph should explain the importance of preventing teen motor vehicle crashes. Cite statistics on crash rates. Provide local statistics to help readers see why this topic matters to them.

The body of the Op-Ed also should provide background information on the campaign and suggest solutions to the problem.

Call to Action: Ask readers or decision makers for support in a specific way.

Conclusion: Wrap up your Op-Ed by referencing the facts, current events, or personal stories mentioned in the opening paragraph. Give a clear picture of the situation, including the local perspective, with the solution in place. End the piece by re-emphasizing your main point.

Your Media Materials Checklist

- ☐ Did you cover the Basic Guidelines for Developing Press Materials?
- ☐ Is your material tailored to the media and the medium's target audience you are trying to attract?
- ☐ Does the header on your press release include a contact person's name, telephone number, and e-mail address, as well as the URL for your website and for the "Parents Are The Key" campaign, www.cdc.gov/parentsarethekey?
- ☐ Does the press kit include all the essential elements, including background information, fact sheets, biographies on spokesperson, and other supporting material?
- ☐ Are you targeting a wide range of media representatives, ranging from feature editors and health reporters to columnists and editorial page editors?
- ☐ Have you created a specific pitch or news angle for each type of media you are targeting?
- ☐ Does your letter to the editor pertain to only one issue?
- ☐ Have you documented the media representatives and outlets that provide coverage of your events for monitoring purposes?
- ☐ Have you translated public health and other jargon (like scientific terms) into layman's terms?



Section 4

MEDIA SPOKESPERSONS- CREATING VOICES

Selecting Media Spokespersons

Real stories help audiences better understand the issues. Knowing this, you should select spokespersons who can discuss the issue of teen driver safety in a precise, professional, and personal manner. Spokespersons are the most effective way to become a credible source to the media while promoting your messages.

When recruiting spokespersons, look for parents and others devoted to protecting teens, especially those with personal success stories. Also, other teens and young people can be effective spokespersons by offering their own testimonies of personal experience with motor vehicle crashes. Consider selecting a range of specialists, such as:

- Pediatricians;
- Administrators of local organizations;
- Traffic safety professionals
- Public health professionals; and
- Community advocates or influential leaders.

Typically, spokespersons should be:

- Eloquent and concise;
- Able to memorize key messages without sounding rehearsed;
- Capable of shifting conversation styles from short sound bites to narrative

stories. Radio and TV stations may want either style depending on the program format and whether it is a news story versus a public affairs show;

- Free of negative publicity related to their personal and professional lives;
- Easily accessible for last-minute media interviews;
- Aware that their role is to discuss the campaign and ways to support parents in their efforts to keep teen drivers safe.

Training Checklist

Before placing your spokespersons before the media, be sure they are well-trained and aware of:

- ☐ The campaign's goals, objectives, and messages;
- ☐ Specific story angles and how they relate to their area of expertise;
- ☐ Details surrounding the interview, such as potential questions and format;
- ☐ The fact that it's better to say, "I do not know the answer to that..." or "It is really a good question and should be directed to..." than to provide inaccurate information.



Managing Your Messages

A challenge for spokespersons may be the ability to stay “on message.” Spokespersons should be able to clearly and accurately communicate messages, objectives, and goals. They need to be trained to easily call upon approved messages—in both written and oral communications—when addressing different audiences, including the media. Spokespersons also should be able to weave the messages related to the campaign into real-life stories during media interviews.



Share the following helpful tips with your selected spokespersons:

- **Have three succinct messages crafted:** Explaining the main points you want to make.
- **For broadcast interviews:** Define three main points you want to make and use every opportunity to communicate these points.
- **Write some quotes in advance:** Practice saying them so they sound natural.
- **If a reporter begins asking about issues you are not familiar with:** Simply say you are not an authority on those issues and are only speaking on behalf of the campaign. Then repeat the central message to “bridge” back the topic you are discussing.
- **Always assume you are on record with the reporter:** Never speak in “confidence” or “off the record” and don’t offer personal opinions. Correct any misconceptions the reporter may have. Otherwise, they will assume their information is correct and may use it in news stories.

Pitching Your Story

Pitching a story basically means selling your story idea to a media representative. Using this guide will help you generate ideas relevant to your community to engage the media. Before pitching your story, think about which of the following criteria it meets:

- **Prominence:** Involves well-known people.
- **Impact:** Explains how many people are affected by the news.
- **Surprise:** Underscores the departure from the norm (doesn’t happen everyday).
- **Timeliness:** Emphasizes the current news.
- **Something New:** Includes “firsts” events, projects, or initiatives.
- **Trends:** Highlights surveys, changes, or new statistics.
- **Something Useful:** Answers the “How will this affect my life?” question.
- **Experts:** Involves traffic safety or public health professionals.

After fine-tuning your story angle, pitch your idea to media sources most likely to cover your story. To get a clearer idea of what media sources will likely

be interested in your story, scrutinize the kinds of stories covered in your area's newspaper and TV newscasts. Understanding how journalists cover the news will help you bolster your story angle. To improve your chances at gaining coverage, you can also offer to arrange interviews with sought-after experts, exclusive photograph opportunities, and other elements that will help to strengthen your story. You can pitch your story by telephone, letter, or e-mail; however, it's best to start with a telephone call. The following steps will help prepare you to approach the media:

Preparing a Pitch

- **Start with a Good Story Idea:** Journalists need to immediately spot the news hook of your pitch. Your idea should be timely, affect the journalist's audience, or focus on new information, such as a recent study or novel initiative.
- **Make it Clear:** Provide additional information to connect the journalist with sources who can tell true-life stories, facilitate interviews with local experts, and provide introductions to others who can contribute to the story, such as partners and health officials.
- **Know the Journalist's Audience:** Tailor your pitch to the media outlet's and journalist's audience.

Making a Verbal Pitch

- **Find a good time to call:** As a rule, journalists are more receptive to pitches in the morning, before evening deadlines loom. They are less likely to take unsolicited calls after 3 p.m. when facing deadlines.
- **Make a 15-second pitch:** Persuasively state why the journalist's audience will care about the story. Be sure to mention any deadlines or dates of events. Offer to send additional information if the journalist seems interested.
- **Follow through:** If the journalist asks to talk at another time, agree on a time to call back. Send any promised information immediately. The following pages include a sample media pitch script you can use as a guide when pitching stories by telephone.



Writing a Pitch Letter

- ❑ **Be Brief:** Limit the letter to one page. Make the letter easy to read and appealing by writing succinct sentences, short paragraphs, and using bullet points.
- ❑ **Start with the Story Lead:** Many effective letters provide the right framework or slant for the story. Put that information in the first paragraph.
- ❑ **Provoke the Reader:** One way to accomplish this is to begin the pitch letter with an intriguing question or startling statistic.
- ❑ **Don't Oversell:** Remember, you're not writing an ad. The letter must spell out why the story should be covered and the resources you can provide to formulate the piece.
- ❑ **Tie the Pitch to a Journalist's Interest:** Research the kind of stories the targeted journalist covers and reflect this knowledge in the pitch letter. This will make you appear "involved" in the journalist's activities. Even if the journalist declines your pitch this time, the person may be more amenable the next time.
- ❑ **Attach Support Materials:** A brochure, news release, photo, or even an article published in a non-competing media outlet (for example, you can send a trade magazine story if you are pitching to a newspaper) may be enclosed to provide additional background, if appropriate.
- ❑ **Wrap up with a Promise to Call:** State that you will call to discuss the story idea and any additional information you can provide.

Pitch Letter Evaluation Tips:

- Keep track of the topics of pitch calls and letters, how many you make or send out, who you call or send them to, and how many stories were produced in what media outlets.
- Analyze articles or stories that come about as a result of pitch letters and record the author and the media sources.
- Estimate the number of people exposed through print, radio, TV, and collateral coverage using the media impressions templates in Section 5 of this guide.

On the next page, you'll find a sample pitch letter that can help guide your writing.

Pitch Letter Template

[Place on your letterhead]

Date:

Newspaper name:

Newspaper address:

Newspaper fax number:

E-mail address:

Dear **[Insert media contact's name here]:**

First Paragraph: Begin your letter with compelling information that will persuade the targeted media representative to cover the story you are pitching. The first paragraph should briefly explain why the media outlet's audience would want to know about the importance of promoting safe teen driving. To quickly capture the journalist's attention, it is a good idea to begin with hard-hitting statistics or a thought-provoking question.

Second Paragraph: The body of your letter should reference central messages or the importance of preventing teen motor vehicle crashes. Also, you can describe your activities and how they will affect the local community.

Third Paragraph: Provide background material for your story, such as ways to prevent motor vehicle crashes. You also can offer resources, such as published reports and additional support materials, and arrange an interview with your spokesperson. In closing, confirm that you (or a representative) are available for an interview and re-emphasize the importance of covering the story.

Sincerely,

[Your signature here]

Name (typed)

Title(s)

Name of Organization (if author is a partner or supporter of the campaign)

Telephone Number

E-mail Address

Preparing for the Interview

Now that you've successfully pitched your story, it's time to prepare for the interview. When your spokesperson is scheduled for an interview, follow the proper guidelines for that media outlet, whether print or broadcast. Broadcast interviews require more preparation than print interviews, because they are often recorded live with little or no time for editing. For that reason, much of this section will focus on broadcast interviews.

It is up to you and your staff to make sure your spokesperson(s) is ready for media interviews. The person(s) to be interviewed should be authoritative and credible source(s) and prepared for appearances. He or she should practice answering interview questions, especially aggressive, rapid-fire inquiries. Spokespersons also must make messages and anecdotes a part of their thinking process so their answers sound natural.

Lights, Camera, and Action

The following tips will prepare your spokesperson to go live:

- When your spokesperson arrives at the TV or radio station, ask whether the staff will be using hand signals. If so, find out which ones will be helpful for you and your spokesperson to know.
- For both radio and TV interviews, find out what type of microphone will be used. For example, a tiny lapel clip-on presents no problem, but a large old fashioned microphone that sits on a stand has limited pickup range.

- If the spokesperson must use notes on a radio show, use small index cards to avoid the sound of shuffling paper during the interview.
- Provide the spokesperson with a list of sample questions and answers in advance that they can review. (Note: reporters will not usually share their questions in advance.)
- People have a tendency to talk fast once TV cameras are on. Teach the spokesperson to slow down and pause between sentences.
- If you want your spokesperson to mention your website, get an OK from the station in advance.
- In TV interviews, wearing the wrong clothes and colors can undermine the spokesperson's credibility. Have your spokesperson wear medium tones of gray, brown, or blue. Wear off-white or pastel shades for shirts and blouses. Avoid distracting stripes, checks, or sharply contrasted patterns that distract the audience.
- Avoid highly polished gold and silver jewelry or large diamonds and rhinestones. The items reflect studio lights and distort the picture.
- In general, interviewees should wear regular makeup in natural tones. Women should use eye shadow sparingly.

The National Association of Broadcasters offers several suggestions to make a spokesperson's TV appearance more effective. Provide these tips to your spokespersons prior to an interview.

- Avoid unnecessary movements and gestures. They distract from the interview.
- Look, listen, and speak to the host

talking to you — unless there is something you need to say directly to the TV audience. In that case, look directly into the camera.

- If the interview takes place in the studio, resist the temptation to look at yourself on the TV monitor. It distracts the viewer.

- If the spokesperson's throat feels tight, relax it by stretching and yawning or by drinking a warm beverage before going on the air.



Checklist: Are You Ready to Introduce the Campaign to the Media?

- ☐ Have you figured out how your spokespersons can weave messages from “Parents Are The Key” information into media interviews?
- ☐ Do you have a list of main points you want your spokespersons to cover in an interview (you can use the talking points included in this guide as a model)?
- ☐ If you are using a local celebrity as a spokesperson, have you made sure the person is free of negative publicity related to their personal and professional lives?
- ☐ Is your news angle clearly highlighted in your pitch letter?
- ☐ If you want your spokespersons to mention your website in an interview, did you reach an agreement with the station in advance?
- ☐ Have you made a list of visual possibilities before pitching a story to a TV station?

Section 5

MONITORING YOUR MEDIA COVERAGE

Recording Media Impressions

Media impressions are standardized measurements representing everyone exposed to “Parents Are The Key” messages through radio, print, television, collateral, or other news media. It’s important to track and monitor the media coverage. Many organizations use a media monitoring or clipping service to obtain copies of their media coverage, such as print clippings, TV videotapes, radio audiotapes, or CDs. If you’re interested in pursuing such an option, refer to the Additional Resources section. However, if you don’t use a paid monitoring service, you can always track your own coverage and obtain copies of clips directly from media outlets. You should closely monitor media coverage on a weekly or monthly basis. You can use Excel spreadsheets as a tool to track and monitor media impressions. Using these spreadsheets, you will be able to:

- Calculate how many media impressions you garner; and
- Analyze which media outlets give you the most effective media impressions.

Save your spreadsheets to your database with the recording period dates to keep track of them easily. Follow the suggestions below when you set up your spreadsheets.

Recording Print Media Impressions

In Column A: Record the name of the publication.

In Column B: Record the type of publication (daily, weekly, or monthly).

In Column C: Record the circulation—the number of copies of a publication (newspaper or magazine) that are sold or distributed on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis. A publication’s circulation number is usually printed near the editorial staff listing, or “How to Reach the Newspaper” section. You can also obtain the number from the publication’s advertising department.

In Column D: Record the number of times the piece ran in the publication. For example, if an ad ran three times within the month or two times within the week, record the number of times it appeared in the publication during the circulation period.

In Column E: Record the number of readers for the publication. According to Nielsen Media Research, 2.4 readers or viewers will come in contact with each publication circulated. This number is pre-recorded within Column E. For example, if the publication is printed 100,000 times and you have an article in the publication, your impressions garnered are 100,000 (the circulation number) multiplied by 2.4 readers

or viewers, which equals 240,000 impressions.

In Column F: Record the total media impressions for each item entered. This number will be the product of Column C (circulation number) multiplied by Column D (Number of times the piece ran) multiplied by Column E (average reader number, a predetermined value).

In Column G: Record the type of coverage received. Types of coverage may include:

- Articles ($\frac{1}{4}$, $\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{2}{3}$, full page) or article with photo(s);
- Blurbs (a paragraph of information, often announcing an event, time, date, and place);
- Press release (reprint of your press release);
- Promotional ads or PSAs (non-paid and secured by your organization or an organization on your behalf). Include the approximate size of ad ($\frac{1}{4}$ page, etc.);
- Paid ad;
- Letter to the editor; and
- Opinion-editorial.

In Column H: Enter “yes” or “no” in this column whether or not a clip is available.

Grand Impressions: At the bottom right side of the spreadsheet, you can calculate the grand media impressions.

Recording Radio Media Impressions

In Column A: Enter the call letters (e.g., WXYZ-FM) for the stations that are airing your public affairs interviews,

PSAs, and other announcements about upcoming events.

In Column B: Enter each station’s ownership group, such as Clear Channel. Enter the station’s format, such as easy listening, hard rock, or classical.

In Column C: Enter the type of coverage received, such as a 10-minute public affairs interview, a 30-second PSA airing, or an announcement about an upcoming event.

In Column D: Enter the approximate (or average) listenership of the radio station. You will need to obtain this number from the radio station or ownership group itself, and the number will vary based on the time slot in which your piece aired.

In Column E: Enter the number of times the piece aired, 1, 2, 50, 100, etc. PSAs usually run at least 50 times, and some stations may play the PSA forever as a space filler. Interviews usually run once or twice, and some stations with weekly programs may agree to run a pre-recorded interview once a week for a given number of weeks.

In Column F: : Enter the total media impressions for each item entered. This number will be the product of Column D (approximate listenership) multiplied by Column E (number of times the piece aired).

In Column G: Enter whether or not you have an audiocassette, CD, or DVD available of the actual clip of coverage (PSA, interview, etc.). Radio stations are willing to make a copy for you.

In Column H: Enter your radio contact, so that it will be at your fingertips the next time you try to gain access. You

can add the information to your current media list.

Grand Impressions: At the bottom right side of the spreadsheet, you can calculate the grand media impressions.

Recording Television Media Impressions

In Column A: Enter the call letters (e.g., WXYZ) of the stations that air your news stories, public affairs inter-views, PSAs, or other announcements about upcoming activities and events.

In Column B: Enter each TV station's ownership group, such as Sinclair, Hearst-Argyle, etc. You can find out who owns a station by visiting its website or viewing the TV credits for their newscasts.

In Column C: Enter the type of coverage received, such as a 3-minute health segment interview, a 30-second PSA airing, or an announcement about an upcoming event.

In Column D: Enter the type of programming, such as a 5 p.m. newscast, health segment, special report/edition, and so on.

In Column E: Enter the approximate (or average) viewership of the television station. You will need to obtain this number from the TV station or its ownership group, and the number does vary based on the time slot your coverage was aired.

In Column F: Enter the time slot the piece aired such as early morning, mid-day, early evening, prime time, or late night.

In Column G: Enter the number of times the piece aired, 1, 2, 50, 100, etc. TV PSAs usually run at least 50 to 100 times. News stories may be re-aired

during the station's evening newscasts at 5, 5:30, or 6 p.m.

In Column H: Enter the total media impressions for each item entered appears. This will be the product of Column E (approximate viewership) multiplied by Column G (number of times the piece aired).

In Column I: Enter whether or not you have a broadcast VHS, Beta tape, or DVD available of the actual clip of coverage (PSA, news story, etc.). TV stations are willing to make a copy for you.

In Column J: Enter your TV contact, so the next time you are trying to gain access it will be at your fingertips. You may want to add the information to your current media list.

Grand Impressions: At the bottom right side of the spreadsheet, you can calculate the grand media impressions.

Recording Collateral Media Impressions

In Column A: Enter the collateral type (e.g., posters, fact sheets, brochures) your community partners will utilize to promote the campaign.

In Column B: Enter the total distribution number of each piece (e.g., 500 posters, 500 fact sheets).

In Column C: Enter the name of the event or place where the collateral was distributed (e.g., lead community partner organization).

In Column D: Enter "yes" or "no" to indicate whether the collateral items were paid for by CDC.

In Column E: Enter "yes" or "no" to indicate whether the collateral items were paid for by supporter(s) or partner(s).

In Column F: Enter the name or acronym of the supporter(s) or partner(s) (e.g., HHS/CDC, name of the participating agency).

Grand Impressions: At the bottom right side of the spreadsheet, you can calculate the grand media impressions.

In Column D: Enter “yes” or “no” to indicate whether the collateral items were paid for by CDC.

In Column E: Enter “yes” or “no” to indicate whether the collateral items were paid for by supporter(s) or partner(s).

In Column F: Enter the name or acronym of the supporter(s) or partner(s) (e.g., HHS/CDC, name of the participating agency).

Grand Impressions: At the bottom of Column B, At the bottom right side of the spreadsheet, you can calculate the grand media impressions.

Glossary of Media Terms

BETA (Betacam or Super-BETA):

Professional broadcast format of high-resolution strength and quality. This format is most frequently preferred and used by hundreds of TV affiliates across the country. The size of the tape is 155mm X 95mm X 25mm. Many cable outlets prefer this format as well.

B-roll: Video footage that can be used in the production of a TV news story. You generally provide B-roll footage free of charge upon request. B-roll could be a tape of a past event or film related to a child injury prevention topic or activity, such as a parent securing an infant in a car seat properly.

Earned media: Coverage of the story that was received without paying for media placements.

Embargo: An embargo on newsworthy information means you are being instructed or giving instruction not to publicly release the information until a specific date and time. The words EMBARGOED UNTIL should appear at the top of the press release or other media material in capital letters along with the specific date and time to release the formation to the public.

Opinion-editorial: An Op-Ed, which means “Opposite the Editorial Page,” is an opinion piece written by anyone who is not a staff member of a newspaper’s editorial board. Members of the community, advocacy groups, policy-makers, and others are encouraged to submit opinion pieces, which, if accepted, are published in the newspaper.

Press kit: A packet of documents (usually in a folder) that addresses an issue, program, or event. Press kits, also known as media kits, usually contain about 8-10 components, including a press release, background information sheet, fact sheet, photographs, and other press materials. Biographies of speakers or other appropriate individuals may also be included.

Public service announcement (PSA):

A form of advertising over radio, television, billboards, Internet, or other media that is delivered free of charge by the media. PSAs are often run on radio and television at off-peak times, and their placement is not guaranteed. PSAs are valuable tools, because many media outlets commit to delivering a certain amount of public service advertising each year.

Additional Resources

NOTE: Public libraries provide free access to a wide range of media relations materials to help you develop and monitor your “Parents Are the Key” media outreach efforts. Whether searching for information on professional news services or teen driving, your local library has the resources and staff to help you find up-to-date reference books, magazines, videos, and online sources. To help you get started in your research, here is a broad compilation of news services and media distribution companies. Please note that these are only example of a few services your librarian can help you locate additional resources. The sources listed here are additional resources only and not in any way endorsed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, CDC, or NCIPC.

News Distribution and Clipping Services

BurrellesLuce

75 East Northfield Road
Livingston, NJ 07039

Phone: 800-631-1160
or 973-992-6600
Fax: 973-992-7675
www.burrellesluce.com

BurrellesLuce is a print monitoring service that provides:

- Complete coverage of every daily and non-daily newspaper in the United States;
- Comprehensive monitoring of consumer and trade magazines, television, and radio coverage; and
- Editorial services where all clips are

reviewed before they are submitted to the client to ensure accuracy and relevance.

Business Wire

44 Montgomery St., 39th floor
San Francisco, CA 94104

Phone: 415-986-4422
or 888-381-WIRE (9473)
Fax: 415-788-5335 or 415-986-4522
www.businesswire.com

Business Wire is a commercial news wire service that:

- Offers affiliation with more than 60 key news services;
- Provides products to media outlets, reporters, investors, regulatory agencies, Web systems, and other audiences; and
- Specializes in the dissemination of press releases, photos, and other content.

Cision, Inc., formerly Bacon's Information

332 South Michigan Avenue, Suite 900
Chicago, IL 60604

Phone: 866-639-5087
www.us.cision.com

Cision, Inc., can do the following:

- Research the media to target specific news professionals and media outlets;
- Contact the media to disseminate news announcements and key messages;
- Provide comprehensive coverage of print, broadcast, and Internet media; and
- Evaluate media results through quantitative and qualitative methodologies.

Media Distribution Services

307 W. 36th Street
New York, NY 10018-6496

Phone: 212-279-4800

Fax: 212-643-0576

Email: services@msdconnect.com

www.mdsconnect.com

Media Distribution Services provides the following services:

- Creation of a media database;
- Press kits;
- Printing, assembly, and mailing;
- Graphic design;
- Distribution of products or materials;
- Blast faxes and emails; and
- Access to the nation's top executives by telephone, mail, and fax.

NewsUSA

2841 Hartland Road, Suite 301

Falls Church, VA 22043

Phone: 703-734-2401

or 800-355-9500

Fax: 703-734-6314

General inquiries: office@newsusa.com

www.newsusa.com

NewsUSA provides the following services:

- Creation of media campaigns with story ideas and direct editorial contact;
- Development and distribution of media-ready features;
- Monitoring services of monthly usage by newspapers and radio stations;
- Detailed reports and actual clips in print and electronic formats;
- Nationwide media access; and
- Enhanced product and brand awareness.

PR Newswire

810 7th Avenue, 32nd Floor

New York, NY 10019

Phone: 201-360-6700

or 800-832-5522

www.prnewswire.com

PR Newswire specializes in:

- The electronic delivery of press releases and information directly from companies, institutions, and agencies to the media, financial community, and consumers; and
- Services that include targeting, evaluation, and measurement.

VMS

1500 Broadway

New York, NY 10036

Phone: 800-VMS-2002

Email: sales@vmsinfo.com

www.vmsinfo.com

VMS tapes broadcast news stories and advertising every day in nearly 100 cities across the United States and Canada and can record in any other city upon request.

VMS also:

- Monitors print advertising from over 700 consumer magazines, trade magazines, and newspapers, and can pull ads from over 17,000 publications; and
- Provides comprehensive up-to-the minute summaries of broadcast news coverage and advertising in all 210 designated market areas (DMAs) in the United States for broadcast, Internet, radio, print, and out-of-home media sources.

**U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
National Center for Injury Prevention and Control**

www.cdc.gov/injury

1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636)

cdcinfo@cdc.gov