NCOA GUIDE TO MEDIA OUTREACH

These tips will help plan your media outreach to traditional media (newspaper, TV and radio) and promote your efforts on social media.

In the included toolkit, you will find a template news release, a media advisory, and sample social media posts. A news release is an announcement that reflects your organization’s participation in an event/program or seek general attention to an issue. News releases are generally targeted to a broad audience. A media alert is an invitation to an event you are hosting.

On the included template the information to be customized by your organization has been highlighted in yellow. Insert the needed information or delete the necessary lines to complete the release before sending it to your contacts.

USING THE TEMPLATE PRESS RELEASE

In the template release, there are several places where information should be edited. The type of information is indicated inside brackets [ ] in the template. When editing this information, make sure to delete the brackets. When the text inside the bracket is bold, the text you add should also be bold.

At the end of the release, don't forget to add a boilerplate about your organization for reporters who may not be familiar with you. Make sure the formatting matches the NCOA boilerplate included at the end of the release.

ADVANCED PLANNING

- **Identify the media contact within your organization.**
  - If you don’t have a staff person who coordinates your communications, it is important to determine who will be the point of contact for media with questions about the release or who want to arrange an interview.
  - If reporters request a national perspective, the following experts are available at the National Council on Aging, the Centers for Disease Control National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, and the U.S. Administration for Community Living:
    - **NCOA Expert:** Kathleen Cameron, Director of the National Falls Prevention Resource Center
      Contact: Armando Trull, Media Relations Manager
      armando.trull@ncoa.org
      202.709.2474
    - **CDC Expert:** Dr. Gwen Bergen
      Contact: Courtney Lenard, Senior Press Officer
      zvg5@cdc.gov
      770.488.3733
    - **ACL Expert:** Shannon Skowronski
      Contact: Ann Mosher, Public Affairs Officer
      ann.mosher@acl.hhs.gov
      202.795.7410
• **Determine the outlets to target.**
  Are you trying to reach print and TV reporters? Are there non-traditional outlets to cover the story?
  o If you’re unsure of the best contacts, ask a few people in your target audience about their most trusted sources of information.
  o Your contacts will likely be a mix of traditional media (newspapers and TV) and community organizations.
  o Beyond mainstream media, these alternative news sources can be valuable targets:
    ▪ Trade media and trade organization newsletters
    ▪ Online trade and consumer media sources
    ▪ Topical and related blogs (some have very large readership)
    ▪ College, university, senior center, or other community newsletters

• **Determine your contacts.**
  Do you have contacts in the local media? Have you worked with reporters in the past? Who else do you want to reach?
  o Newsrooms generally have a single point of contact that receives releases. Email addresses for these contacts are generally listed on their website on the “Contact Us” page.
  o Many media outlets will have specific reports that cover "beats" like aging, health and wellness, community events, etc.
  o A keyword search on a newspaper’s website for example may turn up a reporter who has written several stories about seniors or aging. Often their email address will be listed on the website.
  o If you need contact information for an organization or media source, often you can find that with an Internet search. Most organizations or bloggers will include a contact email on their website. Again, try the "Contact" page.
  o If you are hosting an event that is open to the public, also submit the release to community calendars (online, print, TV, radio, etc).

• **Send out your information.**
  A news release can be sent prior to the launch of the program, or on the first day of the program, but are generally not affective after the initial launch. Reporters are looking for current news, so the more "in the moment" it can be, the better.

**FOLLOW UP**

• A few days after you send your release, follow up by phone.

• Some tips for pitching your story:
  o Be brief: Give high-level, short information first. If interested, they will ask for more details.
  o Be relevant: Make the story relevant to the readers/viewers.
  o Be emotional: Let them know you care about the issue—then they will too.
  o Repeat, rephrase, and reinforce: Key points are worth repeating!

• To get TV media to attend an event, call the assignment desk and ask if your event is in the daybook for the appropriate day. It’s good to make your first call about a week in advance. However, they may tell you to call back closer to the event—24 hours is a good timeframe for final follow up.

• If a reporter expresses interest in attending your event, send him or her a reminder email or call 24 hours prior to the event.

• The easiest way to find out if a reporter has written about your release is a Google search. Use a general search and/or the news button. Complete the same search under Google’s blog listing (found under the “more” tab in the main search bar). You may find that an influential blogger has picked up your story, and you can get engaged in a dialogue that touches those who care most about your issue.
SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media should be planned as part of your outreach and is a great way to compliment and reinforce a release. Think of social media posts as teases to get people to your website or to an event. The most common social media sites are Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn.

Facebook
Posts can be 420 characters, plus a link, however only about the first 250 characters can be seen in the newsfeed without clicking on the post.

Twitter
Tweets are limited to 140 characters, including spaces, links, and punctuation.

LinkedIn
LinkedIn status updates are limited to 700 characters, but only the first 150 will be seen without clicking to view the full post.

Content

Social media outlets are generally a constant stream of information, so you want your posts to be relevant, but easy to understand and share. Try to think of a way to make them action-oriented by urging your followers to “join us,” or “come out to...” or even “share this information with...”

Studies have found that social media posts that include photos – especially when the photos contain additional information – are shared more often.

Hashtags (terms on Facebook or Twitter that start with the # sign) are a way to search for all of the posts using a certain term. It is also a way for Twitter users to see what the most popular conversations are (what’s trending).

It takes a little time and some work, but engaging on social media can be a great way to build a contact list and to get community involvement. Post interesting information and your release information on your Facebook page. Join a conversation on Twitter. Tweet a link to your release or invite your followers to your event. Search for people already talking about your topic and engage them. A retweet from a reporter or blogger will get your message out to all of their followers as well.

HELPFUL TIPS

• Keep trying! Develop relationships with a few key media contacts and keep in touch with them about newsworthy items related to your topic.

• Build your relationship with these reporters by volunteering commentary when there is relevant news in your industry. If you help them out as a quotable source, they are often more receptive to your future story ideas.