Press Release Check-List

- Make sure the information is newsworthy.
- Tell the audience that the information is intended for them and why they should continue to read it.
- Start with a brief description of the news, then distinguish who announced it, and not the other way around.
- Ask yourself, “How are people going to relate to this and will they be able to connect?”
- Avoid excessive use of adjectives and fancy language. AP Style is preferred.
- Focus on facts.
- Provide as much contact information as possible: Individual to Contact, address, phone, fax, email, Web site address.
- Make sure you wait until you have something with enough substance to issue a release. Don’t continue to flood the inboxes of reporters. You will get ignored!

What’s the news?

Or, more importantly, what is news? That’s a question we want you to start asking yourself more often. We find there are many instances when a certain project or accomplishment goes unnoticed, overlooked or simply not promoted the way it should be.

The first step in understanding what’s newsworthy, is knowing the two basic kinds of news stories – hard news and feature stories.

You’re all probably familiar with hard news stories. These are your bank robberies, fires, natural disasters etc. Other things like public meetings, elections and court trials fall into this category. Typically, this is the phrase used by journalists to describe the news of the day. Hard news stories typically are brief (600 words or less) and answer the basic questions of who, what, when, where? These stories are time sensitive.

Some of you may not think of the human interest story, the feature, in the same way.

Features stories take a step back from the headlines. They're designed to explore an issue, offer a personality profile or detail the ingenuity or uniqueness of a program, tool or entire agency. You frequently see stories like this in magazines, or sections beyond the front page of your local newspaper. Many health stories make excellent features.

Public Health is full of interesting people, ideas, color, lights, action and energy - all of which make for fantastic storytelling. Let us help you get the message out!

Where do I begin?

You've got an idea. You think it's a story. Now what do you do? Take time to research communication strategies and determine which avenue will work best for you. That can be writing a nice feature for your newsletter or planning a press conference for a formal announcement. Make sure you are getting the message out in the most appropriate way – and reaching your target audience.

To put a story together, you will need to know how to answer these questions;

Who ?

Who are the players involved? This can mean, who attended an event? Who committed the action we're reporting? Who witnessed? Who planned? There are a variety of who's to consider. Think of as many as possible.

What ? *This is simply a description. What happened?*

When? *When did it happen? When is something going to happen? When did this become an issue? When will it end? Think of all the elements of the story related to time.*

Where ? *Where did the event occur? (Another important "where" to consider is, Where will the story be most relevant?)*

Why?

Whys are virtually neverending and you can drive yourself crazy trying to list them all. Our advice is to consider a few basics. Why is this important? Why do people need to know? Why will the public be affected? Why are their tax dollars being spent? The list goes on.

How?

How did this happen? How did it come about? How was an event planned? How was a goal achieved?