

## Planning a media event

Media events, such as press conferences, can be used to draw attention to an issue or story. The most common type of media event is the news conference - but if you really want the media to take notice, you and your organization might want to host a more original media event. For example, if members of the coalition are visiting long-term care facilities to assist residents and help educate about falls prevention, the media can be invited to record the event as well as ask questions.

Media events are usually held to announce an important event, activity or campaign. However, they can also be held in response to an event or news story. For example, groups sometimes stage demonstrations at the Capitol to protest a new piece of legislation. Because media events should be special occasions, you don't want to hold them too frequently.

A media event should be designed to highlight your cause, and should be timed so that the reporters attending can still make their deadlines.

First and foremost, ask yourself if the event you're promoting is newsworthy. Often, announcements can be made through a simple news release. This is particularly affective for things like Falls Prevention Awareness Day and other issues in which no real activity or program is planned. However, if the coalition is launching a new program or initiative – or something else that might generate great interest from the press – an event is in order.

Form a committee of all relative parties and design an agenda for the event. Meet regularly to discuss progress of planning.

- Remember that morning (between 9 and 11 a.m.) is the best time for reporters, as it gives them time to prepare their stories for that evening's newscast or the next day's paper.
- The event should last no longer than 30 minutes. Remember to open the floor to media questions following remarks.
- Choose a day as early in the week as possible, and avoid Fridays. If you plan to hold your event on a Monday, make sure your news release is out by the previous Friday.
- Pick a location big enough to hold a crowd of people, but with good acoustics. Also make sure there is room for camera equipment and microphones and make sure reporters have access to electrical outlets. For example, hotel ballrooms make for poor press conference venues, but board and meeting rooms look just fine. The room doesn't have to be luxurious – function is key!
- Walk through the event a few days before it takes place. Visit the site and map out how people will enter, where speakers will stand, and where media will likely be located.
- Share the event agenda with all relative parties. If the governor's office is participating, make sure materials are sent to them several days in advance. The governor's staff will conduct their own advance work.
- Reserve any necessary equipment, such as a podium, microphone, chairs/seating and backdrop for visual interest. We frequently use the state seal to dress up the podium and fill the background with a nice banner, signs, graphs, etc. The podium and background are two great places to promote your agency – they make it into all the photos and video!

- Give media people at least a day's notice of the event. Send your news release to the media a few days before the event, and call reporters the day before to confirm. (This gives them enough time to book cameras and equipment, schedule photographers, etc.) But don't tell reporters too far ahead of time - by the time your event rolls around, they may have forgotten about it!
- Have extra copies of your news release on hand and greet each reporter with a copy. If you have the time and resources, you can even put together a press kit. This might include your news release, one or two pages of information about your organization, any articles written about you, and contact information such as business cards.
- If you're inviting television media, try to have something visually appealing for the cameras: people demonstrating, putting on a play, or involved in some other activity. If you're organizing a more traditional press conference, have any graphs, tables, charts and posters ready.
- Provide enough chairs at the front for reporters, and enough room for their equipment (such as cameras and lights).
- Start your event on time - no later than five minutes late. Reporters have tight deadlines, and they may have other events to cover that day. If you keep them waiting, they may simply leave.
- Make sure your spokesperson is prepared to answer questions, both during and after the event.
- Always remember to follow up with reporters. Reporters may ask for information that you don't have on hand, so be sure to send this material to them as soon as possible. They may also need photos or camera footage. Before they leave, double-check with them to make sure they have everything they need for their stories.
- Track all the reporters who cover the event and work on maintaining a good working relationship with them.
- Track/analyze all coverage of the event.