

# MEDIA 101

Want to reach thousands of people in your community and across your state with your Kick Butts Day (KBD) message? It can happen if you work hard to let the media know about your exciting event. Getting noticed in newspapers, radio and television is just as important as planning your activity. Just think – if you have a rally at your state capital with 500 people, then 500 people hear your message ... but if you have a rally and convince television networks and newspapers to cover it, your message could be seen and heard by thousands, even millions of people, depending on how far your coverage goes!

## WHY IS GETTING MEDIA COVERAGE SO IMPORTANT?

Media coverage can:

- Publicize your event beforehand, so more people will be there to support it.
- Educate thousands of people about your issue and your message.
- Inspire more people to follow your lead and get involved in taking on tobacco companies.

## WHERE TO BEGIN

The first step is to let the media know about your event. The best way to do that is to REGISTER your event at [KickButtsDay.org](http://KickButtsDay.org). Your event will then be listed on our KBD website specific to your state, and our KBD Media Team will be available to help you pitch your event. Once you register, you'll be able to tell reporters all about your media-friendly event and make sure they cover it. Here's an overview of the steps:

- Develop your message.
- Choose your media contacts and get in touch with them.
- Grab reporters' attention with tools such as media advisories, media alerts, press releases, press kits and more.
- Make your activity so eye-catching that you'll be sure to attract crowds and cameras.

Follow the steps in this section and you'll be sure to increase your chances of getting media coverage for your event!



Today is Kick Butts Day, a day dedicated to encouraging smokers to stop smoking.

## Kick the habit now

■ Today is Kick Butts Day, a national call for smokers to stop smoking.

### HEALTH WATCH

Today, smokers across the nation are being encouraged to kick their smoking habit for good. But for those who need additional reasons to stop, they should check out New York state's new campaign, "Light Cigarettes — Don't be Fooled."

The campaign's goal is to alert smokers about the hidden dangers of "light" cigarettes. The ads will appear during the next few weeks on television, the Internet and in newspapers statewide as part of New York's tobacco settlement. The key message of the ads is that light and low tar cigarettes are as dangerous to one's health as regular cigarettes.

Studies have shown that smokers who use low tar and or light cigarettes use their fingers to cover the vent holes in light cigarettes, causing them to inhale more deeply, and thereby, reducing or eliminating the so-called tar-reducing effect.

Tobacco is the leading cause of death from lung

cancer, heart disease and stroke in New York state.

In the first ad, a man uses a vacuum cleaner to demonstrate how light cigarettes work. He discusses vents in the filter that let in air so light cigarettes test as having lower tar and nicotine levels, but then he explains that smokers' fingers cover up these vents. At the end of the spot, the man dumps out the vacuum cleaner bag to illustrate the pollutants inhaled by light cigarette smokers.

The second ad, begins with a woman standing at the end of a long tunnel while two large trucks rush towards her. The voice-over presents the two trucks as representing light and regular cigarettes, respectively, and notes that you can't see a difference between the two. The tobacco industry confirmed that lights can deliver the same amount of tar and toxins as regular cigarettes.

For more information, call (866) NY-QUITTS or visit [www.nysmokefree.com](http://www.nysmokefree.com).

— [Statepoint.net](http://Statepoint.net)

## DEVELOP A STRONG MESSAGE

Before you contact any media, you must have a strong and clear message. Think about what you will say so that reporters will understand what you are trying to accomplish, and their coverage will help your KBD cause. Here is some advice on how to develop an effective message:

As a group, think about the two or three most important pieces of information you would want people to gain. These are usually referred to as key messages.

### Key messages should:

- Be short and easy to understand.
- Explain to reporters exactly why you have asked them to cover your KBD event.
- Spread the facts, such as, "1/3 of all tobacco users die of a tobacco-caused disease."
- Inspire people to take some action, like, "We are doing this to encourage people to support smoke-free workplaces in our town."

Your key messages should be specific. Anyone who hears them should understand why your group is taking action.

- A more specific message helps reporters give more effective coverage.

A specific message would be, "We want our state's leaders to stand with kids by funding a statewide tobacco prevention program."

A less specific (and less effective) message might be, "We are here because we hate tobacco."

Once you have developed your key messages, make sure everyone in your group knows what they are and can explain them in their own words.

## DEVELOP YOUR MEDIA LIST

After you've decided on your key messages, the next thing to do is assemble a list of media you will contact. Here are some pointers on how to do this.

Start by making a list of all local TV stations, radio stations and newspapers:

- Each station and newspaper has many reporters that cover different types of news. Think about which ones would want to cover your story.
- With newspapers, start with "metro" or "city" reporters. After that, think of other sections where news about KBD might fit, such as health, science, youth, education and lifestyle, just to name a few.
- At TV stations, you will be looking for specific producers. Again, start local and think of all the other possible angles they could use to report on your story. Keep in mind that some local news shows have youth reporters.

Media directories are like giant phone books of all media outlets. They list TV stations, radio stations, daily and weekly newspapers, magazines and even some news shows. Best of all, they list most reporters, editors and producers and what each one covers, so you don't have to bounce around looking for the right person when you call.

- You can find media directories at your local library, and some offer free trials online.
- The most popular ones are Bacon's, Burrelle's, Hudson's and Gale's.

Don't forget about groups that might be interested in what you do on KBD, such as anti-tobacco groups, environmental groups, health organizations and various youth groups, like the YMCA. Some of these may have newsletters that go to their members. Sending these groups a news release could be a great way to get your message out to others.

Write down all the contact information you can collect for everyone in the media that you have decided to contact, including name, title, complete address, email, phone and fax number.



**Watch for stories resulting from your release and keep copies. Make sure to send copies to the Campaign!**

## CONTACTING THE MEDIA

Now that you've finalized your key messages and compiled a good list of people to contact, you will need to prepare your story and get it out there. There are a few standard ways to package your story so that reporters, editors and producers will read it when they receive it. Here are the major ways you could format your story and the different uses for each one. Examples can be downloaded from [KickButtsDay.org](http://KickButtsDay.org).

**1. News Advisory:** A news advisory tells the media about an upcoming event such as a press conference, rally or other event, and advises the media to cover it.

- You use a news advisory to tell them in advance when and where the news event will be.
- It should be only one page and should include specific "who, what, when, where, why" information, plus some general information on your group.
- Don't give away all the details! Make sure you catch their interest and convince them to come to the event to find out more.
- If interview and photo opportunities will be available, be sure to say that.

**2. Press Release:** A press release announces news or information that will come out as part of your activity. For example, if you are launching a campaign or announcing findings from a survey of tobacco advertising, you would send out a press release to let the media know.

- You can send a press release a day or two before, the day of, or the day after.
- Include details of your event and news, such as attendance numbers, who will be (or was) there, and why.
- A press release should be written as if it is the news story itself. That way, journalists can write their stories just by using the release. \*\*If you do a really good job, sometimes a paper will make very few changes and run the press release as the news story\*\*
- The opening paragraph should answer the basic questions: who, what, where, when and why.
- Feel free to include quotes to help you tell the story and make it more personal.
- At the top of the release list one or two people who are available to speak to media. Be sure to include their phone numbers.
- Follow up with a phone call after you send the release.
- It's best to fax or e-mail it if possible, but you can also mail it. However you send it, make sure to clearly write the name of the person who you want to receive it.

**3. Letter to the Editor:** A letter to the editor is a great way to get a short piece about your ideas published in the newspaper. An effective letter should:

- Be related to a recent story in the news. This way, you can say, "I read the recent story on ... and I wanted to add that..."
- Be short and to-the-point. Newspapers print many letters, so you should keep yours to a single page or less (approximately 100–250 words).
- Express your opinion, as a young person, about stopping tobacco marketing that targets kids.
- Tell them why the battle against tobacco is important to kids and adults in your community.
- Include your age, address and phone number.

**4. Opinion-editorial (Op-ed):** The op-ed gives you an opportunity to express your opinion, supported by facts, and stimulate others to think about an issue.

- It is longer than a letter to the editor, generally up to 700 words.
- An op-ed is written by an individual and submitted to the newspaper, but it is different than a letter to the editor because it is in the style of an essay.

### Helpful Tips:

- Call the newspaper to find out length requirements and to whom you should send your op-ed.
- Once you've written it, have someone proofread it.
- Send your op-ed to only one newspaper at a time with a cover letter stating why their readers would be interested in the piece.
- Try sending it several weeks before KBD and mentioning in your cover letter that KBD is a national event. This will give the newspaper more of a reason to print your op-ed.
- Follow-up to find out if it will be printed. If the newspaper does not accept your op-ed, you may submit it to another newspaper.
- Finally, be aware that the op-ed may not run for several weeks or even months. This means you should not include date-specific information that might keep it from being published.

## **VISUALS: MAKING YOUR EVENT EYE-CATCHING**

Eye-catching events attract crowds and television cameras. So, when planning your event, make sure you build in a lot for others to see. Think of how you feel when you go to a school assembly and the entire time it's just one person standing in front of a podium talking. It's much more interesting to you, your audience and the media when some type of action is taking place. Check out the Quick and Easy part of the Activities section on page 36 for great ideas that you can add to any event.

**Be sure to mention all the exciting visuals in all your press materials when you speak to people in the media.**

## **THAT EXTRA SOMETHING**

If you look at any reporter's desk, you'll probably find a huge stack of media advisories, press releases and other things sent by people who want that reporter to cover them. Unfortunately, no matter how hard you work on yours, there is always a chance that a reporter might not get to it. It pays to put a little extra effort into getting your materials noticed. Here are some ideas.

One way to get reporters interested is to mail them something unexpected that supports your message and will make them curious about what you are doing on KBD. For example, you could send out little bull's-eye stickers to the media with your message written on them: "We won't let Big Tobacco make us targets anymore!" If the item you want to send is too fragile or too big to be mailed, you could drop it off at the newspapers or TV stations you want to reach out to. But remember to clearly mark it with the name of the recipient.



## TIPS ON TALKING TO THE MEDIA

As you go through the process of getting media coverage, there may be many different opportunities to speak to members of the media.

- You will call reporters, editors and producers to follow up on things you have sent them (to convince them to cover your activity).
- You might get interviewed before or during your event.
- They may even call you afterward to get your reaction on how it went, or to ask you about other tobacco or youth issues they are covering.
- If a reporter comes to your event, you might call afterward to thank him or her for the coverage or to ask when the story might run.

You may have already had the opportunity to speak to a reporter as part of your involvement with KBD or another activity. Or you may be new to all of this. Either way, talking to reporters gets easier the more experience you have and the more you understand about how the media works. Here are some guidelines to make any conversation with the media easy for you.

- Prepare yourself for each conversation. Remember the reporter's name, where they work and what they do. If you don't know your stuff ahead of time reporters might think you are wasting their time.
- Decide in advance what you need to accomplish with this conversation. Are you trying to get the person to run a blurb about the event, send a reporter to cover it, schedule a meeting with you, etc.? Tell the reporter the purpose of your call early on.
- When you reach a reporter, introduce yourself and ask if he/she has time to talk. If not, ask when might be a better time to call back.
- Remember to rely on your key messages. You already know that they will best sum up your reason for being involved in Kick Butts Day. Be sure to use them naturally and explain them in your own words if necessary.
- Speak clearly and concisely. Relax and don't ramble or mumble.
- Be helpful and prepared. Remember, you are helping them by providing something interesting and newsworthy.
- Be honest. If you don't know something the reporter asks, don't guess. If you know where to find the information, you can say that. Otherwise, refer him or her to [www.tobaccofreekids.org](http://www.tobaccofreekids.org), which has lots of information on these issues.
- When the conversation is ending, thank the reporter for his or her time and make sure he or she has your phone number if there are further questions.
- If a reporter leaves a message for you to call, do so promptly.

## IF AT FIRST YOU DON'T SUCCEED

Like the old saying goes, "Try, try again." Here are some things to do if you don't get a great reaction to your story at first.

- If newspaper reporters aren't biting, try reaching one of the photographers on their staff. If a photographer comes, you might get a photo and caption in the paper, which is just as good as a story.
- Go back through some recent newspapers to look for stories similar or related to yours and reach out to the reporters who wrote them.
- Seek out different reporters, editors and producers within the same newspapers or TV stations.
- Submit letters to the editor or an op-ed piece.
- If the media doesn't cover your activity, do a post-event press release that covers all the great things you accomplished.
- Try a different angle, such as writing a press release about a dedicated teacher who helped your group or one of the youth involved who has a personal story about tobacco.



**Be sure to mention all the exciting visuals in all your press materials when you speak to people in the media.**

## HOLDING A PRESS CONFERENCE

If you have the opportunity and resources to hold a press conference, it's a great way to let people know about the results of your Kick Butts Day effort. At a press conference, a spokesperson announces the news (or results or outcomes), and then takes questions from reporters. To make sure it goes smoothly, use the following checklist:

- Decide on a location for the press conference. Think about interesting places that support your message, such as the steps of your school. Make sure to get permission from the appropriate person to use your chosen location.
- Schedule it for a time when an audience and reporters are most likely to show up. Mid-morning on a Tuesday or Wednesday is generally the best time to get media to attend.
- Decide who will speak at the press conference and how long it will last. A good length would be about 30 minutes, including time to answer questions from reporters.
- Invite VIP guests early, such as the mayor or a local legislator.
- Decide what visuals will best convey your findings. You could create large posters showing your findings or compelling pictures.
- Include the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids logo on your visuals to tie your press conference to the national initiative, giving it greater recognition.
- Prepare a news advisory and mail, fax or email it to reporters on your media list so they'll see it one week before the press conference.
- A few days before the press conference, follow up by phone and encourage reporters to attend.

- Assemble handouts or press kits to give reporters that include written summaries of your findings, prepared statements to be read at the briefing (see sample press briefing statement), photos of your group fighting tobacco and/or graphics that help explain your findings. Press kits are information packets that explain your organization, purpose, goals and services. Press kits are often mailed to the media, and are sent to people or organizations you feel might be interested in your organization. A press kit should include items such as press releases, profiles of group members, a fact sheet and contact details.
- At the location, leave enough space for television cameras on the sides or in the back of the room.
- Ask all members of the media to sign in so you have a list of reporters to follow up with.
- Give all attendees an agenda for the press conference that includes who will be speaking and the timing for the press conference.
- Be sure you begin and end on time.
- Thank the media and your guests for attending.

Whatever you are planning for KBD, remember that media coverage can help your message be seen and heard by many more people. Although seeking media coverage may seem like a lot of work, it is just as important as planning the activity itself. From the start your group should include media in the planning. Divide the steps among the members of your group and remember to follow all the tips and suggestions included in this guide. Good luck and don't forget to tell us all about it! You can email photos, press materials, news clips and other materials about your event to the KBD Team at [KBDinfo@tobaccofreekids.org](mailto:KBDinfo@tobaccofreekids.org).



**Assemble handouts or press kits to give reporters.**