

## Media Outreach

Media coverage is fundamental to a successful advocacy campaign. We can raise awareness of child survival issues and attract new advocates by reaching private, public, and government sectors through newspaper, magazine, TV and radio coverage.

Here are some step-by-step guides to using the media to advocate for children worldwide:

- Writing an Op-Ed
- Writing Letters-to-the-Editor
- Generating an Editorials
- Writing a Press Release
- Writing a Press Advisory
- Tips for Interviews

## WRITING AN OP-ED

## Media How-to Guide

An Op-Ed is submitted to a newspaper to express an opinion or position on a specific issue or event. Since the news often doesn't cover all aspects of a story, Op-Eds are useful vehicles for offering explanations of details and sides of a story that are left out. While an op-ed is not a news report, it should include relevant statistics or quotations to support its point.

In national papers, Op-Eds are generally written by significant public figures and officials. We will therefore focus our attention on campus and local media. Though newspapers on this level circulate on a lower level, their Op-Eds still influence local members of Congress. The strongest Op-Eds can be fundamentally regarded as political actions, and so they should be targeted at particular policy issues and Congress people.

Timing is everything in successfully placing in Op-Ed.

### I. Before You Begin to Write

- . Think about WHY you are writing the piece. Why should the newspaper's readers care? What is the message you want the readers to remember from your piece? (i.e. the US is not appropriating enough money for child survival or there is a local Congress member who is on a relevant committee who can be influenced about an issue like child survival)
- . Make sure the Op-Ed and its treatment of child survival is timely. Is there an important vote coming up? A related event (like a conference)? Something new happening in the UN or other relevant organizations?
- . Make sure you have a specific point and/or suggestion for solving a problem. Everyone knows that child survival is good. What aspect of the movement are you writing about? Is it a personal message or a political message, etc?
- . Do your research. There are two kinds of research you should do:
  1. Research your issue. Make sure you thoroughly understand it and obtain statistical information to support your point.
  2. Research the newspaper to which you're submitting the piece. Find out who the editorial editors are and which one(s) cover the issue you are writing about. Read some of their op-eds to analyze their style and the types of stories they print. You should call the Op-Ed editor before you write to gauge his/her interest.
- . Know that newspapers often have a review process of anywhere from 1 to 30 days. Most big newspapers also require exclusivity (they only consider your piece if they're the only paper receiving it).
- . Submission instructions are available through the newspaper or its website. Ideally, submit the Op-Ed via email, fax, and hard copy. A follow up call after a few days is also a good idea.

### II. Format and Content: The Actual Writing of an Op-Ed

1. Indicate authorship and group affiliation.
2. Length: 700-1000 words. Consult the paper in question to determine the standard length. Otherwise they will edit your work, which may potentially change its content and tone.
3. Lead with your main point by opening with a strongly stated, captivating first paragraph to draw readers in. Many Op-Eds are rejected because the author never gets to the point or fails to present it clearly.

4. Be succinct and creative.
5. If possible, use a news or local angle. Try to draw a connection between an important issue of the day and global child survival issues at large. Appeal to the self interest of your newspaper's readers.
6. Make a single point and make it well, again aiming to target a specific policy or a local Congress person, or both; challenge a Congress person to take action. As already implied, always include recommendations for solving a problem.
7. Include statistics and data to add credibility to your Op-Ed, but be careful to not confuse your main point with too many numbers. Always provide sources.
8. Showing is better than discussing. Provide vivid examples to illustrate your point.
9. In most cases, do not explicitly mention SCCS. In campus papers, however, this is sometimes more acceptable. The only possible exception would be if the Op-Ed's bent was towards the importance of grassroots type pressure in advocating for global child survival.
10. Don't be afraid of the personal voice, and avoid jargon. Keep sentences and paragraphs simple.
11. Make your ending a winner. Readers often skim the first and last paragraphs.

Sources:

Results USA: [www.resultsusa.org](http://www.resultsusa.org) and

Physicians for Human Rights: <http://www.phrusa.org/>

Student Global Aids Campaign

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR Guide

## Media How-To

A letter to the editor responds either in favor of or in opposition to a story written on an issue. It is a credible, low time commitment method of getting your viewpoint across.

Members of Congress and their staff, along with a surprising amount of active readers, pay deep attention to letters to the editor. Hence, both national papers and local dailies and weeklies should be targeted—although efforts can be concentrated on the latter.

### I. Strategy Tips for Publication

1. Respond quickly, ideally the same day as the article to which you are responding appears.
2. Have a number of members from your SCCS chapter send letters because even though only one or two might be published, the volume of letters helps the editorial page editor determine that the issue is important enough.
3. On that note, the key is consistent writing by a variety of people. This increases the probability of getting your letters published.
4. Include your name, address, and phone numbers because you will be called to verify your identity if the editor chooses to publish your letter.
5. Submission will usually need to be by email or fax due to rapid turnaround.

### II. Form and Content—Short, Punchy, and Timely

1. Length: about 150 words. Consult the newspaper (usually via web) for specifics.
2. Reference the title, date, and author of the original piece in your opening sentence.
3. Keep the letter to one, at most two points, and take a strong position immediately in the first paragraph.
4. Style: attention grabbing, direct, and engaging language and support for your point.
5. The letter's content should not mention SCCS but do include your affiliation with your authorship info.
6. Do not waste time repeating what the article said, but do suggest what it SHOULD have said.
7. Suggestions: include striking statistics (i.e. 27,000 children die each day from diseases that are easily prevented and treatable) and include the names of regional Congress people who have either failed to support the issue or who deserve praise.

Sources:

The Global Interdependence Initiative of the Aspen Institute  
Student Global Aids Campaign

# GENERATING AN EDITORIAL FOR CHILD SURVIVAL

## Media How-To Guide

### I. The Basics: Before You Act, What You Should Know

#### What is an editorial?

Editorials are written to reflect the opinion of the newspaper on the whole. Often, there is a connection made between a newspaper's editorial opinion and the "opinion" of the community at large. In other words, the paper is supposed to reflect the will of the people (although it often doesn't work out that way). Editorials are usually found in the back of the first (news) section of the newspaper, with submissions by readers (op-eds) on the opposing page.

#### Who reads editorials and why?

This might not seem important, but it is actually the main reason for generating editorials. In addition to being some of the most read pages in any given newspaper, they serve as both an indication and an arbiter of general public opinion on the most pressing public issues. For example, if a paper is well-known and respected for liberal stances (like the New York Times), its editorial position will be considered by many to be a reasonable indication of "liberal" political opinion on that subject, and those who consider themselves to be normally in line with editorial positions of that particular paper may be influenced by an editorial.

Most importantly, elected officials at all levels are fully aware of the significance of editorials. They regard them as important signals of the direction of public opinion and may make decisions about what positions they wish to support based on editorial positions; thus editorials in prominent national newspapers endorsing candidates in elections or supporting a particular policy decision can have significant political repercussions. For purposes of influencing both lawmakers and the broader public, editorial support is a major asset to any campaign.

#### Who writes editorials?

A newspaper's editorial writer staff usually makes up the newspaper's editorial board whose size is typically proportional to the size of the newspaper. Editorial writers are a lot like reporters in the sense they sometimes have a "beat" and can be pitched in similar ways. Additionally, they are usually under deadline and equally stressed out as reporters, but can also be friendly and willing to talk. A position that sometimes exists is an editorial page editor. This person may act as a firewall, but can sometimes be very helpful in connecting you with the best writer for the issue. When setting up a meeting, you may speak to the entire board or to the smaller group of editors most interested in or knowledgeable about the issue.

#### What is an editorial board meeting, and why or when should one be set up?

The purpose of an editorial board meeting is to meet with newspaper editors and issue-specific reporters to present your position in-depth and encourage editorial support.

You should request an Editorial Board meeting if your issue is topical, your organization is pushing for a particular action, or new information is available that could persuade the paper to take or change its position. For SCCS, congressional budget votes, national action days, or the announcement of relevant political or global child health news could provide opportunities to meet with an editorial board.

## **II. The Actual Meeting: First How to Set It Up, Then How To Make It Successful**

1. Do your research. Call the paper to find out who the editorial writers are and who covers health or government issues. Read recent editorials to get a feel for their slant.
2. Write a request letter to the Editor and follow up with a phone call.

In the request letter you should explain why you think the editors would be interested in meeting with you and why the issue is important.

For the follow up call, plan, practice, and then execute a “laser talk”. Keep it brief (1-2 minutes) and heartfelt. Here is the typical format:

- a) One sentence introduction
- b) Ask if they have a few moments right now (they may be on deadline)
- c) Address the problem of global child survival—don’t assume they are experts. Tie in recent news articles or other hooks if possible.
- d) Talk about the solution (i.e. Make it local by bringing in the name of your Representative or Senator; mention specific bills or resolutions, events or actions)
- e) Request a meeting: “Can I set up an appointment to tell you more details and give you more information?”

**If no**, ask who else you should talk to who might be interested in covering the issue. In any case, end the call with a specific plan to follow up.

**If yes**, schedule a meeting and PROCEED with the following to make it successful:

3. Send background materials to the people who will participate in the meeting so they can prepare and later follow-up with meeting participants.
4. Select a small number of appropriate representatives to attend the meeting with you. They should represent different aspects and sides of our issue—perhaps a vocal professor, a rep from the campus international student group, a student with experience in developing countries, students from political groups (Dems or Republicans), reps from other likeminded organizations (Amnesty Int’l), someone from the religious community, a doctor, etc.
5. Prepare three to four major points that you want to convey and develop talking points for them. Review possible questions you may receive and rehearse the answers with all those participating in the meeting.

6. Know the latest news reporting on global child survival or activities in Congress, relevant NGO's, the UN, etc. (bring recent national newspaper clips or other editorials with you) and know the opposition's position and how to refute it.
7. Know any previous positions taken by the paper on global child survival, or increases in foreign aid, or the U.S.'s general role in global engagement.
8. At the end of the meeting ask if the editorial board is planning to write an editorial or a story on your issue. If they say yes, ask when they are planning on running it and if you can be of further informational assistance. If they say no, ask them why and try to address their concerns. You can try again at a later date. Newspapers sometimes reverse their positions.

### **III. Regional/National SCCS Editorial Campaigns: Is there any way to reach more than one editorial board at once?**

A very effective and efficient way to get a lot of editorials written relatively simultaneously is to host a nationwide journalist conference call. It should be appropriately timed around some event or action, and should involve well-known speakers. One or two speakers with a knowledgeable moderator are recommended. The Media Chairs of the National Coordinating Committee should be involved in, if not leading, such a call. To set up a conference call, keep the following in mind:

1. Make calls to appropriate editorial writers encouraging participation on the call (it is important to get ALL of their contact information to confirm them and to follow up)
2. It is optional to send a packet of information before or after the call (sending before the call can sometimes discourage participation)
3. Call attendance has been best when the host (conference call operator) calls out to the journalists or provides them with a toll-free number, redirecting the cost of the call to the host
4. Be sure there's time on the call for questions from the audience
5. Timely follow up is crucial to ensuring that editorials get printed

Sources:

Physicians for Human Rights <http://www.phrusa.org/>

Global Treatment Action Campaign <http://www.globaltreatmentaccess.org>

**What is a press release?**

The purpose of a press release is to summarize and present your story, help the reporter frame your message accurately, and provide them with background information and quotes from spokespeople at your event or involved with global child survival/SCCS. Essentially, you are writing your own news article to demonstrate to an editor or reporter the newsworthiness of your event. Press releases should be released to reporters at the event as part of a media kit, and faxed or emailed directly afterward to contacts on your media list that could not attend the event. It can be sent alone especially if you already enjoy an established relationship with that particular media outlet (like a campus newspaper). However, for first contacts, we suggest supporting materials.

The most common and appropriate occasions for the submission of press releases include rallies, teach-ins, conferences, call-in and letter-writing days, guest speakers at meetings, or any other actions or events organized by SCCS, whether on a national or chapter level. Press release preparation should start two weeks in advance of the event in conjunction with releasing press advisories and putting together media kits.

***I. News Hooks—Possible Frames for Your News Story To Spice It Up***

By incorporating one or more of the following news hooks into your press release, it can heighten the appeal of your article and the likelihood of it being published, or your story being covered.

1. Special Event—A conference, rally, or gathering as stated above. Frame the event to really capture the issue and its importance.
2. Localize National/International Story—Relate local activities to something in the national or international spotlight or level. For example, a local chapter's contribution to SCCS national, possible joint projects with youth abroad, etc.
3. New Announcement—"Unprecedented" or "first-ever." Make your news fresh.
4. Dramatic Human Interest—Opportunities for human-interest angles may be scarce, but keep in mind that stories and anecdotes of real people are highly effective.
5. Trends—Stories that suggest new opinions, behavior patterns, and attitudes. Find at least three examples to assert that a new trend is emerging. You may also want to fit your chapter's activities within the context of a trend in growing student activism on campus or nationwide (if one exists), growing awareness of human rights or global justice issues, globalization in general, etc.
6. Timelines/Calendar—Captures something upcoming on the calendar. For example, "Back to School" can be a hook for toxic pollution in public schools, and Mother's Day can be a hook for a new breast cancer community hot line. As an SCCS chapter, remain aware of voting schedules, the progress of certain resolutions and bills, elections, international summits and conferences, etc.
7. Anniversaries/Milestones—One year later, one decade later, etc.

8. Profiles and Personnel—Your articles may highlight individuals, community leaders, or galvanizing spokespeople whose presence may be news themselves. For example, if a guest speaker visits your chapter, highlight his/her background, or for campus media, if a popular professor strongly supports your cause, make it known.
9. Respond and React to news others have made.
10. Strange Bedfellows—Have unlikely allies come together in solidarity over your issue? (like a prominent Republican co-sponsoring a bill with a rival Democrat for increased funding of maternal/child health) Highlight it in your story.

**II. Writing the Press Release**

1. Target media—decide to whom you want your press release sent or published. Study the style, length, focus, content, and word choice of the articles in the publications you have chosen, and adapt your press release to each publication.
2. Length—Keep it around 200 words if possible. It is easier to publish short articles. Keep the writing smooth and articulate.
3. Headlines—Brief, interesting, catchy.
4. Format—Print on organizational letterhead, single or double-spaced, highlight release date and provide contact names and numbers, indicate the end of the page by placing “###” (a universal “end” symbol” used by news outlets).

Sources:

[www.spinproject.org](http://www.spinproject.org)

[www.phrusa.org](http://www.phrusa.org)

**A Sample Template for a Press Release:**

<COMPANY LETTERHEAD>

For Immediate Release

Date

Contact: Name

Tel # and Cell #; email address

MAIN TITLE OF PRESS RELEASE HERE IN ALL CAPITAL LETTERS  
 Subtitle, if necessary, goes here in upper and lower case letters.

Town/City, ST—body of	release	body	of	release
body of	release	body	of	release
body of	release	body	of	release
body of	release	body	of	release
body of	release	body	of	release
body of	release	body	of	release
body of	release	body	of	release
body of	release	body	of	release

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# PRESS ADVISORY Guide

## Media How-To

### What is a Press Advisory?

A press advisory notifies the media in an advance about an event. It explains the “who, what, where, when, and why” and provides just enough information to attract reporters to your story without giving it away.

Remember: a press advisory IS NOT a press release. It is an instrument of persuasion to get reporters to attend your event so they can get the whole story and you can receive maximum exposure.

### I. How to Effectively Use a Press Advisory:

1. Try and send a PA to your contacts on your media list twice; one week before the event, and again two days before. The first creates a buzz and the second ensures that you stay on their radar screen.
2. If you do not have specific contacts, send it to the “City Editor” at newspapers, the “News Director” at radio stations, and the “Assignment Editor” at TV stations.
3. Even if you know a reporter will not cover your event, send an advisory anyway. They might request an interview with you later.

### II. Writing the Press Advisory

1. **Headline**—Keep it brief.
2. The words “MEDIA ADVISORY” should appear in the top left corner.
3. Provide contact names, phone numbers, and email.
4. Highlight the place, date, and time.
5. Give a brief description of the event’s purpose, what will take place, who will speak, and if there will be photo ops.
6. Keep it to one page. Indicate the end with “###.”

Essentially, think of your press advisory as a quick and dirty version of your press release, but also as a CRUCIAL step in securing coverage so that you’ll have media to whom you can send a release! Preparation of your press advisory should begin two weeks in advance of your event.

Sources:

[www.phrusa.org](http://www.phrusa.org)

# INTERVIEWS

## Media How-To Guide

### I. Before the Interview—Message and Sound Bite Preparation

The key to all interviews is to be prepared. Before any reporter calls you, before you think there is a chance that any reporter will call you, you should already have formulated a clear message or group of messages to present to an interviewer. Our three main messages are a good place to start, but depending on the context of what is being reported and who is doing the reporting, we encourage you to tailor your messages to the occasion.

These messages should be developed into clear and concise sound bites that will impact listeners in an articulate, powerful way. Remember, if a reporter calls you at an especially bad time, or if for whatever reason you are thrown off-guard, it is perfectly acceptable to inquire what their deadline is and call them back. If you do so, make sure you respect their deadlines and return their calls as soon as possible.

#### **Here are some general guidelines for creating and delivering sound bites:**

1. Start with the SCCS mission statement and your first message point.
2. Combine the two into a single phrase; don't worry about wording, and use as many sentences as it takes.
3. Rephrase the bite to convey a *positive* message of the stance or action on your chapter's part.
4. Include any contextual information necessary to let the sound bite stand on its own.
5. Confirm that your message accurately conveys your stance. As you edit, keep in mind any and all ways it could be misinterpreted, and attempt to eliminate those ambiguities.
6. Think about how to phrase your bite so that it is *short* (two or three sentences at most) and memorable.

#### **Sample SCCS sound bites: (The first three are derived from our three key messages)**

"Just \$15 covers the entire cost of immunizing and protecting one child against the six major childhood diseases."

"More than four million child deaths worldwide are already prevented due to successful programs. US funding for them, however, has been steadily decreasing over the past 4 yrs."

"Because students are key agents of change, we strongly advocate for child survival, but not at the expense of other foreign aid programs—that is what makes Global Justice so innovative."

"Every minute of every day, 20 children die of diseases that are easily preventable or treatable. There are effective, proven and cheap ways to avoid many of these tragic deaths. "

## **II. During the Interview—Get Your Message Out!**

The most important thing to remember during an interview is to get your message out. Depending on the reporter's angle on the story, or his/her factual background, this may be very easy or extremely difficult. Obviously, you need to answer the questions you are being asked; however, you should at all times remain focused on what you are trying to express, and return to your message and your crucial points whenever possible. To a great extent, the course of the interview and what you say is in your control. If you are distracted by irrelevant or unfamiliar questions, you run the risk of jeopardizing your message.

### **Delivering the Content**

1. Say your key points up front. If the interview is being taped to be edited, repeat your key points several times; the editor will use your best version.
2. Keep your answers as short, concise, and simple as possible. Keep in mind that reporters are always looking for sound bites; make sure you provide them.
3. Translate and interpret for your audience. Discuss the subject from the audience's perspective. Use anecdotes or personal stories. Do *not* use jargon. If you must use complicated language to be precise, immediately explain what it means.

### **The Dynamic Between You and the Reporter**

4. If you are not immediately ready to answer a question, it's better to take your time to think than to stumble through an answer. Pause, restate the question or address the larger issue. Relate the question back to the key points you want to make by using "bridge" phrases such as "it's also important to remember," "our primary concern," "for example," etc.
5. If you don't know an answer, *admit it* and agree to get back to the person asking the question, or put him/her in contact with someone who could provide the information. Never say "no comment;" it raises a red flag. If you can't comment about an issue, explain why.
6. Be alert for the reporter's techniques. Assume there is no "off the record," and be mindful of what you say. In a multiple-part question, answer the question that best moves your agenda forward. Don't speculate when asked a hypothetical question; use anecdotal information here. Talk about only what you know
7. If you are being interviewed in person or on television, maintain eye contact with the reporter.

## **Backup**

8. Always be prepared to supply documentation. Provide handouts or background packets, including fact sheets, poll results, and/or press releases.

Sources:

[www.fischercommunications.com](http://www.fischercommunications.com)

Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation Media Guide [www.glaad.org](http://www.glaad.org)