

CHAPTER SEVEN: VISIBILITY THROUGH COMMUNITY AND MEDIA OUTREACH

- ◆ Identifying Reporters
- ◆ Contacting the Media: Advisories, Releases and Interviews
- ◆ Other Visibility Tools
- ◆ Sample Media Advisory
- ◆ Sample News Release
- ◆ Media Sign-in Sheet

Identifying Reporters

Media lists

Developing a current, accurate media list is the first key to gaining media coverage. Make a list of the reporters, editors, and departments in your state's newspapers and broadcast stations that focus on AAUW priority issues and are likely to use AAUW's news. Include contact names, phone and fax numbers and, if available, e-mail addresses for all the media outlets in your area or state. The information below will help you get started.

Identifying Print Reporters



- **Familiarize yourself with local outlets and papers –**

Review daily papers, prominent weekly outlets, and appropriate community papers. Take the time to locate reporters' or editors' bylines on articles and editorials that deal with women's issues.

- **Use media directories.** The Two-Minute Activist page on the AAUW website includes a media directory that contains contact information for national and local media across the country. In addition, several companies publish media directories with details about every outlet in your city, county, and state (print and broadcast). You can find directories at bookstores, libraries, college communications departments, and the AAUW media relations department.
- **Make calls.** Call each newspaper on your list and ask for the name, phone, and fax numbers of reporters responsible for covering women's issues, family issues, and education. Also obtain the information for the political reporter, editorial page editor, metro or city editor, and the photo editor.
- **Keep your list current.** Turnover can be high in the news business, and reporters covering the issues on your list may change frequently. Make calls quarterly to review and update your media list.

Getting Results from Reporters

Just as reporters are often the most direct routes to reaching the public, the telephone is your most direct route to reaching reporters. Initiating and responding to calls from the media is one of the most critical tasks in getting AAUW's issues and events covered.

Assume reporters are already busy when you call them. Open the call with, "Are you on a deadline?" If the answer is yes, ask for a good time to call back. If no, assume that you have only 60-90 seconds to "pitch" your issue or event.

Timing is everything. Mid or late afternoon calls are less likely to be returned because of deadline pressure. Morning or early evening calls allow for more leisurely conversations because these are "down times" for reporters.

Be organized before you initiate or take a call from the media. Have appropriate background materials, data, and other contact names and numbers available at your fingertips. Have an event explanation ready as well.

Offer to fax or send follow-up information. Be prepared to re-send press releases or advisories as a reminder.

Always call a reporter back as soon as possible. If you have 20 phone messages, call the reporter back first to ensure the best possible chance of obtaining media coverage.

Identifying Reporters at Television Stations



When making your list of television stations, be sure to include not only network stations, but also local cable and independent stations with news programs. Although a station's anchors are on each day, the people behind the scenes decide what should be covered, and who will report on the story.

Contact each station on your list and ask for the following:

- **News director and assignment editor.** They determine the value of an incoming news idea, and if it is worthy, make an assignment to have an issue or event covered.
- **Reporters.** As with newspapers, the reporters who cover politics as well as women's, education, and family issues will want to know what you are planning.
- **Producers for relevant programs.** Many stations feature a "working women's" program or public affairs talk show. The producers for these programs decide what and whom the programs will cover.

Identifying Reporters at Radio Stations



Radio stations offer some of the best opportunities for coverage, so be sure to include AM and FM stations that feature local news programming in your media list. Radio stations in larger markets offer two good mechanisms for coverage: news, especially during commuter "drive time," and talk shows. For each larger radio station, identify the news director, reporters, and producers. Call the stations early in the morning. Avoid calling them on the hour or half-hour since they are often doing live news shows then.

Knowing whom to call is a basic key to getting covered by the media!