

PROACTIVE MEDIA TOOLS

Before using any media tool, determine the appropriate and likely audience. Is this event meant for a Puget Sound-area television audience or black congregations in central Seattle? Once you know your audience, you can target the most appropriate means of communications. Among the common media tools are the:

Media advisory: Notifies the media about an event or activity (fundraising dinner, open house, guest speaker, etc.) Advisory should be a brief, one-page explanation of “who, what, when, where and why.” Mail or fax one week in advance. Send to local dailies, weeklies, broadcast media (assignment editors) and appropriate niche communications. If intended as a **calendar item** or **public service** announcement, target the calendar editor or the public service director.

News release: Presents a story on a newsworthy individual, a significant happening, or an important social trend. Needs an angle to gain media attention. Look for a compelling human interest story, a dramatic increase or decrease in some social phenomena, an exciting new way of doing social service or orchestrate a response to a legislative or judicial decision or find some other way of piggybacking on an existing story. At Christmas and Easter seasons, in particular, the media is looking for “good news” stories. Send news releases to the same audience as media advisories and target appropriate reporters (religion, social issues, city hall, etc.)

Guest editorials/Op-Eds: Opinion pieces written by a knowledgeable person about a particular social issue. Typically they run 400 to 800 words and are good vehicles for explaining complicated issues. It’s wise to query the editorial page editor first to see if there is interest in the topic. The knowledgeable op-ed writer should be developed as a source for the media on the issue.

Letters to the Editor: Respond to articles, editorials or news issues in your local press by writing a 100 to 300 word letter to the editor. Letters that are short or written by someone with a vested interest in the issue have the best chance of being printed.