



Media Outreach

The media can be a powerful outreach tool, but only when you engage them. It's very rare for the media to find you; usually *you* have to make the first contact. A successful community program offers a welcome break from some of the press' routine coverage, so you may be surprised at the reception you receive.

Actually, it is a regulatory requirement for sponsors to annually announce the availability of summer meals to the media. FNS encourages state agencies to complete this requirement for all sponsors in their state through an all-inclusive statewide news release.

There are different factors to consider when deciding which media outlets to approach. Television and radio are great if you have an event. If people can see or hear what is going on, they will be drawn to story. Newspapers are also important to consider, because they are always looking for a positive feature story. Their stories will tend to focus on what happened *at* the event. These longer stories generally include personal quotes and photos. Consider discussing the possibility of having a reporter spend a week at lunch with one child participating in the program—but understand you'll need parental permission.

Don't forget to post your events and special activities on community calendars. Most media provide them on their website. Ask permission to post your lunch program every day it meets. Make sure to include as much detail as possible, such as menus and activities.

Here are three tips to get media to cover a story about your feeding site:

1. **Contact the media when you have a newsworthy story.** Only call a reporter when you have real news such as your kick-off event, the announcement of a large donation or sponsorship, or a story about your new feeding site opening.
2. **When working with media, be prepared.** When you call a reporter, be prepared to answer questions. When you submit a news release, make sure it is complete and free of grammatical errors. The easier you make their job, the more likely an editor or reporter will cover your story.
3. **Getting a story covered takes work and follow-up.** Just because you send a news release, does not mean they will cover your story—no matter how great your program is. Pick up the phone and make a follow-up call and offer to help set up a visit.

