

Sample Media Contact Form

Date _____

Contact initiated by:

Time _____

Staff _____ Media _____

Follow-Up Needed: _____

Follow-Up Needed By: _____

Follow-Up Completed: _____

Name _____

Title _____

Affiliation _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Fax _____

TV

Print

Radio

Online

Request/Comments/

Notes: _____

Add to Media List

Added to Media List: Date _____

Checklist: Who's Who in Newsrooms

When getting to know the people who make up the news media, you need to know who does what in the newsroom. Here are some typical people you'll find at most news outlets.

**Assignment Editor
or City Desk Editor:**

Coordinates the day-to-day assignment of stories. Random calls to the newsroom are directed to this desk. If you can get to know an assignment or city desk editor's likes and dislikes, you'll have made a strong and useful contact at your local media outlet.

Editor:

Coordinates and assigns stories for his or her section of a newspaper or magazine. City editors handle news assignments for the urban area; publications may also have editors responsible for entertainment, arts, sports, business, the environment, and so on.

Managing Editor:

In charge of editors and operations of the whole newspaper.

Producer:

In network television, a story producer researches, writes, interviews, and oversees the camera crew and editing process for stories. He or she works closely with reporters and, in some cases, does much of the work to create a story. However, in local news, most reporters do this for themselves. The show producer decides which stories will appear on the news and in what order and works closely with the writers who create the anchor's scripts. The executive producer is roughly equivalent to the managing editor at a newspaper.

Reporters:

In the print media, reporters are writers. On TV and radio, they're the voices you hear reporting the news and generally the main gatherers of that news. Cultivate relationships with reporters, both staff and freelance, who know your organization, who understand it's purpose, and who have the respect of editors and producers.

Public Affairs Director:

The contact at radio and TV stations responsible for the airing public service announcements and free-speech messages and general community relations (arranging a tour of the newsroom, for instance).

Calendar Editor:

Responsible for events listings, announcements, and, with few exceptions, a vital source of free publicity. If your event is for community members, send a one-page media advisory specifying the basics to the calendar editor.

**Freelance Writers,
Photographers (stringers),
and Producers:**

Freelancers generally write or produce news for a variety of news outlets without being employed by any single outlet. Many editors and producers have a regular group of freelancers with whom they work frequently. Establish relationships with freelancers in the same way you do with staff writers and reporters.

Checklist: What Makes Your Story Newsworthy?

The more newsworthy elements your story contains and the broader the audience it interests, the more likely it will show up on the evening news or in the newspaper.

Controversy/conflict	Are there adversaries or other tensions in the story?
Broad Interest	Does this story affect a lot of people, or does it relate to groups of special concern such as children?
Injustice	Are there basic inequalities or unfair circumstances?
Irony	What is ironic or unusual about this story? Is there hypocrisy to reveal?
Local peg	Why is this story important or meaningful to local residents?
Personal angle	Is there a person with direct experience with the issue who can provide an authentic voice in the story? (Make sure such people are trained advocates as well as traditional "victims.")
Breakthrough	Does this story mark an important historical "first" or other event?
Anniversary peg	Can this story be linked to the anniversary of a local, national, or topical historical milestone?
Seasonal peg	Can this story be attached to a holiday or seasonal event?
Celebrity	Is there a celebrity already involved with or willing to lend his or her name to the issue?
Visuals	What interesting visuals can you create or take advantage of to give journalists something interesting to shoot?

State of California Gun Dealer Comparisons

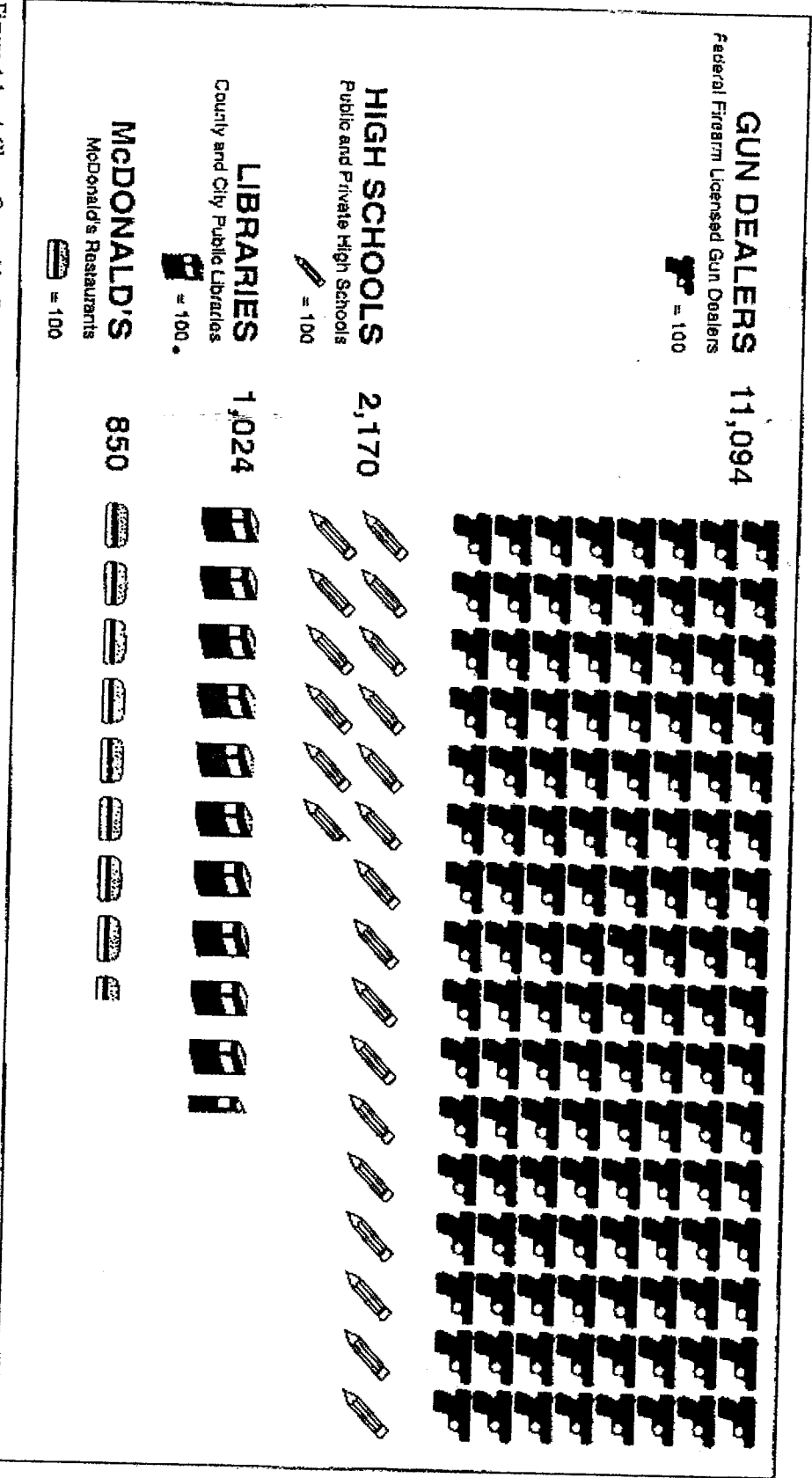


Figure 4.1. A Chart Created by Prevent Handgun Violence Against Kids
 SOURCE: Prevent Handgun Violence Against Kids is a public education campaign funded by a grant to Martin & Gantz LLC from The California Wellness Foundation. All statistics are for the State of California. Data on gun dealers: Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, Jan. 22, 1996; data on high schools: Department of Education, Educational Demographics Unit, 1994; data on libraries: California State Library, Library Services Bureau, 1994; data on McDonald's: McDonald's Corporate Headquarters, 1996.

Checklist: Media Event Planning Time Line

One month in advance

- Decide on objective and key messages of the event.
- Decide on a newsworthy "hook" for the event
- Find a site for the event.
- Brainstorm some interesting visual elements that will reinforce the key messages of the event: charts, ads, demonstrations with signs, and so on.
- Arrange for speakers.
- Update media list, if necessary.
- Begin planning media kit materials (see Checklist: The Media Kit).

Two weeks in advance

- Draft media advisory and news release
- Draft fact sheets, speakers' bios, and other media kit materials.
- Assign roles for people at the event (media greeter, emcee, speakers, etc.).
- With speakers, draft talking points.

One week to three days before

- Fax media advisory (including directions to event site) and news release.
- Follow up by calling journalists to pitch the story to them.
- Compile media kits.
- Conduct speakers' training.
- Create sign-in sheets for attending journalists.
- Create table tents, name tags, or other means of identifying speakers.

The day before

- Make follow-up calls; re-fax the advisory and news release to key media contacts.
- Make sure media kits and all other conference materials are ready.
- Deliver media kits to any journalists who requested materials in advance.
- Make sure journalists have directions to the site.
- Rehearse the event with speakers, if possible. Ask every question that could possibly be important, and prepare for every possible problem.

At the Event

- Introduce each speaker; keep comments to three minutes maximum.
- Leave time for questions after all speakers have presented.
- After the formal presentation, help reporters connect with individual speakers for one-on-one interviews
- For more, see Checklist: At the News Conference, page 81.

After the event

- Send media kits to any journalists who didn't attend.
- Call journalists who attended, offering to answer further questions.
- Track and evaluate coverage to see how you can improve next time.

TRY IT OUT: WRITING A NEWS RELEASE

Here is a format for writing news releases. It includes all the necessary elements and what information you should provide in each place. A sample is shown in Figure 5.5.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

(Today's date)

CONTACT: (Name)

(Phone Number)

HEADLINE: KEEP IT SHORT, ALL CAPITAL LETTERS

- 1st Paragraph:** What is happening, who is involved, where and when (briefly)
- 2nd Paragraph:** Why this event is significant and newsworthy
- 3rd Paragraph:** Quote from an expert involved that emphasizes how significant this event is
- 4th Paragraph:** More details on where and when the event is happening
- 5th + Paragraphs:** Other pertinent details, including:
Speakers' names and affiliations
Description of any photo opportunities
Further quotes from other spokespeople
- Final paragraph:** One-sentence "boiler plate" description of the organization (s) involved in the event.

MORE (if release goes on to a second page, or)

(to indicate end)

Checklist: At the News Conference

- Is your room large enough to hold the invited number of journalists, plus a few more? *Always leave yourself plenty of room for last-minute attendees.*
- Is there parking nearby for attendees? *If necessary, have signs directing attendees from the parking lot to the conference site.*
- Can the conference site accommodate TV cameras? *Are there enough (and powerful enough) electrical outlets and extension cords for cameras and lights?*
- Make sure your office is staffed before, during, and after the conference. *That way, the media can reach someone to get directions or additional information if necessary.*
- Set up a check-in table near the entrance where you can greet arriving journalists. *Make sure you have extra media kits and other background materials.*
- Have a complete list of invited media and check them off as they arrive, or create a sign-in sheet for names, addresses, and affiliations of all attendees. *Keep track of every media representative there, and use the information to update your files later.*
- Give each attendee a press kit, including an agenda for the conference. *Have spare pens and paper available.*
- Have an emcee introduce all speakers. *Make your speakers and guest available for post-conference interviews, in person and by phone.*
- Are presentation materials prepared? *Make sure the slides are right side up; pretest the overhead projector or slide projector and have a spare bulb available. Have two copies of any video or audiotapes you are going to play in case one of them breaks.*
- Will you need amplification for your speakers? *If so, check in advance to be sure your microphones work and are set to appropriate sound levels.*
- Are there refreshments available? *Providing coffee, donuts, and the like for reporters is a nice touch, although not essential. At a minimum, be sure speakers have water available.*

TRY IT OUT: Letter to the Editor Worksheet

Here is a sample letter to the editor format that may help you organize your ideas. You can use some or all of these sentence ideas in your letter, but try to use your own language as much as possible.

Letters to the Editor

[Newspaper name]

[Newspaper address, fax or email]

Date

Dear Editor:

Yesterday, you reported that _____.

This is [timely/interesting/ironic] because _____.

As a [parent/teacher/physician/community member/voter], my perspective is _____.

What people don't realize is _____.

One thing that could really make a difference is _____.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

[Your name, address, and phone number]

Before you set up a meeting with an editorial board, it is a good idea to plan what you want to say about why the

TRY IT OUT: Editorial Board Meeting Planning Worksheet

board should meet with your group. Editorial boards typically get many more requests for meetings than they can fulfill, so you should be proposed to make the strongest case possible for your issue. Use the following questions to focus your thoughts and draft a letter describing your group's objectives.

Newspaper we want to meet with:

Contact person for editorial board meetings:

Phone number/address

Dear [Name]:

We would like to meet with your editorial board to discuss an issue of great importance for your readers. We are a coalition of _____ working to _____. Our coalition includes

[list type of participants or number of community members represented].

The specific issue we would like to discuss with you is _____.

This is an important issue in general because _____.

It is particularly urgent/timely for your paper to take a stand on this issue on at this time because _____.

We would be happy to provide you with additional material on this issue. We look forward to hearing from you soon about when we can meet.

Sincerely,

[Your name, address, and phone number]

News Interview Tips

- Don't perform for the Media. Ask them what purpose it serves to have you walk out of your office or act like you are talking on the phone. How does this help inform viewers.
 - Always have major talking points. Repeat them or rephrase them. Even use the set up *Well, there are 3 main points I want to make.* This increases the chance that they will include multiple talking points.
 - Have the conversation with reporters about the importance of including multiple points, substantive information for the news story. Rely on GRIID for data, examples to support your argument.
 - Always provide written materials to the reporter that would have been sent out in the media packets ahead of time. Doesn't hurt to give it to them again.
 - Feel free to provide reporters with questions ahead of time. Before the interview begins tell them what you plan to talk about.
 - If the interview is not live, don't feel like you have to immediately respond to questions. Take your time. Also, if you realize that what you said could be better, stop and do it again. Don't ask to do it again, just say...*I'm going to do that over.*
 - Feel free to use a cheat sheet, cue cards, whatever you need to stay on message.
 - Use visuals. Think about where you will stand for an interview. Have a banner behind you, t-shirts, buttons or a structure behind you to enhance the story.
 - Have someone video tape the interview. You can use it to critique yourself later, it puts the reporter on alert that you are taking the interview very seriously, and then you have a copy of the full interview that you can later use to compare the news story to. It makes for a great media literacy exercise - can help you in holding reporters accountable and be useful when you do public presentations.
1. In Kent County over 70% of sexual assaults are committed by someone the victims knows.
 2. In 2003, the YWCA Nurse Examiner Program conducted 283 forensic/medical examinations.
 3. Rape and sexual assault prevention needs to reach men and boys because males are the perpetrators of the vast majority of sexual violence.

Become a News Source

- Once you have found out who to contact in news departments, identify specific reporters who cover the issues you are know.
- Contact these reporters/editors directly when sending out media releases.
- Contact them after a story for follow up, additional resources.
- Contact them when there is a national story so that you can provide a local angle - *I saw the story last night having to do with federal legislation on Genetically Modified Foods. We do local education and work with farmer/growers/vendors who provide non-GMOs in West Michigan. I can send you materials or be available for an interview.*

Host a breakfast or luncheon with reporters & editors

- Work with GRIID to look at coverage of your issue over a 2-3 month period
- Based on coverage develop your own recommendations for improved coverage
- Invite reporters & editors to event for the purpose of educating them and offering your group of "experts" as news resources.
- Create packets
- Provide contact information with areas of expertise
- You want them to understand the importance of reporting on the issue you work on, how that benefits the public, and that you want to help them provide this information to the public.
- Follow up by monitoring coverage and affirming reporters/editors when coverage does improve.

**Total estimated cost of the
War, Occupation &
Reconstruction
efforts in Iraq**

\$100 billion

Sources: <http://www.nationalpriorities.org>
<http://www.fairconomy.org>

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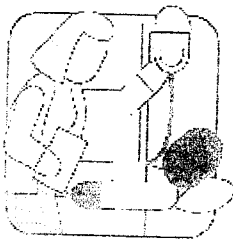
**Cost of providing
health care
to all uninsured
children in the US
for 5 years**

Source: <http://www.nationalpriorities.org>

**On the state (MI) level, \$4.2 million
was recently cut from a project to
provide clinical breast exams, Pap
smears and pelvic exams to
women 40 - 64 years old and
mammograms to women 50 - 64
(used to be 40 - 64).**

**Statewide, 22,000 fewer women
will be able to participate with this
program which was funded through
the Centers for Disease Control
(CDC).**

Source: www.nidigit.org/index



**Annual
salary/benefits
for 15 RNs**

=

**Cost for
1 minute
of the war in Iraq**

\$763,000

Source: www.warresisters.org/press/041104

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You can download this and other resources at
<http://www.mediamouse.org/static/peoplesalliance.php>**