



MAKING THE NEWS: TIPS FOR MEDIA ADVOCACY

Media Advocacy is the strategic use of media to advance a social or public policy goal, by focusing on shaping attitudes, affecting policy, and building social movements. On alcohol issues, community groups have used media advocacy to draw attention to the marketing of wine coolers to kids and to prevent alcohol promotions at amusement parks.

Media advocacy includes initiating and responding to calls from reporters; staging media events; writing letters to the editor or op-ed pieces for the newspaper; conducting surveys to generate media attention (such as the number and location of billboards in your community); developing long-term relationships with editors and producers; and alerting media to important policy-related developments.

The following are tips for raising awareness about underage alcohol, marijuana or other drug use and how prevent it:

1. Take the initiative. Don't wait for media to call you - make news happen!
2. Know your goal. How will the media help you get there?
3. Be strategic in everything you say and do. Constantly state what changes need to take place, and what you want parents to do.
4. Be newsworthy. Highlight what is significant, timely and groundbreaking.
5. Be timely. Be prepared to respond to events as soon as they come up.
6. Practice. Role-play calls to reporters; say your media bites out loud before your interview; hold practice question-and-answer sessions with your colleagues. Practice will help make you more comfortable and effective in your contacts with the media.
7. Frame your story. Emphasize the environmental elements of this campaign and that parents have the power to clean it up.
8. Think locally. If there is a national story, offer local spokespeople to talk about what impact that story has on your state or community.
9. Be strategic in selecting your spokespeople. The head of your coalition may not be the best spokesperson available. Consider parents, police officers, teens or others who will have inherent credibility with the media. Help them prepare through role-playing.
10. Tend to your relationships. Get to know the reporters, editors and producers in your area. What kind of information do they like to have? What kind of stories do they want to cover? Ask yourself how you can help them.

Adapted from "Strategic Media Advocacy for Enforcement of Underage Drinking Laws", Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation.