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## Working With Media

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While the national campaign focuses on securing national media coverage, Foster Care Month also provides a great opportunity for pitching positive foster care stories to local media. During May, media in your area may be more open to featuring human-interest stories that profile members of the community, such as inspiring foster care alumni. Many print, radio and television outlets have regular segments spotlighting “people making a difference” in the area. You can present them with brief profiles of foster parents, mentors, social workers and others who contribute to the lives of local youth.

Remember, there are many different issue-based “months” out there. “May is Foster Care Month” will probably not be considered newsworthy by a reporter. You will have to build a case for why foster care is an issue of concern and interest to members of your community all year round. Be sure to highlight how foster care affects the audiences served by the media outlets you approach for support. The core messages, fact sheets and other resources provided in this Toolkit will give you a solid base for developing your own localized pitch materials.

### Five Ideas to Get You Started:

- > **Visit the Online Newsroom at [www.fostercaremonth.org](http://www.fostercaremonth.org).** There you will find many resources including: fact sheets, success stories, suggested “hot topics” about foster care, potential story angles and much more. You may use these materials as a guide for preparing your own information – remember, the more local you can make your pitch, the more it will resonate with reporters in your market.
- > **Pick (and prepare) your spokespeople.** Compile a list of a few local experts, foster care alumni, foster parents and others making a difference in the lives of youth in care in your community. Who will be available to speak with reporters about their experiences? Think about people who have either had previous interactions with the media or have been properly trained to do so. Develop a brief bio or profile for each spokesperson. Visit [www.fostercaremonth.org](http://www.fostercaremonth.org) to see sample profiles. Work closely with each of your spokespeople *before* connecting them to an interested reporter. They should understand the scope of the proposed story, how to handle difficult questions and which of your core messages you would like for them to emphasize during the interview.
- > **Send a Save-the-Date notice (or Calendar Listing) to all of your local media outlets.** See *Creating a Press List* in [Tools](#) for help in compiling a list of reporters, editors and producers who cover family issues in your area. If you are hosting a special event during Foster Care Month, follow up the save-the-date notice mailing with a press advisory one week prior to your event. In addition to event details, convey why foster families and volunteers are important, why your organization is participating in Foster Care Month, and what you want the community to know about and do for young people in foster care. Be brief, use compelling, local statistics and try to tell a good story. Check out [Tools](#) for more tips on *Reaching Out to the Media*.

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## Working with Media (continued)

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- > **Write a Letter to the Editor about foster care.** Most daily and weekly newspapers have a special section for letters from local citizens. These letters are particularly effective if sent by a community leader, foster parent, volunteer or foster care alum (you can ghostwrite the content for them). Keep your content brief (10 sentences maximum). Try to convey the year round needs of youth in foster care. Mention that May is National Foster Care Month and include a public call-to-action (Change a Lifetime) message that encourages others to get involved. Send these letters to your newspapers by mid-April to leverage the heightened awareness of Foster Care Month. Check out [Tools](#) for sample letters to the editor.
- > **Write an OpEd about foster care.** An OpEd (Opinion-Editorial) is written by a member of the community with a particular point of view to express. Most daily newspapers have an Editorial or Opinion Page containing OpEds, many of which are written by syndicated or staff columnists. They must be topical, timely, well written and must clearly state a strong opinion. Check out [Tools](#) for more information on *Tips for OpEds* and for some samples to guide you.

### Tools:

- > National Foster Care Month Core Messages
- > National Foster Care Month News Release (English)
- > National Foster Care Month News Release (Spanish)
- > *Creating a Press List*
- > *Reaching Out to the Media*
- > Sample Calendar Listing
- > Sample Media Timeline
- > Sample Press Advisory
- > Sample News Release
- > Sample Letter to the Editor – from a foster parent
- > Sample Letter to the Editor – from an advocate
- > Sample Letter to the Editor – from a foster care alum
- > *Tips for OpEds*
- > Sample OpEd – from a foster parent
- > Sample OpEd – from a foster care alum
- > *Guide for Media*
- > State Fact Sheets about Children in Foster Care
- > Facts about Children in Foster Care (National data)
- > Facts about Disproportionality of Children of Color in Foster Care (National data)