

Public Relations Basics

Public Relations is the art of influencing public opinion about your organization through personal or impersonal interaction. Public perception is shaped through publications such as brochures and newsletters, demeanor on the phone and in person, and the mass media.

Publicity is free exposure provided through the media. **Types of media** include magazines, newspapers, radio, television, and the Internet. Publicity can be obtained by distributing a press release, holding a press conference, or by writing an informational article that demonstrates your organizational leaderships' expertise. **Media contacts** can be researched in the yellow pages, in printed media directories in the library, or online at a site like www.mediapost.com.

A **Press Release** is a written request for publicity that can be distributed via mail, email, or fax. Any newsworthy project or event can be submitted; this might include special events, grants received (with the funder's permission), new programs, new publications, or staff appointments. The press release should be distributed to media outlets with an audience that would be interested in your news. It should always be addressed to a specific person or department; this information can be researched on the Internet or by calling the main number. Make sure your press releases are received at least three weeks in advance of the requested publication date.

A press release is usually one page long and typed in a 12-point font. The language used should be clear, concise, and simple. It should be on your organization's letterhead and follow this format:

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE:	Today's Date
CONTACT PERSON:	Name Phone and/or email

BRIEF ATTENTION-GETTING HEADLINE

(City, State) -- The first paragraph should contain pertinent facts, including who, what, where, and when. Also include a way for the reader to get more information such as a phone number or email address. Write this paragraph so that it could stand alone and clearly communicate your purpose.

The second paragraph contains more specific information about the project or event. This could include brief biographies, historical or cultural context, quotes, and/or an explanation about why this project/event is significant.

The third paragraph should contain background information about your organization. Include a brief description of programs and services, leadership, and complete contact information.