**Media Protocol Checklist**

Media requests provide an opportunity to raise awareness about the Tobacco Prevention and Education Program in your community. It is important to be prepared for incoming media queries and to understand your internal operating procedures.

This document serves as a reminder of existing protocol and a checklist to help direct media to the correct person or department. Don’t forget to check out tips and tactics when talking to the media at the end of this document.

**Checklist**

1. Are you authorized and trained to speak directly to the media? Yes 🞏 No 🞏

*(NOTE: If the answer is “no,” then consider the person to whom the media inquiry should be advanced, gather the information to answer questions 3 and 4, and forward this information to that person, preferably your information officer on staff.)*

1. Do you have an information officer on staff? Yes 🞏 No 🞏

*(If “yes,” please provide the following to your information officer.)*

1. Contact information for the media person:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Name (first and last) |  |
| Media outlet/publication |  |
| Phone(s) |  |
| Email |  |

1. Reporter’s deadline and story focus:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Reporter’s deadline? |  |
| Focus of the story they’re preparing? |  |

1. Can you schedule a time to talk so you have time to prepare? Yes 🞏 No 🞏

*(NOTE: Always try to build in at least a 30-minute window of opportunity to prepare for the interview before speaking with the reporter.)*

1. Do you have access to the materials and/or reports to prepare for the conversation? Yes 🞏 No 🞏

*(NOTE: If possible, refresh your memory on these materials prior to engaging in the interview.)*

**10 Tips for Talking to the Media**

1. **Be prepared.** Make sure you can completely focus on the interview. Have a glass of water handy. Stand and walk around to get your blood flowing. Relax yourself. Review your materials. Don’t multi-task during the interview.
2. **Know your talking points and use them often.** Select no more than three key message points you want to communicate and focus on getting those points across. Practice using these talking points with a friend or colleague, so you are completely comfortable with the talking points and able to articulate them clearly and succinctly.
3. **Stay focused, keep on track and know when to stop talking.** Prepare and practice your message points. Your goal is to control the interview as much as possible and be sure your message points are communicated. Anticipate difficult questions and how you will answer them in a way that brings you back on message. If you’ve finished an answer, just stop. Don’t feel the need to keep talking.
4. **Know your interviewer.** If possible, do a quick Google search of the reporter’s name and publication to see if you can find anything they’ve reported on in the past that might provide a clue about their level of understanding (and any potential bias) on the issue. If you cannot find anything on the reporter, look for anything the station or publication might have produced recently on the subject.
5. **Respect the reporter’s deadline.** Always call a reporter back or agree to an interview before the reporter’s deadline.
6. **Make your messages easy to understand.** Avoid using slang, jargon or acronyms. Use the stories and sound bites you’ve prepared. Speak slowly and deliberately, taking breaths as needed. Give short answers.
7. **Avoid pitfalls.** Never repeat negative questions or false information. Simply say: “I am not sure if that is the case.” If you cannot answer a question, say so, check the facts and get back to the reporter ASAP. Never speak “off the record.”
8. **Be a helpful resource.** After the interview, offer to provide backup materials and other sources you may have thought of, and invite them to call if they need more detail.
9. **Never guess, speculate or speak for others.** If you do not know the answer to a question, offer to get back to the reporter with the required information.
10. **Be pleasant but be careful.** Be relaxed and cordial without being too casual.

**Common Media Interview Tactics**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Tactic** | **How to do it** | **Example** |
| **BRIDGING** | Briefly address the question, then pivot back to your prepared message. | *“Changing how the tobacco industry can market its products would involve some modest change for local retailers. But protecting our youth from the harms associated with tobacco has to be our top priority.”* |
| **FLAGGING** | Provide a verbal signal that you are about to make a critical point. | *“The most important thing to remember is the tobacco industry is targeting our youth.”* |
| **LIFELINE** | Prepare one key phraseyou can keep going back to. | *“Alcohol is more dangerous than people might think. And the industry is increasingly taking a lesson from the tobacco industry in how to market its products to our young people.”* |