

Have media cover your SAAM event

Your agency may host events throughout the year for various reasons, such as educating the community, SAAM, Take Back the Night, receiving an award or any other number of reasons to bring your community together.

There are many opportunities to have your event covered by some form of media, including print, online, television or radio. It is important to plan ahead for media coverage of your events. In some cases, the success of your event — if you want to reach a large group — will hinge on your success in getting it covered.

• Know the lay of the land

Look at what media outlets are in your community (daily newspapers, TV stations, radio stations, weekly/community newspapers, websites and blogs). Take note of:

- o who has covered your issue and how they've done it. Look at how similar community events have been covered.
- o how most people in your community are getting information. Depending on your community, many people may be prolific blog readers. On the other hand, the majority of residents in your community may get their news from the daily newspaper or from free dailies or weeklies.

• Build a press list

Get phone numbers and e-mail addresses (if possible) for all relevant reporters. (CALCASA has already provided you with some names and contact information.) If there are organizations partnering the event, coordinate your press lists. Don't be afraid to call the news desk and ask who covers events in your community. Be sure to include calendar editors (the people who compile a list of what's going on in town). Update this list regularly.

• Have a clear understanding of your message

Why should a reporter cover this event? Use the CALCASA document "Developing Talking Points." Memorize important lines for sound bites and build a case in your head for the event's newsworthiness. Imagine yourself trying to convince a reporter to cover the event.

• Send press releases

Send a media advisory or press release to your target media list announcing the details of your event. You can use the template provided by CALCASA to create your press release. Be sure to highlight key people who will be speaking or in attendance. Your media contacts may want to secure an interview, either before or right after your event. Media advisories should be sent about two to three weeks ahead of the event. Post-event press releases are great for a summary and wrap-up of any news or announcements made during the event.

• Use calendars

Most media outlets offer the opportunity to post your events at no cost on a community calendar. These calendars give you free coverage ahead of time and help to secure greater awareness for your events. Sometimes the calendar will appear in print and online. Be sure to check back and make sure your event information is listed properly with the correct phone number, e-mail address or web site for registrations.

• Think strategically

When planning your event, you can make choices that will help the press outreach. If you want to get cameras, make sure there's a good visual — a compelling image that you might see on the nightly news. If you're having speakers, think of who is notable and might attract media.

• Reach out, and be persistent

Two weeks out: Send the release to target publication's community calendars and follow up with a call to confirm. One week out: Distribute the release by e-mail and make follow-up calls to the calendar editors and your key journalists. You want to make sure it's on their radar and get them thinking about how they're going to cover it. Two to three business days out: Resend the release. Make follow-up calls to all journalists and ask if they plan to cover the event. The day of the event: Make one last round of calls to anyone you haven't received a solid answer from. Following the event: Immediately send out a press release with a summary of the event.