

Working with the Media

***For more in depth information, please see the media guide in the resource CD.**

The media can expand the reach of your efforts, reinforce your messages throughout the community, and increase public support for a healthy school environment. Many times it can be the deciding factor in pushing the decision maker to act. The media will most likely jump at the opportunity to cover a story about students organizing to bring about positive change in their school health environment, so do not be afraid to ask for coverage!

To engage the media:

A. Build a Media Contact List:

1. Begin by finding the phone numbers and addresses in the phonebook.
2. Call the newspapers, radio and TV stations to ask which reporters cover health and education.
3. Develop a **Media Contact List** with all of the names, phone and fax numbers, and addresses that you are able to gather.

B. Plan What You Want to Say- it's all about 6 simple questions.

1. Who? – who is doing the project or holding the event?
2. What? – what is it about?
3. When? – when is the project or event taking place?
4. Where? – where is the work taking place (i.e. your high school) or if it's an event, where is it taking place?
5. Why? – why are you trying to make change (i.e. site your survey results and rationale) or why are you holding an event?
6. How? – how did you do this project or how are thinking of doing the project if you are announcing something?

C. Send them information on your work:

1. Write a Letter to the Editor.

- Newspapers print letters to the editor. These letters express opinions about issues that affect the community. Your letter should describe how the problem has affected your life. You can find the editor's name and address on the editorial page of the newspaper.

2. Write a Press Release.

- A press release is a written description of a news story or event. A press release should be short and to the point — no more than two pages. It's best to type a press release.
- Make sure reporters know your press release is written by teenagers. They will be much more interested in your story. In addition, many times newspapers will use the press release as the basis for their story so make sure to do a good job.

- You should fax, email, or mail a copy of your press release to all of the reporters on your media contact list, then telephone them to make sure they received it. After you get media coverage, remember to get a copy of the newspaper article, or a recording of the TV or radio story. You can use the copies the next time you contact a decision maker.

3. Hold an event to attract media attention:

- Reporters like events. Create an event at your school to attract reporters. You could hold a debate, or give a presentation to the school board. Make sure to invite the media. You could also invite a reporter to have lunch with you in the school cafeteria.