

Getting Free or Low Cost Media Coverage for Your Program: *Writing a Press Release* (Part 2 of 3)

Promote your program by writing effective press releases.

A Press Release is a common way to make known an upcoming event or to share important news. These are especially important tools for publicly funded marriage programs that may not have much marketing money and want to raise awareness of healthy marriage services in the community. This Tip Sheet gives a common layout for organizing information contained in a Press Release.

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Press Releases should be on letterhead. It is fitting to use both your organization's logo and your program's logo (or partners' logos) to lend credibility to a "new" program. Type in bold, upper case letters at the top of the page "**PRESS RELEASE**" as close as possible to the organization's logo. It is common to use

an expanded character type and a 16 – 20 pt., upper case font size to set it apart from the rest of the text that follows.

Place the words "Release Date" on the left-hand corner of the page; this is the date that tells the media when to release the information to the public. On the same line on the right-hand side note your contact person's name, direct phone number and email address. It is important to find a spokesperson for the event to answer questions from reporters and/or writers. Make sure the spokesperson is ready to answer questions and knows what information to give and what information not to give! A contact person must be on hand when questions come in.

Never give a general office number; it is better to give a direct phone number for the contact person.



RELEASE DATE: May 1, 2009

CONTACT: (contact name)
(contact's direct phone #)
(contact's email address)

The next step is to create an attention-getting headline that catches the meaning of the event, along with the date. The rest of the language to use should be simple and clear. It is always important to define the term “marriage education” as some are not familiar with what marriage education means. For example:

Relationship Tune-up: *FREE Workshop*
For Couples – Saturday, May 31

The headline is the most important part of your press release because it is likely to become the headline for any public campaign, print or electronic. Include the date in the headline so it is clear when the event will happen; the reader of a press release should not have to read the body to have this information.

Indent the opening sentence and start with the city and state where the event will take place, i.e. **Rochester, NY.**

The details of your event should follow and should cover *who, what, where, when, and why.*

The details of your event should follow and should cover *who, what, where, when, and why.* The most important information about the event should be in the first paragraph. The short paragraph that follows is an example of how information might be organized:

Rochester, NY. The Greater Rochester Healthy Marriage Initiative (GRHMI) [*who*] is offering a FREE marriage workshop for couples [*what: addresses cost*] from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Saturday, May 31, 2008 [*when*]. This hands on workshop for engaged and married couples [*who: target groups*] will provide useful tools to help couples communicate better, settle conflict and bring more excitement into their relationship [*what and why: show gains*]. This event takes place at Maritime Event Center located at 1221 Essex Boulevard in Downtown Rochester [*shows format and where*]. Free parking and on site childcare! [*what: deals with hurdles*]. Free lunch for all couples and children registered in advance! [*what: motivation for attendance; encourages pre-registering*] You may register online at www.GreaterRochesterHMI.org or by calling 212-534-5353. [*call to action*]

Next is the *why* portion of the Press Release. This paragraph should have national statistics on the scope of the issue i.e. divorce rates, the effects on children of single parent families, or other important facts. Following these facts, make clear the effect of the issues closer to home (to the local city if possible). Next, clearly share how both your organization and your event *deal with the* issue. Give the organization’s vision or mission and tell what couples will learn. For example:

Nationally, one in two marriages ends in divorce; Rochester residents are no exception. The State’s Office of Family Assistance reports that one in two marriages in Rochester end in divorce and with no end in sight. The

Greater Rochester Healthy Marriage Initiative's Mission is for all married couples to have the skills and tools needed for a healthy marriage. Couples will learn how to create a peaceful home by finding out how to communicate better, solve problems together and offer each other understanding and support. "A happy marriage is great for individual health and society as a whole", says Executive Director John Johnson, PhD.

Finish the paragraph with a quote from an expert on how marriage education helps relationships and the family [*validity of solution*]. The expert may be the organization's director or another well-known person who can speak with authority about marriage education.

To finish your press release, write a separate one-sentence paragraph with your contact information. If the company letterhead does not include the organization's website, include it at this time.

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Final Tips

- ✓ Keep your Press Release to one page
- ✓ Use 1.5 line spacing
- ✓ Place # # # # centered at the bottom of your last paragraph to show document end
- ✓ Give out the Press Release one month before the event date. Note: Some media outlets may need the information sooner because of publication deadlines

For more media ideas, sample press releases, and free marketing materials, please visit the National Healthy Marriage Resource Center website (www.healthymarriageinfo.org).

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