

African American Healthy Marriage Initiative

A Quick Reference Guide to
Local Media &
Community Outreach







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*Distributed by the
Administration for Children and Families*



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Introduction

Our times have been appropriately called the information age. Various media outlets saturate the public with news and information. Part of the challenge for your organization is making sure your mission to promote and strengthen the institution of healthy marriage is reaching the African American community.

This booklet is a tool to help you become more knowledgeable about media engagement and community outreach. It provides a good starting point to familiarize you with protocol and considerations for approaching the media.

When used in conjunction with the sample AAHMI Media kit found at www.aahmi.net, this information will take you one step closer to making sure your program and events receive appropriate support and attention.

As you will see, the sample kit contains national data and generic samples, but localizing your media kit will make it more compelling to the media and your local community. Please consult the samples in the kit and use them as examples for how to create a media kit that is targeted to your local outlets.

Understanding Mass Media

For this, you'll need to put yourself in the position of the targeted media organizations. The more background information you have on targeted groups, the better the chance of getting the coverage you desire. By now you should be familiar with each outlet and have a general sense of what kind of stories and programs they run.

Get familiar with the outlets' formats and local programming tendencies. Model your message after those that you've seen printed or that have aired.

As part of the Federal Communication Commission's public service requirements, radio and television stations have air time set aside for community and public access. This is provided free of charge and allows wide-reaching access through broadcasts. Look and listen for things like:

- Community Calenders,
- Public Service Announcements (PSA) or,
- Public Affairs Programs.

News Organizations

Most news organizations gravitate to stories that have the following characteristics:

- It's the first/ the biggest/ the longest/the oldest
- It demonstrates a trend
- It adds something to an existing news event.

Media Engagement Checklist

- **Create a media list.** An up-to-date media list is an important tool for anyone working with news media. The best list is one you create yourself. It takes time, but then you are sure it contains the

information you need. Consult the internet and don't forget small, new, and transient publications or college and university publications.

Also, ask your contacts for names of others who cover your issues. Keep your detailed media list on a spreadsheet. The online media kit contains a template for gathering the pertinent information.

- **Define your message.** Make sure everyone in your organization knows and understands what you are trying to communicate through the media. The media and public rightly look at staff and volunteers as representatives of your group. Make sure they are armed with the word you want to get out.
- **Speak with one voice.** Usually there is one person that handles media contact while the executive director, president, or chairperson actually delivers the message to the media. Make sure that everyone in your organization is aware of the media contact person and that they can quickly reach that person if the media calls.

Make sure they avoid suspicious and curt statements like “No Comment” or “I’m not allowed to talk to the press.” Instead, they should offer assistance, get the name and contact information for the caller, along with the reason for calling. Consider closing with, “I’ll be happy to help you. Let me get your name, number and reason for calling. I’m sure our media contact will be the best resource for your story.”

The Media Kit

In its simplest form a media kit, sometimes called a press kit, is a collection of information about an organization or its programs. With the presence of the word “media”, it’s easy to focus the content on news organizations and media outlets. To make the most of your resources, consider a broader audience for your media kit.

This may include:

- Faith-based Organizations
- Local Government Officials
- Community Organizations
- Schools, Colleges, and Universities

When viewed this way, your media kit may serve as a resume of your organization, credibility enhancement or an introduction to your programs. Of course, in this age of targeted messages, it would be unwise to think that a one-size-fits-all kit could serve all of these purposes. There will be some *static* or fixed components of your kit that have been provided by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), but create the rest of your kit with a *modular* mentality—meaning the contents can be rearranged, replaced, or interchanged easily.

Assembling the Media Kit

The AAHMI folder provides an ideal foundation for your media kit. If the AAHMI folder is unavailable, use any new folder with two pockets. It may have a label or your organization's information on the outside. Using it to organize your kit, place organization and AAHMI information on the left and arrange it from front to back as follows:

- Business card for media contact affixed to the left pocket
- AAHMI Brochure
- AAHMI Theme Song CD
- On letterhead, a brief background of your organization that includes: Mission Statement, Affiliation with AAHMI, Key Contacts and/or Board Members
- AAHMI Overview
- ACF Fact Sheet

On the right side, include Specific Event or Program Information.

- Press release, letter of introduction or invitation

- Photos or artwork related to the event
- Event program or schedule
- Bios of key players
- Preview articles about the event or PSA about the program

Event or Program Request

The first page on the right side of your media kit almost always guarantees a glance. This is a very prominent position and should answer the recipient's question, "Why am I getting this now?" No matter the format, make sure this piece can answer that question clearly and thoroughly.

The rest of your kit will be referenced on an "as needed" basis. That means it may or may not be seen. The following checklist will help you verify that your premier piece has impact.

- **Are the "five W's" answered?** (Who, What, When, Where Why)
- **Is the desired response clear?** For press releases, it's obvious that you want press coverage. But with letters, would you like the reader to respond with a letter of support, join you at a special event, be a key note speaker, meet with representatives of your group or host an event? The possibilities are limitless. Whatever you want to happen, make sure you ask for it explicitly.
- **Is there a time element?** Time is a great motivator for action. Make sure you use it to your advantage by giving deadlines in your letter or coordinating the release with a newsworthy event.

Contacting The Press

The Press Release

A press release is an efficient way to communicate your organization's activities to a wide variety of media outlets. Your release will be competing with hundreds that end up in a newsroom.

Make sure you get a fighting chance at the editor's attention by focusing on the most important details.

Press Release Format

Take a look at the sample press release in the online media kit. It contains all of the elements of a professional press release.

Time Element	<i>The most common phrase is "For Immediate Release" and in most situations this is what you will use.</i>
Contact	<i>This includes how to reach the media liaison within your organization to get more information. This person is aware, well-versed and comfortable talking to the media.</i>
City, State – Headline	<i>This should be an attention grabber and a summary of the release contents. Use some creativity, but—be warned— it should be factual and newsworthy, not an over-the-top sales pitch.</i>
Lead Paragraph	<i>Most of the five W's are answered here. After reading the first paragraph, the recipient should be able to give a one-sentence summary of the release.</i>

Body	<i>The body will answer the rest of the five W's. It may also contain a quote from a credible source or additional background information.</i>
Closing	<i>Usually just one paragraph, this contains information about your organization.</i>
-more- or -###-	<i>This indicates a second page or end of the release. Since many releases are time-sensitive, they are usually sent by fax (without a cover sheet). It is important that the reader knows what to expect at the end of each page.</i>

The Press Conference

A press conference is an excellent way to share your message with a variety of media outlets—if you have news. The most important element of the conference is the message. To get the most from your efforts, make sure your message is (1) newsworthy and (2) clearly defined. In this setting, you are in control of the flow of information.

Planning a press conference takes a significant amount of time and resources. It requires a great deal of organization and coordination.

The two checklists on the following pages will help guide you through the process of hosting a successful press conference. Planning should start approximately three weeks in advance.

**Your
message
must be
newsworthy.**

Planning Timeline

Three Weeks Before	<p><i>Decide to have a press conference</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Define the goal of the press conference</i> - <i>What message will the conference deliver</i> - <i>Who will be the media liaison</i> - <i>Who will be the spokesperson</i> - <i>Who will be the moderator</i>
	<p><i>Choose invitees</i></p>
	<p><i>Set a date and time</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Traditionally, conferences are held mid-week (Tuesday through Thursday) and mid-morning (9-11am)</i> - <i>Consult your media list and plan according to your invitees' schedules</i>
	<p><i>Select a location</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Make sure you can accommodate the invitees</i> - <i>Make sure there is room and power sources for cameras</i> - <i>Create a good backdrop that features the logo of your group or program</i>
Two Weeks Before	<p><i>Send a media advisory to the outlets on your media list</i></p>
	<p><i>Send a simple letter or invitation to the people on your guest list (non-media)</i></p>
	<p><i>Prepare the modular side of your media kits that includes:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Fact sheets</i> - <i>Speaker notes</i> - <i>Speaker bios</i>
	<p><i>Order visual aids like charts, photos, and graphs that emphasize your message</i></p>
	<p><i>If using a photographer, meet to make a list of key photos and shots that must be captured</i></p>
One Week before	<p><i>Notify the Media</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Send a press release to the outlets on your list</i> - <i>Place a follow-up phone call</i>
	<p><i>Visit the site for a quick walk-through. Make notes about set up and establish traffic patterns</i></p>

One Day Before	<i>Place a reminder call to media and invitees to provide them with the time and special instructions about the location. Be available to answer any questions about logistics.</i>
On the day of	<p>2 hours before: Coordinator/ Liaison arrives <i>This will give you time to attend to any last-minute matters.</i> <i>** See Day-Of Checklist</i></p>
	<p>1 hour before: Support staff arrives. <i>This includes the greeter and sign-in table workers. The greeter is charged with meeting guests as they arrive, directing them to the sign-in table, and seeing them into the conference area. The greeter should be able to answer any questions the guests may have.</i></p>
	<p>½ hour before: Speakers arrive. <i>Speakers may use this time to get familiar with the facilities, attend to any last-minute details, and relax for a few minutes before the event begins.</i></p>

Start the press conference on time, even if attendance is sparse.

Day-Of Checklist

Conduct a second site walk-through the morning of the event.

- Space adequate
- Security available
- Accessible for physically disabled
- Parking available
- Outdoors — grounds in good condition
- Visuals identified

Equipment

Test equipment before and on the day of the event. Allow time for replacement and know who to contact about equipment problems.

- Microphone/amplifier
- Podium
- Platform/stage
- Acoustics
- Visual aids (equipment, screens, easel, charts, etc.)
- Heat/air (where controls are/ how to adjust them if necessary)
- Video/audio recording equipment, including CD player
- Seating arrangements
- Registration table
- Signage

Materials

- Sign-in sheets
- Name tags
- Tent cards, if needed
- Posters
- Press kits
- Pads and pencils
- Participant materials (including press kits, releases, AAHMI CD etc.)
- Phone service, if needed
- Coffee, soda or water

Staffing and Set-up

- Speakers
- Staff on hand and in place
- Photographer

Sample Press Conference Agenda

9:30 a.m.	<i>Attendees begin to arrive. Ensure everyone signs-in at front with contact information. Guest and reporters should have separate check-ins.</i>
	<i>Play AAHMI theme song or other appropriate music in the press conference area. This upbeat track will energize the press conference.</i>
10:05 a.m.	<i>Begin event.</i>
	<i>Moderator will welcome everyone and introduce first speaker.</i>
10:07 a.m.	<i>First Speaker again welcomes everyone to their facility and speaks on importance of promoting the Healthy Marriage Initiative in the African American Community. Talk about the importance of having the support of the community groups, faith-based organizations, and elected officials.</i>
10:15 a.m.	<i>Moderator introduces Second Speaker.</i>
10:16 a.m.	<i>Second Speaker: elected official, married couple, youth, etc.</i>
10:30 a.m.	<i>Moderator thanks speakers and opens the floor to questions.</i>
10:33 a.m.	<i>Q & A</i>
10:45 a.m.	<i>Close press conference and summarize the key messages.</i>
	<i>Facilitate any planned interviews between press/speakers.</i>

After the Conference

Make sure all of your work pays off with additional planning for after the press conference. Ideally, the media liaison should be available to answer any questions after hours.

For the members of the media that attended, send a follow-up letter thanking them and briefly reiterating the important

points of your conference. An example is included in the online media kit. Reporters rarely get “thank yous,” and this will go a long way as you try to establish a rapport with the media. For members of the press that didn’t attend, send photos and a press kit that includes the press release and speaker notes/quotes.

Finally, unless you have significant news to share, close the book on press conferences for a while. Reporters grow weary of frequent conferences, so make sure your announcements are necessary.

Community Outreach

As mentioned earlier, the media kit can be presented to many different audiences. One of the most effective ways of promotion is through community outreach. By forming a bond with faith-based and community organizations, your organization will reach people in settings that are both familiar and personal. This is different from the mass media, which is intended for a broader, less specific audience.

A customized media kit, accompanied by a letter of invitation, introduction or a request, makes a powerful first impression.

The online AAHMI media kit includes several sample letters designed to engage various representatives from the community. The kit includes:

- a letter inviting an individual to support a press conference.
- a letter requesting a meeting with an elected or government official and a follow-up “thank you” letter.
- a letter inviting an organization to a coalition workshop.

Additional Resources

For more information and updates, visit these websites:

AAHMI Sample Media Kit
www.aahmi.net

Administration for Children
and Families Healthy Marriage
Initiative
www.acf.hhs.gov/healthymarriage

Black Media online
<http://www.unc.edu/~haman/media.htm>

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