

Keys to getting YOUR message out through the media

Here are key points for getting your message out through an interview, either in person or on the phone.

- Before the interview, learn as much as you can about the reporter and the publication, radio station or television channel. Do you know the reporter? Is he/she familiar with your association? Is the interview for a local, regional or national audience? Will your interview be a story by itself (a feature) or part of a broader article or program?
- Find out what specific topics the reporter wants to discuss with you. Be prepared to comment on any “hot” issues as well as any state and national issues associated with your association.
- Decide what your communication goals are for the interview. Choose and jot down three to five key points you want to make, and have supporting data available. Remember, you’re the expert, the person with the knowledge and information the reporter is seeking.
- Watch for speech mannerisms that distract from your message such as saying “um” or connecting your sentences with “and - uh.”
- Practice your comments aloud. Are you comfortable with your answers and explanations? Anticipate questions and prepare your answers in advance.
- If you will be on TV, wear muted, plain or bold solid colors. Leave the flashy jewelry, prints and patterns at home.
- Forget jargon. Speak in plain English.
- Be honest. Never, never lie! If a question is asked that you can’t or don’t want to answer, tell the reporter you’re “not ready to answer” and give a reason.
- Illustrate key points with personal experience or anecdotes.
- Take a deep breath before speaking. Don’t let a reporter’s silence pressure you into answering a question before you are ready.
- Before major points, use “alert phrases” such as “The key is....”
- Relax and smile.

Adapted from an article written by Carolyn Meagher, ASPR, communications consultant from CommunicationPlus