

Working with the media

Working with local media can help to spread the word about the Community Social Services Matter campaign.

Using the media effectively does not have to be complicated. It does take some planning and preparation, so start thinking about your plan early.

There are many ways to work with the local media as part of this awareness campaign. Media are interested in local stories, and we have stories to tell.

Story ideas

Below we have identified a number of basic tools to assist in working with local media. But let's start by talking about some of the things that we might want to do in the media.

If we know that we have designated March as Community Social Services Awareness month, we can talk to local papers and other media outlets early to propose an article or a series of articles on various topics. Some of our agencies or workplaces may be comfortable with having their work profiled or some of our members may also be comfortable having their work profiled – such as “a day in the life” kind of story. Our members care deeply about their work, and this can be an interesting story to tell.

Local radio stations may want to schedule community social services topics on talk shows during the month of March and we should be prepared to participate. Local radio or TV stations can also be asked if they would run public service announcements in support of Community Social Services Awareness month. (Union communications staff can assist in writing up advertising scripts and identifying talk show topics)

You should also consider using opinion pieces and letters to the editor not just during the month of March, but on a regular basis.

Finally, you can organize events that are of interest to the media and you can respond to issues that arise in the community or elsewhere.

Develop a list of local media

Start your planning by developing a list of all the media outlets that serve your community - your local media – print, radio and television – and don't forget alternative, community and union media. Local unions and community groups often have newsletters and are looking for material. So remember to include everyone when you build your media list.

As part of your local media list, identify particular reporters, editors or talk show hosts that you have a relationship with or with whom you want to develop a relationship. Personal contact is very effective.



Media briefing sessions, such as one where you spend some time giving the media background information your work and your services, can be an effective way of keeping local reporters or editors up-to-date with the issues facing community social services. When you approach media, offer to meet and talk about the range of services we provide and some of the issues facing our community.

Media releases can be used when you are responding to an issue that has arisen or when you have a newsworthy story. Use clear simple language. Put the most important issues (who, what, when, where and maybe why) in the first paragraph. Have an identified contact at the bottom of the release and make sure that person is available if the media call. All media releases should be followed-up by phone calls to the targeted media outlets and specific journalists whom you want to cover your story. Some of the times in the campaign when you might want to issue a media release are: following a decision by your local municipal council to designate a week or the month of March 2008 for Community Social Services Awareness and at the beginning of March – to announce that it is Community Social Services Awareness Month or Week coming up and listing some of the events that will happen.

Press conferences take a lot of time and energy. It is often more useful to make calls to individual media contacts. You might want to do a local press conference to announce the start of Community Social Services Awareness month or week.

On-air and print interviews. As part of your media plan, you will want to submit stories and ideas yourself in the form of letters to the editor and opinion pieces, and you will also want to talk to reporters who are doing stories related to community social services. You will need to figure out who (within your group of local union activists) should speak on particular issues and make sure that they have had a chance to be briefed on the major issues that will be covered in an interview. Reporters can also be briefed in advance.

Community cable – If you are organizing an event, make sure that you invite your community cable TV reporters to attend. Especially if there are shows that focus on local community activity, this can be a very valuable local tool.