

Connecting with Radio and TV

Local broadcasters are always searching for ways to add rich, local content to the news stories and programs they produce. Local public health issues and stories offer great opportunities to partner with local radio and TV outlets.

News directors or producers, not program hosts, typically make programming decisions. Often, the best place to start is by contacting the news director. Here are a few partnering options:

Special events

The goal of partnering with broadcasters is to extend the value of your outreach efforts and their programming. Approach a local TV or radio station about partnering to produce special events and programming around your public health issues and messages. Together, you might create news stories on public health issues in your community, and co-sponsor town hall forums, health fairs, and other outreach events.

Editorials

Many radio stations, especially public radio stations, will reserve spots in their news schedules for community comments on pressing issues. Call the news directors of local stations that reach your audiences and request an opportunity to provide editorial comment. Focus on local public health issues.

PSAs

Public service announcements (PSAs) raise awareness of topics important to viewers and listeners through funny, emotional, or compelling 30- to 90-second commercials. Contact your local TV or radio stations about creating a PSA for your campaign. In some cases, stations will actually help you produce the piece.

Expert guests

Drive-time radio broadcasters and morning and evening TV news programs always need local experts who can speak to important local issues. Because public health affects everyone, and that broad appeal is attractive to news producers and hosts, contact program producers and reporters and let them know you have experts who are ready to contribute and appear on their radio and TV news show.

Creating Media Coverage

Local media offers a great opportunity for local health departments and community partners to generate media coverage. The fact that public health directly affects the community creates a natural news hook. Many public health stories also carry human-interest angles that are ready-made for local news placements. Below are a few tips to help generate local media coverage:

Know your media

Read, watch, or listen to targeted media outlets ahead of time. Notice which reporters cover health. Be sure your issue fits with the reporter's "beat." If you are not sure which reporters cover your issue, contact the assignment editor. At large newspapers, there are assignment editors for different sections of the paper (e.g., Health, Metro, Business).

Help your newspapers localize stories about public health

Provide news outlets with background on your organization's efforts and, if appropriate, make someone within your group, or a member of the community served by your organization, available as an expert on public health issues. For example, when news of the flu vaccine shortage hit, NACCHO sent out an announcement offering its executive director as an expert to speak to the media (see example in Template Section).

Reach out to local television and radio reporters

Offer to assist broadcast coverage of your issues by providing background information, experts, or community members who illustrate local public health (see Connecting with Local Radio and TV Outlets).

Arrange general information briefings for local reporters

Schedule time to meet with reporters that cover beats related to the work of the local health department. Brief them on upcoming activities and relevant issues, such as an upcoming flu season. Maintain regular contact with reporters and provide periodic updates on scheduled events and local health department achievements.

Place an op-ed or monthly column in your local daily or neighborhood papers

(See "Developing an Op Ed" below.)

Feature local citizens

If local citizens play a feature role in your work, emphasize their roles to local newspapers and television and radio news programs.

Consider alternative media to access hard-to-reach populations

Pursue placements in foreign language newspapers and distribute brochures and leaflets in community centers, churches, and hospitals—wherever people with an interest in your story gather.

Maximize use of all available communications channels

Local health departments routinely produce newsletters and maintain Web sites. Community organizations, neighborhood associations, and parents' groups often publish newsletters for their members. Use these outlets to raise awareness of local efforts.

Investigate regional or state e-mail mailing lists

E-mail distribution lists that commonly discuss issues related to your work and include the address of your Web site. Post your Web site address, information about your local health department achievements, and upcoming events to the online forums you identify.