

How to prepare for a media interview?

Before a Reporter Calls

- Media interviews are a great way to gain exposure for your organization and quite frankly for yourself. It's also an effective way for your message to reach large audiences. Many people are ready to jump in front of the TV cameras, while others are hesitant or anxious when a reporter calls to ask questions. Either way, it's important for your organization to be prepared for incoming media inquiries. With recent coverage on the 9/11 anniversary and now the upcoming presidential elections, your organization should be READY!
- It is recommended that your organization have a policy on how to deal with incoming media inquiries. The policy should state that all press inquiries are to be handled only by your Executive Director or other designated spokesperson (this could be your communications director, senior staff or members of your board). Their contact information should be readily available.

When a Reporter Calls

Your staff or volunteers should be aware that if a reporter calls, they should try to get as much information as possible before connecting the call or before scheduling a time with you or the designated spokesperson for your organization. This information will be helpful in preparing for the interview.

Questions you or your staff/volunteers should ask:

- What is the name of your outlet? (newspaper, television, radio station)
- What is your contact information? (phone number and email)
- What is your deadline?
- Have you covered our organization or (whatever the topic is they are asking you about) before?
- What is the angle for your story?
- When are you looking to run the story?

Take Time to Prepare for Media Interviews

- Just because reporters have deadlines it doesn't mean you can't call them back in a few minutes to get your talking points together. This could be in 10-30 minutes. Simply ask them about their deadline and schedule a time that's in a reasonable timeframe.
- Think about what are the key messages you want to convey about your organization or the topic that you were asked to address.
- Take a few minutes to Google the media outlet and any past coverage on the subject. Also Google the reporter's name so you can find out what style of writing and you can also determine his/her political views.

Your Message

- To ensure a clear, concise and consistent voice in the media, your local organization should already have prepared your key messages/talking points.
- In addition, your organization should also take the time to determine what you want your target audience to take away from your message. Key messages usually include a call to action, such as volunteering for your local organization or an action on the topic you are addressing. (i.e., call your local representative and demand they vote for a specific bill, etc.)
- Since most of the time your interviews may be conducted over the phone, it doesn't hurt to have those messages written down and in front of you. Don't read verbatim, just use them as a guide and to ensure that you don't forget key points.

Create a Sound Bite

A sound bite is a very short piece of a speech taken from a longer speech or an interview in which someone with authority or the average "man on the street" says something which is considered by those who edit the speech or interview to be the most important point.

Once your key messages are in place, determine how you can make it both brief and memorable. Often times, you only will get a few seconds on local news hour or a few minutes if it's a longer interview.

Here are examples of talking points/sound bites if you're speaking about "domestic violence in the Muslim American community":

1. The Tennessee Muslim community condemns any and all victimization of women and children.
2. Research shows that staying at a shelter or working with a domestic violence expert significantly reduces the likelihood that a victim would be abused again and improved the victim's quality of life.
3. Government agencies should work together with the community and local agencies to ensure that victims feel comfortable contacting local authorities to report domestic violence.

**Tips taken from NNAAC*