

# GETTING NOTICED: WRITING RELEASES AND PRESS ADVISORIES

As an organization seeking media coverage, you are competing with the many other news advisories and releases coming across the editor's desk at a newspaper every day. The paper has a limited amount of time and space to cover these issues. *What makes yours special? What makes the paper want to cover your story over someone else's?*

## DEFINING TERMS

**Press Advisory:** used to announce an upcoming event

**Press Release:** used to report on an issue or event, usually after it has happened.

## SIMPLE RULES FOR GETTING NOTICED

### 1. **Be compelling**

- Your press release is competing with many others in the newsroom—you need to have a hard news hook.
- Releases with breaking news, or those with a local angle, are more likely to get covered.
- Ask yourself: What makes my issue special and unique? What makes my issue urgent and important? Highlight these points in the release.

### 2. **Neatness counts**

- If your release is sloppy with many errors, your organization appears unprofessional.
- Always print your release or advisory on organization letterhead to show your legitimacy.
- Reporters are busy people and won't waste their time covering events of groups that they don't take seriously.

### 3. **Phone it in**

- After you fax in your advisory or release **ALWAYS** follow up with a personal phone call to the specific reporter you hope will cover the story.
- Ask her if she received the release/advisory and then quickly pitch your story to her (summarizing the release). Ask if she has any questions and if she will be covering the story.
- Be brief; reporters are busy people and are usually under deadline in the afternoon.

### 4. **Persistence counts**

- If a reporter doesn't show up for your press conference or event don't take it personally. Time conflicts happen, but it doesn't mean your story still can't get printed.
- Fax media outlets a copy of your press release and pictures from the event as soon as it is over. Then follow up with another phone call to see if they got the release or have any questions.

## WRITING A GREAT NEWS RELEASE

### 1. **Use the Inverted Pyramid**

- Put the most important and substantive information first and the least important information last.

### 2. **Be accurate**

- Quotes and numbers from your press release are often re-printed in articles, so make sure your facts are correct and that you have permission to quote people.
- Be honest and don't inflate details—you will lose credibility if you do.

### 3. **Be personal**

- Quotes help to personalize and add validity to your issue. Try to include quotes from at least two different individuals.
- When using quotes, always include the title of the person you are writing about.