

**GIFFORDS CENTER FOR
VIOLENCE INTERVENTION**



MEDIA TRAINING

What is news?

- **Prominence:** Well-known person, place or event
- **Impact:** Affects people
- **Proximity:** Location, Location, Location
- **Timeliness:** Current, fresh
- **Unusual:** Rare, shocking, bizarre
- **Conflict:** Arguments, rivalries
- **Human interest:** Evokes emotions
- **Other:** Money, disaster, novelty, scandal

Types of Media Interviews

Print:

- Longer format but precise answers are still important
- Can be opportunity to educate reporters
- Chance to correct misstatement

Television (Video):

- Short, simple answers are crucial
- Emphasis on appearance and technique
- Many of these interviews they will only use a few seconds of your conversation

Radio (or podcast):

- Emphasis on delivery: voice, inflection, and pace
- Need to speak “visually”
- Okay to use notes, but don’t read

Critical Elements

- **Consistent:** Like memorable commercials, good messages require consistency and repetition.
- **Brief:** Keep your messages brief. In broadcast, the average quote lasts 7.3 seconds. In print media, quotes run between 8 and 20 words. This includes keeping press releases short!
- **Simple:** Use short words, use short sentences. Use everyday words. Use contractions. Speak messages aloud. DON'T use abbreviations. Use colloquial terms when describing policy.

Key Interview Terms

*You must confirm with the reporter before you start speaking if the interview is on the record, on background, etc. **You can't just say this is off the record, you have to ask if you can go off the record.***

- **Off the record:** Comments cannot be printed but can inform other reporting.
- **On background:** Information provided by a source that can be used, but the source cannot be named or quoted directly. Agree on attribution ground rules before speaking.
- **Not for attribution:** Comments that can be quoted directly by describing their connection to the story without naming the source (ex: a source who was present at the meeting, or a White House official, etc.)
- **On the record:** Everything in the conversation can be used and quoted using the source's name and title.

Think before you speak

Things to figure out ahead of time

- **Audience:** Who do you want to reach/persuade? How can you relate to them early on or connect to their concerns/beliefs? (*i.e.*, “*We can all agree _____ ... That’s why _____*”)
- **Message:** What arguments are most effective with your audience?
- **1-3 Main Points:** Settle on 1-3 messages you will 100% get into your interview, regardless of what questions are asked. Take advantage of useful pivots and deflections, including:
 - “*I’m glad you brought up _____.*” “*You bring up a great point.*” [*Pivot to TPs*]
 - “*The real issue here is _____.*”
 - “*I imagine many of your readers/viewers _____.*”
 - “*That reminds me of _____.*” [*Have a story/anecdote in your back pocket*]

Tough Questions and Stay on Message:

- **A – Address:** “Absolutely, and...”
- **T – Transition:** “It’s important to remember that without an ATF Director the agency can’t be effective.”
- **M – Message:** “It is vital that the Senate confirm Dettlebach so the agency can finally have a leader.”
- **S – Sell:** “To prevent further tragedies, we need ATF to do its job”



Never say “No Comment”

Last-Minute Tips for a Successful Interview

Be Prepared! To perfect message delivery, preparation is key. The best spokespeople show up to interviews clear on messaging, in the loop on the reporter's story angle, and equipped with additional resources that could be useful to the journalist.

Silence is Important! Right before your television, radio or phone interview, be sure to turn off or silence cell phones, televisions, etc. Be sure to kindly let house members know that your interview will be taking place and to keep noise to a minimum.

Be Aware of How Your Body Language Impacts Your Presence! You might not think twice about crossing your arms or leaning back in your chair, but certain body positions can cause you to seem closed off or uncomfortable. To give off a warm and relaxed disposition, we recommend that you: Sit up straight, **Smile** and Lean forward slightly.

Dress the part! To look your best on camera, avoid bright colors and patterns and opt for softer colors instead. If you are wearing a tie, wear a solid color rather than a patterned one. If you wear glasses, adjust the lighting in the room to reduce glare from the lenses. Position the camera so that you are looking up slightly and centered on the screen. While it's likely that the interviewer will only see your upper half, it's still a good idea to wear professional pants or a skirt in case you need to stand up for any reason.

Check Tech Set-up in Advance! Clear the desk space, Check that your webcam is working, and check that your audio is working. Check your internet connection as well as be sure that the background behind you is neutral and free from clutter. Adjust the lights in the room.

Press Releases, Talking Points

- Releases are structured to be precise and increase coverage. We highlight what's **newsworthy** in the announcement
 - Like a news article, facts are asserted throughout, with the most important near the top.
 - **Quotes** are included to **provide color** and communicate **opinions or values**.
 - Quotes that recite facts do not add value and likely will not be used by media.
 - A sample press release format can be found [here](#).
- **Remember:** we want quotes and talking points be **quotable**.
- **What reporters say:**
 - Jargon and too many details can be a deterrent
 - If they have questions, they'll ask

How to Pitch Press

TV:

- Call news desks and pitch producers

Print:

- Pitch reporters who cover the beat your pitch falls into (IE a CVI funding bill should be pitched to a political reporter.)

Radio:

- Pitch producers and reporters depending on the show.

Most importantly do your research! Journalists biggest complaint is getting pitches for things they don't cover.

What to Pitch Press

Press release: When you're responding to something timely like a major announcement or reacting to an event. You can also send one out when you're announcing something in addition to an exclusive.

Exclusive: When you're breaking news or announcing something new and want guaranteed coverage. You can send a press release after the the exclusive is out.

Press Conference: When you're announcing news, holding an event, or special speaker. You can send a press advisory, call press to invite them. Afterwards you can send out a press release.

Op-Eds: When you want to make a longer point or share an opinion.

What's key? Follow up, follow up, follow up

Creating a media list

- Look for reporters who frequently report on gun violence or politics
- Set up Google news alerts for your organization and relevant topics
- Create an excel sheet of media contacts as you get them (especially phone numbers!)
- You can use MailChimp or even your regular email (If you do this we recommend BCC'ing)
- There are also databases available like, Cision, Muckrack, etc, to help you source reports

Messaging Tips

Check out HAVI'S [Public Response to Community Violence Intervention Messages \(squarespace.com\)](https://squarespace.com)

Key Highlights:

- The most convincing messaging around CVI was that it is a proven effective to prevent violence.
- Secondly, CVI programs have economic benefits to individuals and communities.

Additional Resources

- [GIFFORDS Center for Violence Intervention](#)
- [Michael Smart Resources](#) (free PR tips)
- [Sample Press Release](#)
- Media Databases: Cision, Muckrack, Critical Mention, and more
- [PR Daily](#)
- [How to create a Google alert](#)