

5.07: How Media Can Enhance Your Advocacy

2025 NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON
ENDING HOMELESSNESS



June 30–July 2, 2025 🌅 Washington, D.C. 🌅 #NAEH2025

Marie Condron

Principal & Co-Founder, Ocean & Mountain

Libby Miller

Media Relations Specialist, National Alliance to End Homelessness

Tamera Kohler

Chief Executive Officer, Regional Task Force on Homelessness



How Media Can Enhance Your Advocacy

Marie Condron

marie@oceanmo.com

July 1, 2025



OCEAN &
MOUNTAIN

News media is still **influential**, but how Americans **get news** has **changed dramatically**.

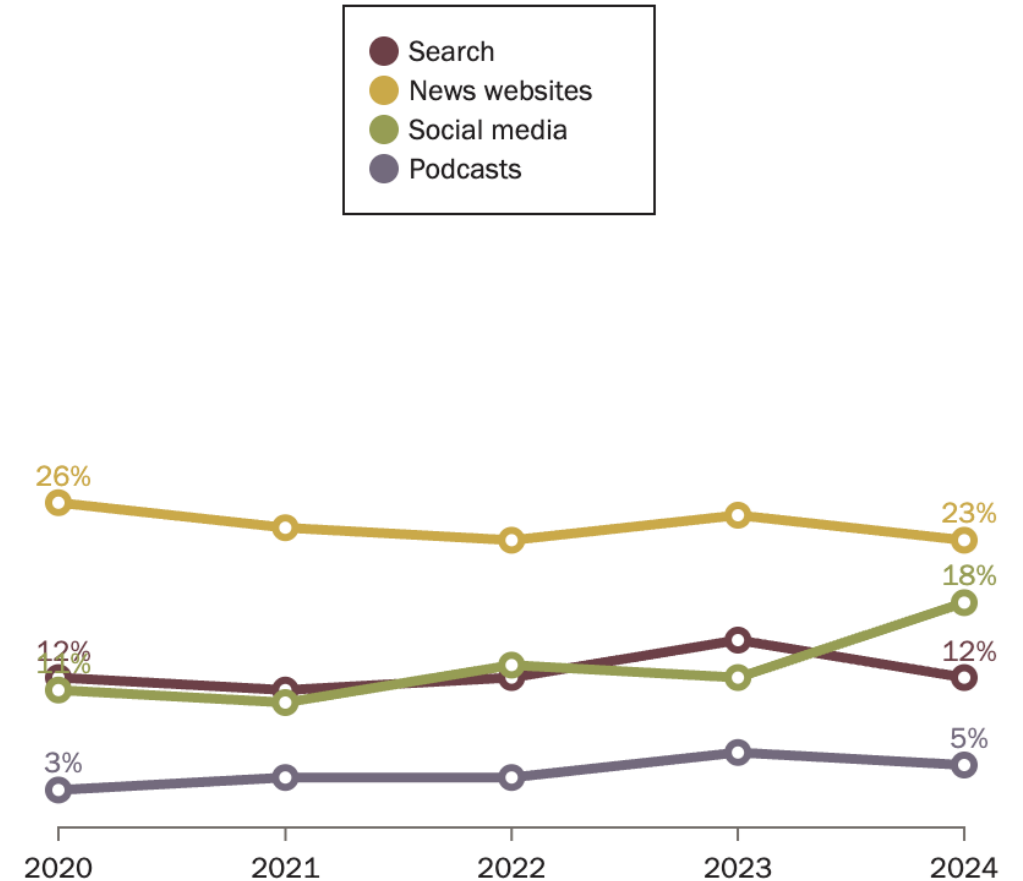
DIGITAL DEVICES are now by far the most common way Americans get news (86% sometimes, 57% often)

NEWS WEBSITES OR APPS are the most preferred source of news on digital devices at 58%

TV NEWS is second most common (63% get news from TV often, 33% sometimes)

Digital news platform preferences

% of U.S. adults who **prefer** ____ for getting news



SOURCE: [Pew News Platform Fact Sheet](#), Feb. 2024

Earned Media: Reporters and editors decide what to cover

Earned Media

Pitch to writers who decide what they cover
The realm of ideas & reporting

Traditional

- News sites
- Op-eds'

New

- Podcasts
- Substacks

The Washington Post

DOGE loses control over government grants website, freeing up billions

Marketing

Pay influences to reach their followers
The town square with video outperforming all else

Social Media

- Facebook
- Instagram
- TikTok



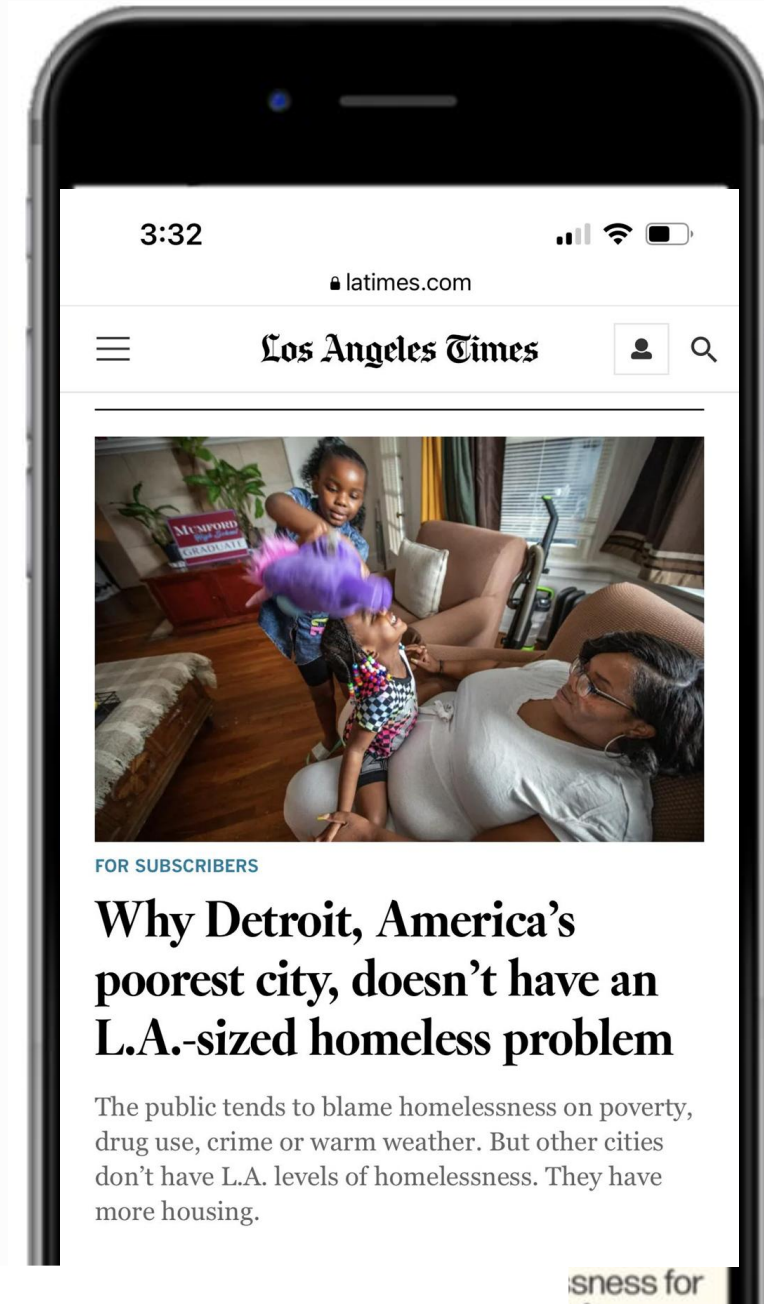
carolynordonez • [Follow](#)

Paid partnership with [ourfuture_la](#)
Original audio

Every media story has an underlying narrative

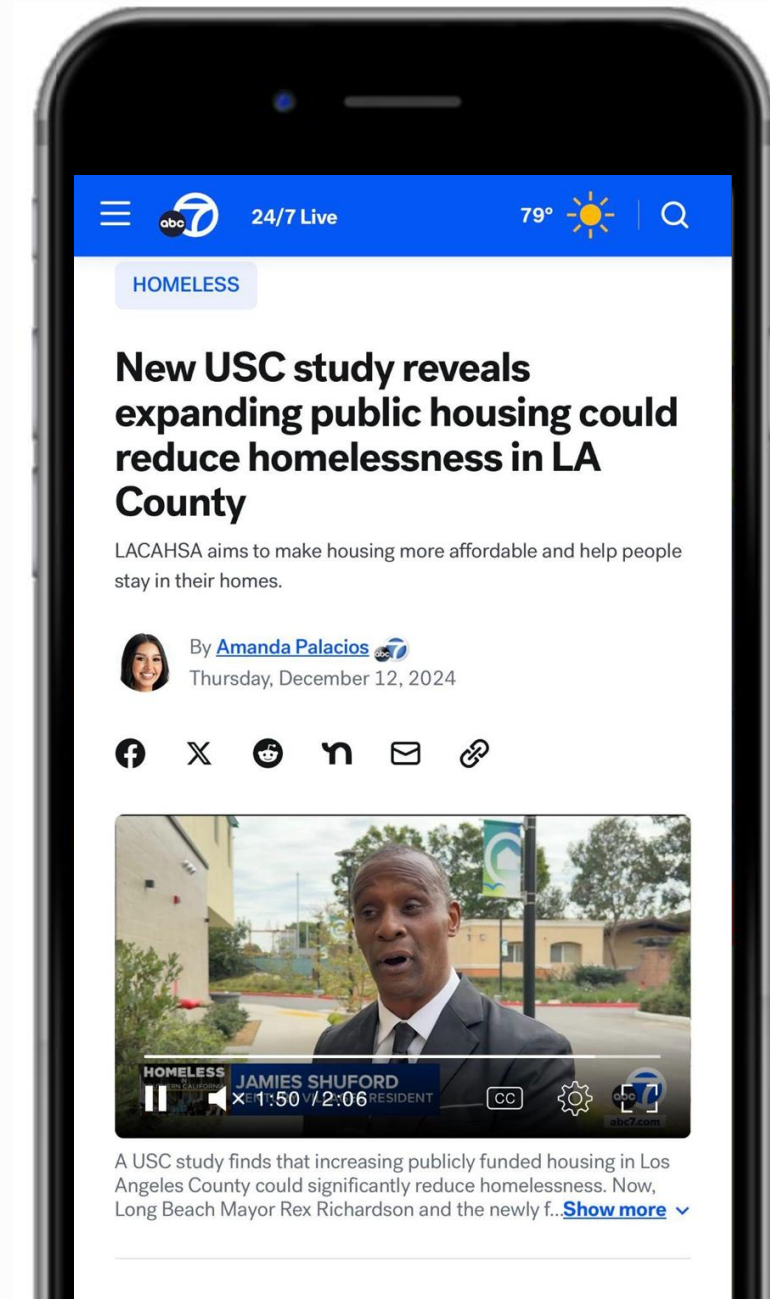
- What's the story really about?
- Who is the hero & villain?
- What is the emotional tone?

Our work is to recognize what the dominant narratives are, so we can communicate more effectively to change hearts and minds



Our opportunity: Tell stories that spotlight solutions, and show we need to invest at the scale of the problem

- We can reinforce our shared value that **everyone, regardless of their circumstances, deserves a place to call home**
- We can spark **emotions of hope and relief** that change is possible
- We can help people understand the **solutions that are working & the investment needed to scale up**

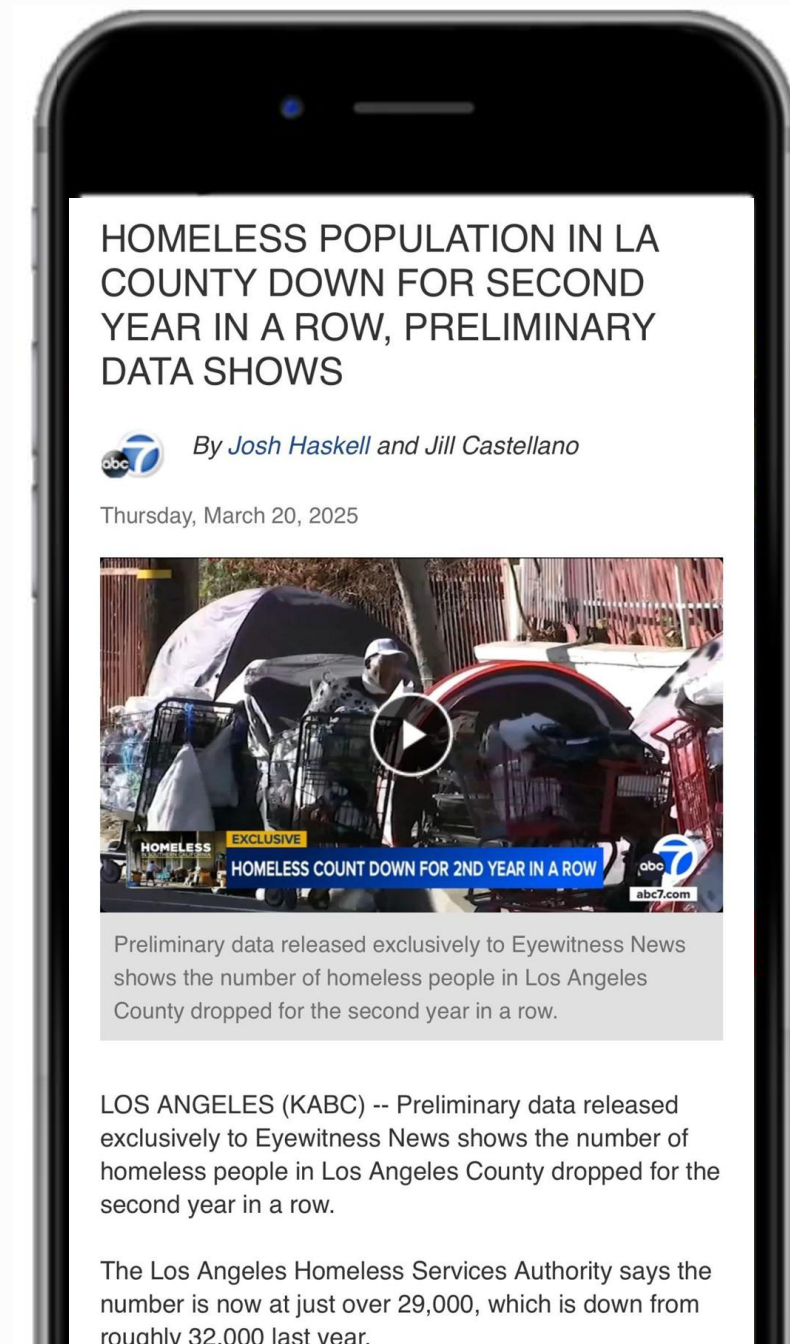


Key ingredients of effective media messages

- **Research and polling** - what is public sentiment & what do voters want? Partner with local universities, think tanks, philanthropy
- **Build coalitions of trusted messengers** - people trust community organizations and service providers and don't trust government
- **Lead with vision, solutions and story** - what is our community's goal, reinforce that with asset-based, positive images and words, and a story of a person's experience



OCEAN &
MOUNTAIN



“Comms Organizing” - to build public understanding & support

- **Housing & Homelessness Communications**
Collaborative, a coalition of 50+ community providers made possible by philanthropic support
- At the end of a campaign that led with vision, polling showed voters were most influenced by **data about what’s at stake**



OCEAN &
MOUNTAIN



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE— Oct. 21, 2024

New data warns 57,400 more people across Los Angeles could experience unsheltered homelessness when funding expires

Without current funding, unsheltered homelessness could rise 28% across LA County

LOS ANGELES, CA— [New data](#) shows that with outset new voter-approved homelessness funding, nearly 57,400 more people could experience unsheltered homelessness throughout Los Angeles County due to lost housing and services. The funding cuts would result in a 28% rise in unsheltered homelessness across LA County.

“We have an opportunity to create more affordable housing, more accountability, more mental health care, more clean sidewalks, and safe neighborhoods, all by passing Measure A,” said **Dr. David Levitus**, Founder & Executive Director of LA Forward Institute. “When our systems for housing people, providing services, and keeping tenants in their homes are properly funded, it makes our region safer and more just for everyone.”



“Media Buzz” - share reactive messages with partners often

- Equip your staff, board, funders, clients, service providers and all key stakeholders with **reactive talking points** that respond to media stories with facts
- Acknowledge the challenges and encourage them to share with their audiences in their own words



Biggest opportunity & challenge- The Media



Clairemont braces for homeless housing

Residents fear the project will exacerbate growing transient problem

Author
Julie Stalmer

Publish Date
April 4, 2018

Let's talk about our culture

Was our culture hindering our messaging efforts?

Did we have a strategy?

- **Not considered our role to be proactive with Media**
- Lack of trust between... elected, press, providers
- Inadequate culture or opportunities for collaboration
- Our data, policies and practices are governmental focused and hard to understand
- National narratives don't always match local issues
- **Rhetoric was getting worse**
- Reactionary



Create a healthy communications ecosystem

- Build Trust and Influence in our relationships with Media
- Embrace the truth that as a CoC or Community leader, you are significant, your leadership is meaningful and has impact
- Ensure all interactions are built on trust, understanding and are of a reciprocal nature. Win-Win



Putting it together, putting it to work:

The Goldilocks Approach to Strategic Planning: Getting it "just right"



- What we had:
 - Dashboards & infographics- iterative process of perfecting them - Connecting the data to strategic plans
 - Knew our Media people
 - Social media platforms
 - Time to get it right
- What we wanted:
 - Providers, media, policymakers, community groups, elected officials, speaking events, press and the public could explain in one sentence
 - Deliberate decision to begin “pushing” data & the message out
 - Level set the environment – Change the Narrative

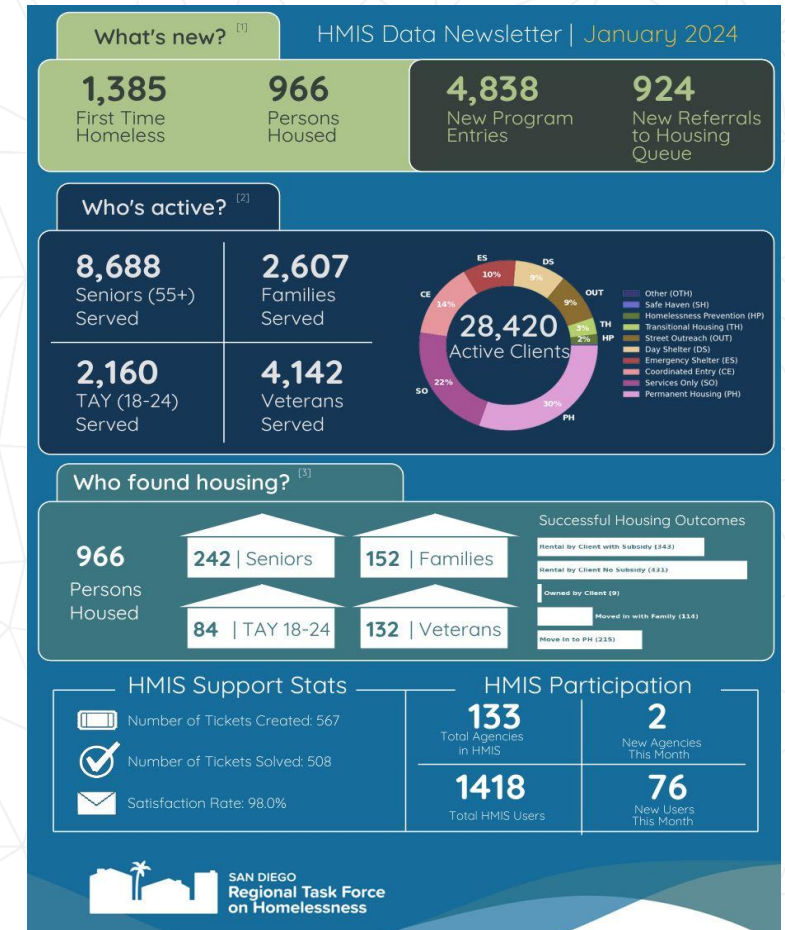
the Release -Annual recap -Monthly thereafter



- The first report pushed out
- Gives a baseline to consider
- Easily identifiable gaps to fill

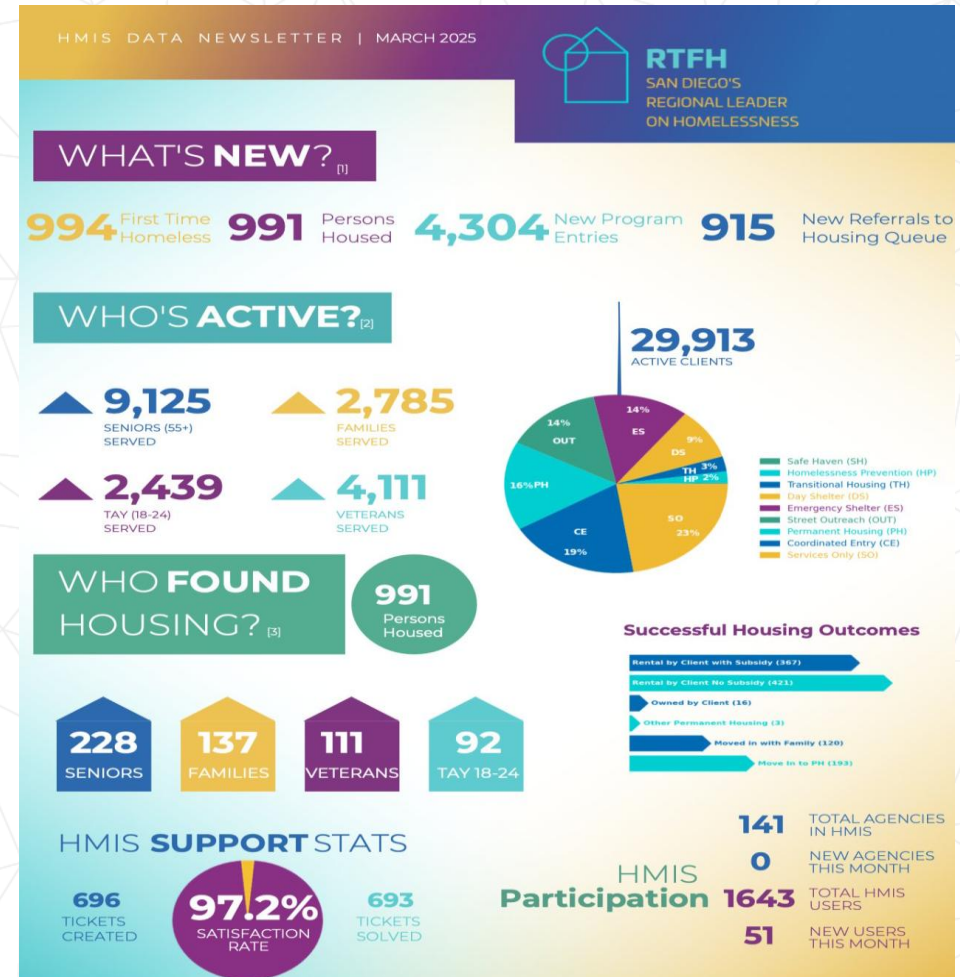
THE STATEMENT -

- “For every 10 Housed 13 more Experience Homelessness for the First time”



The Inflow/Outflow Monthly Report

- At a Glance Readability
- High Level Stats
- Focus is on Whole system
 - Populations
 - Success
- Definition Cheat-sheet included



Anchoring our messaging

Strengthened our relationship with all Media

- Better Political message-
- Elected officials could easily speak to this-
- Easy to understand for the Public
- Supported provider community
- Pushed out monthly directly to the Media
- Created culture of constant interact with Media
- Minimum Monthly engagement



Press after monthly report pushed out

- Focusing on outcomes and solutions
- Recognizing the immense work being done and the support needed
- Spreading the word, Winning the hearts, Opening the minds

Poway News Chieftain
Rancho Bernardo News Journal

NEWS

The trend continues: More falling into homelessness than becoming housed in San Diego County

The San Diego Union-Tribune

HOMELESSNESS

Report: For every 10 homeless people who found housing in last year, 13 more people became homeless

MORNING REPORT

VOICE of SAN DIEGO

DONATE

LA JOLLA LIGHT

NEWS

Number of newly homeless people continues to outpace newly housed in San Diego County

Morning Report: Surge of Newly Homeless San Diegans Outpacing Housing Efforts

by Voice of San Diego October 25, 2022

Twitter Facebook Email

Intentionally Strengthen Relationships Journalists and Media Outlets



- Press Releases
- Media Alerts
- Social Media Content
- Proactively Inviting Journalist to run story – make the connection – provide the data
- Op-Eds
- Find collaborative stories
- Take time to do deep dives/talk through processes, be transparent
- Hire or contract a communications team & PR

Lessons Learned



- The Media are your key partners - Bring them along
- Build trusting relationship with press -
- Take the lead in your own messaging:
 - Be Deliberate
 - Be Proactive
 - Be Bold
 - Publish it – Put it out there
 - Keep it simple & aligned with the work/goals
 - Message must match the local issues
 - Create a culture to change communication strategy on every level – website, press, narrative, stories,

Thank you

Tamera Kohler

Tamera.kohler@rtfhSD.org

www.rtfhSD.org

Twitter @RTFHSD





From Message to Media: Telling Your Story with Confidence

Libby Miller

Media Relations Specialist

National Alliance to End Homelessness



Intros



Who Are The “Media”?

- **Journalists and Reporters** – who research and write stories
- **Editors and Producers** – who shape how stories are told
- **Photographers and Videographers** – who provide visuals to support storytelling
- **Media Outlets** – such as newspapers, TV networks, radio stations, online platforms, podcasts, and social media channels

They can work for:

- National or local news organizations
- Traditional outlets (like *The New York Times*, NPR, or local TV news)
- Digital-first platforms (like Vox, BuzzFeed News, or YouTube channels)
- Advocacy or issue-focused outlets

Ending Homelessness is Possible.



Why Media Training Matters

- Elevates your message
- Builds public trust and credibility
- Prepares you for difficult or unexpected questions
- Helps align with your organization's goals



Before the Interview – Do Your Homework

- Know the **reporter, outlet, audience, and format**
- Research:
 - Reporter's past work
 - Publication's tone and readership
 - Clarify your **role** and **story relevance**
 - Draft and review **talking points** with your team



Align with the Message

- Stick to **organization or team-aligned messaging**
- Avoid personal opinions
- Use the interview to advance **organizational goals**



General Interview Tips

- Speak clearly, avoid industry jargon and acronyms
- Be likable and engaged
- Pause before answering—gather your thoughts
- It's okay to say "I don't know"
- Ensure understanding: Ask if you've been clear



Media Do's and Don'ts

- **Do:**

- Speak in soundbites
- Offer conclusions first, then support
- Use facts, not speculation
- Bridge to key messages

- **Don't:**

- Over-answer
- Get provoked or emotional
- Repeat negative framing
- Make unsupported predictions



Soundbite Strategy

- Short, memorable, quote-ready phrases
- Use emotion and clarity
- Support with data or lived experience
- Avoid puns, cliches, etc.



Conducting the Interview

- Set your mental “interview mode”
- Provide:
 - Your name, title, and brief bio
 - 1–2 lines about your organization
- Stay focused (avoid multitasking)
- Use notes discreetly during phone interviews
- Personalize your message
- For broadcast – be mindful of backgrounds, dress professionally, speak in a normal tone (avoid speaking too fast)



Master Your Messaging

- Focus on **ONE strong key message**
- Reinforce it throughout the interview
- Show **authentic enthusiasm** and appropriate emotion



Bridging and Blocking

Bridging

- **Bridge Techniques:**
- "That reminds me..."
- "Let's put that into perspective..."
- "I'm glad you asked..."

Blocking

- **Example Phrases:**
- "I'm not the right person to answer that, but I can tell you..."
- "I don't have that info, but what I do know is..."



Final Thoughts

- Think of it as a **conversation**, not a confrontation
- Ask the **reporter questions** when needed
- Stick to your **talking points**
- Remember: Only a small portion will be used—**make it count**



Now Let's Practice

Questions?

Let's practice and prepare together.

Contact info: Libby Miller, lmiller@naeh.org

Ending Homelessness is Possible.



Role Play Scenario

- Your Governor just signed a budget bill that would cut homelessness funding by 50% in your state. You have another bill sitting on the Gov.'s desk waiting for signature, however, so you want to talk about the impact, while avoiding direct criticism that might imperil your bill getting signed.
- The reporter you're talking to, however, wants a good soundbite for their story.



Op-Ed Exercise

- Who is your audience?
- What is your core message? Take that core message and refine and narrow. Refine and narrow again.
- Who is your messenger?

