

NATIONAL BLACK HIV/AIDS
AWARENESS DAY 2008 · PREVENTION IS POWER
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www.blackaidsday.org



HOW TO WORK WITH YOUR LOCAL MEDIA

Following are some general tips and tactics to generate publicity about NBHAAD activities in your community media:

WHEN MULTIPLE SITES ARE INVOLVED IN YOUR COMMUNITY

- **Coordinate** your media efforts so news organizations know how widespread the activities are (*and so they don't receive essentially the same release from several organizations*). The more sites involved in activities the better. Media is more likely to cover an event with lots of community involvement.
- **Establish a single telephone number** to use in news releases – either toll free or a local number – for people in your area to call to find out site information. If possible, have an individual answer the phone and refer callers to sites nearest their home, or have a recorded message that lists sites and activities.
- **Select a spokesperson** to represent all sites or rotate interview opportunities among several people. When multiple sites are involved, spokespersons should agree to promote all local activities.

TACTICS FOR WORKING WITH MEDIA

- Make a **media list** of all print and broadcast media in your area. Almost all will be listed in your telephone book. **Do not overlook** smaller weekly or monthly community newspapers that reach citizens in your immediate geographic area and in the African American community.
- Don't forget **on-line media**. Most of your television and radio stations, newspapers and magazines have websites that carry information. The sites usually have their own reporters and editors responsible for creating stories. Find out who they are and add them to your media list.
- **Before sending out materials**; call the news outlets and ask who would be in charge of coverage for your local events. Send your information to the individual rather than addressing materials to "*Editor*" or another generic title.
- **To get calendar listings** in local newspapers, submit your calendar notice, addressed to the person in charge of calendar listings, at least four weeks in advance. Call to confirm that your information will be used.
- **To get advance stories** on your events in local print and broadcast media, send your news release, cover letter and fact sheets to print and broadcast media at least three weeks in advance. Call several days later to discuss the story with the reporter.
- **To get Public Service Announcements (PSAs)** aired on radio and television stations, send the information to the Public Service Directors for the stations at least three weeks in advance. Call several days later to discuss their interest in broadcasting PSAs.
- Ask the public service directors if there is a possibility their **station would partner with your local group(s)** and do special promotions or broadcast live from events. Once you have a "*media partner*," competing media may be less interested in promoting your events, but many will do so simply because they want to support a good cause.
- **When you make your follow-up phone calls**, encourage reporters/editors to use the material and offer them an interview with a spokesperson and others who will be involved in your events. News media like to "*put a face*" on the HIV/AIDS epidemic by interviewing people who are affected, such as patients, family members, volunteers, people who have been tested or participated in previous events, etc. Identify these individuals and offer interviews with those who are willing to work with media.

TIPS FOR SPOKESPERSONS

Before the Interview

Know the show that will carry your interview (*or the style of the reporter for a print publication*) by watching, listening and reading.

- Talk to the reporter who is going to do the interview and ask if he/she wants to talk to any **additional spokespersons**, such as African Americans with HIV/AIDS in your community.
- **Prepare for the interview** by reviewing the news release and other materials being used to contact and inform media.
- Have two or three **key messages** or points in mind that you want to get across, and repeat them whenever appropriate. Make sure one of your key messages is “where to go for more information” and give a local phone number or the NBHAAD website address www.blackaidsday.org during the interview.
- If your interview is in an **unfamiliar environment**, arrive at least 15 minutes early to familiarize yourself with the surroundings.
- **Anticipate questions** that are likely to be asked during the interview and be prepared to use those questions as launching pads for your key points. For example, when asked about something off the subject, briefly answer and then say, “but the most important thing to remember is....” And then restate your main message.

During the Interview

- Speak in **short**, concise sentences.
- **Relax** and speak naturally.
- Use **lay terms** and avoid technical language and jargon.
- Use **examples**, stories and anecdotes, when possible, to dramatize your message and emphasize the human side of the epidemic.
- **Watch what you say.** Reporters look for the most colorful, interesting language so if you are glib, silly, outrageous, surprising, etc. you can expect that comment to be used.

- If you are asked a question that you cannot answer, do not be afraid to say “**I don’t know**” and then promise the reporter to find out the answer – and do so as soon as possible.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR BROADCAST MEDIA

- **Broadcast reporters like visuals/sound.** When you are on TV you are not just a story, you are “pictures.” On radio you are “sound.” Think in those terms when preparing for a TV or radio interview – what prop can you bring that will be a “good picture” or “good sound” or both!
- **Slow down, keep it short and speak clearly.** Keep it short, speak clearly and be as fascinating as you can possibly be.
- **On TV, keep eye contact with the speaker.** Forget about the camera and speak specifically to the person who asked you the question. If there are several of you on the show, look at the person who is talking (*and nowhere else*).
- **On radio, speak into the microphone.** Speak directly into the radio studio microphone rather than swinging your head to look at another person. Your show host or other guests may not even be in the studio with you so don’t be surprised if it is just you and a microphone.
- **Don’t let your wardrobe overshadow your words.** For TV, dress conservatively in plain (*no prints*) colors. Do not wear black, white or an all-red outfit. Avoid big jewelry and remove objects from your pockets so they lay flat. Don’t wear half glasses or light-sensitive ones, and accept the offer of make-up, if it is made. Women should wear lipstick on TV and men should wear long socks. Look in the mirror and make sure your outfit will not distract from the important things you have to say.
- **The editing of the piece will probably not be done by the reporter.** If you are taped rather than appearing live, the reporter may see the finished piece on television or hear it on radio at the same time you do. Editors often select what is most colorful rather than what is most substantive. They also pay special attention to the first and last thing you say. You can give yourself an edge by restating your most important points at the end of the interview.
- **Sit up straight on TV, plus watch your buttons.** You don’t want to look uncomfortable but it is better to sit up straight and lean forward in your seat (*as though you are interested*) rather than having a laid back look. Also, button your jacket when you stand, and unbutton when you sit.
- **Watch nonverbal signals.** Eyes looking up, down and away look shifty and less informed. Nervous hands that play with jewelry or clutch each other (*or the arms of a chair*) look... nervous. If you are nodding your head to indicate, “I hear you” you are also telling the reporter and the TV audience, “I agree.”

- **Avoid sitting between two interviewers** to prevent having to constantly turn to answer questions.
- **Enjoy yourself** – you are appearing on an important interview for a worthwhile cause. The reporter interviewing you will want this to go well, too.