

# CDC National Infant Immunization Week Media Toolkit



**National Infant  
Immunization Week**

**IMMUNIZATION.  
POWER TO PROTECT.**

# National Infant Immunization Week

## Media Relations Tool Kit

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### **About the Campaign**

Each year, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recognizes National Infant Immunization Week (NIIW), an annual observance to highlight the importance of protecting infants from vaccine-preventable diseases and celebrate the achievements of immunization programs and their partners in promoting healthy communities.

#### **About this Toolkit**

The purpose of the *National Infant Immunization Week Media Relations Toolkit* is to provide information, strategies, and resources to help guide public health planners, communicators, educators, and other health professionals as they engage media and encourage infant immunization.

Although the kit includes information specific to National Infant Immunization Week, it can be used throughout the entire year.

### **Using the Toolkit for Infant Vaccination Promotion**

To achieve the goals of this campaign, CDC relies heavily on its partner organizations to promote its messages and encourage parents and caregivers to have their children vaccinated. One way partners can help support this effort is by working with their local media to educate parents and caregivers about the importance of vaccination in protecting their children against vaccine-preventable diseases. CDC encourages partners to reach out to local media with powerful information and “pitch” them to cover the issue through social and digital media platforms, newspapers, television and radio programs, websites, magazines, and other outlets.

This toolkit is intended to help CDC partners expand and enhance their abilities to educate their audiences on this issue through media outreach. Designed as a resource for media novices and experts alike, this toolkit offers a variety of proven resources, models, and templates to help you work with your local media.

Outlined within this document are six critical steps to help you develop a media strategy and prepare to engage the media in your community:

1. Define goals and audience
2. Develop key messages

3. Develop press materials
4. Prepare for media outreach
5. Train spokespeople
6. Engage the media

### **Define Goals and Audience**

Before preparing materials and reaching out to the media, it is essential to define what you want to get out of media engagement. Ask yourself, “What is our end goal?” When you decide what your goals are, you can better define your messages, figure out who your audience is, and determine what media is best to target.

Your goal could be as simple as getting more media attention or targeting specific populations or outlets, but try to make it measurable so that you can quantify your efforts and show impact.

Before reaching out to the media, it is important to articulate who your audiences are and what you want them to know or do. This also helps everyone in your organization speak with one voice about your programs. In every awareness campaign, key messages are developed in the initial stages to ensure consistency and accuracy of communications throughout campaign activities.

### **Develop Key Messages**

Each year, CDC develops key messages for National Infant Immunization Week. To ensure consistency across all sectors, we encourage CDC partners to draw from CDC’s key messages to inform their materials (i.e., press releases, public service announcements, speeches, articles, locally produced PSAs, interviews with reporters, etc.).

*For more information on CDC’s key messages, please the [NIIW website](#).*

### **Develop Press Materials**

Press materials provide reporters additional information about your work and your cause, and it helps them to write their articles or produce their segments. Some common and effective press materials include:

- Press Releases
- Public Service Announcements (PSAs)
- Radio Live-Reads
- Letters to the Editor or Op-eds
- Matte Articles
- Media Advisories

#### **Press Release**

A press release is a short (usually one to two page) description of your news or event and is designed to provide the media with high-level information—the who, what, where, when, why, and how. Every news story must contain these elements, so it’s crucial for your press release to contain these elements as well.

A press release should also include the following key information:

- Your contact information
- A captivating headline
- Essential information about your issue or event (i.e., who, what, where, when, why, and how)
- A quote from someone in your organization (typically from a senior member of your organization or other trusted spokesperson)
- Resources from local partners (this isn’t a necessity, but having information on where to get vaccinated, etc. can be helpful for reporters)

To access CDC press materials, please visit [www.cdc.gov/media](http://www.cdc.gov/media). You can click “Get Updates” to receive automatic email notifications.

*For more information on writing press releases, see Appendix A.*

### **Public Service Announcements (PSAs)**

PSAs are non-commercial, unpaid radio and television messages used to promote information intended for the public. Before pitching a PSA to local radio or television stations, ask how long—in number of words and in time—your PSA can be, as station preferences vary 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 on CDC’s website for partners to pitch to their local media outlets and/or post on their websites. CDC’s childhood immunization PSAs target English and Spanish-speaking parents of young children and are available in 30- and 60-second spots.

Available PSAs can be viewed at <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/events/niiw/promotional/web-etoools/audio-video.html>.

*For more tips on distributing PSAs, see Appendix C.*

### **Radio Live-Reads**

Radio live reads are another way to share information about NIIW with the community. These short scripts can be shared with local DJs to read on air and can be customized to include information about local events or address local issues.

### **Letters to the Editor or Op-Eds**

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

Op-ed is the abbreviation for “opposite the 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 word count limits or deadlines. Both letters to the editor and op-eds should be written and submitted in a timely manner, with guidelines strictly adhered to or else you run the risk of your message not being considered for inclusion. All letters must be signed and include an address.

### **Matte Articles**

Matte articles, also known as drop-in or ready-to-publish articles, repro-proofs, or camera-ready news, are an effective, cost-efficient way to spread information on childhood immunization and share your success stories. A matte article is a type of news article that is written for direct insertion in community and weekly newspapers or online. Similar to a feature story, 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:

- Limit articles to one page
- Offer solutions and/or calls to action
- Include a photo or graphic

- Localize the story with quotes or statistics (you may include contact information for organizations as well)
- Learn what format your publication prefers before submission

For sample matte articles, visit: [www.cdc.gov/vaccines/partners/childhood/matte-articles-features.html](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/partners/childhood/matte-articles-features.html).

### **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 NIIW on your calendar.

### **News Conference or Special Events**

When planning an event, such as a press conference to recognize an immunization champion, send a media advisory to local media before the event and again the day of the event to entice press attendance and coverage. Also consider including an RSVP on the media advisory so that you know who will be attending. 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 D for a checklist for conducting a news conference and Appendix B for information on writing a media advisory.*

### **Prepare for Media Outreach**

Now that you have developed your press materials, it is time to identify which media contacts should receive them. This can be done in three simple, yet important, steps:

- Compile media lists
- Establish and maintain relationships
- Provide trained spokespeople

### **Compile Media Lists**

Media lists help you organize local editors', reporters', and producers' names, outlets, and contact information. Your media lists should also have information on topics covered, submission deadlines, conversation notes, and best way to contact (some reporters may prefer talking on the phone while others may prefer an email). In addition, they should include a variety of media outlets including ethnic media. Reach out to reporters, producers, writers, etc. in the following categories:

- health
- medical
- public or community affairs
- others: bloggers interested in health issues or local issues can help promote your event

Developing media lists may require research if it's not something your organization already has. Check the websites of your local news outlets for their staff list or call local newsrooms. Also, keep track of journalists that have contacted your organization in the past or track the media that covers health-related stories. There are also news sources that offer (for a fee) access to databases of specific media contacts.

Remember to look beyond traditional news media in your area. Examples of non-traditional media outlets include:

- Local parenting magazines
- Medical center or clinic newsletters
- Supermarket or pharmacy news handouts
- Faith-based organization publications

- Community circulars/newsletters
- Public health journals
- Business journals
- PTA/PTO newsletters or school newspapers
- Bilingual publications

### **Establish and Maintain Relationships**

Once you have your media lists, reach out to the reporter (this may be by a phone call, a get-to-know-you meeting, or via email) to present your organization as a resource on infant immunization. Remember to have your media materials available to send as follow-up information.

Maintaining relationships with the media should be a priority. Note: If there is no time to build a relationship and you need to get your information out quickly, please see [Engage the Media](#).

The following are a few tips on maintaining good relationships with the media:

- Be responsive and provide follow-up information as quickly as possible.
- Be mindful of reporters' deadlines. Don't call or email when reporters are rushed.
- Know your reporter's "beat" or area of coverage and send only relevant news.
- Offer background information when a related news story breaks. Also, have a list of outside experts to refer a reporter to in case your organization cannot comment on a subject, or if a reporter is looking for a person who had the disease or has experience with it.
- When your story is covered, follow up and thank the reporter.

### **Train Spokespeople**

#### **Identifying a Spokesperson**

For many of the materials and activities mentioned throughout this toolkit, you will need to identify a spokesperson who will serve as the voice to deliver the messages. A spokesperson should have a healthy balance of an engaging personality and technical expertise. In addition to being an expert on the topic, your spokesperson should be upbeat and conversational.

Local health departments will likely have a cadre of experts that can serve as spokespeople or advisors. Find your local health department by using this tool: <http://www.naccho.org/resources/lhd-directory>.

#### **Preparing a Spokesperson**

Regardless of who serves as your media spokesperson or if they have done this before, he or she should be prepared. Prior to an interview or press event, prepare your spokesperson by practicing questions and answers, reviewing key messages, and giving him or her background information on the journalists conducting the interview. You can also create a list of potential questions that you expect to be asked, along with sample responses. For example, a common question may include debunking common "misconceptions" about childhood immunizations.

Preparing for interviews or speaking engagements should include:

- Reviewing key messages
- Practicing any prepared remarks
- Practicing questions and answers, including potential tough questions and answers
- Reviewing background information on the journalist, outlet, or audience
- Practice staying on message (it's important not to allow the conversation to go down paths that are not pertinent to your goals or message—no matter how persistent the questioner might be in pursuing a line of inquiry.)

*For more guidance on preparing your spokespeople, see Appendix E for tips on writing speeches and presentations and Appendix F for tips on public speaking.*

## **Engage the Media**

### **Sparkling media interest in CDC's National Infant Immunization Week (NIIW).**

CDC's National Infant Immunization Week plays an important role in increasing public awareness about vaccine-preventable diseases and the importance of infant immunization. NIIW is intended to raise awareness about the importance of infant immunization and encourage following the recommended childhood immunization schedule. CDC recommends that partners use this designated week to promote vaccination among parents and caregivers, as well as health care professionals, through their various communications channels.

There are several ways to engage the media to cover your issue. Depending on the type of media, you can pitch (request) articles, PSAs, calendar items on NIIW, letters to the editor, or op-eds, articles. You can also pitch digital outlets to post childhood vaccination information on blogs, websites, and online news sources. Your pitch can focus on a vaccination drive, health fair, or other community event.

While public health professionals may view infant immunization as a compelling story to tell, it may be challenging to generate media interest in the absence of a disease outbreak. Think creatively about how you could pitch NIIW to your local media. Making NIIW locally relevant may help to generate interest. For example, you could tie NIIW into the following:

- State immunization statistics, as reported in the [National Immunization Survey](#) or by your state health department
- Local outbreaks or cases of vaccine-preventable diseases
- Stories of local families who have been impacted by vaccine-preventable diseases
- Stories of local children who are immunocompromised and depend on others to vaccinate in order to stay healthy

Timing is important. When sending out information prior to your event, do not send it too early, or it may be discarded or "filed." On the other hand, do not send information so late that it becomes "old news." Consider whether the publication is daily, weekly, monthly, or quarterly. For daily papers, sending information 4-5 days prior is a good rule of thumb. For weekly publications, send information 8-10 days in advance. Contact monthly or quarterly publications to find out about their deadlines.

### **Be Respectful and Prepared**

Be cognizant of the fact that reporters get numerous phone calls, emails, and requests every day, all of which compete for their time and coverage. Don't take it personally if you do not hear back in a timely manner.

Helpful tips when engaging media:

- Your pitch can focus on events, new data, or a compelling personal story.
- Provide accurate information in a timely manner to the right reporters; know their topic areas.
- Don't offer a spokesperson unless you have one ready and prepared.
- Be prepared with information about the issue and/or event(s).
- Be persistent, but if a reporter says "no," be respectful and move on.
- Be creative.
- Thank reporters when they cover your story.

If you develop a strong relationship with a reporter, you will become a resource on this topic and possibly other vaccine-preventable disease issues when that reporter does a story in the future.

## **Conclusion**

Now that you have the tools, you can begin to develop your own media outreach plans in support of CDC's National Infant Immunization Week. The templates and ideas presented here are designed to be customized for your organization's use. Use these media components wisely so that they will represent your organization, promote the goals of this campaign in a compelling way, and build visibility for your organization's activities.

Be sure to record your NIIW media activities/events on CDC's NIIW webpage:  
<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/events/niiw/activities/activity-form.html>.

If you have questions or would like to speak with a media expert at CDC's National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases, email [media@cdc.gov](mailto:media@cdc.gov) or call (404) 639-3286 and reference this toolkit.

Additional resources for your use are listed in Appendix G.