

Media Pitching Dos and Don'ts

It's not enough to send out your release or media advisory and hope the media decide to cover it. Your success or failure can rest on how well you follow up by phone to pitch your story or event. Here are a few tips:

- Keep the release or advisory in front of you and refer to it if needed to refresh their memories;
- Keep your messages handy to reiterate key points;
- Never dial without a script. Consider these key questions:
 - Is this a good time to talk? (If not, when?)
 - Did you receive the information? (No? Let me resend right now and call back!)
 - Here's an angle that I think will interest you.
 - Would you like to interview Mr. Celebrity or Ms. Spokesperson?
 - Can I provide additional information?
 - When will the story run?
- Always say thank you and provide your contact information.

DO

- Send out accurate news releases in a timely fashion and in the correct format.
- Send out a media alert/advisory telling *who, what, why, when, where*, and *how* about a week in advance and again a day or so before a planned event. Send a release immediately following an event to those media that could not attend.
- Follow up by telephone to ascertain interest, see if the outlet would like to interview your spokesperson, and encourage it to cover your event or use your story.
- Tailor your pitch for the needs of each journalist.
- Be prepared to offer visual opportunities for television, human-interest stories for print, and interviews for radio.
- Respect deadlines and time.
- Ensure that you or your designated spokespersons are available and that they have been briefed for this particular interview.

DON'T

- Tell the media what *you* want. Instead, ask them how you can help *them*.
- Forget to look for opportunities to tie your story to others that the journalist has been covering.
- Overwhelm reporters and editors with information that isn't newsworthy or timely. They may become desensitized to your information and might ignore a Safe Schools/Healthy Students story that would be of interest.
- Be a pest. If a reporter seems disinterested, ask who in the newsroom or which program staff members might be good to contact.
- Forget to approach and talk to public service program producers in addition to news personnel.
- Underestimate the importance of media such as community newspapers, cable television, trade journals, and special-interest newsletters.
- Be discouraged if your story is rejected. Keep trying!