



NEOPB Public Relations Frequently Asked Questions

The Nutrition Education Obesity Prevention Branch Public Relations Team provides promotional support for LHD events/activities through: press releases and media advisory templates, social media post recommendations, relevant message and data points, and informational/training webinars. In addition, the NEOPB Public Relations Team administers the Champion Alliance Program, which oversees a pool of motivated, trained and available Champions (e.g., moms, dads, teachers, pastors, etc.) who will promote SNAP-Ed messages and support LHDs.

Q: What is Public Relations?

A: Public relations is a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics.

Q: What is Media Relations?

A: *Media relations* is such an important and well-known component of public relations that people often mistakenly believe that PR *is* media relations. Media relations professionals work with members of the media to publicize organizations and their activities through what we call "earned media" coverage." Earned media coverage happens when the news features your organization's brand, activity or spokesperson. Unlike advertising, which sponsors the news, public relations uses earned media coverage to integrate you into the news content. Earned media coverage appears in print, broadcast and online media.

Q: What is Publicity?

A: At its core, publicity is the simple act of making a suggestion to a journalist that leads to the inclusion of NEOPB activities or messages in a story. Newspapers, magazines, TV programs and radio shows have large amounts of space to fill. They depend upon the public relations efforts of LHD media coordinators, publicists, government agencies, businesses, nonprofits and community based organizations to help provide story ideas, interview subjects, background information and other material.

For the most part, the act of making a suggestion to a journalist, when successful, will lead to one of two types of coverage:

- A story created from scratch built around the story "angle" you suggest (e.g., a feature story on your agency; a story about a trend that you present to a journalist; an interview segment, etc.)
- The inclusion of NEOPB messages or LHD activities in an already existing story (e.g., the reporter is already working on a nutrition education/physical activity related story; your contact with the reporter results in your messages/activity being included in the piece).

Q: What's a Press Release?

A: The most important tool for making a suggestion to a journalist is the press release. Simply put, a press release is a pseudo-news story that presents the most newsworthy aspect of your work or activity in a



format and language familiar to the journalist. A good press release places the newsworthy angle at the very top (much as the lead paragraph of a well-written news story does), and is free of hyperbole and overt promotionalism.

Q: What makes a good press release?

1. It must be news. The story must be topical, relevant and of interest to the common viewer/reader.
2. It's appropriately directed: Find out the name of the journalist responsible for the section you want it to appear in, and address the press release to that individual.
3. Write a headline that identifies the story. Do not waste too much time on dreaming up a winning pun as the sub-editor will always re-write it.
4. Write for the publication's readership. Use jargon for the technical press but simplify it for your local paper.
5. Put the meat of the story in the first sentence to attract the reader (and sub-editor), then develop the story in succeeding paragraphs. Most stories can be told in three to four paragraphs.
6. Type in double spacing to make it easy to edit.
7. Use quotes from an identified source to add interest.
8. Add your contact details, including your after-normal-business-hours contact telephone number.
9. Include a photo if possible; put a caption on the back to identify the people portrayed.

Q: What is a Pitch Letter?

A: While the press release is written in third person, the pitch letter allows for direct communication between the LHD media coordinator and the journalist. It's an opportunity to pique interest, form a relationship and persuade. Bad pitch letters begin with boring formalities or promotional hype. Good pitch letters begin with a striking opening that immediately alerts the journalist to an interesting story possibility (e.g., if you're promoting sunscreen: "In the time it takes to read this letter, seven new cases of melanoma will be diagnosed"). Or, if you're an accountant: "Americans who were unaware of a new tax break needlessly paid more than \$5 billion in extra taxes last year -- and time is running out for them to get that money back." The pitch letter has one purpose: to persuade the journalist to read the attached press release. Personalize it, keep it short, sign it and include it with your press release.

Q: When should the LHD tell NEOPB about media relevant events promoted by the LHD in its own backyard?

A: Before it happens! Even if the LHD is not requesting assistance from the NEOPB PR Team please keep us informed about your promotional activities so that we can track the extent to which the story was carried by local and possibly even statewide news media. If the LHD is requesting technical assistance about promoting a local activity or event, the sooner the NEOPB PR Team is brought into the loop, the better.

Timing is everything in the news business. The more time we have *in advance* of the actual event, the more effective our technical assistance will be.



Q: If I contact the NEOPB PR Team for PR technical assistance on an upcoming event/activity, can I count on local news coverage?

A: Working with the NEOPB PR Team on an upcoming LHD event/activity does not guarantee coverage in the media. Whether a story idea/event garners media coverage depends on many factors. Public Relations can work with the LHD to determine if external media may be interested and to plan an appropriate strategy for outreach.

Q: Does NEOPB have a social media presence?

A: Yes. In addition to the Champions for Change website (www.CaChampionsforChange.net) NEOPB engages the public through Facebook (www.facebook.com/cachampionsforchange) and Pinterest (www.pinterest.com/cachampions). In the near future, NEOPB will also engage consumers through Instagram.



Q: How do I contact the NEOPB Public Relations Team?

A: NEOPB_MediaPR@cdph.ca.gov