

# Introduction to Traditional Media Outreach

**The media can serve as an important tool to build support** for the Campaign and promote the work of your Action Coalition. Local and national media can help raise broader public awareness of your issues, prompting action and influencing decision-making that can help move the Campaign for Action forward.

The growing media landscape has opened opportunities to talk about the Campaign in print and broadcast news, as well as online and through social media. This document focuses on traditional media, including print and broadcast (TV and radio) news. To make use of these channels, it is important to consider the tone and content specific to the news outlet you choose and to tailor your information for specific audiences.

Many Action Coalitions have generated media coverage in local newspapers that highlight accomplishments,

publicize meetings and events, and provide commentary on news articles about nursing and health care. By offering something “newsworthy” to a media outlet, Action Coalitions can reach a wider audience, educate stakeholders, and in some cases, create new partnerships.

Reaching out to media may feel daunting at first, and it can be time consuming—but the benefits this outreach can yield are well worth the effort.



# How to Tell if It's News

When you know what reporters consider newsworthy and prepare your messages accordingly, you can increase the odds of your research making the news.

## So what makes a good story?

A number of factors help determine newsworthiness. The more items in this list that apply to your work, the greater potential interest it may hold for a media outlet.

- **Timeliness.** Is your work related in some way to a recent news topic or a new issue? For example, can you tie the need to expand access to Advanced Practice Nurses to the Affordable Care Act and the anticipated increase in need for primary care providers? Perhaps Nurses Week offers opportunities for a timely news hook.
- **Discovery or novelty.** Are you working in a way that is new or surprising? Is there something significantly different about your approach to nursing (or education, interprofessional collaboration, or leadership) from others in the field?
- **Magnitude.** Are many people involved with or affected by your work? Are the lessons learned from your approach relevant to a large and growing number of people, or to a small, segmented population?
- **Human interest.** Can you provide personal stories that would highlight your work and make it more compelling?
- **Notable spokesperson.** Does your work address an issue that has caught the eye of a well-known public figure? The involvement of such a person can do wonders for getting an issue into the press.
- **Milestones.** Can you tie your story to the anniversary of the IOM report on the Future of Nursing (October 5) or a national observance day?
- **Visuals.** Think about anything visual you can use in your presentation, materials, or interview. Can your television interview be conducted in a hospital or health care setting rather than in your office? If you are working in the field of nurse education, can the story be filmed in a classroom?
- **Practical information.** Has your work led to action steps or recommendations that other states or systems could use to address the same nursing issue?

**When considering what topics to cover, reporters, editors and producers ask themselves questions such as:**

- ✓ Will our readers/listeners/ viewers be interested?
- ✓ How does it affect our audience?
- ✓ Does it make a good story?

The communications team at CCNA is available to help you determine whether an event or other content is newsworthy or to help you modify it to increase the interest of the news media.

# Deciding Which Media Outlet Is Right

**Before approaching a news outlet,** you want to be sure to understand your message, the “hook” in the story, and which outlets are likely to cover this kind of information.

For widely read publications like daily state newspapers, consider submitting an editorial piece. Opinion editorials and letters to the editor have a much greater chance of publication than a hard news story, especially when signed by a leading local health expert. Consider also writing a letter to the editor of a specialty publication, especially one that targets your state’s business, education, or health community.

Your Action Coalition may also seek outreach opportunities with broadcast news on television and radio. Radio is sometimes easier to connect with than TV, because talk radio stations, both AM and FM, often look for brief news stories that have a large local angle.

In addition, many local universities and colleges have radio stations, and some National Public Radio affiliates are found on the campuses of academic institutions.

Network TV news affiliates like your local ABC, NBC, CBS and FOX stations may cover a story if they believe it has a large impact on local viewers. These stations, in addition to your local public television station, may host a weekly segment or interview show on community affairs. Take a look or a listen to your local TV and radio stations and make a note of the range of opportunities available within each news outlet.





# Building Your List of Media Contacts

Once you've decided on the story you want to promote and the best media outlets to reach, the next step is finding out who to “pitch” for your story.

Consider which newspapers, radio, or TV stations you read, listen to, or watch for local and state business news. There is a good chance that your target audiences are reading, listening to and watching the same news outlets. Take a moment and write down these news sources. Most media outlets have websites, so you can go there to find out which programs may be appropriate for your message.

You can also use Google to determine media outlets in your area. For example, to find local talk radio stations in your area, Google “talk radio” and your city and state (e.g., “talk radio Ventura County, Calif.”). Or, to determine affiliates in your area, Google “ABC affiliate” and city and state (e.g., “ABC affiliate Ventura County, Calif.”). For each contact you find for your media list, be sure to include the name, phone number and email address.

Then, think about the kinds of reporters and editors who would be interested in your story. Those covering health and health care might be interested, but you also want to be thinking of additional topics or audiences relevant to the work of your coalition such as education, aging issues, or policy and legislative news.

The next step is to get the name and contact information of those reporters and editors. Scan the state's newspapers (or look on their websites) to see which reporter is covering which type of issue. Also, many academic institutions and libraries have access to LexisNexis, a service that provides synopses of past articles by topic. To find out the names of the editors (those in charge of a section of the newspaper), you might need to contact the paper directly. TV and radio stations have producers who make the decisions about which stories to cover. Their names may be on the stations' websites or you may need to call the station to find out that information.

Talk to members in your Action Coalition in case they already have this information. Often, universities and large corporations already have media lists developed and may be willing to share them with you. The media or public relations department at such institutions can often be invaluable in helping you build your contact list.

