



How-To Media Guide for Health Care Professionals

The *Childhood Influenza Immunization Coalition (CIIC)* provides a unique opportunity to protect infants, children and adolescents by helping to make childhood influenza immunization a national health priority. This document describes how you can enlist the media as a key partner in this effort.

CIIC developed communications tools and suggested strategies for conducting outreach on childhood influenza. These materials are designed to help inform others about influenza and vaccination, consistent with the immunization recommendations issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

This “How-to Guide” explains each of the communication tools and offers suggestions on how to use them for awareness programs to reach key audiences – media, parents and health care professionals.

Media Materials on www.PreventChildhoodInfluenza.org

CIIC has prepared basic media materials to assist you in your outreach to reporters. Some of these materials can be adapted to include information specific to your area and local influenza awareness activities (e.g., pediatrician/flu clinic address and telephone number, vaccination clinic dates and times). Many components can be easily customized and reproduced or photocopied for distribution.

The *CIIC* Web site, www.PreventChildhoodInfluenza.org, includes the following materials, which you can download and send to the media:

- Media Alert (template)
- Flu Fact Sheet

Media Relations: The Basics

The media can play a powerful role in shaping public awareness and the understanding of public health issues. The media often rely on outside sources for story ideas. You can be one of those sources by providing information about *CIIC*'s goals and activities.

Below are descriptions of the types of materials that can be used to reach media with a newsworthy childhood influenza story or event.

Press Release

A press release is a formal news announcement distributed to media through select mailings, faxes or e-mail and/or through a press release distribution service such as PR

Newswire. Press releases include “who, what, where, when and why” elements and are intended to spark reporter interest in developing a news story.

Some reporters tend not to open attachments, so it is best to copy and paste the release into the body of the e-mail. A press release must include contact information so that a reporter may call with questions or request an interview.

Media Alert

A media alert briefly (one page or less) announces your news. This alert should be customized with the basic information about your story – who, what, where, when and why – as well as your contact information. The alert can be sent to media by fax or e-mail. Media alerts are used primarily to provide reporters with basic information.

Pitch E-mail

A pitch e-mail is used to grab the attention of reporters so they will read material such as a press release or media alert. Pitch e-mails should be sent in the body of an e-mail with an informative subject line. Generally a pitch e-mail should be no more than a few short paragraphs. Be sure to personalize the letter for each reporter (e.g., Dear Ms. Jones).

Fact Sheet

Also known as a backgrounder, a fact sheet is a document summarizing the most important information on a topic. Fact sheets provide busy reporters with most of the information they need in one easy-to-read document.

Tips for Working with Reporters

A media relations tip sheet is provided below with a snapshot of some of the most important elements to consider when speaking with reporters. You may find it helpful to review this often, as a reminder of how to best work with the media.

Think Like a Reporter

- Who is the publication’s target audience?
- Do the reporters have a “beat” or topic they regularly cover (e.g., education, health, features)?
- What format do they work in? Print, radio, TV, Internet?
- How far in advance do they develop stories (lead time)?
- What type of deadlines do they work under (e.g., daily, weekly, etc.)?
- Have they or their outlet covered this issue before?
- Do you have any visuals, tools or spokespersons that might be useful to them?

Remember the Rules of Good Media Relations

- Practice your pitch before you call
- Keep your pitch concise and focused on your key message

- Be confident – you have a story that deserves to be told
- Find out the best time/means of contacting the reporter – e-mail, phone, etc.
- Offer to call a reporter back at a later time if he/she is on deadline
- Send follow-up materials (and confirm their e-mail, fax, address)
- Ask for the name of an alternate reporter if the one you've contacted is not appropriate
- Keep a record of the reporters you've contacted and notes about each
- Don't assume a reporter will return your phone call; follow up
- Return phone calls promptly
- Be persistent – without being too pushy
- Suggest meeting at their office or over coffee to discuss the story
- Invite reporters to your event (e.g., vaccination clinic), if appropriate, and offer on-site interviews
- If the reporter declines the story, politely ask why and offer to keep in touch

Prepare for Interviews

- Once a reporter has agreed to develop a story, ask about the angle/approach, length, format (live vs. taped), who else will be interviewed
- Confirm details (time, location, etc.) of an interview, usually a day before
- Resend press materials before an interview
- Offer to assist with additional information for their story, if appropriate
- Encourage the reporter to include the *CIIIC* Web site in their story for more information
- Prepare yourself and/or spokesperson. Review messages, anticipate potential questions, practice responses. Remember that everything is “on the record”

Follow up with Reporters

- Contact the reporter after an interview. Discuss remaining questions, details on story, publication/air date
- Send a thank you letter once the story has been published/aired
- Keep in touch