

Tips for Working with the Media



Maranda Collins
TASK Regional Consultant

Be prepared.

- ▶ Anticipate questions a reporter might ask.
- ▶ Who? What? Where? When? Why (does it matter to the public)?
- ▶ Practice your answers to tough questions.
 - This helps you get comfortable with your key messages and helps you keep your cool if you're asked a challenging question during the interview.



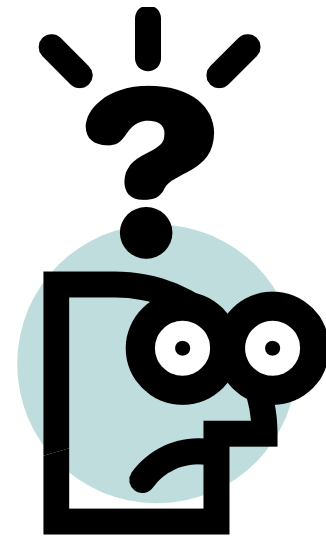
Have your messages ready.

- ▶ Have 3 to 5 messages ready that you wish to communicate.
- ▶ Steer your answers toward your messages.



Don't use overly technical terms.

- ▶ Phrase everything in lay-level (approximately 8th grade) terms, unless the reporter is from a technical journal.



Be concise.

- ▶ State your point and, if appropriate, use an example to support it. But keep your responses brief unless the reporter asks you to elaborate.



Be aware!



- ▶ Everything is on the record, every microphone is live, every e-mail could wind up in print – even those not sent to reporters.

Don't fear silence.

- ▶ If you get a question you aren't prepared for, don't start talking until you think through what you want to say.
- ▶ Equally important, when you're finished answering a question, it's OK to sit in silence while the reporter composes the next question.



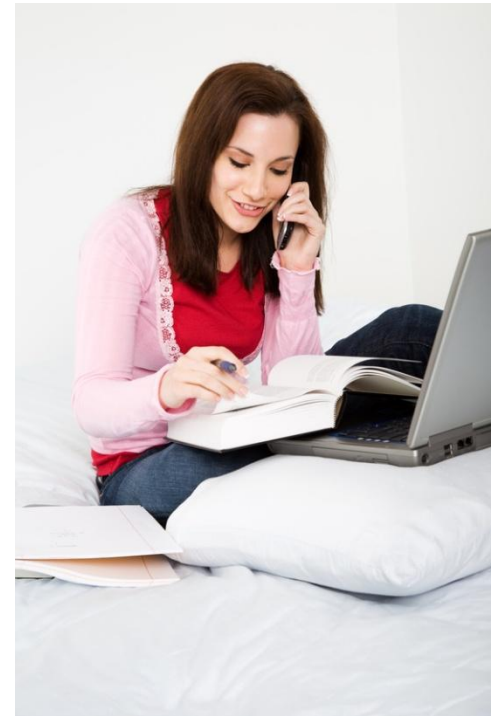
Be honest.

- ▶ It's ok to say, "I don't know," and even better to refer the reporter to someone who does know.
- ▶ If you are unsure of a fact, tell the reporter you'll get back to them with the precise information.

Honesty is the
best policy!

Follow up.

- ▶ Remember reporters are on non-negotiable short deadlines, often same day.
- ▶ Return communications ASAP.



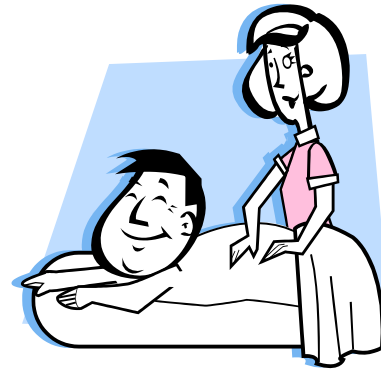
On-camera interviews



- ▶ Focus should be on your message.
- ▶ Look at the reporter asking the questions not the camera.
- ▶ Clothing should be nice enough to be professional, but not too formal.
- ▶ Solid low-tone colors are best.

Relax

- ▶ Be as natural and as relaxed as you can in the interview.
 - This is important whether you're doing a phone or in-person interview.



Talk it up!



- ▶ This is your chance to tell your story.
- ▶ Give background information and further sources.
- ▶ Have a fact sheet ready to give to the reporter with pertinent information.

Things to avoid.



- ▶ Don't wing it – be prepared!
- ▶ Never say, “No comment.” It sounds suspicious.
- ▶ “We’re looking into it,” is good, or perhaps, “That’s not public information yet. We’ll let you know when it is.”
- ▶ You can always refer the reporter to the one of the adult staff members.

Any questions?

▶ Sources

- WSU Vancouver
- KC Associates
- CDC's Tobacco Counter Marketing
 - http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/media_communications/countermarketing/index.htm

