

INTERVIEW QUICK TIPS

To help you prepare for media interviews, a list of tips is provided below with suggestions and points to remember when you're being interviewed.

THE INTERVIEW

It's impossible NOT to communicate. Your words – and the way you convey them – create the complete message you leave with your audience. When you talk to a reporter, realize that the reporter is paying attention to EVERYTHING you say (although only a small portion of what you say makes it into the final story) and may be taping it or writing it down. Make sure that you say what you'd like to see in the reported story.

CONSIDER THE AUDIENCE

Think about the knowledge, background and attitude of the audience you're reaching and the topic you'll be discussing. Awareness of your audience – beyond the reporter you're talking to – helps determine what you must do to come across appropriately.

DETERMINE YOUR KEY MESSAGES

As you prepare for your interview, determine the main points you want to cover and the way you want to cover them. What are the points you want your audience to know after you've completed the interview?

ANTICIPATE QUESTIONS

Prepare answers for questions – both easy and tough – that the reporter may ask. Be prepared, know your facts and answer questions with messages.

TURN NEGATIVES TO POSITIVES

When asked a question with a hostile attitude or with a negative characterization in it, respond with positives. Avoid using or reflecting the negative language. You may need to stop the negativity with a simple, "No" or "That's not the case," but don't dwell on it. Make a transition to one of your key messages and continue to tell your story. For example:

Q. Meningococcal disease only affects about 3,000 Americans each year and the vaccine used to prevent it costs about \$85. Given the disease is so rare, don't you think the vaccine is too expensive to justify immunization?

A. No. Meningococcal disease is a devastating disease that can potentially be prevented. Immunization is the most effective way to prevent the disease and for the price of a pair of sneakers, you can potentially save your child's life. I wish I had known about vaccination before my child was affected.

TAKE CONTROL. DO MORE THAN ANSWER QUESTIONS: BUILD BRIDGES

Control is what it's all about. You've got a story to tell your audience. The reporter may have questions and issues that must be addressed, but you are able to address them in a way that moves you back to the story you want to tell. Build a bridge to your messages.

DON'T FEEL PRESSURE TO ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS

A reporter may ask you a question that you may not have the answer to – that's OK. You're not expected to answer questions about vaccine supply, specific disease-related questions, or any questions that you may not feel comfortable answering. Feel free to suggest the reporter speak with a physician or the vaccine manufacturer, as they may be able to provide more detailed, accurate information.

A simple answer to a question you're not quite comfortable answering could be:

"I would suggest you speak with [insert a physician or the vaccine manufacturer, as appropriate], who may have more information for you."

BEWARE OF "OFF THE RECORD"

Experience indicates there's no such thing as "off the record." If you say something to a reporter outside the context of an interview, it's still fodder for the story. If you say something you wish you hadn't and then tell the reporter, "That's off the record," you're too late. If you speak off the record, remember that the reporter's definition of "off the record" is not likely to be the same as yours. Say what you mean and mean what you say as the story source.

USE THE INTERVIEW AS YOUR OPPORTUNITY TO TELL YOUR STORY

Not everything you say will make it into the final story, so use the interview to tell your story and deliver key messages clearly and concisely. This is the time to discuss your personal experience with meningococcal disease and to provide important information about the awareness initiative.