**2018 Prevention Campaign**

**Grantee Technical Assistance Toolkit**

From Sept. 17 through Oct. 28, 2018, Smokefree Oregon is running a statewide media buy to draw attention to the tobacco industry’s ongoing marketing to youth. Ads will appear in your area on TV, radio and online. We have provided an overview of the 2018 Prevention Campaign with more details about the specific outlets and channels where these ads will run, as well as screenshots of the ads.

This campaign will bring a higher level of awareness about the dangers of tobacco use and the deceptive marketing to youth. Take advantage of this awareness in your community by reaching out to your key audiences between now and Oct. 28, to let them know about your county’s policy priorities and actions.

This toolkit provides content and ideas to support your outreach during this campaign and beyond. Remember to also use the communication planning template to think through your audiences and approach and determine which of the tools in this kit will work best for you. Your community programs liaison is standing by to help!

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# Messaging

## I. Sample Prevention Key Messages

*Key messages provide priority audience groups with the emotional and intellectual information they need to engage with an issue and take action. Every communication you have should hit these points.*

* **The tobacco industry continues to target youth with new products, use of flavors, marketing and promotions.**
* **Flavors are dangerous and help get young people addicted to nicotine, making them more likely to become long-term tobacco users.**
* **Tobacco companies continue to aggressively market to specific cultural and ethnic groups, perpetuating health disparities and disproportionately harming Oregon’s minority populations.**
* **Tobacco is harming our young people and our community. We need to tell the tobacco industry they can’t market to our youth.**

## II. Sample Prevention Talking Points

*For each key message above, here are detailed statistics and talking points you can choose from to make your case.*

**The tobacco industry continues to target youth with new products, use of flavors, marketing and promotions.**

* There are currently over 15,500 tobacco flavors…and counting. Many of them are fruit and candy flavored—designed to mask the harsh taste of tobacco and appeal to youth.
* Vape products such as e-cigarettes and JUUL are the fastest growing tobacco product segment. (The official name for these devices is inhalant delivery systems.) Vape products aren’t an FDA approved aid to quit-smoking, and many youth today are being introduced to addictive nicotine through e-cigarettes.[[1]](#endnote-1)
  + New vaping products are sneaky. They don’t even look like a smoking device, and kids and parents often don’t realize that they contain nicotine or tobacco.
  + According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Youth Tobacco Survey, youth e-cigarette use increased tenfold between 2011 and 2015.[[2]](#endnote-2)
  + JUUL is one of the most used vape products among youth. Just one JUUL pod contains as much nicotine as a pack of cigarettes.
  + But a recent study found 63% of JUUL users, ages 15 – 24, did not know the product always contains nicotine.[[3]](#endnote-3)
  + New vape products look like USB drives, keychains and hoodies with built-in vape pens. These products appeal to youth and are cheap and easy to hide.
* In Oregon, e-cigarette use among 11th graders nearly tripled from 2013 to 2017 from 5% to 13%.[[4]](#endnote-4)
  + With 13% of 11th graders reporting that they use e-cigarettes, our work is far from done. The industry continues to market to young people and it's imperative that we continue working to counter that influence and protect our youth.[[5]](#endnote-5)
* Tobacco companies know that their industry is heavily dependent on addicting kids to tobacco products: they call them “replacement smokers ”.[[6]](#endnote-6) They know that if people don’t start smoking before age 18, they’re unlikely to ever start.
* Big tobacco dictates to our local retailers how to market products—which puts them in a difficult position. Here in **[INSERT YOUR COUNTY]**, local retailers are stepping up to do the right thing… **[INSERT SPECIFIC EXAMPLES FROM YOUR COUNTY]**.
* The tobacco industry keeps trying to get around regulations. For example, just this August nine leading public health and medical groups [filed a petition](https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/press-releases/2018_08_27_ftc) to request that the federal government stop the tobacco industry’s deceptive advertising online—specifically their payments to social media stars to flood their feeds with images of their cigarette brands to get around advertising bans. For now, those social media mentions are still reaching our youth.[[7]](#endnote-7)

**Flavors are dangerous and help get young people addicted to nicotine, making them more likely to become long-term tobacco users.**

* Flavors mask the harsh taste of tobacco, making it easier for kids to get hooked on nicotine.[[8]](#endnote-8)
* Tobacco companies aren’t just aware of this—they’re counting on it. The brain’s peak period for developing addiction starts in adolescence, and early exposure to nicotine paves a pathway for future addiction of all kinds.
* The less dangerous tobacco seems to teens, the more they use it.[[9]](#endnote-9)
* 4 out of 5 kids who have used tobacco started with a flavored product.[[10]](#endnote-10)

**Tobacco companies continue to aggressively market to specific cultural and ethnic groups, perpetuating health disparities and disproportionately harming Oregon’s minority populations.**

* Big Tobacco taps in to **Native American** cultural values and uses native imagery for their corporate profit.
  + Tribal Nations’ sacred tobacco traditions have been passed down for hundreds of generations. Big Tobacco coopted these traditions and practices. The industry steals cultural imagery and values to sell addictive products.[[11]](#endnote-11), [[12]](#endnote-12)
  + Commercial tobacco companies have also targeted American Indians and Alaska Natives in marketing, sponsoring events and giveaways, and devising promotional strategies.[[13]](#endnote-13)
  + Partly as a result of this marketing, a disproportionate percentage of American Indians and Alaska Natives use commercial tobacco compared to other ethnic groups in the United States.[[14]](#endnote-14)
  + From 2010 – 2011, 35% of Oregon’s American Indian and Alaska Native adults were cigarette smokers. This rate is compared to 21% for whites, 33% for African-Americans, 20% for Latinos and 14% for Asians/Pacific Islanders.[[15]](#endnote-15)
  + American Indian and Alaska Native adults also have the highest rates of use for smokeless tobacco and cigars, and for the use of multiple tobacco products.[[16]](#endnote-16)
  + Disproportionate rates of chronic diseases in American Indians and Alaska Natives are directly reflected in high rates of commercial tobacco use among these populations, where six of the top eight causes of death are linked to smoking. In fact, the leading cause of cancer death among American Indian and Alaska Native populations is lung cancer.[[17]](#endnote-17)
  + Tribes in Oregon are pushing back on the tobacco industry and protecting their cultures and stories by **[INSERT SPECIFICS FROM YOUR TRIBE]**.
* Tobacco retailers cluster in neighborhoods with **higher rates of poverty**.[[18]](#endnote-18), [[19]](#endnote-19)
  + Tobacco companies advertise aggressively to people living with lower socioeconomic status, and there is a higher density of tobacco retailers in their neighborhoods. As a result, people living with lower socioeconomic status tend to smoke at higher rates than the general population and have higher rates of tobacco-related disease.[[20]](#endnote-20)
  + When there are more tobacco retailers in an area, adults in that area tend to smoke at higher rates than people in other areas.[[21]](#endnote-21)
* The tobacco industry has been marketing menthol products to **African-Americans** through targeted campaigns since the 1970s, concentrating advertising and promotions in predominately African-American neighborhoods and with campaigns that exploit cultural hallmarks and stereotypes.[[22]](#endnote-22)
  + Tobacco retailers within predominantly African-American areas are 2-3 times more likely to display interior and exterior advertisements than stores in areas with lower African-American populations.[[23]](#endnote-23)
  + Newport (menthol) cigarettes are also cheaper in geographic areas with a higher proportion of African-American residents.[[24]](#endnote-24)
  + This kind of marketing has been going on for a very long time. Back in the 1980s, Phillip Morris created a *Black Marketing Task Force* to come up with promotional plans, incentives, advertising, sampling programs, materials, and communication strategies to target African-Americans.[[25]](#endnote-25)
  + Recent data show that more point-of-sale marketing of menthol tobacco continues in areas with higher numbers of African-American residents.[[26]](#endnote-26)
    - Unfortunately, it’s working: 60% of African-American youth prefer Newport (menthol) cigarettes compared to 22% of white youth.[[27]](#endnote-27)
  + The tobacco industry is trying to prevent menthol-flavored tobacco from being banned by taking advantage of the current racial and political climate and manipulating well-known Black organizational leaders to use as their mouthpiece.[[28]](#endnote-28)

**Tobacco is harming our young people and our community.**

* Tobacco is still a top killer, taking the lives of more Americans than AIDS, alcohol, motor vehicles, homicide, illegal drugs and suicide combined.[[29]](#endnote-29)
* In our county… **[INSERT SPECIFIC EXAMPLES FROM YOUR COUNTY. CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING:**
* What is the rate of youth tobacco use in your county?
* Are there any populations most affected in your county?
* What are you doing to reduce youth initiation in your county?
* What are some recent successes?
* Challenges, solutions and priorities?**]**

*Call to action:* **As a community, we need to tell the tobacco industry they can’t market to our youth.**

* Some communities in Oregon and across the country are using Tobacco Retail Licensure to prevent youth tobacco use. This requires businesses located in the county to obtain an annual license to sell tobacco and other nicotine products, including electronic cigarettes. It is a comprehensive strategy to prevent youth from using nicotine products and to end the burden of tobacco-related disease and death.
* Tobacco Retail Licensure enforces existing federal, state and local tobacco laws. It enables local jurisdictions to identify and educate retailers, monitor their compliance with these laws, and enforce penalties if tobacco is sold to persons under the age of 21. It’s a very effective strategy to keep youth from smoking and help people quit.
  + A study of 33 California communities shows dramatic decreases in youth tobacco sales since passing Tobacco Retail Licensure.[[30]](#endnote-30)
* In places that have Tobacco Retail Licensure, it is also possible to take further action to keep tobacco away from young people. For example, some counties use Tobacco Retail Licensure to limit the number of retailers that can be near a school, and to limit promotions like price reductions. It’s a very effective strategy.[[31]](#endnote-31), [[32]](#endnote-32)
  + Studies show that density of tobacco retailers and proximity of retailers to schools impacts youth tobacco rates.[[33]](#endnote-33), [[34]](#endnote-34)
  + Increased tobacco retailer density is associated with experimental smoking.[[35]](#endnote-35), [[36]](#endnote-36)
  + Prevalence of smoking is higher at schools with five or more retailers within the area.[[37]](#endnote-37), [[38]](#endnote-38)
* Oregon is one of only nine states in the country that have not passed Tobacco Retail Licensure. As a result, counties like **[INSERT YOUR COUNTY]** are taking the initiative to pass it themselves.
* Here in **[INSERT YOUR COUNTY]**, the OHA Public Health Division coordinates with the Oregon State Police to conduct unannounced compliance checks using minor decoys. Due to the State’s limited capacity and resources, only a random sample of retailers are selected for compliance checks and many tobacco retailers in our area can go one or more years without being inspected.
* A Tobacco Retail Licensure policy in **[INSERT YOUR COUNTY]** would enable our program to augment the state’s system so that every tobacco retailer is inspected annually. It would also ensure that all retailers are equipped with information and tools to keep tobacco and nicotine inhalant devices out of the hands of our young people and help protect them from a lifetime of addiction and poor health.
* If Tobacco Retail Licensure is passed here, **[INSERT YOUR COUNTY'S LOCAL PUBLIC HEALTH AUTHORITY]** proposes including... **[INSERT SPECIFIC TOBACCO RETAIL LICENSURE PROVISIONS PROPOSED]**.
* *Segue to price call to action where applicable:* In addition to reducing marketing and sale of flavored products to youth, another way to keep tobacco out of our communities is to increase the price of tobacco. National evidence shows that every 10% increase in the real price of cigarettes reduces adult smoking by about 2%; reduces smoking among young adults by about 3.5%; reduces the number of kids who smoke by 6% or 7%; and reduces overall cigarette consumption by approximately 3% to 5%.[[39]](#endnote-39)
  + *If applicable:* **[INSERT COALITION/GROUP]** is working to **[INSERT SPECIFIC: ban coupons, promotions, etc.]**.

## III. Pivot Points for Tobacco Retail Licensure Concern/Opposition Messages

**Concern about putting** **small retailers out of business or resulting in job loss:**

* Licensing is standard for businesses in many industries, including alcohol sales, personal or animal care, mental health, professional services and food services. A local Tobacco Retail Licensure program is a way to ensure that sales of a deadly product are done lawfully. Tobacco is one of the only addictive and deadly products that does not require a government license and fee in order to be sold.
  + The goal of Tobacco Retail Licensure is to provide adequate enforcement of state laws that make it illegal to sell tobacco products to minors and provide appropriate penalties that include the suspension of a tobacco retailer license for retailers who break those laws. If a retailer abides by the law and does not sell tobacco products to minors, then they have nothing to worry about.
  + Cigarettes can generate significant revenue for convenience stores each year. A small annual fee of a couple of hundred dollars is minimal relative to the average retailers’ tobacco revenue. In terms of restrictions on sales of tobacco products near schools, this policy only limits the ability of a retailer to sell tobacco products. It does not prevent them from selling other products and does not force their business to close.

**Concern about impact on small-business owners of color or retailers that serve communities of color, or about potential of racial profiling in enforcement:**

* Since the tobacco industry aggressively markets in communities of color and lower income communities, there is a higher density of tobacco retailers in those areas and Tobacco Retail Licensure assessment and enforcement will be active there. A well-implemented Tobacco Retail Licensure policy should acknowledge, and work to prevent, the possibility of disproportionate enforcement.
  + The Multnomah County Tobacco Retail Licensure policy, for example, addressed this by working in partnership with the Oregon Health Equity Alliance comprised of 33 community-based organizations to ensure an equity focus was applied to analyze the effects of a potential policy on communities facing economic hardship and on communities of color. They established an advisory committee including representatives from organizations that serve community members who could have been affected by tobacco retail licensure. The group helped the health department create rules to govern the licensing and compliance program. The implementation process also included a substantial investment in retailer education. Materials were disseminated in seven different languages, and in-person visits to stores were conducted to educate retailers on the policy changes prior to compliance checks.
  + **[INSERT COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES OR POLICY CONSIDERATIONS IN YOUR COUNTY TO ADDRESS THIS]**
* One of the most effective potential uses of Tobacco Retail Licensure is to reduce inequities in how tobacco products are marketed and sold in underserved communities. Research has found that the prices of tobacco products tend to be lower in neighborhoods of low socioeconomic status and in African-American neighborhoods.[[40]](#endnote-40) Evidence shows that these same communities have higher rates of tobacco use and addiction, worse health outcomes, and increased health inequities.[[41]](#endnote-41) Because the health problems associated with tobacco use fall disproportionately on underserved communities, policy interventions such as Tobacco Retail Licensure that affect consumption, price or marketing have a greater positive impact on these communities and have the potential to address these inequities.

## IV. Sample Answers to FAQs

*These answers are pulled from the talking points, above, into a format that provides crisp responses to common questions you may receive.*

**What is Tobacco Retail Licensure?**

Tobacco Retail Licensure requires businesses located in the county to obtain an annual license to sell tobacco and other nicotine products, including electronic cigarettes. It is a comprehensive strategy to prevent youth from using nicotine products and end the burden of tobacco-related disease and death.

**What does Tobacco Retail Licensure do?**

Tobacco Retail Licensure enforces existing federal, state and local tobacco laws. Tobacco Retail Licensure enables local jurisdictions to identify and educate retailers, monitor their compliance with these laws, and enforce penalties if tobacco is sold to persons under the age of 21. It can be used to reduce the density of tobacco retailers and keep them away from schools. It’s a very effective strategy to keep youth from smoking and help people quit.

**Why focus on tobacco regulation in the retail environment?**

Retail convenience stores are top sellers of tobacco and nicotine products nationwide.

**How effective is Tobacco Retail Licensure** **in reducing youth access to tobacco?**

Communities across the country, including four counties within Oregon, are implementing Tobacco Retail Licensure as a best-practice to prevent youth from illegally purchasing nicotine products. A study of 33 California communities shows dramatic decreases in youth tobacco sales since passing Tobacco Retail Licensure.[[42]](#endnote-42)

**How does Tobacco Retail Licensure** **prevent youth from using tobacco?**

Tobacco Retail Licensure reduces illegal sales to minors through retailer education and enforcement of laws. Youth who have fewer opportunities to obtain tobacco and see less tobacco advertising are less likely to use tobacco and nicotine products.

**Why is a Tobacco Retail Licensure** **separate from other business licenses?**

Tobacco is a hazardous product that causes disease and death. There are no safe levels of tobacco use. Tobacco Retail Licensure is the mechanism to identify stores that sell tobacco so they can be monitored for compliance with tobacco sales age laws and other regulations. It is like the licenses required to sell alcohol and marijuana.

**Why are vaping products included in Tobacco Retail Licensure?**

Vaping is not an FDA approved aid to quit smoking, and many youth today are being introduced to nicotine through e-cigarettes rather than conventional tobacco products.[[43]](#endnote-43) A 2015 survey found that among e-cigarette users aged 19-24, 40% had never been regular cigarette smokers.[[44]](#endnote-44) Vaping is outpacing conventional cigarettes among youth.

# Media Advocacy Tips and Resources

## I. Collaborate with your Coalition, Network and Partners

Remember, you don’t have to do this alone, especially if you face barriers in the clearance process for media outreach and public engagement. Getting your message out through the media is more powerful if community allies are telling this story alongside your public health department. In many cases, it might be more effective if they are the lead messengers. Work with your coalition, your local Coordinated Care Organization or other partners to mobilize many voices in favor of protecting youth from tobacco.

## II. Shaping Your Story and Approach

The 2018 prevention campaign isn’t a strong news hook on its own, but it could be used to grab a reporter’s attention, so you can offer them a more substantive story.

There are many ways to gain media coverage—from an interview with a community member on a local radio station, to an opinion submission in your local newspaper. Below are steps for developing your media approach, including how to identify the right outlet and the right type of media opportunity.

**1. Develop your angle** to be most compelling to reporters and editors. The media is usually interested in the following:

* Something new, unusual, unexpected or controversial.
* Story ideas with a local angle that are indicative of larger trends.
* Stories that are timely either because something just happened or because the story can tie to something bigger. (For example, if tobacco retail licensure is discussed at the national level, you’d want to talk to a reporter about what that issue looks like in your local community.)
* Story ideas about issues their readers, listeners or viewers care about. Ask yourself, “Why would this matter to someone else?”
* A human interest angle. Is there someone in your community who has been affected by tobacco use, tobacco marketing or industry targeting and can speak firsthand about this?

**2. Identify the outlet(s) that reach your audiences.** Where do your decision-makers and influencers go for news and information about your community? Is there a publication more focused on business news? Is there a talk radio show that policymakers listen to?

**3. Identify your reporter(s).** Direct your media pitch to the person most likely to be interested. Use the search function on the media outlet’s website to look up words that link to your story idea and see who has written about similar issues in the past. You can do the same on Google News. Once you find potential reporters, read a few of their stories and, if possible, follow them on social media to get a sense of what they care about.

**4. Determine your timing or “newshook”** by identifying an upcoming milestone. It could be the release of a new tobacco-related report, a park or building that has chosen to go smoke-free, or a neighboring county passing related policy. Remember that the prevention campaign itself isn’t a strong news hook, so build it into a more substantive story that highlights your county’s need and strategic priorities.

Now that you’ve completed these steps, it’s time to begin your outreach. Below are different ways you can work with the media and tips on how to select which tools to use.

## III. Media Pitches

A media pitch, done via phone or email, is used to interest a reporter in a specific story. Reporters are always looking for a unique angle and the opportunity to “break” a story, so they often prefer individual pitches to news releases that are broadly distributed.

**1. Build relationships.**

Effective media pitching is all about building relationships. When you offer reporters quality news stories and serve as a reliable media source, reporters become more likely to pick up your story ideas and turn to you as a go-to media source. Consider following their social media accounts to see what they’re covering and to retweet/repost their coverage and add your own perspective or notes on related ideas for the reporters to consider. You can also comment on their stories online. Also, think about whether people in your community already have relationships with reporters and ask if they would send the pitch or make an introduction for you.

**2. Draft the email or phone pitch.**

If you don’t already know the reporter well, start with an email and then follow up via phone. Here’s how to draft your email:

* The **subject line** should be short and provocative. What is the aspect the reporter will care most about? For example, “The tobacco industry is targeting [Community’s] children in new ways but there’s a solution.”
* **Address the email** by using the reporter’s first name. Be sure to double check spelling.
* **Write a few compelling sentences.** Start by expanding on your subject line about what aspect, based on what you know the reporter cares about, would be most compelling. For example, “The tobacco industry is marketing flavored tobacco to our children in new and insidious ways.Flavors mask the harsh taste of tobacco, making it easier for kids to get hooked on nicotine. Tobacco companies aren’t just aware of this – they’re counting on it.”
* Then tell the reporter **why this story connects to what they’ve reported about in the past** and why their readers, viewers or listeners would care.
* End by **offering local spokespeople** – which could be you – **for an interview** and ask if they are interested.
* If you’re repurposing any of the content for another pitch, **be sure to customize** and be careful of copying and pasting.

**3. Follow up via phone**.

If you have not heard back in a day or two, give them a call. You can often call the main line of an outlet and ask to be transferred.

Now that you know how to draft and make a media pitch, here are some prevention-focused pitch angles you can build-out and use:

**[Pitch #1] Big tobacco continues to market to youth**

*This pitch can be done by sending a USB-like vape device, along with a real USB, to a reporter and asking, “can you tell the difference?” and/or requesting a meeting to share a variety of products (including a disposable Blu that is cheap and easy to hide, USBs, JUUL products like hoodies with vape string, etc.).*

Key messages to include:

* The tobacco industry continues to target youth, now with new vape products (that are increasingly hard to spot) and flavors that appeal to younger markets...
* Flavors are dangerous and addict kids to nicotine, making them more likely to become long-term tobacco users...
* Here in **[INSERT YOUR COUNTY]** we’re working to counter tobacco industry influence by… **[INSERT YOUR LOCAL STRATEGIES]**.

**[Pitch #2] How youth gain access to tobacco.**

Where and how are youth getting tobacco? Here are six common ways kids purchase tobacco:

* E-cigarette and vape products are all over social media, and many promote the sale of their products directly from their accounts.
* Age restrictions on websites are easily bypassed by putting in a different birth date, and youth can use their parent’s name for shipping. In fact, kids successfully buy e-cigarettes online 94% of the time.
* Clerks at tobacco shops, vape stores, gas stations and convenience stores might not enforce the law to not sell to anyone underage. **[INSERT LOCAL STATISTICS ABOUT UNDERAGE SALES IN YOUR AREA USING** [**OREGON TOBACCO RETAIL ENFORCEMENT INSPECTION RESULTS**](https://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/PREVENTIONWELLNESS/TOBACCOPREVENTION/Documents/InspectionCoReport.PDF)**]**
* Many e-cigarette and vape companies have names that wouldn’t raise a red flag on parents’ credit card statements.
* Online orders can be delivered to Amazon lockers in supermarkets or convenience stores, so youth can pick them up without parents even knowing.
* Orders can also be scheduled to deliver at a time when parents are at work.

**SOURCE FOR ABOVE**: “One patient, a student at a prestigious local private school, secretly used his parents’ credit cards to buy thousands of dollars of JUULs online, and then turned around and sold the devices and flavored pods to other kids at a profit.” https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2017/11/15/where-teenagers-are-high-school-bathrooms-vaping/IJ6xYWWlOTKqsUGTTlw4UO/story.html The same doctor talks about prepaid debit cards here: <https://www.fox25boston.com/news/local-doctor-warns-parents-of-dangers-of-juul-e-cigarettes/548847718>

IV. News Releases

A news release (also called a “media release” or sometimes a “press release”) is an objective announcement directed at members of the news media for the purpose of sharing something newsworthy. Developing and disseminating news releases can help create credibility for your organization, build a history of your key milestones, and get your name in the media. Here are some reasons why you may develop a news release:

* Celebrating a major milestone
* Announcing research results
* Announcing an event or press conference
* Meeting some kind of unusual challenge or rising above adversity
* Introducing a new, unique strategy or approach
* Issuing a statement of position on an important issue

News releases are not recommended for “evergreen” story ideas (i.e., those that are not tied to a specific point in time) or those that don’t have a strong newshook.

News releases are rarely more than two pages, including the heading. Try to keep yours concise and to-the-point, shortening where possible without compromising the story. Make sure to include a quote, interesting proof point, fact or other notable key information that grabs the reader’s attention and makes your release more interesting.

Send all news releases to specific contact people if possible. Find out who the appropriate editors are at each media outlet. With newspapers, you’ll typically want to send information to the editor or to a specific contact with whom you have worked in the past. At television or radio stations, you’ll want to send information to an assignment editor or news director as well as to the community calendar editor, if appropriate. Be sure to follow up by phone or email to underscore why the news is relevant and encourage the editor to use it.

To illustrate how to write a news release, here is a template with section-by-section instructions:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  Date | **CONTACT:** Name  Phone, Email |

**HEADLINE, BOLD TYPE, CENTERED**

City, State — Begin the release with a heading that includes “For Immediate Release,” the date, a contact person, their title, and a phone number. Space down a couple of lines and insert the headline in bold all-caps.

The headline should be a newspaper-style headline. Most newspaper headlines are complete sentences and written in the present tense (and sometimes in the future tense if you refer to something that hasn’t happened yet). The headline should summarize your story’s main point and, if possible, mention your organization’s name.

Begin the body of your news release with a dateline and a dash (for example, “Cleveland, Ohio—”). Datelines give the location of the story. In your first paragraph, include concise, specific, newsworthy information that has a clear local angle. The first paragraph should engage the reader so they continue reading. Ask yourself the traditional “who, what, where, when, why and how” questions. Use the key information from those areas in your lead paragraph. Try to spark the reader’s interest by using a question or an anecdote.

When you email your release, paste the text of it into the body of your email below your signature and a brief note/pitch about why the release is important. The media will not typically open attachments. If you are providing a complete media kit, use a cloud-based service (like Dropbox or Google Drive) to store the media files and include a link to it in your email.

The last paragraph of every release should be “boilerplate” language about your organization. A “boilerplate” is a basic, brief statement that describes your organization and contains a link to your website.

###

To give you an idea of what this could look like in practice, here is a sample news release:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  October 1, 2018 | **CONTACT:** Julie Smith  503-123-4567, jsmith@abccounty.com |

**TOBACCO INDUSTRY CONTINUES TO MARKET TO CHILDREN IN ABC COUNTY**

XYZ City, Ore. — Though the rate of cigarette use among youth has steadily decreased over the past 30 years, a new market of candy-flavored tobacco products has started to boom. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Youth Tobacco Survey, [youth e-cigarette use increased tenfold between 2011 and 2015](https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/65/wr/pdfs/mm6514a1.pdf), putting a new generation of youth at risk of nicotine addiction and the serious health impacts of tobacco use. One convenience store owner in ABC county is taking action to prevent youth from using tobacco by refusing to sell flavored tobacco products in his store.

“You look at these products, with bright colored packages and flavors like cotton candy or caramel apple, and you think, ‘Who are these for?’” asks Jonathan Mitchell, owner of *The Quick Stop* convenience store in ABC county. “To me, it’s clear that these are intended for kids—and that’s not right. I can’t sell these things in my store and just pretend I don’t know who’s using them.” As of this summer, *The Quick Stop* no longer sells any flavored tobacco products in their store and has moved all tobacco marketing behind the register, about seven feet above the ground—away from most teens’ eye-level.

A recent report titled “[The Flavor Trap: How Tobacco Companies Are Luring Kids with Candy-Flavored E-Cigarettes and Cigars](http://flavortrap.org/),” notes that sweet-flavored tobacco products have fueled the popularity of vape pens, e-cigarettes and cigars among youth. It also exposes tobacco companies’ long history of developing and marketing flavored tobacco products as "starter" products that attract kids. And while the 2009 *Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act* prohibited candy- and fruit-flavored cigarettes, it did not include a ban on flavored cigars or electronic products like vape pens and e-cigs.

“I walk into the bathroom at my school and I can smell the sweet, fruity-flavored smoke from kids who have been vaping in there,” says Jessica Torres, a 15-year-old high school student at Perkins High School in ABC County. “So many kids vape—but I don’t know how many realize that they’re actually smoking tobacco,” Torres remarks.

The Coalition for Tobacco Prevention in ABC County commended Mitchell for his decision to stop selling flavored tobacco at *The Quick Stop,* and says they wish all tobacco retailers would do the same. But they aren’t just relying on the goodwill of store owners to move the needle on tobacco prevention in ABC County. The coalition is advocating for the passage of Tobacco Retail Licensure, which would allow ABC County to limit the number of stores selling tobacco in a given area and restrict how close tobacco retailers can be to schools, among other things.

To learn more about tobacco prevention strategies and tobacco retail licensure in ABC County, visit [www.abccounty/tobaccoprevention.org](http://www.abccounty/tobaccoprevention.org)

###

# Opinion Pieces

Letters to the Editor and Op-eds are persuasive opinion submissions from respected members of the community found on editorial pages of newspapers and magazines (both in print and online). When working to create support for your program objectives, opinion pieces would be a great way to expose deceptive industry practices and connect the need for policy to audiences’ values around protection, fairness, equality and security. Opinion submissions also provide you with an opportunity to debunk the arguments of your opponents.

## I. Letters to the Editor

A Letter to the Editor is written in a short letter format to the editorial page editor of a newspaper or magazine. You can use it to call attention to a recent news story on your issue, to correct facts in a biased or inaccurate article, to praise the publication for its positive coverage of your issue, or to educate about a local issue that’s relevant to readers.

**1. Consider what angles and how many letters you can submit quickly.**

Think about what perspectives you can bring to bear on the issue. By asking several community supporters to submit letters, you can demonstrate wide-reaching support for your issue, increase the likelihood that at least one will be published and make a call to action.

**2. Determine who should be the author(s) of letter(s) to the editor.**

Deciding who should sign the letter(s) as the author(s) is as important as the content. Think about who has the most authenticity and credibility in the community and whose perspective would best influence your target audiences. For example, a student leader or parent who is worried about the availability of tobacco products in their children’s lives have great credibility when speaking to the need for the issue. Also consider whose perspective might not be expected.

**3. Draft the letter(s).**

Generally, shorter letters have a better chance of being published. In most cases, letters to the editor should be 300 words or less.

Here are the core elements of a letter to the editor:

* **Salutation**: A simple "To the Editor” is sufficient. If you have the editor's name, use it.
* **Write a strong opening**: Your opening sentence should tell readers what you’re writing about and make them want to read more. For example, sharing that there are more than 15,500 tobacco flavors (and counting!) mostly aimed at children to get them addicted at a young age is a powerful opening to a letter.
* **Explain the issue**: Explain the issue and its importance simply and in plain language. Provide supporting points or data to back up your arguments. Share the source of your information whenever possible.
* **Make your “ask”**: In closing, offer suggestions about what could be done to improve the situation or where to learn more. Be specific—the more reasons you can give to back up your suggestions, the more likely people are to take your assertions seriously. For example, if there is an upcoming public discussion of the retail licensure policy process, invite the publication’s readership to attend it as part of the call to action.
* **Sign the letter**: Be sure to have the author(s) close with their full name (and title, if relevant) and include their address, phone number and email address. Newspapers won't print anonymous letters, though in some cases they may withhold a name on request. They may also call the author to confirm that they wrote the letter before they publish it.

Here’s an example of a letter to the editor that ran in *The Register-Guard* congratulating 2008 USA Track & Field Olympic Trials Steering Committee for deciding to make the event tobacco-free:



## II. Op-eds

An op-ed (literally “opposite the editorial page” because that’s where it traditionally is placed) is a longer, more detailed submission that is clearly focused on educating readers about an issue and encouraging them to act. It is also an opportunity to refute an editorial, opposing op-ed or a commonly held assumption about an issue. Op-eds also create opportunities to share compelling anecdotes or personal stories related to the issues.

Here are instructions for how to develop an op-ed:

**1. Have a clear purpose.**

Your piece should provoke discussion, controversy and response. What do you want your target audience to do?

**2. Target your audience.**

Knowing your audience will help you decide which outlet to target and who the author should be. Make sure to think about what makes this interesting or important to the readers of the publication.

**3. Identify your author(s).**

Op-eds are generally signed by a well-known community leader or official (e.g., a local business person or elected official). Collaborating with a relevant public figure, policy maker, executive director or advocate may give you a better chance of getting published and connecting with your audience. The author(s) should be asked to both sign the piece and follow up with the publication to increase the likelihood of publication.

**4. Make your submission timely.**

Reference something that’s recently been in the news that relates to your topic.

**5. Know the rules.**

Identify where you plan to submit your op-ed, and the requirements of the outlet. In most cases, the outlet will have a limit on word count—usually between 500 and 800 words. Submissions must also be original and exclusive to that outlet. Time the submission of your op-ed to coordinate with events or dates that stress your message.

**6. Build a strong argument.**

* Focus on one issue and one clear action that you are encouraging.
* Draw them in so they have to keep reading. Consider starting with a personal experience or recent publicly known activity or media story.
* Support your argument with three key points, with one paragraph on each.
* Use both personal and community anecdotes and defensible facts to help drive home why this issue is important and what it means to you and the community is an effective strategy.
* Anticipate and counter the opposing arguments with facts and point out other weaknesses in the opponents’ message. Explain why your position is stronger.
* Avoid public health jargon.
* End with a bang, not a yawn: Drive the point home and sum up the argument.

**7. Pitch it and follow up.**

* Ask the author of the op-ed to call the editor to let them know it is coming and clearly state why it should be printed.
* Submit the op-ed with a cover note that provides the author’s contact information and reasons why the article is timely and relevant to readers.
* If the submission doesn’t run right away, don’t be afraid to have the authors call back and ask if the paper intends to publish it.
* If your piece is not used, do not give up. Try different angles, different outlets and different time periods to run your op-ed. Keep your information updated with changing events and public perceptions.

**8.Leverage the piece once it is published.**

Send out a summary or compelling excerpt with the link to the full piece to your support base and allies via email and social media. Ask the author to thank the outlet to build relationships.

## III. Editorial Board Meetings

An editorial board (usually the publisher, editorial page editor and editorial writers) dictates the topics and position of a paper’s editorials and opinion pieces and may shape or comment on news coverage. While Letters to the Editor and op-eds let you and your community partners share your opinion directly with readers, meeting with an editorial board lets you persuade the editors to cover your issue in a certain way.

**1. Set up an editorial board meeting.**

To schedule an editorial board meeting, use the same approach you would for a news story: Demonstrate the relevance and timeliness of your issue in a pitch to the editorial page editor or other appropriate contact.

**2. Select and prepare your team for the editorial board meeting.**

Just as with a news story, it’s important to include the voices and perspectives of community supporters by asking them to participate in the meeting. Make sure people representing varying aspects of the issue are present. For example, a great retail licensure policy editorial board meeting would include you, the owner of a potentially regulated business, and a parent or educator who sees children frequenting those businesses. Make sure you meet with your community supporters before the meeting to discuss each person’s role, talking points, the meeting agenda and responses to anticipated questions.

It’s important that everyone understand that while the meeting will be conversational, each person plays a specific role and has a specific message to deliver. It is also important to remind everyone that their comments are on the record and so to think carefully about what they say.

**3. Manage agenda and flow of the meeting.**

Provide the editorial board staff with a couple of key documents that provide a frame of your issue — perhaps a brochure or fact sheet. Start by briefly introducing yourselves and giving a brief overview of your issue, why it matters and your call to action (“We hope you’ll consider an editorial encouraging the county to consider a retail licensure policy.”). Then move into questions and discussion.

**4. Follow up after the meeting.**

Send handwritten thank you notes to the people you met. Also, provide any additional follow-up information and materials requested during the meeting.

**5. Leverage the editorial if it is favorable to your position.**

Once an editorial or opinion piece runs, think about who you might share it with (legislators, local decision-makers, tobacco prevention supporters, social media platforms etc.) and consider asking community members to post comments on the newspaper’s website (if the outlet has one) in response to the editorial as well as send a link to it to other supporters and friends.

Here’s an example of an editorial in *The Oregonian* that was a result of a meeting with their editorial board:



# Social Media

Social media can be a powerful communication and engagement tool when used correctly. Here are some recommendations for engaging your Facebook audience:

* Content considerations
  + **Literacy level**: Public Health best practice is to write at a sixth-grade reading level, which means avoiding jargon or complex language.
  + **Tone**: Consider the tone of voice you’d like to use on social media. Is it warm? Urgent? Health care focused?
  + **Length**: Shorter posts that are concise and to-the-point usually receive more audience engagement (likes, comments and shares). **Aim for no more than 80 characters**. Facebook cuts off longer posts and forces followers to click “See More” to read the rest of the text. This extra step causes audiences to lose interest and reduces engagement.
  + **Words/terms to avoid**: Facebook uses algorithms to determine what posts show up in your followers’ newsfeeds. There are some words that prevent your content from being shared widely. Here are some words and terms to avoid using in Facebook posts:
    - Free
    - Like
    - Love
    - Comment
    - Share
    - Buy
    - Sale
    - Follow
* Share links: Sharing links to relevant articles, videos or other online sources creates a drumbeat of interesting content, provides followers with more information about the issue, and demonstrates that you are actively engaged in the work.
* Share photos: Photos are a great way to keep people interested and involved, while showing the real faces of your organization, supporters and volunteers.
* Create events: Invite followers to upcoming events using Facebook event pages. Event pages can host their own information that is specific to the event, such as pictures, comments and an RSVP list. Invitees are also able to forward the invitation on to their friends.
* Post and reply: Post (or repost) discussion-worthy questions or topics, official statements, and information on your Facebook page. When people leave comments, reply to them, both to show that you value their engagement and to keep the conversation going!
* Re-share: Share content from people and organizations working on the tobacco prevention locally and nationally, but add your own voice/commentary to it!
* Hashtags: A hashtag is a designated set of letters and numbers preceded by a # sign. Hashtags allow Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to congregate and group all posts, photos, videos or tweets with the same hashtag. Users can search for tweets with that hashtag and view them in a list. Hashtags allow users to take part in an online conversation while discovering new pages to follow or links to check out. Hashtags are great tools to create buzz and raise the profile of events. Publicize your hashtag for events when you send out emails and invitations and have it posted on a wall at the event.
* Drive traffic to your page: Make your Facebook Page a core part of your online presence by selecting a custom URL (visit facebook.com/username). Drive referrals to your Facebook Page by adding the Like and Share buttons to your website and e-newsletters. If you can, add Facebook comments to your website to let people discuss your content via their Facebook account.

Here are some sample Facebook posts you can customize and use during the 2018 Prevention Campaign period:

**Post #1:**

Tobacco companies know that getting kids hooked on nicotine early makes them more likely to become lifelong smokers. We need to tell the tobacco industry they can’t market to our youth. How will you help us/**[INSERT YOUR COUNTY]** stand up to Big Tobacco?

**Post #2:**

Just flavored smoke? Don’t be fooled – new vape products might taste harmless, but they still contain nicotine and tobacco, which can addict young people and turn them into life-long smokers. **[INSERT CALL TO ACTION. Example: *Learn how Big Tobacco is finding new ways to market to youth by visiting xxxx.com; In XXX county, we’re protecting our youth from tobacco by…; That’s why XXX county is working to pass ABC policy; etc.*]**

**Post #3:**

Vaping is outpacing conventional cigarettes among youth and addicting a whole new generation of tobacco users. It’s not a safe alternative to smoking cigarettes—in fact, many people who start with vape become cigarette smokers once they’re addicted. In **[INSERT YOUR COUNTY]**, we’re fighting Big Tobacco by… **[INSERT YOUR STRATEGIES]**

**Post #4:**

Tobacco is still a top killer, killing more Americans than AIDS, alcohol, motor vehicles, homicide, illegal drugs and suicide…COMBINED. In our county… **[INSERT SPECIFIC EXAMPLES FROM YOUR COUNTY. CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING: *What are the rates of youth tobacco use in your county? Are there any populations most affected in your county? What are you doing to reduce youth initiation in your county? What are some recent successes? Challenges, solutions and priorities?*]**

**Post #5:**

Communities in Oregon and across the country are using Tobacco Retail Licensure to prevent youth tobacco use. Tobacco Retail Licensure limits the number of retailers in an area, keeps them away from schools, and limits promotions like price discounts. Learn more by visiting **[INSERT YOUR WEBSITE, OR:** Stop by **XXX** Coalition’s presentation on **DATE** to learn more about what Tobacco Retail Licensure would do for our county**]**

**Post #6:**

A simple equation: Cigarette prices go up, youth smoking rates go down. Every 10% increase in the price of cigarettes reduces the number of kids who smoke by 6% or 7%. **[LINK TO ARTICLE, REPORT OR RESOURCE ABOUT TOBACCO PRICING AS PREVENTION STRATEGY]**

For reference, here is the Smokefree Oregon Facebook content calendar for October, 2018:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Date** | **Theme** | **Post Copy** | **Link & Visual** |
| 10/1 | Quit | We're here to help! Visit www.quitnow.net or call 1-800-QUIT-NOW.  #MotivationMonday | <https://bit.ly/2JjYB71>  /var/folders/dj/v30gjbsn6r9blbkg1ygr23p40000gr/T/com.microsoft.Word/Content.MSO/949C6B89.tmp |
| 10/2 | Youth | Big Tobacco has always targeted the next generation.... | /var/folders/dj/v30gjbsn6r9blbkg1ygr23p40000gr/T/com.microsoft.Word/Content.MSO/BCFD54E5.tmp |
| 10/3 | Prevention Campaign/  Youth | Big Tobacco is hooking the next generation by targeting young people with candy-flavored tobacco products. We are working to change that. | <https://bit.ly/1cOVa38> |
| 10/4 | Environment/ Indoor Clean Air Act | #TBT to when going out to dinner could mean breathing secondhand smoke. How unhealthy is secondhand smoke? Learn more here. | <https://bit.ly/1Bu8G0y> |
| 10/5 | Youth/  Prevention | @CounterTobacco exposes how tobacco companies are trying to build the next generation of customers...kids. #WhatsforSale in your neighborhood? | <https://bit.ly/2MFAxIt> |
| 10/8 | Cessation | One of the best things you can do to help somebody quit tobacco is listen to them and support them, anytime, anywhere.   #MotivationMonday | [www.quitnow.net](http://www.quitnow.net/) |
| 10/9 | Disparities | #DYK Big Tobacco gave free cigarettes to mental health facilities and groups to increase addiction and grow their customer base. People with mental health conditions or substance abuse disorders account for 40% of cigarettes smoked in the U.S. | <https://bit.ly/2xnmKkg> |
| 10/10 | Youth | Do you know what to look for? | <https://to.pbs.org/2NX2z44> |
| 10/12 | Youth | Can you tell the difference? Big Tobacco is making it easier than ever for teens to use tobacco. |  |
| 10/15 | Quit | Interested in quitting? Visit www.quitnow.net to find the quit method that works for you or call 1-800-QUIT-NOW.  #MotivationMonday | <https://bit.ly/2MFrVlv> |
| 10/16 | Youth | It's illegal to advertise tobacco in TV commercials. But it's not illegal to show tobacco on TV or in movies. Exposure to tobacco on screen makes people more likely to start smoking. | <https://bit.ly/2PKxd0G> |
| 10/17 | Environment/  ICAA | There is no safe level of secondhand smoke exposure. Since the Oregon Indoor Clean Air Act passed, more people are safe from secondhand smoke. But there's still work to be done in places like outdoor venues and multi-unit housing. Learn about what you can do in your community. | <https://bit.ly/1IXrKeS> |
| 10/17 | Environment/  ICAA | There is no safe level of secondhand smoke exposure. Since the Oregon Indoor Clean Air Act passed, more people are safe from secondhand smoke. But there's still work to be done in places like outdoor venues and multi-unit housing. Learn about what you can do in your community. | <https://bit.ly/1IXrKeS> |
| 10/18 | Youth | The U.S. banned tobacco advertisements on TV and radio back in the 1970's. But now Big Tobacco is using social media to lure in a new generation of users. Check out their shady tactics. | <https://nyti.ms/2o9Uc9O> |
| 10/19 | Youth/  Prevention | Want to know how Big Tobacco targets people in stores? Watch this video from @CounterTobacco and take a look at #WhatsforSale in your neighborhood. | [Share from FB] |
| 10/22 | Quit | Are you or someone you know thinking about quitting tobacco? Take the readiness quiz and learn about resources available to help at www.quitnow.net.  #MotivationMonday | <https://bit.ly/1kGGDne> |
| 10/24 | Youth | Is that a USB stick or an e-cigarette? | <https://bit.ly/2IPiMVE> |
| 10/26 | True Cost | Tobacco doesn't just cost users, it costs everyone. In 2013, tobacco-related medical treatment and lost productivity cost Oregon $2,558,800,000! | <https://bit.ly/1mNoXHO> |
| 10/29 | Youth/ Prevention Campaign | Why do you think tobacco is displayed near the candy aisle? Big Tobacco controls how products are marketed in stores. Share a picture of #WhatsforSale in your neighborhood. | <https://bit.ly/1cOVa38> |
| 10/30 | Youth | Interesting new study finds that youth are 15% more likely to try vapor products if they see them advertised on the wall behind the register. #tobaccoracketeers | <https://bit.ly/2QfS504> |
| 10/31 | Youth | Happy Halloween!   Don't be tricked by big tobacco's claim that they don't market to kids. There are over 15,000 flavors...and counting. | <https://bit.ly/1mJX2sk> |

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