

TOOL # 1: Backgrounders: In Your Face

Old-fashioned research can play a very important role in achieving local media coverage for your SWAT team. Get to know which journalists at your local newspapers, radio, and TV stations are reporting on areas or topics related to SWAT (health/education/youth). Then, phone or write them asking for a “get to know you” meeting.

It may not result in an article right away, but that doesn’t matter. A “get to know you” meeting will:

- ❑ **Help** you develop a relationship with key local reporters, so that when you are planning an event, reporters will be more likely to cover it.
- ❑ **Help** you introduce reporters to SWAT and its objectives.
- ❑ **Help** establish you as a valuable source of news information.

TOOL #2: Media Alert

Media alerts are used by organizers, businesses, and individuals to notify the media of a newsworthy event or activity taking place. A media alert can help create a sense of urgency and importance about a forthcoming event.

- ❑ **Send** alerts usually a week before the SWAT event or activity you are planning.
- ❑ **Keep** alerts – use bold and large type so it is easy to read.
- ❑ **Include** a hard-hitting first paragraph that summarizes the key news point.
- ❑ **Clearly** identify all the particulars of the event or the 5 W’s (the who, what, when, where, and why) in a readable, simple format.
- ❑ **Follow up** one or two days before the event to confirm media interest and attendance.

TOOL #3: Press Releases

One of the most commonly used tools for communicating with the media is the press release. It should be used for announcing newsworthy SWAT developments, such as a planned SWAT rally or demonstration, survey findings related to the sale of tobacco to minors, or any other SWAT related activity you feel would be of interest to your local community.

For your release to get the attention of a reporter, write it like a good magazine or newspaper article. It has to be timely and promise a benefit to the target audience – reporters’ own readers!

Therefore, the key question a writer of press release must ask is: What’s in it for the media? Why would anyone want to know this? Also:

- ❑ **Keep** releases simple, concise and as short as possible (1-1.5 pages in length)

- ❑ **Include** a contact name, address, phone number, fax number, and email address
- ❑ **Include** an information release line (e.g. For Immediate Release)
- ❑ **Use** headlines to help an editor quickly size up the essential nature of the release
- ❑ **Remember** the local angle; this is of greatest interest to newspeople
- ❑ **Include** quotes from SWAT members that focus on the benefits or impact of the story
– but don't overdo it
- ❑ **Don't** draw conclusions. Never offer a concluding statement at the end of the release.
Instead include a brief overview of the Partnership/SWAT team, its history and objectives