

Working with Media



Part of advocacy involves sharing your story both online and on the news, but before you can get your story widely published, it's important to remember the basics of news media pitching. For more information on news media, check out page 12 in the CDC Advocacy Toolkit.

Identifying reporters

Before getting your story on the news, you must identify the reporters that would be interested in covering your story. When looking for reporters to target your pitch, try searching for your chronic condition or topic of interest at local news stations.

For example, searching diabetes news in Houston, Texas may yield recent publications that have talked about your issue. Identify the author of the story and find contact information for the reporter either online or on the broadcast station's website.

Pro Tip

Many reporters have an email associated with their publication. Try finding a cell phone number to follow up with as well, often times reporters may miss an email and are eager to cover a story after connecting with a quality source. Also check reporters' social media channels, many reporters will publish their emails or contact information on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.

Pitching your story

After you have identified your reporters it's time to prepare your pitch; unfortunately, preparing an effective and informative pitch can be easier said than done. **Try answering these questions when thinking about taking your story to the news:**

- ✓ **Who are the key players in this story?** This could include you, your insurer, your doctor, a state agency, or anyone else involved in your story. These specific details matter.
- ✓ **What is the story?** Remember to assemble a powerful narrative by thinking about character, conflict, turning point and resolution using the outline on page 11 of the CDC Advocacy Toolkit.
- ✓ **Where is the story taking place?** If pitching at the local level, think about your story's relevance to your community, but if you are pitching to national publications like the New York Times, consider describing why your story is relevant to people everywhere.
- ✓ **When is this story taking place?** Sometimes your story may have no set timeline, but other times your story may be built around a specific event. Typically, recent events are easier to pitch to local media.
- ✓ **Why is your story relevant?** This is the most important element of your pitch. Most reporters are managing several stories at once, so they are always thinking about why a story is relevant to their readers. Be sure to include why your story is newsworthy at the start of your pitch. If a reporter is interested, they will often follow up with you the same day or soon after.

Preparing for an interview

Sometimes the news media will want to interview you to provide a visual or narrative element to your story. Talking in front of a camera or with a reporter can be scary but remembering **these key tips can help you prepare for your interview.**

- ✓ **Think about the details of your story.** Sometimes it can be helpful to write down the key details or "talking points" you hope to discuss in your interview. Use the Perfecting Your Pitch outline on page 14 of the CDC Advocacy Toolkit to plan out your narrative.
- ✓ **Remember to remain calm and ask questions.** Most reporters understand that people aren't always comfortable interviewing. Don't be afraid to discuss what the interview will entail and what questions the reporter hopes to cover beforehand.
- ✓ **Don't be afraid to stray from the plan.** The best interviews and stories come from advocates who are passionate and informed about their topic. Don't hesitate to be yourself and let the conversation flow naturally. Imagine you are sharing your story with a friend or family member, but don't forget your manners on camera!
- ✓ **Next question, please!** Remember, you are not required to answer any questions, if you feel the reporter is being pushy, not respecting your boundaries and straying from what was discussed beforehand, ask for the next question or end the interview.