



# How to Write a Press Release

## IPS Toolkit: Media Advocacy



### Write your Ideal Story

Think of a news release, or press release, as the opportunity to write the ideal story about your cause. It is meant to pique the interest of a reporter for publication or for broadcast. If there is an event that it is tied to, the news release will provide more in-depth information than the media advisory. However, an event does NOT need to be tied to the news release; it can stand alone and offer a more in-depth look into why people should care about your issue. The news release should contain an attention-grabbing headline, a strong lead paragraph, background information, quotes, and details on your issue.

#### Tips:

- Identify your target audience. Know who you are trying to communicate your message to: residents, businesses, policy makers, law enforcement, adults, youth, healthcare or public health professionals, etc. Don't forget to identify a specific journalist who may have an interest in your topic based on their beat.
- Write an attention-grabbing headline (and sub-heading if necessary). Be bold and creative so that your reader will want to dive right into the article.
- Begin your article with a BANG! This is the hook - make it count. The easiest decision a reader can make is to read your article or walk away. You want to make it difficult for them to walk away. Compare and contrast the following lead sentences: "Out with the mini-bottles and cigarette butts, in with the water bottles and yoga mats. Park Central is going healthy," vs. "Parkville City Council is banning alcohol and tobacco from Park Central."
- Write in short paragraphs. Include as many of the W's as possible (who, what, when, where, why). Each paragraph should be no longer than four to five lines and try to keep the news release to two pages at most. Avoid jargon, and write in plain, simple English - so a fifth grader could understand.
- The point of a news release is to be factual, not opinionated. State your premise and then back it up with two or three supporting details that answer the question, "So what?"

IPS's Toolkit consists of a suite of tools to assist advocates, community groups, prevention practitioners, and policymakers in achieving community transformation. IPS's tools are for practical application in the field, supporting all functions necessary for creating community-level change: Research and Data, Media Advocacy, Community Organizing, Policy & Systems Change, and Sustainability.

# IPS Toolkit: How to Write a Press Release

- Find ways to be newsworthy. As you write the news release ask yourself if you can imagine this story on the TV news or in the newspaper in the form you are writing it. Here's how to give journalists what they want:
- Provide exclusive data or research. Journalists love anything exclusive. They also happen to love data. Giving them data in a news release is a good way of offering both.
- Include supporting quotes. Including quotes is a good way to boost the credibility and personality of your new release to a reader.
- Help to ensure extensive coverage of your event. Many wire services, community newspapers, and radio news departments rely heavily on the text of news releases for their stories; other news departments will write their own stories but may use some of the facts and quotes from your news release. Including a photo with your news release will enhance your story.
- Sending out your news release. Due to newsroom concerns over viruses from unverified attachments, many reporters will not open them up. You can still attach your news release, but it is also recommended to put the text of it in the body of your email.
- Contact Person. Include the contact information of a person on your news release that the media can contact to ask questions, obtain additional information, or conduct an interview.