

Media Relations Tips for Print Interviews

Before the Interview

- > Think of two or three main points you would like to make about your subject.
- > Plan ahead: Gather facts, figures and anecdotes to support your points.
- > Anticipate questions the reporter might ask and have responses ready. Practice your answers beforehand.
- > If a reporter calls you at a bad time, it is acceptable to ask when their deadline is and if you can call them back before then.
- > There are “five Cs” to success: Speak with *conviction* in a *conversational* manner while retaining your *composure*. Be *confident* — you are the expert. Be *colorful* — tell stories and anecdotes that illustrate your point; give examples.
- > If you are giving an interview over the phone, keep in mind that the reporter can hear background noise. Attempt to have your conversation in a quiet room without interruptions. If you and an associate are participating in the call together, communicate with each other using notes. Do not attempt to hit the mute button as the reporter will be able to tell. When a question is asked, take your time to think about your answer before you speak. Do not feel pressured to rush.

During the Interview

- > Be sure to give your name and your guild name. “Hi, I’m XXX from XXX guild, a Seattle Children’s Hospital guild.
- > Remember, the interviewer is there to do a job. Everything is ON THE RECORD, even before and after the reporter starts officially asking questions.
- > Be cooperative, truthful and courteous.
- > Never say, “No comment.” Explain to the reporter if legal or privacy issues prevent you from providing information.
- > Don’t speculate. If you do not understand a question, ask for clarification rather than talking around it. If you do not have the answer, say so. Tell the reporter where to find the information. (Do not give out names or contact information for other Children’s Hospital employees. Ask the reporter to contact Media Relations for the contact information).
- > Begin at a basic level. Use short direct words and avoid academic or technical jargon; explain special terms if you must use them.
- > Be brief. We live in the age of the sound bite. The shorter your comments, the less likely they are to be edited. Even print reporters are looking for short, snappy quotes.
- > Repeat your main points (in different ways) to make sure they get across.
- > If you are describing a surgery, procedure or case, do not provide identifying information that will violate the patient’s privacy. The only exception to this is when you have received a signed authorization form from the parent or guardian that allows the release of this information.
- > The reporter may pause for long periods of time hoping that you will fill the silence with more information. Do not feel compelled to fill the silence; instead, wait until another question is asked.
- > Invite the reporter to call back for clarification.

To contact Seattle Children’s Hospital Media Relations staff, call (206) 987-5246.

