

Promotion Kit



Getting Noticed

Your involvement in National Institute of Child Health and Human Development's (NICHD's) Media-Smart Youth; Eat, Think, and Be Active! program gives you a great opportunity to bring local media attention to your organization and to the services you provide to young people in your community.

This section of the curriculum provides you with:

- ◆ Tips on how to get noticed by local media
- ◆ A template news release that you can customize and send to your media contacts
- ◆ A set of key message points about the program that you may use as a guide when creating other materials about the program or when you are interviewed for media stories
- ◆ Media-Smart Youth fact sheet, which you may reproduce and distribute

Template News Release: A news release can serve two purposes for a local media outlet. Many times, a media outlet will run the release as you have written it. Other times, a reporter will use the release as a “story starter.” In this case, the text of the release is not directly turned into a story. Instead, the reporter may wish to produce his/her own story, including interviews with representatives of your organization and young people involved in the program.

The same news release may be distributed to various media outlets, including television, radio, and print. It is a good idea to send out news releases and then make follow-up calls to “pitch” your story. See tips for talking with reporters on page H-3. Please note that the news release provided to you is a template. You'll want to customize it with your local information and provide details about your organization. Don't forget to include your contact information at the top and print it on your organization's letterhead.

Key Message Points: Talking points help you and others in your organization stay “on message” when speaking with reporters or other people in your community eager to hear about the program and the work you do. Try to include these key points in your conversations about the Media-Smart Youth program.

You may also use and adapt these key message points to create other types of materials that your local media would be interested in, such as:

- ◆ **Media Alert**—A media alert or advisory lets media outlets know about a specific event you plan to hold, such as the *Big Production* launch or a news conference. The *Big Production* is the final media product created by Media-Smart Youth participants. Be sure to indicate what the event is, what time it begins, where it will be held, and who will participate. Keep the document length to one page and indicate whether photo or interview opportunities will be available.
- ◆ **Letter to the editor**—An effective letter to the editor should be relevant to a recent story in a newspaper or magazine about physical activity, nutrition, or media as it applies to youth. Use the message points to write a concise letter (100–250 words) about Media-Smart Youth and how it relates to the published story.
- ◆ **Op-Ed**—An op-ed is a longer piece, usually about 700 words or fewer, and provides an opportunity to express your opinion, supported by facts, about an issue. Send your op-ed to only one print outlet at a time with a cover letter about why readers would be interested in your piece.
- ◆ **PowerPoint presentation or speech scripts**—Use the message points along with photos of the program in action, local statistics, and quotes from Media-Smart Youth participants to create a presentation or speech that may be used in various settings.

Fact Sheet: The NICHD’s Media-Smart Youth Fact Sheet provides an overview of the program. You may reproduce and distribute the fact sheet as part of your promotional efforts.

Getting Started

Now that you have promotional materials, you will need to decide to whom you will send them and what types of outreach you will conduct.

Creating a media list: Media lists contain key information about all the media outlets and reporters you work with or would like to reach. Here’s how to create your list:

- ◆ **Call all your local media outlets**—print (both daily and weekly), television, and radio—and ask for the name of the assignment editor, or check a media directory at the library or the Web site of each media outlet. You could also ask your media partner to help you identify reporters and create the list.
- ◆ **From these sources, you will want to identify the reporters who cover youth, education, or health “beats.”** Personalized information to these reporters is more likely to get a response than items simply addressed to “editor” or “producer.”

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- ◆ For additional media contacts, consult with local organizations that serve similar populations and have similar goals to yours. They may be willing to share their media lists with you.
- ◆ Staff turnover is frequent at most media outlets, so update your contact list regularly.

Getting coverage: There are many ways you can get coverage from your local media. Simply sending the press release to them may result in a story. You also might choose to have a one-on-one meeting with a particular reporter. Or, you could have an event—such as a *Big Production* launch—in which you invite members of the media and other individuals in your community to come and hear about the program. Following are a few basic guidelines that will help you in this effort:

- ◆ Use the promotional materials as provided or as a guide to create your own. Incorporate local statistics and quotes from young people and the head of your organization, as well as descriptions of the services you provide and information about the Media-Smart Youth program. Be sure to include your organization’s logo whenever possible.
- ◆ In your communication to reporters and other individuals in your community, be sure to include all the relevant facts (who, what, when, where, and why) about the program or event.
- ◆ Decide what “picture” or visual would help people understand the program. You may choose to send photos of the program in action along with the press release, or you could invite a reporter and photographer to attend a lesson or session during creation of your *Big Production*. Visuals are much more engaging when young people are included, so be sure to encourage photographers to focus on the youth.

Tips on talking with reporters in person or by telephone:

- ◆ Take a few minutes to relax and prepare yourself for each conversation. Decide on the three main points you want the reporter to remember, and plan what you want to say. You may want to practice out loud beforehand. Use the Media-Smart Youth Key Message Points (page H-5) as your guide.
- ◆ When you meet with a reporter or reach one on the telephone, introduce yourself and ask whether the reporter is on deadline for another story. If he/she is on a deadline, ask when you can call or come back.
- ◆ Know the goal of your call. Do you want the reporter to visit during a lesson or a special event? Do you want him/her to write a story based on the news release you have sent? Tell the reporter the purpose of your visit/call early in the conversation.
- ◆ Speak concisely. Be able to summarize your main point in two sentences. Depending on how much time the reporter has, you can provide details.
- ◆ Be helpful. If you haven’t already sent the reporter your press release, you may wish to do so. At a minimum, provide the reporter with the Media-Smart Youth Fact

Sheet, Table of Contents from the curriculum, and other information to support your story, such as a backgrounder about your organization. If given enough time with the reporter, you may wish to show him/her the introductory segment of the Media-Smart Youth curriculum videotape.

- ◆ If you can't answer a question about your organization or the issue of youth and overweight for example, don't attempt to guess. Simply tell the reporter that you don't know and that you will follow up with him/her. Provide information only on topics about which you are knowledgeable. Track down the information you need and follow up later.
- ◆ When the conversation is finished, thank the reporter for his/her time and make sure the reporter has your contact information in case further questions come up. Be sure to invite the reporter to observe a lesson or provide a time in which the reporter can interview some of the youth taking part in the program. If a reporter calls you, return the call as quickly as possible.

In addition to working with a reporter directly, you also may get noticed by sending a letter to the editor or writing a guest editorial for your local newspaper. Or, see if you can get on the schedule for your local television or radio station's community show, or other such programming. Listen to talk radio in your area and find out when you or someone from your organization could participate or call in as a guest. Think reactively, as well as proactively. If a news outlet runs a story about the problem of overweight youth or poor nutrition among youth, call them up and let them know what you're doing to address the issue.

Getting the word out about your program to other members of the community can benefit you. Consider making lunchtime presentations to your local Rotary Club or service clubs. Think about associations in your community that would be interested in hearing about the program or team up with another organization and hold a press conference to talk about the issue of youth nutrition and physical activity in your community and what you are doing to address it.

If you use a variety of methods to reach out to your community and to local media, your efforts and work on Media-Smart Youth will get noticed.

Key Message Points

(Customize with local information)

A growing number of young people get little or no exercise, have poor eating habits, and are greatly influenced by media messages.

- ◆ Every day, 11- to 14-year-old youth spend nearly 7 hours using media, including television, computers, and video games. They encounter a barrage of marketing and advertising messages.¹
- ◆ Over the last three decades, the number of television commercials children viewed rose from about 20,000 per year (in the 1970s) to more than 40,000 per year. The majority of these advertisements are for food, primarily candy, cereal, and fast food.²
- ◆ More than 15 percent of young people in the United States are obese, and many more are at risk for becoming overweight or obese.³
- ◆ Youth take in more calories than they need, but most don't meet recommended intakes for several essential nutrients, including calcium, potassium, and dietary fiber.⁴
- ◆ Nearly half of American youth ages 12 to 21 are not physically active on a regular basis.⁵
- ◆ [INSERT A STATE OR LOCAL STATISTIC FOUND FROM THE INTERNET OR YOUR LIBRARY]

In response to this problem, the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) developed Media-Smart Youth, a new afterschool program.

- ◆ The NICHD (<http://www.nichd.nih.gov>) conducts and supports research and programs on topics related to the health and well-being of children, adults and families.
- ◆ The NICHD is part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). The NIH is the biomedical research arm of the federal government and is an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
- ◆ Media-Smart Youth seeks to empower young people ages 11 to 13 to make healthful choices about nutrition and physical activity by helping them understand how media can influence their health.

¹Roberts, D., & Foehr, U. (2004). *Kids & Media in America*. United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.

²Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation. (2004, February). *The role of media in childhood obesity*. (Publication 7030). Available at <http://www.kff.org>.

³Institute of Medicine. (2005). *Preventing childhood obesity: Health in the balance*, (pp. 55-56). Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.

⁴U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Agriculture. (2005). *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. Retrieved August 11, 2005, from <http://www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines/dga2005/document/pdf/DGA2005.pdf>.

⁵Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. (1996). *Physical activity and health: A report of the Surgeon General*. Retrieved August 11, 2005, from <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/sgr/sgr.htm>.

The Media-Smart Youth curriculum includes 10 lessons plus a media production project that integrates learning in three key areas—media, nutrition, and physical activity.

- ◆ Media—Young people will understand the connections between media and health and will learn to analyze and create media messages. Young people will develop their own media products to promote positive nutrition and physical activity messages to their peers.
- ◆ Nutrition—Young people will understand the basic principles of a nutritious and balanced diet and will practice ways to make healthful snack choices in real-life settings.
- ◆ Physical activity—Young people will understand the importance of daily physical activity in promoting health and will practice ways to be more physically active in their daily lives.

The Media-Smart Youth curriculum has gone through a thorough development process with rigorous review and pilot testing.

- ◆ The curriculum combines solid youth–development principles and practices with the most current research findings, federal recommendations about nutrition and physical activity, and extensive field-testing.
- ◆ The curriculum is consistent with widely accepted national standards of learning.
- ◆ The curriculum was reviewed by experts in nutrition, physical activity, media literacy, and youth development.
- ◆ The curriculum was initially pilot-tested in a variety of settings by afterschool programs in seven sites around the country. The second draft of the curriculum was pilot-tested by afterschool programs in three sites. Curriculum developers obtained feedback from facilitators, youth, and parents in the sites in order to revise and refine the curriculum.

[Your organization name here] is conducting NICHD’s Media-Smart Youth curriculum with youth in [your community or city].

- ◆ Young people in [your town here] are participating in the Media-Smart Youth program.
- ◆ [Describe how the young people were chosen and how often they meet.]
- ◆ [Describe what the “*Big Production*” media production project is/will be.]