



**Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association**

**Association canadienne de soins palliatifs**

## **How to get your story in the media ...**

Media relations is an important component of any communications strategy. It is the best way to get your message out to the general public in a timely and relevant fashion. However, it does require careful planning and the ongoing development of personal contacts with reporters and editors.

### **When is a Story “News”?**

The media is interested in stories that have the following elements:

- ❑ **Timeliness** – Can you relate your story to an emerging or timely issue in your community, in your province or nationally?
- ❑ **Relevance** – Is your story idea relevant to the general public or an interest group?
- ❑ **Conflict or Controversy** – Is your story idea part of a larger public debate?
- ❑ **Human Interest** – Does your story idea touch or interest people on a personal level?

### **Op-Eds and Letters**

Newspapers will often run guest columns from local opinion leaders on timely subjects (opinion editorials or op-eds). They also run letters, which provide an excellent opportunity to get your message out without being filtered by a reporter. Contact the editorial page editor directly if you want to write a column to find out specific guidelines for writing such as length and format. Always include your name, address and telephone number with a letter for verification.

### **Tips on Media Relations**

The best strategy for media relations is to know the media in your community. Read the local daily and weekly newspapers, watch the local news, and listen to the radio. It’s important to know which local reporters or columnists are interested in your issues.

Here are some tips to help you deal effectively with the media:

- ❑ Develop a list of media contacts including city and editorial page editors, columnists and “beat” reporters and find out how they like to receive their information i.e. e-mail, news release, or personal contact.
- ❑ Consider using alternative media such as community newspapers in addition to large dailies and major broadcasters.
- ❑ Remember: reporters work to a deadline. Always ask them when their deadlines are, and meet them.

## **Kinds of News Products**

Use the following news products to support your media relations strategy:

- ❑ **News Release** – News releases should be concise, informative and tell your story in a lively and direct fashion. Limit your news release to one page. Additional information can be delivered, mailed or e-mailed to editors and reporters, or included as a backgrounder document or fact sheet.
- ❑ **Media Advisory** – Media advisories let reporters know when you are holding a news conference or an event, as well as who they may expect to see there. Keep them short and concise.
- ❑ **Fact Sheets** – Fact sheets provide relevant information or background on an issue. Key statistics should be included and regularly updated.
- ❑ **Brochures/Annual Reports** – These documents provide information on your organization, its membership, mandate and services.

## **Interviews and News Conferences**

News conferences should be limited to “hard” or timely news stories. “Softer” stories and features should be sold by e-mail query, news release or personal contact.

Keep in mind the following:

- ❑ Ensure your spokesperson knows the key messages you want to deliver.
- ❑ If you have a visual story, suggest a location that reflects your issue.
- ❑ Rehearse the interview; remembering the main points and keep to two or three major points.
- ❑ If you don’t know the answer, say so, and offer to get back to the reporter.
- ❑ Never say “No comment”.
- ❑ Always remember – nothing is ever “off the record.”
- ❑ Dress appropriately and conservatively for television to ensure there are no distractions from your message. When important to the story, wear the uniform i.e. scrubs or lab coat

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