

Understanding the Media

Understanding the media is a key factor in executing effective media and community relations. Recognizing what constitutes a newsworthy story and appreciating the media's perspective will allow you to more effectively and efficiently communicate information.

How the media work:

- The media work to meet constant deadlines and often develop many stories at the same time.
- The media want new, insightful, and sometimes exclusive information and points of view.
- The media are gate keepers who need to be able to understand the news value and gist of a story up front.
- The media tend to be skeptical and will play devil's advocate.
- The media may ask questions on behalf of their audience that seem insulting. They should not be taken personally and should be handled with respect.
- The media are made up of human beings who work hard for little pay to provide what many deem a public service.
- Reporters are too busy to spend much time understanding all aspects.
 - A typical newspaper reporter can receive dozens of press releases each week and as many phone pitches each day. They have very little time to go deep into understanding an issue and rely on you to summarize it for them.
 - A typical magazine editor receives hundreds of press kits each week and as many phone pitches each day.
 - A typical broadcast producer, anchor, or reporter is looking for short, poignant "soundbites" and visuals to support the story. Talking head shots are boring.

What makes news:

- Impact – the topic must affect people's lives in a significant way.
- Numbers – it must be universally appealing and/or affect a large number of people.
- Timeliness – how recent is the event or discovery.
- Prominence – it involves well-known people.
- Proximity – it happens close to home.
- Conflict.
- Bizarre or unusual elements.

Activities surrounding family and consumer sciences are often newsworthy as they fit most of these criteria:

- They have the potential to play a major role in the lives of many people.
- Nearly 69% of US adults are overweight or obese.
- Families experience financial strain on a daily basis in today's economy – healthcare costs and unemployment numbers are on the rise.
- The military remains a hot topic in these politically charged times.
- Family and consumer sciences has the potential to offer solutions to the problems people face.