

National DPP Job Aid

Media Relations 101

Purpose

This job aid is designed to help you understand more about working with the media.

What is Media Relations?

Media relations is the process of working with the media for the purpose of informing the public of an organization's mission, policies, and practices in a positive, consistent, and credible manner. Essentially, it means having a relationship with reporters or journalists and getting them to tell your story how you want. In this case, when talking about “media” we really mean “news media,” or any outlet that communicates the news. We will define news and describe what makes a newsworthy story later in this job aid.

Types of Media Outlets

There are different types of media outlets, including:

- **Print media:** Magazines and newspapers
- **Broadcast media:** TV, radio, and podcasts
- **Online media:** News websites and blogs, as well as social media influencers

Types of News

There are different types of news stories, including “hard or spot news” and “soft news.” Hard or spot news generally refers to up-to-the-minute news and events that are reported immediately, while soft news is background information or human-interest stories.

Local vs. National

For each type of media, there are local and national media outlets. The guidance included in this job aid is primarily focused on local outlets. However, keep in mind that many local media outlets are part of a larger media corporation, which means that a local story might get picked up by the parent company at the national level. For example, a story in the El Paso Times could get uploaded to USAToday.com.

Why Should You Work with the Media?

The media can help amplify your key messages to a larger audience and help you reach your goals. However, for media outreach to work, two things need to happen:

1. **The message needs to be delivered correctly.** You don't want a “game of telephone” situation where your message gets altered along the way. Be sure you're able to clearly explain to reporters what your key messages are. Repetition and simplicity are key.

ENGAGING THE MEDIA PROVIDES AN OPPORTUNITY TO:

- Advance the public's understanding of what prediabetes is and why it is important
- Encourage screening of prediabetes
- Increase awareness of the National DPP
- Encourage screening and enrollment in the lifestyle change program
- Demonstrate your organization's expertise in preventing or delaying type 2 diabetes among your priority populations

2. **The reporter delivering your message needs to reach your intended audience.** It's like that old saying, "If a tree falls in a forest and no one is around to hear it, does it make a sound?" If you get your story in a local newspaper but your target audience doesn't read that paper, was it worth your effort? You'll want to make sure that the reporters you work with or pitch to reach and resonate with your audiences. If you need help identifying your audience and thinking through how they get their news, remember to review market profiles and the audience research.

What Makes Something Newsworthy?

Because of the continual shrinking of newsroom staff, it's more important now than ever to pitch compelling news stories. Your story can be newsworthy or a news hook if it is:

- **Timely:** Something that's happening soon or at a specific time, and if there is new information or data available. Make sure to give your reporter plenty of advance notice!
- **Impact:** Something that will have a big impact on the community.
- **Prominence:** Something that involves prominent members of the community, like a mayor or local DJ.
- **Proximity:** Something taking place nearby and will affect people at the local level.
- **Magnitude:** Something that will affect many people, such as a record number of attendees to an event.
- **Conflict:** An issue that poses a problem to the community.
- **Oddity:** Something unique or unexpected.
- **Human Interest:** Something that tells a story.

Storytelling and Human Interest

Human interest stories are different from other news stories in that they are designed to appeal to people's emotions. You might notice that when you watch certain interviews on TV or hear them on the radio you feel emotions like sadness, excitement, or frustration. If it's a story about a person from your community, you might feel that emotion even more. Stories have the power to inform and influence. Stories are personal and relatable. They can move sterile facts into causes for action. Don't forget to include them in your media relations activities.

Sharing stories of people in your community who have successfully participated in the National DPP lifestyle change program is one of the best strategies you can use to get people interested in your program or motivated to make a change.

How to Work with Reporters

The job of a reporter is to explore "newsworthy" topics and write about them in a way that will be interesting and informative for their readers, viewers, and listeners. They get their information from several sources including personal interviews, pitch emails, wire services (services that distribute news releases), news briefings, and more. Your job is to provide the reporter with the most compelling information—delivered in a concise manner—so they are motivated to cover your story. To do that, you'll need to show reporters why their readers, viewers, and listeners will take interest in the story, and what makes it "news."

1. **Think through your angle:** You need a clear, defined reason to reach out to reporters. Maybe you have an event coming up that you'd like reporters to attend or you have a new class you want them to write about. Think carefully about what you want the reporter to do before reaching out.
2. **Identify the right reporters:** You need to think about who and which types of media outlets you want to engage. Specifically, decide what will most effectively cover your story and reach your target audiences. Would it make more sense for a local newspaper to write about your story or the local TV station? Maybe both? Put yourself in the shoes of the viewer, listener, and reader, and think about the types of topics you usually see on TV, hear on the radio, and read online.
3. **Find contact information:** Once you've identified the type of media outlet, you'll need to do some research on the best way/person to contact. While there are tools that can help you find reporters' contact information – such as PR software like Cision and Meltwater – these can often be expensive and may not include information about smaller, local outlets. Start with people at your organization who work in communications or public relations to see if they have recommendations or relationships. If not, an internet search usually provides some way to contact the reporters you're

Once you've identified the reporters and their contact information, don't forget to add it to a database or spreadsheet so you don't have to start from scratch next time you want to reach out to them.

interested in reaching. Once you find a media outlet that would be a good fit, look for a page that says Contact Us, Connect, or something similar to get an email address or phone number, even if it's just one for general inquiries. See if there's a web form to submit messages or social media profiles you can follow and engage. If you know of a specific reporter, you can try looking them up on LinkedIn or other professional platforms. You can even send a note in the mail or ask

a local librarian for help. The important part is to get your message across and be sure to include your own contact information so they can let you know if they're interested.

Working with Local Media

Local media outlets are a bit different from national ones, and there are some other strategies you can consider for pitching and engaging local reporters. For example, you can:

- **Customize the pitch for your local audiences:** You can (and should) provide data or statistics for people in your city or town. This will help your pitch stand out from others the reporter might get about diabetes and prediabetes, especially when it's close to anchor events like National Diabetes Month. Once you've identified the reporters and their contact information, don't forget to add it to a database or spreadsheet so you don't have to start from scratch next time you want to reach out to them.
- **Invite the reporter to a class or session:** Pick a day when reporters can come watch a cooking demonstration or participate in another engaging session.
- **Send an editor a matte article:** These are short, feature articles that are already written and can be placed directly in a local newspaper or online outlet. These work great for local newspapers and community newsletters.
- **Host events such as a ribbon-cutting ceremony, kick-off event, or milestone celebration:** If you are starting a new cohort, invite a reporter and local champions like the mayor to attend a ribbon-cutting ceremony or kick-off event. You can also host a milestone celebration when you

reach certain achievements such as the 100th enrollment or combined 1,000 pounds lost across classes. You can even invite graduates back to attend.

- **Participate in local events such as fairs and community days:** If a local event is coming up, try to get a table or booth so you can talk to attendees. You can let the media know you'll be there.
- **Partner with other local organizations and companies:** You can work with grocery stores, churches, and schools to host joint events, and invite the media to attend.

How to Write a Pitch Email

Pitching is the most common way of alerting the media that you have a potential story to share with the public. Think about the ideal news story you'd like the reporter to write or broadcast if you're successful in your pitching.

- **Personalize the email.** If you don't know the reporter's name because you're emailing a general inquiry box, just start the email with a simple "Hello." However, if you have an idea of which reporter would be best for your story, be sure to include his or her name in the greeting.
- **Put key details up front.** Reporters, like everyone else, are busy, and they appreciate when you do some of the work for them. Try to include key details in the subject line, place the news hook in the beginning, and include specific details like when and where something is happening. You can even include quotes or details that they can copy directly into their story.
- **Let reporters know how they can reach you.** Be sure to include your contact information so they know how to reach you if they want to schedule an interview or find out more.
- **Follow up.** It's ok to follow up with another email if you don't hear back right away. You can also follow up with a phone call. When leaving a voicemail, don't forget to include the key messages and a phone number so reporters can call you back.

Reporters are always looking for the 5 W's – who, what, where, when, and why. Make sure the information is front and center in your pitch.

Pitching Tips

When writing a pitch email, here are some other strategies to consider:

Do	Don't
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do your research. Know what topics the reporter typically covers or if they have covered anything related to diabetes before. Don't pitch to reporters without seeing or reading their work first. • Begin with a bang. Draw in their interest early with an attention-grabbing sentence. • Frame your story. Provide enough information so that the reporter gets a sense of the story you want them to write. • Be passionate. Don't be afraid to show how important this topic is to you. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross the line from persistent to aggressive. Following up is fine, but don't go overboard. • Blanket multiple reporters with a "form pitch." Reporters can tell when they get an email that has gone to hundreds of other journalists. • Pitch something completely off topic for the reporter or outlet. Know what topics the reporter or outlet typically covers. • Misspell names or use the wrong names. If you aren't sure of a name, keep it generic. • Pitch stories with no news value or seek blatant advertising.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keep it relevant. Keep in mind why your topic is newsworthy and why the reporter should care.• Keep it short. No one wants to read a long email. Get the most important points across and then wrap it up.• Use facts. Use statistics to grab the reporter's attention. Don't forget to localize them!• Say "thank you." | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have spelling and grammar mistakes.• Use jargon. Explain what prediabetes is and don't use acronyms like DPP without defining them first. |
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What's Next?

Once you've gotten the reporter's attention, work with them as needed to provide any additional information for their story. You might need to connect them to your spokesperson or set up a conference call for them. Sometimes reporters will ask for a photo or infographics that can accompany their story or they might need special press registration to attend your event. It's helpful to cater to their needs as much as possible so you can begin to build a relationship.

Maintain a Relationship

After the story airs or is posted online, be sure to follow up with the reporter to thank them for their time. You can let them know about any future events you're planning and encourage them to keep in touch. Then, next time you have a new story to pitch, you'll already have the relationship established and you can reach back out from a personal level.

If you've done a good job helping the reporter, they might reach back out to you if they get assigned another diabetes-related story. Remember, this is a symbiotic relationship and you can both help each other.