

PROACTIVE MEDIA TOOLS

Before using any media tool, it's important to determine what audience you need to reach with your information. Are you broadcasting an event meant for a specific local legislative district? Or a statewide message for housing advocates? Is the audience simply your faith community? Or those working in a specific profession? Once you know who your audience is, you can target the most appropriate means of communications. A few common media tools include:

Media advisory: Notifies the media about an upcoming event or activity (fundraising dinner, open house, guest speaker, etc.). The advisory should be a brief, one-page explanation of “who, what, where, when, and why.” Can be sent to local news, blogs, broadcast media (assignment editors), and other appropriate communications. Mail or email one week in advance. If intended as a calendar item or public service announcement, target the calendar editor or the public service director respectively.

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, or an exciting new way of doing social service; orchestrate a response to a legislative or judicial decision; or find some other way of piggybacking on an existing story. At holiday 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.