

Guide to Working With the Media

This guide has been developed to help you work with the local media to maximize the impact of your event.

Steps to Getting Media Coverage for Your Event

:: STEP 1: DEVELOP A PRESS LIST

Develop a list of reporters to invite to the news event. Include newspaper, television and radio reporters who cover metro news, government, health care and business. Invite columnists from local papers. Contact the press secretaries of any elected officials who will be participating in the event and the public relations departments of stakeholder organizations involved in planning the event. Ask for their help in refining your press list and pitching the event.

:: STEP 2: GET THE EVENT ON REPORTERS' AND THE COMMUNITY'S CALENDARS

Promote the event in advance by sending information to television, radio and newspaper community calendars. A community calendar listing is a place where people can find out about upcoming events in their area. These listings are often printed in local newspapers or newsletters, posted on community Web sites, or broadcast on local radio and television stations. A listing gives a short description of the event; the location, date and time of the event; and contact information so people can obtain more details. The purpose of these listings is not to get media to the event, but to encourage the community to attend your event. For information on writing a community calendar listing go to www.CoverTheUninsured.org/materials.

Send a media advisory to your press list. One week prior to the event, fax or e-mail reporters a media advisory that details who will be participating in the event, where and when it is being held, and contact information so reporters can contact you with any questions. For information on writing a media advisory go to www.CoverTheUninsured.org/materials.

Get your event on the AP daybook. News services such as the Associated Press (AP) maintain a daybook and distribute it through their wire services to journalists throughout a state or community. Newsroom managers, assignment editors and reporters from other media outlets check the daybook for the latest updates on important events. A state-by-state listing of AP bureaus can be found at www.ap.org/pages/contact/contact.html. Once you have the contact for your state, fax or e-mail them a copy of the media advisory.

❖ STEP 3: PITCH THE EVENT TO REPORTERS

Don't expect reporters to read everything you send them. Give them a call a day before the event to make sure they've seen your materials. See below for information about how to develop your news hook and the best times to call reporters.

Develop your news hook. What is the news of the event? Examples include high-profile participants discussing an issue important to the community; new national research findings on the uninsured; and the fact that the event is part of a comprehensive, nationally coordinated series of activities highlighting the 46 million Americans without health coverage.

For more information on research that may be available for use in your community, contact the national campaign office by phone at **1(877) 655-CTUW [2889]** or by e-mail at info@covertheuninsured.org.

Supplement the news hook with important information that can help reporters tell the story.

- Underscore the significance of the issue for the local community by using state data/research.
- Check out www.CoverTheUninsured.org/stateguides for information about health coverage in your state.
- Have spokespersons lined up who would be willing to discuss the issue. Offer reporters the opportunity to talk to uninsured individuals, families covered by SCHIP, small-business owners who can't afford to provide coverage to their employees, or doctors or school nurses who can comment on what it means to treat uninsured patients.
- Call reporters during the week prior to the event and encourage them to come to the event and cover the story.
- Consider setting up advance interviews for some of your spokespersons to set the stage for the news conference.

Respect reporters' deadlines

- Print: It is best to call a newsroom between 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m., when reporters are likely to be available and not on deadline.
- Television: Planning editors generally take calls between 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m., but not around the noon hour, when they are putting together their mid-day news show. It is best to call the assignment desk after the morning planning meeting, which usually ends between 9:30 and 10:00 a.m.
- Radio: The best time to call is early, between 7:30 and 8:30 a.m. After that, the staff goes into planning meetings. You can start calling again after 10:00 a.m. News directors, reporters and producers are often gone by the afternoon. If a reporter is not able to attend the event, offer to have one of your spokespersons do a taped interview.

Follow up with the reporters who come to your event and those who couldn't make it.

Call those who did not come and offer to send them a press kit and the news release. For those who did attend, call to see if they need to interview anyone or if they need more information for their story.

The Do's & Don'ts of Media Pitching

- **DO** be concise while pitching the story.
- **DO** assume your event is worth a reporter attending.
- **DO** be enthusiastic about your event.
- **DO** be persistent and call back if you do not get in touch with the reporter right away.
- **DO** ask if the reporter is on deadline and whether it is a good time to talk.
- **DON'T** leave a long phone message with your phone number at the end; leave your name and number at the beginning and immediately after your brief pitch.
- **DON'T** call to find out if a fax or e-mail was received.
- **DON'T** pitch two reporters at the same news outlet at the same time.
- **DON'T** read a script.
- **DON'T** argue with a reporter.
- **DON'T** call during a big news story or at deadline.
- **DON'T** make up a response to a question you don't know the answer to; tell the reporter you will get back to them. Find the answer and give the information to the reporter as quickly as possible.

Develop Materials to Distribute to the Media

A press kit will help reporters understand the issue and the purpose of the event. It will also give you an opportunity to make the case for why this is an important story to cover.

The press kit for your event should include the following:

- Bios of spokespersons
- A press release – Ask your news conference participants for a quote to use in your press release. Make sure to include a contact name and phone number on the release so reporters can call if they have questions after the event. Distribute the press release to all reporters on your list the morning of the event. For information about writing a press release, go to www.CoverTheUninsured.org/materials.
- Fact sheets – Fact sheets about health care coverage are available at www.CoverTheUninsured.org/factsheets. Add specific data about your state or community to the fact sheets if possible.

Other Media Opportunities: Editorial Placement

In addition to pitching the media for an event, you can also receive media coverage through op-eds and letters to the editor in your community's newspapers, magazines and newsletters. For more information and tips, go to www.CoverTheUninsured.org/materials to download the *Guide to Editorial Placement*.

Cover the Uninsured Web Site

The *Cover the Uninsured* Web site offers many resources for planning your event and working with the media. Go to www.CoverTheUninsured.org to:

- Provide details such as the date and time of your media event so that this information can be accessible to those who visit the site (See the How to Help.)
- Find answers to your questions or get technical assistance
- Find the most current list of national supporting organizations
- View fact sheets and other information about the issue of the uninsured (See the Facts & Research section of the Web site.)
- Register for a weekly news digest and updates about the campaign
- Find state-specific handouts on resources available for those without health care coverage at www.CoverTheUninsured.org/stateguides
- Learn more about what you can do to help get America covered

Cover the Uninsured Materials

The following free materials are available to help volunteers plan and promote their events. Materials are available to download or order at www.CoverTheUninsured.org/materials. There will be a limited number of free materials available for order from the Web site. Order early to be sure you receive materials for your event.

- **News Conference Planning Guide** – This guide will help you plan a successful news conference. Available for download.
- **Guide to Editorial Placement** – This guide will help you place op-eds and letters to the editor in local publications. Available for download.
- **Media Tools** – Tools to help you write a news advisory, press release, radio public service announcement (PSA) and community calendar listing are available for download.
- **Flier** – Download and customize this flier to promote your event and build attendance.
- **Guide to Finding Health Insurance Coverage** – These state-specific guides outline help that may be available to uninsured individuals. Available for download in English or Spanish.
- **Cover the Uninsured Listserv and News Digest** – Encourage your coalition members and the media to sign up for this listserv and news digest to stay on top of the issue. Visit www.CoverTheUninsured.org to sign up.

Go to www.CoverTheUninsured.org/materials for a complete listing of all available materials.