

Health Policy Communications

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KaiserEDU.org Tutorial

Overview

- Media are major source of information on health issues
- Dissemination and communication are critical for increasing impact of policy analysis
- Multiple audiences, including media and policymakers – need to tailor information and presentation appropriately

What is Media Training?

- Strengthening communications skills
- *Not* making you someone you are not
- *Not* manipulation
- Developing comfort and confidence talking to reporters
- Different forms of media have different information needs

Getting Prepared — Who Are You Talking To?

- Know your audience
- Know the reporter - and what he knows
- Understand how far along the reporter is and the level of detail she's looking for
- Get a feel for how much time to talk and deadlines

Laying the Ground Rules

- Establish how quotes will be used
 - “Off the record”: no attribution; try to avoid
 - “On background”: no specific attribution; “health care policy expert”
 - “On the record”: your name is attached
- Best not to shift from “on the record” to “off the record”
- “Off the record” is not retroactive

What and How to Say It

- Decide 2-3 points to emphasize
- Put facts into broader context
- Use strong, descriptive words
- Provide local angles for local reporters
- Write down key words or phrases; do not write down answers verbatim
- Role play ahead of time

Interview Basics

- Be comfortable
- Answer questions on your terms; do not be goaded to answer questions you are uncomfortable with
- Look for opportunities to make your points, even if you are not asked about them directly
- If you don't know an answer, do not fake it
- Stick to your message
- Make simple statements and focus on central ideas
- Avoid technical jargon and alphabet soup

The Print/Online Interview

- Have material close at hand
- Be close to your computer for easy access to information
- Remember - notepad may be closed, but reporter's ears are open

The Television Interview

- Camera time often limited – be concise and to the point
- Let audience determine complexity
- Dress simply - don't be bold
- Powder to reduce shine
- No office chairs with wheels
- Befriend cameraman and soundman
- Speakerphone: challenges & practice
- Microphone is always on

The Radio Interview

- So many deadlines, so little time
- Call in shows
 - Anything can happen
 - If you don't know an answer, don't fake it; try to transition to one of your points
- Be concise & remember the audience
- Microphone is always on

The Briefing — To Reporters

- State key points early
- Inverted pyramid: conclusions, then details
- Signals what *you* think is important
- Use examples and anecdotes

Briefing Policymakers (I)

- Know your audience
- Streamline your comments
- Key messages help policy experts, too (plus any reporters in the room)
- Even policy experts get statistics overload
- Inject *people*, not only numbers
- Comfort with information & maintaining eye contact are essential

Briefing Policymakers (II)

- Lose the script - reading undermines authority
- Make slides interesting, think about using moving graphics but don't overdo it
- Ask for questions
- Presentation should be academic, interesting & quotable - all at once

When the Interview is Over

- Reporter got what he needed?
- Offer to do more
- It's not really over...just a hiatus until the next one
- Practice, until you get where you want to be
- Relax. You know more than you think and you are in charge.

For More Information...

Poynter Institute

<http://www.poynter.org/>

EMS/Science Communication Network

<http://www.ems.org/>

Johns Hopkins School of Public Health Center for Communication Programs

<http://www.jhuccp.org/>

Association of Health Care Journalists

<http://www.healthjournalism.org/index.php>