

Writing a Press Release for a Healthy Marriage Program

Follow these easy steps to writing an effective press release for your program.

A press release is a common way to promote an upcoming event or share important news. These are especially important tools for publicly funded healthy relationship and marriage programs that may not have a large marketing budget but want to raise community awareness of the services they offer. This Tip Sheet provides a formatting guide to organize information for press releases.

Press release intro and headline

1) Press releases should always be on letterhead.

It is fitting to use your organization's logo, the program logo and any appropriate partner logos to lend credibility to a "new" program or announcement.

2) Write "PRESS RELEASE" in bold, upper case letters at the top of the page just under your 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 remainder of the text.

3) 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 but over on the right-hand side, include the contact person's name, direct phone number (not just the main office phone number) and email address. It is important to identify a spokesperson for the event to answer questions from reporters and other media inquiries. Provide this individual with key message points so they can fully understand what information should be incorporated in an interview as well as any information not to give. Be sure the contact person is available when calls/questions come in. For example:

RELEASE DATE: May 1, 2010

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

4) The next step is to create an attention-getting headline that encompasses the meaning of the event, along with the date. 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 entire article/release to find this information. For example:

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

The body of a press release

1) 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 will follow and should cover *who, what, when, where* and *why*. The most important information about the event needs to be covered in the first paragraph. The language should be simple and clear, and it is always important to define what “marriage education” means since many people are not familiar with the term. For example:

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: shows benefits*]. 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 will be provided [*what: deals with hurdles*] as well as free lunches for all couples and children who register 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*].

2) Next is the *why* portion of the press release. This paragraph should include national statistics on the scope of the issue (i.e. divorce rates, the effects on children of single parent families, or other important facts). Follow this information by elaborating on the effect of the issues closer to home (your local city if possible). Next, clearly share how both your organization and upcoming event *deal with the* issue. Include the organization’s vision or mission and explain what couples will learn.

3) Finish the paragraph with a quote from an expert regarding the importance of marriage education on relationships and families [*validity of solution*]. The expert may be the organization’s director or another well-known person who can speak with authority about marriage education.

For example:

Nationally, one in two marriages ends in divorce; Rochester residents are no exception. The Office of Family Assistance for the state of New York reports that one in two marriages in Rochester also ends in divorce with no change in this statistic in sight. The mission of the Greater Rochester Healthy Marriage Initiative is for all married couples to have the skills and tools needed for a healthy marriage. Couples will learn ways to create a peaceful home by discovering 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,” said Executive Director John Johnson, PhD.

The boilerplate of a press release

To close your press release, write a separate paragraph that includes contact information and a brief summary of your organization (this is often called a 'boilerplate'). If the company letterhead does not include the organization's website, include it at this time.

The Greater Rochester Healthy Marriage Initiative is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to the improvement of healthy relationships and marriage. For more information, or to register online for upcoming workshops, visit us at www.GreaterRochesterHMI.org or call 555-555-5353.

Final formatting tips

- Limit the length of your press release to one page if possible.
- Use 1.5 line spacing.
- Center the symbol '###' at the bottom of your last paragraph to show the document has ended.
- If you are trying to get your event placed on local community calendars (magazines, websites, and cable channels) distribute a release to these outlets four-six weeks prior to the event date. Some media outlets may need the information sooner because of publication deadlines. As the event date gets closer, it's always a good idea to follow up with reminder calls to your media contacts and/or send a follow-up release.
- For regular media coverage, a press release does not need to be distributed any sooner than one week prior to the date of the event.

To learn more, refer to the "Getting Free/Low Cost Media Coverage for Your Program" Tip Sheet.

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