

Tips for long-term care providers handling media  
(ACHCA 2019, Presenter: Elizabeth Leis Newman)

DO

- Select/hire a designated person who handles media calls
- Work to establish a relationship with local media
- Seek out positive stories, especially ones involving photos/video
- Return phone calls/emails promptly. Ask about the deadline
- Give specific details in a release: Date, time, facts about facility (bed count, type of units), accurate names of people involved, any financial info available or other details. (i.e. "Courtland Gardens Administrator Eli Katz joined state Sen. Matilda Morton and the Chamber of Commerce President Elana Kucko at the ribbon-cutting for its new unit. The \$6 million renovation includes a spa, bistro and spaceship.)
- Invite reporters to tour the campus
- Have your residents and employees sign consent forms
- Talk to your legal counsel, when appropriate, or refer calls to him/her
- Ask for a correction/clarification if something is incorrect
- Create a "For media inquiries, call X" on your website
- Consider a subscription (or several) to the local newspaper for residents for common areas. Remind employees McKnight's subscriptions are free.
- Send out the link/buy extra copies when the article comes out. Widely share among your organization

DON'T

- Lie.
- Assume the reporter is out to get you
- Say you "know how it is" because you worked at your college newspaper and/or talk about how easy it must be to write all day
- Confuse incorrect facts with a dislike of the story
- Avoid telling staff about a bad situation
- Threaten employees if they talk to the press
- Keep contact information off the website or only have a general "info" email

How to set the groundwork for positive stories:

1. Focus on children
2. Use the pets that visit/live in the building
3. Turn to your activities department
4. Involve local businesses
5. Celebrate new units/renovation
6. Hold parties to celebrate milestones
7. Apply for awards/celebrate successes
8. Make the reporter's experience positive - rope off media section at big events, offer a tour, offer to validate parking.
9. Think about employees or residents with interesting stories
10. Take photos on your own/write your own columns or blogs to submit to publications