

This guide has been adapted from the Parent Link Program with the permission of Elizabeth Foy, Senior Clinician in Social Work and Manager, Family Support, and the staff of ROADSS and Training and Development, Divisions of The Spastic Centre of New South Wales. A very special thank you for sharing your knowledge and expertise.

INFLUENCING DECISIONS

RAISING AWARENESS THROUGH PUBLICITY

There may be times when it is necessary to publicise your issues and you may wish to take your message to the wider community. This may help to change attitudes or increase community support or raise funds.

PUBLICITY

Under the broad term 'publicity', there are many possible ways to spread your message. The most important aspect of publicity is careful planning. You need to consider:

- **WHO** you want to reach with your message
- **WHAT** message you want to deliver. It is important that your publicity creates the image you want. In representing disability, you may wish to think how to avoid images that encourage inappropriate sympathy.
- **HOW** you can best get your message across. The range of publicity methods available to you is enormous. But don't be daunted, consider the following list. Of course, methods can be used alone or in combination.

PUBLICITY OPTIONS

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|-------------------------|---|
| 1. Word of Mouth | The grape vine |
| 2. Radio and Television | Remember:
Ethnic radio
Community radio |
| 3. The Printed Word | Leaflets
Mail Outs
Newsletters
Posters
Stickers
T-shirts
Banners
Slogans |
| 4. Print media | Newspaper and magazine articles
Letters to the Editor |

USE OF THE MASS MEDIA

In using the mass media, remember that in many instances issues may be reported in a way you do not particularly like. Sometimes the media prefers to focus on an individual whereas your group may be more concerned with a broader issue. However, you may believe that through targeting a larger audience via the mass media, the potential benefits outweigh the pitfalls.

NEWSPAPERS

There are some tips on making contact with newspapers and writing a media release:

- If you have an event planned, phone the Editor with advice of the date ahead of time. Advise that you will be sending a media release.
- Consider deadlines, especially the weekly newspapers.
- Prepare a media release.
- Fax the media release. Send it – Attention...(journalist or editor's name)
- Spokesperson should confirm the receipt of the fax. Journalist may ask for the release to be rewritten.
- Ensure that the spokesperson is well prepared
- Invite the journalist and photographer to interview. Suggest appropriate photos.
- Have a support person available who will talk to the photographer.
- In answering questions, remember there is no such thing as 'off the record'.
- Phone the journalist following the interview and ask to read the article before publication.
- After publication, send a letter of thanks.
- If you have serious concerns about misrepresentation in the article, you could ask the journalist to republish with a different angle, request a retraction or write a letter to the editor.

THE MEDIA RELEASE

This may be used in the printed media or it may be used as a report for radio or television. A well written media release can be used as it is, saving everyone time and allowing you to have control over your message.

Some tips:

- Consider the style of newspaper or radio/television station for which you are writing
- Find a catchy title
- Start with a 'newsy' sentence
- Tell who, what, when, where and why
- Keep to the point of the story
- Use short sentences
- Give an explanation of your role
- Be positive
- Type only on one side, with wide margins and double spacing
- Give your day and evening contact numbers
- Don't use any jargon or initials

RADIO AND TELEVISION

The same applies but use of radio and television present a greater challenge for the spokesperson. Television particularly may place great demands upon the spokesperson and should be used only after careful consideration.

You may have the option of a phone interview – live to air or a studio interview – live or taped. Check the time allowed before you begin, and take with you your key information – names, dates, phone numbers.

Remember you don't have to answer a question that is not appropriate. Try to steer the interview in the direction you want, while remaining positive and pleasant.

During your interview, keep your cool and never appear hostile. As you are the outsider, audience sympathy is likely to be with the interviewer if there is a disagreement.

Keep your message simple and focus on a few key points. Try to back these with everything you say.

Good luck with your publicity campaign!