Grassroots Involvement
OHA Legislative Process

Prior to and during each legislative session, OHA’s Council on Policy and Legislation meets with OHA staff to help determine the Association’s position - for, against, or monitor - on a particular legislative issue. The Council’s recommendations are then forwarded to the OHA board of trustees for review and approval. In those rare instances when contentious issues arise and a consensus by the OHA membership cannot be reached regarding the position OHA should take on an issue, OHA staff will “represent” each side of the issue rather than advocating a particular position, for or against.

Throughout the legislative session, OHA will provide legislative updates via HOTLINE, and calls to action via VoterVoice when your quick response and involvement is needed. OHA maintains copies of all bills, so you may contact us at any time to request a copy of those bills you are interested in reviewing. Also, bills may be viewed online at www.oklegislature.gov. During session, OHA staff tracks legislation daily via a computerized legislative reporting system. OHA has a daily presence at the State Capitol during the legislative session.

Serving as your voice at the state Capitol and in other local legislative arenas is one of the most important roles the Oklahoma Hospital Association plays for its members. And, we extend that role on national legislative and regulatory fronts through our active partnership with the American Hospital Association in Washington, D.C.

AHA’s advocacy staff has built a solid reputation on Capitol Hill and has a good working relationship with members of Congress. Our ongoing partnership with the AHA, coupled with the grassroots support from our members, enables us to be an effective player in the political arena.

If you have questions regarding your local, state, or federal involvement in the political process, please contact Craig Jones, Lynne White, Sandra Harrison, Melanie Morriss or any OHA staff member.
VoterVoice

This year, OHA will provide members with opportunities to effortlessly communicate with elected officials as their voting constituents, through an internet-based program for grassroots advocacy. “VoterVoice” is a program that allows OHA staff to quickly and easily organize grassroots lobbying campaigns for all members, or select groups within our member database.

**BENEFITS**

- Immediate 10-fold increase in member participation in grassroots activities.
- With real-time activity reports you will know who contacted whom, enabling you and your board to measure the success of your grassroots campaigns.
- Significantly decrease the time needed to launch and manage multiple grassroots campaigns— from hours to just minutes.
- 35% cost reduction for targeted bulk email and fax communications to grassroots contacts.

**FEATURES**

- Grassroots contact information collected for use in future grassroots activities.
- Pinpoint targeting of swing votes, legislative committees or regulatory agencies.
- Up-to-date contact information on all state and federal legislators and committees.
- Registration form for collection of user contact information.
- One-click logon for repeat visitors.
- Wizard-driven advocacy system.
- Ability to send messages to home and business officials.
- Ability to send messages by email, fax, or letter.

**HOW IT WORKS**

*Example:* a senate bill that would have an impact on workforce recruitment is scheduled to go before the full senate for a vote.

*OHA members dealing with the challenges of an insufficient workforce need to let their Senators know how this action will affect their hospital, and how important it is to them as voting constituents, that their views be represented.*

1. OHA staff sends an email to all CEOs, executive and human resources staff, and RN administrators, explaining the issue and call to action.
2. When OHA members receive the email, it instructs them to click on a link that takes them to the VoterVoice page on the OHA website. *The first time members access VoterVoice, they are prompted through a user registration process. Future visits to the site will require a one-click logon with user i.d. and password.*
3. The program wizard prompts members through a few simple steps that allow them to see the targeted officials and the message.
4. The message, which has been crafted by OHA staff, is previewed as it will appear to their senators.
5. The member will then hit the ‘send message’ button, and the message will be sent to their senators on Capitol Hill.
2014 OHA Council on Policy and Legislation

Chuck Skillings, Chair (2015)
Chief Executive Officer  SE
St. Anthony Shawnee Hospital
Shawnee

Roger Knak (2014)
Administrator/CEO  NW
Fairview Regional Medical Center
Fairview

Kent Rogers (2014)
Chief Executive Officer  SE
Mercy Hospital Ada
Ada

Randy Segler (2014)
Chief Executive Officer  SW
Comanche County Memorial Hospital
Lawton

David Stire (2014)
Chief Executive Officer  NW
Jane Phillips Medical Center
Bartlesville

Rick Ferguson (2015)
Chief Executive Officer  Tulsa
Oklahoma Surgical Hospital
Tulsa

Cathy Hibbs (2015)
Chief Executive Officer  OKC
Deaconess Hospital
Oklahoma City

Jimmy Leopard (2015)
Chief Executive Officer  NE
Wagoner Community Hospital
Wagoner

Stan Tatum (2015)
Chief Executive Officer  NW
St. Mary’s Regional Medical Center
Enid

Chris Hammes (2016)
Vice President & COO  OKC
INTEGRIS Health
Oklahoma City

Jay Johnson (2016)
President & CEO  SW
Duncan Regional Hospital
Duncan

David Keith (2016)
Chief Executive Officer  SE
McAlester Regional Health Center
McAlester

Jeff Nowlin (2016)
President & COO  Tulsa
St. John Medical Center
Tulsa

Ex-Officio Members:
Anne Roberts
Director, Legislative Affairs
INTEGRIS Health
Oklahoma City

James Berry
Chief Executive Officer
Purcell Municipal Hospital
Purcell
Representing OHA-PAC

Richard Boone
President
St. John Medical Center Foundation
Tulsa

Tyra Palmer
Government Relations
Hillcrest Health Care System
Tulsa
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Senior Vice President, Federal Relations  
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Washington D.C.  
(202) 626-2314
Effective Grassroots Involvement

Public policy decisions made at the local, state and federal level have an impact on Oklahoma hospitals and the care they deliver to their patients. These policy decisions are influenced directly and indirectly by the opinion of the general public and the local citizens that will be affected.

Grassroots involvement in your community means educating and organizing members of the community to make sure that all officials – candidates and those who hold office – are aware of the needs of your hospital and the impact of legislative actions on your institution.

The ability to organize and activate your "grassroots" advocates – individuals directly connected to the hospital or in the larger community beyond your walls – is even more important than ever before. Organized grassroots advocates are key to any hospital’s success in influencing federal, state and local public policy.

Developing a strong, broad grassroots base of individuals who will actively engage in legislative advocacy efforts on behalf of your hospital is essential, especially since hospitals are uniquely positioned to be a catalyst for community and grassroots organizing efforts.

Hospitals already enjoy broad community support and have access to constituencies that have the potential to wield significant influence – both in numbers and clout – if they are organized and involved in public policy issues. Trustees, physicians, administrative staff, volunteers, patients and their families, employees, vendors, other health care entities, donors, supporters from the business and philanthropic communities and media representatives are all potential partners in your advocacy efforts. If you were to count the number of individuals for a single hospital and multiply that number by the more than 5,000 hospitals in the country, then organize and inspire them, we would have an overwhelming grassroots movement!

What Needs to be Done?

Many hospitals already work to organize and involve key internal and external advocates in their grassroots efforts. Every hospital should commit to an organized, sustained effort to build a grassroots base of support for participation in advocacy efforts. Usually, getting the support you need is relatively simple and requires communicating and educating those within and outside of your hospital.

A few simple techniques for building grassroots support includes:
Regularly communicating public policy issues to key advocates: trustees, physicians, administrative staff, employees, patients, volunteers, vendors, donors and other community supporters;

Developing a system you can use in order to quickly call key advocates to action, either selectively or en masse when critical issues arise at the federal, state or local level;

Encouraging individuals in your hospital community to take an interest in policy issues by sponsoring public events with public officials; and

Making certain that your hospital’s media and public relations efforts support your grassroots efforts and goals.

By organizing your hospital community for grassroots action, you will do much more than generate political power for the issue of the day. Over the long term, you will position your hospital as an opinion leader on those issues affecting your community’s health and the delivery of health care.

By organizing a strong grassroots base, you will contribute to the continued fulfillment of your hospital’s mission – today and tomorrow. Cultivating your grassroots contacts will help your community by giving them a voice in public policy issues which inevitably impact them.

This section of your notebook provides you with some tools and ideas for making an impact in the political arena, regardless of whether or not you are dealing on a one-to-one basis or are launching a full-fledged grassroots or letter-writing campaign.
Making Effective Phone Calls

If you don’t know your senator or representative’s telephone number in Oklahoma or in Washington, D.C., refer to “Oklahoma Senate or “Oklahoma House” tabs; or you may reach their offices by calling one of the following numbers:

- **Oklahoma House of Representatives**: (405) 521-2711
- **Oklahoma Senate**: (405) 524-0126
- **U. S. Capitol Switchboard**: (202) 224-3121
- **Oklahoma Governor’s office**: (405) 521-2342
- **Oklahoma LT. Governor’s office**: (405) 521-2161

**For Whom Should You Ask?**

- Ask for the senator or representative if you have a relationship with him or her.
- If you don’t know the senator or representative, tell the person who answers the phone the issue you are calling about and ask to speak with the legislative assistant who handles that issue. For most issues, you will probably want to speak with the legislative assistant or the health legislative assistant, if one is assigned.
- Follow up your phone call with an email to the person you talked with and send a copy of the email to OHA Staff.
- If you cannot reach a legislative assistant, leave a concise message with the person who answered the phone. **Legislative and congressional offices do count the number of calls they receive on an issue—pro and con—and relay that information to the senator or representative.**

**What Do You Say?**

- Identify yourself by name, address and hometown within their legislative district.
- Identify the bill by number, name and author (i.e., House Bill 1235, Rep. Steele).
- Clearly state the action you would like the senator or representative to take on the issue (vote for, vote against, offer an amendment, delete a provision, etc)
- Focus on a single issue, making two or three key points in your phone call.
- Have talking points—or your own notes—in front of you when you call, in order to stay focused on the message you want to deliver. OHA will provide you with talking points when we ask you to communicate with your elected public official.
• **Localize the issue to demonstrate the impact on your hospital and the legislator's own constituents. Give specific examples.**
• Ask for your legislator's view or position on the bill or issue.
• Show appreciation for past votes of support. **Be positive.**

**Tips:**

- Keep your call brief—not more than three or four minutes.
- If you are asked a question you cannot answer, tell them you will get the answer and get back to them. If they request written materials, supply this promptly since decisions are often made very quickly during legislative sessions. If you need help finding the answer, contact OHA.
- Leave your name, telephone number and e-mail address with the staff person you have spoken with in case they have any questions later.
- Record the name of the legislative assistant you spoke to and put their name in your phone book. Next time, you can ask for him or her by name and begin building a relationship. Staffers are more likely to listen to and return phone calls from people they know.
Writing Effective Letters

- Write the letter in your own words on your personal stationery or hospital letterhead. A single, well-written letter from a constituent is more likely to influence a legislator's decision than an avalanche of mail. Modify sample letters provided to deliver your own personal and unique message.
- The letter can be handwritten or typed, and can be mailed, faxed or E-mailed. You should fax or E-mail when time is limited.

Opening Paragraph:

- State the subject of your letter.
- Identify the bill by number, title, and authors, if available.
- Identify yourself and your hospital, health system or organization.

Example: "I am president of University Medical Center, the largest teaching hospital in the state," or "I am a member of the board of trustees of Memorial Hospital, the only hospital serving six rural counties."

Body of Letter:

- Explain the issue simply and clearly; use as many facts as possible to support your arguments.
- Briefly state the 2-3 most important reasons for your position on the bill or provision.
- Explain how the issue could affect your organization and community, directly and indirectly.
- Be specific in stating what you want your elected official to do.
- Request an answer. Ask the individual to let you know his or her position on the issue.
- Sign your name and provide your address.

Tips:

- Write to the legislators who represent your hospital or health system, and to the legislators who represent where you live.
- Be brief. Limit the length of your letter to no more than two pages, and preferably only one page. Summarize your position at the beginning of your letter and then expand on specifics in the remainder of the letter.
- Be reasonable, constructive and polite.
- Thank elected officials for their support when they vote in your favor. Also let them know in a polite manner if they voted contrary to your position and ask if you can count on them the next time.
- Send a copy of your letter to the Oklahoma Hospital Association, 4000 Lincoln Boulevard, Oklahoma City, OK 73105, or email a copy of your letter to Melanie Morriss at morriissme@okoha.com so we can coordinate our lobbying activities with the American Hospital Association’s and with your grassroots efforts.
# Forms of Address for Federal, State and Local Government Officials

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Addressee</th>
<th>Form of Address</th>
<th>Salutation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Legislator, State</td>
<td>The Honorable John Smith Oklahoma House of Representatives</td>
<td>Dear Representative Smith:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senator, State</td>
<td>The Honorable John Smith Oklahoma State Senate</td>
<td>Dear Senator Smith:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City Councilman</td>
<td>The Honorable John Smith City Councilman</td>
<td>Dear Councilman Smith:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commissioner</td>
<td>The Honorable John Smith</td>
<td>Dear Commissioner Smith:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governor</td>
<td>The Honorable John Smith Governor of Oklahoma</td>
<td>Dear Governor Smith:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lieutenant Governor</td>
<td>The Honorable John Smith Lieutenant Governor of Oklahoma</td>
<td>Lieutenant Governor Smith:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mayor</td>
<td>The Honorable John Smith Mayor of ____________</td>
<td>Dear Mayor Smith:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President, United States</td>
<td>The President</td>
<td>Mr. President:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice President, United States</td>
<td>The Honorable John Smith</td>
<td>Dear Mr. Vice President:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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### Forms of Address for Federal, State and Local Government Officials

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Representative, United States</td>
<td>The Honorable John Smith&lt;br&gt;United States House of Representatives</td>
<td>Dear Mr. Smith:&lt;br&gt;Or&lt;br&gt;Dear Congressman Smith:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senator, United States</td>
<td>The Honorable John Smith&lt;br&gt;United States Senate</td>
<td>Dear Senator Smith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House Speaker, United States</td>
<td>The Honorable John Smith&lt;br&gt;Speaker of the House of Representatives</td>
<td>Dear Mr. Speaker:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cabinet Officers (such as the Secretary of Health &amp; Human Services and The Attorney General)</td>
<td>The Honorable John Smith&lt;br&gt;Secretary of Health and Human Services&lt;br&gt;The Honorable John Smith&lt;br&gt;Attorney General of the United States</td>
<td>Dear Mr. Secretary:&lt;br&gt;Dear Mr. Attorney General:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Effective Letter-writing Campaigns

Letter-writing campaigns to support your hospital’s position can help inform, educate and influence decision makers. Letters are read by legislators and they are counted. Letter-writing campaigns are valuable tools in developing a broad base of support for your position.

Targeting a Letter-writing Campaign

Letter-writing campaigns work at more than one level. You will need to be able to generate a detailed, focused letter from your organization’s leaders, including your board chair, and to mount a mass mail campaign from your entire network of hospital advocates.

Your campaign should target decision makers who can help sway the outcome of a particular issue. At times, you will want to make sure that as many legislators as possible are hearing from their constituents. On other occasions, you will want to get letters to specific legislators whose votes are key to the process.

Implementing Your Letter-writing Campaign

Organizing a letter-writing campaign is an effective way of demonstrating to your elected officials that your issue has broad support.

⭐ Write an action alert.

*An action alert will provide potential hospital advocates with background information, suggested actions to take and a list of individuals to target.*

- Briefly describe the issue and ask for support of your campaign. Most often OHA will provide you with talking points.
- Call for immediate action and provide simple steps for the advocate to follow.
- Provide a sample letter that advocates can use as a guide, but encourage them to express their own personal perspective. Individualized, thoughtful letters carry the most weight. Include the names and addresses of legislators you are asking them to contact.
- When issues are time sensitive send legislators an e-mail.
★ Distribute the alert broadly.

*Mail the alert to potential allies. You can often get mailing lists from other organizations or ask them to mail your alert.*

- Use VoterVoice to send an alert to your e-mail contacts.
- Pass out the alert at meetings, events or wherever likely allies might gather.
- Some of your key audiences should include:

  ✓ Members of the hospital's board of directors
  ✓ Employees
  ✓ Physicians
  ✓ Volunteers
  ✓ Patients, former patients & their family members
  ✓ Elected community officials
  ✓ Community and business leaders
  ✓ Vendors
  ✓ Other health care entities in the community
  ✓ Donors
  ✓ Media representatives

When brainstorming about where to look for support, you should ask yourself two questions:

1. Who else is or should be concerned about this issue?
2. Who influences legislators and will also support this issue?
Face-to-face meetings are a very effective method of communicating with senators, representatives and their staffs. These meetings are also important in building long-term relationships with your elected officials.

Where Do You Meet?

You have some options:

- You can call the official's local office and make an appointment to see him or her when they are back in their district or in the state;
- You can invite them to tour your hospital; or
- You can meet with your member of Congress in Washington, D.C., when Congress is in session.

How Do You Request a Meeting?

- Contact the official's local or Washington, D.C. office and ask to speak with the appointment secretary/scheduler.
- Explain who you are, the organization you represent and the reason you want a meeting with the senator or representative. Ask the scheduler how you can arrange a meeting. If you are requesting a meeting in the state, you may be referred to the district or local office.
- If you are inviting the legislator to visit the hospital, a letter of invitation should be sent by the CEO and/or board chairman (or a board member or other "hospital family member" who has a personal relationship with the legislator).
  
- Send the letter to the office recommended by the scheduler.
- Ask the scheduler what amount of lead time is needed to schedule a hospital visit and to send your invitation far enough in advance.
During an Office Meeting:

★ Introduce yourself and any others in your group, stating where you are from and what health care organizations you represent.

★ If you are going with a group, decide in advance who will lead the discussion and what key points you want to make.

★ Keep your meeting short and simple. Get to the point and briefly outline two or three key reasons for your position on a particular piece of legislation or the issues that prompted your meeting. Stay focused on the two or three key messages you want to leave with the legislator. It is easy to get off track and run out of time, particularly when dealing with seasoned politicians.

★ Give examples of how the issue affects your organization and the senator or representative’s constituents.

★ Answer any questions asked of you, but if you don’t know the answer, tell the legislator that you will get back to him or her promptly with an answer.

★ Leave behind a one-page fact sheet or position paper on your issue to remind the legislator or staff of the purpose for your visit. Include your name, telephone number and email address on the paper in case there are follow-up questions.

★ Offer yourself as a resource to the legislator and the staff in responding to health care questions.

Planning an Effective Hospital Tour:

You have a great opportunity to educate your legislator and get acquainted by inviting him or her to tour your hospital. These tours introduce legislators to the constituents for whom your hospital provides jobs, and allows the official to put into perspective the real people, jobs and issues which affect voters in his district.

Tours can be mutually beneficial to both you and your public official, since you both develop contacts for the future. Setting up a tour requires some advanced planning and a bit of flexibility, but is well worth the effort.

Since the typical legislator is very busy while the Legislature or Congress is in session, he will probably prefer to tour your facility during one of the legislative or congressional recesses. The legislative and congressional calendars are located behind the Legislative Calendars Tab.
Prior to the Tour:

★ Inform all employees of the upcoming visit.

★ Do some homework on your legislator's background. A short biography of the state legislator or congressman can usually be requested from his office or OHA; this can be shared with your employees or key individuals. Find out what committees and subcommittees your guest is on. Are any of these committees considering legislation related to your interests? In short, show the same interest in his activities that you expect him to show in yours.

★ Try to arrange the visit around a luncheon or breakfast, with the tour of the hospital either preceding or following it. There should be a limited number of your hospital or system's representatives participating in the meal function.

Conducting an Effective Hospital Visit:

In addition to following all of the principles for conducting an office meeting:

★ Extend the length of the meeting to include a brief tour of two or three important patient care areas. Allow about an hour or hour-and-a-half for the tour, including a "sit-down" meeting. Choose areas that demonstrate the impact of your hospital on the health and well-being of the legislator's constituents. Walk the tour yourself in advance to make sure everything is in order and that you deliver your intended message.

★ Provide opportunities for the senator or representative to meet key hospital staff—a physician, a hospital trustee who knows the legislator, and a hospital employee such as a nurse or social worker who works directly with patients. Inform participants in advance so they can be prepared.

★ Prepare a fact sheet on your hospital for the senator or representative. Include information such as: number of inpatients and outpatients served; number of staff, employees and volunteers; average payroll; amount of indigent care provided; Medicare and Medicaid patient load; the economic benefit your hospital provides to the community, etc. Don't overwhelm the legislator with materials during the tour.

★ Notify the OHA about the planned visit. We can provide you with background information on the senator or representative and can assist you in compiling statistics or information needed to illustrate your concerns.

★ If possible, photograph the legislator's visit and include a story on the visit in your hospital’s publications. If you'd like to receive local press coverage, coordinate this coverage with the legislator's press secretary.
After the Meeting or Tour:

★ Always send a "thank you" note, thanking the legislator for his or her time and briefly restating your issue. Include any follow-up information that was promised, along with an open-ended invitation for a return visit. Compliment any of his aides, by name, who helped coordinate the visit.

★ Send a "thank you" note to those aides who helped set up the meeting. You may be working closely with them in the future, so don't let their deeds go unnoticed.

★ Be sure to send the senator or representative copies of any media coverage generated. If a photograph of the official was taken during the hospital visit, send them a copy if available.

★ Provide feedback about your meeting to OHA and the AHA so that we may adjust our lobbying strategies, if needed.

Tips:

★ Be brief.

★ Be honest.

★ Be prompt, but be flexible. Senators and representatives may be late for meetings due to their full schedules, or they may get interrupted during your meeting.

★ Don't be disappointed if you end up meeting with staff instead of the senator or representative. Legislators depend on advice from their staff because it is impossible for them to follow all the issues themselves. Staff are gatekeepers and they can sometimes be the real driving force on an issue.
Effective Media Relations

An essential element of any grassroots campaign is using the media to inform your public. The key to getting positive media attention is having an understanding of the media.

Reporters and editors respond best to news stories and ideas that:

- Have a local angle;
- Have widespread interest;
- Feature well-known people; and/or
- Have human interest.

A story always has a better chance of making the news if it hits home in the community. For example:

*As the federal government faces health care reform, local hospitals are sure to be impacted.*

- What will be the local impact of a proposed cut in Medicare programs?
- How will health affiliations or mergers and acquisitions impact the local hospital?
- What decisions about hospital operations will be made on the local versus federal level?

Be familiar with the types of stories each publication or station covers, and look for angles that will fit the media’s need for news.

Tips for Dealing With the News Media:

- Remember that most media representatives are trying to do their job by reporting a newsworthy event fairly and factually, within a certain deadline.
- Establish relationships with the media *before* you need them. Know their beats, their deadlines, how to spell their names correctly, and whether or not they prefer that you use mail, faxes, E-mail or phone calls when you are sending a press release. Unless you have something to report that is very time sensitive, most reporters prefer that you mail press releases, then follow up with a phone call. If you need a listing of media outlets throughout the state and the names of reporters who work for these outlets, the "Finder Binder" and the annual Oklahoma Press Association's Media Directory are both good sources of current information. For more information on how to order these directories, call OHA.
- Serve as a resource person for media representatives, even when you don't need a story. Let them know they can contact you even if they aren't sure you are the best source for their story. They'll be appreciative of your help.

- When a reporter calls for an interview, find out what questions they would like answered during the interview (to save you and them some time), what their deadline is, when they plan to run the story and in what format the story will appear (i.e. feature/news/tabloid supplement). If the interview is for broadcast, ask if it will be live or taped, and the length (i.e., will it be used for a 30-second sound bite or a one-hour talk show?).

- When you are in a situation that has national/international media focus, remember to treat local reporters as fairly or more fairly than those from out-of-town. You have to live with the local media after those from out-of-state go home.

**When You Are Interviewed:**

- Focus on 3-5 key points you would like to convey, starting and ending with the most important point. Include these key points in all press releases and interviews.

- Avoid saying "no comment," or making "off the record" responses. If you can't divulge certain information, tell the reporter why you can't. And, tell them when you might be able to release more information. If you aren't prepared to comment at the moment you are asked to do so, tell the reporter you'd like to comment once you've had some time to review the information and the questions he or she would like answered.

- If you don't know the answer to a question, say that you don't know. Try to find an answer and follow up with the reporter.

- Never deal with hearsay. Deal with facts. Until something becomes a reality, avoid responding to a reporter's "what if" scenario.

- Remember to keep your audience in mind when crafting your message. Keep your message simple, and unless the publication is a trade publication, avoid using health care jargon. Translate your message into English before a reporter arrives for an interview.

  *When we in health care talk about PPOs, IPAs, capitation, DRGs, UPLs, CMS, and fiscal intermediaries, we often lose our audience – starting with the reporter.*

- Don't attack other organizations or competitors; this might become the focus of the rest of the interview.

- Never, ever, ever lie to a reporter. Reporters keep track (as we all do) of people who have "burned" them and will remember it for many years; they will also share this information with colleagues.

- When a reporter asks, "Do you have anything else to add?" take the opportunity to do so by reiterating your key message or anything you would like to emphasize.

- Strive for dialogue with a reporter. Arguing with a reporter – even if you are right – doesn't accomplish anything. Keep your message and your audience the focus of your thoughts during the interview.
• Do not ask to see the story before it is printed or aired. No reporter is ever required to do this and to ask appears unprofessional. However, your hospital spokesman should offer to verify quotes or facts, or to answer follow-up questions.
• Be brief. Be positive. Be patient. Be polite.

If You Are Ambushed by the Media:

The news media could arrive anywhere at any time in order to pursue a story. One likely place is in your hospital’s parking lot. If you are "ambushed" outside your facility, you should attempt to deter the press and their "need" for an interview at that particular time, but do so in a helpful way. One technique you could use would be to acknowledge their presence, then smile and say, "I know you need information, and as soon as I am able to gather this for you, I will be happy to sit down and discuss this with you."

The odds of this statement appearing on the six o’clock news are much less likely to occur than if you seem agitated, are verbally abusive, and say "no comment" as you push your way through the crowd of reporters.

Television

Television provides an opportunity to reach a mass audience. Many different types of television programs offer potential for airing your messages:

• News broadcasts
• Public affairs programs
• Talk shows
• Editorials
• Public service announcements
• Feature segments

Watch these programs to become familiar with the reporters and anchors, their interviewing styles and the types of stories they prefer. When you are interviewed on radio or television, keep your remarks brief and well structured. Your delivery and tone of voice is also very important; in the case of television, so is your appearance and gestures.

The following tips will make an appearance on the broadcast media more successful:
• Rehearse the message in advance.
• Dress conservatively. Never wear white and avoid jewelry that will flash and cause a distraction.
• Never look for or talk into the camera. Try not to be conscious of the camera at all; the cameramen will get all of the shots that they need.
Radio

Most radio stations tailor their programming to very specific and different audiences from country and classical music lovers, to rock-and-roll fans and all-talk enthusiasts. In recent years, many stations have expanded their news coverage and provide more air time for talk shows and call-in programs which focus on community interests and other issues. This provides a wonderful opportunity to communicate through radio by coordinating your message to the station's audience.

- Radio stations should be notified of events through news releases.
- News releases should be written for radio, in a style that is designed for on-the-air delivery.
- A hospital spokesperson should offer to participate in talk shows or community affairs programs, in order to inform the community about current health care issues.

Newspapers

Newspapers provide in-depth coverage of stories and are particularly good for reaching decision-makers who are interested in more than "headline" news that is available on television and radio.

- In addition to regular news and features, newspapers print editorials, commentaries, letters to the editor, investigative reports and opinion columns.
- Newspapers have larger staffs to cover news.
- They spend more time learning and explaining complex issues.
- They appreciate all the documentation, facts and figures you can provide.
- Since newspapers are in print, stories can be clipped, saved and used for other audiences that may have missed the initial publication.
- Letters to the editor should be reserved for important issues. They should be thoughtfully prepared, based on fact, and should be between 100-400 words in length.

News Releases

Much of the news that is printed or broadcast originates from press releases. The release is a basic tool for generating publicity, and is a powerful public relations tool. It can serve one of the following functions:

- To publicize an issue or a story;
- To provide background information of a news event; or
- To announce an upcoming activity.
The well-prepared news release must follow some guidelines, or it will end up in the editor's trash can, along with scores of others he or she receives each day.

**The Lead.** The first paragraph or two of a news release (the lead) must answer the "five Ws" and an "H" – who, what, when, where, why and how. This important information must be prominently placed to grab the editors' attention, since they don't have time to read through the entire release in order to get all of the facts.

**The Body.** A release should follow an "inverted pyramid" format, with information appearing in the order of its importance. The inverted pyramid allows an editor to easily cut the story as needed without losing the most important facts.

**Tips When Writing a Release:**

- Make it no longer than two double-spaced pages.
- Use short sentences and paragraphs.
- Make certain facts are absolutely accurate.
- Check for proper spelling of names.
- Avoid jargon and technical terms, or explain them if they must be used.
- Don't use abbreviations (i.e., CMS, UPLs, DRGs, PPOs) without indicating what they stand for in the first reference.
- Write factually and objectively, avoiding personal opinions, editorializing and using adjectives.
- Insert pertinent quotes, specific examples and anecdotes which will localize the story.
- Double space the release on plain white paper or letterhead.
- The top of the release should include:
  - The name and telephone numbers (home and office) of the media contact and when they can be reached;
  - The date and time for the story's release (For Release, 9 a.m., April 2, 2014 or For Immediate Release); and
  - A short headline that describes the content at a glance.
- When there is more than one page, type "-more-" at the bottom of each page except the last.
- Number each additional page.
- End the release with the marks "###," "-30-," or "-END-.

**News Conferences**

A news conference is an excellent way to launch campaigns, announce important future events or a new service to the community, provide new information on a previous news story, or release the results of a study or survey.
The key to a successful news conference is to make sure there really is important news to announce. If you "cry wolf" too often with "no-news" conferences, the media may not show up when you do have something important to say.

**Notification.** When justified, news conferences should be arranged by:

- Sending a news release to every community news outlet three to five days before the event (In urgent situations, notification can be handled by telephone.);
- Directing the release to assignment editors, news directors and reporters, giving them the date, time, place and topic of the conference;
- Scheduling the conference to coordinate with media deadlines; and
- Making follow-up calls the day before the conference, urging reporters to attend.

**Logistics.** Site arrangements are important aspects of a successful conference.

- Choose a location and room for the press conference that is large enough to accommodate the media, cameras and other equipment.
- Make sure there are plenty of two- and three-pronged electrical outlets for reporters’ equipment (lights, recorders, cameras).
- Provide a lectern that can hold several microphones.
- If possible, display an appropriate logo in a prominent spot that does not have a glare.
- Provide chairs for reporters, name cards for speakers and an easel for visual aids.

**Visuals.** Almost all news conferences should offer visual presentations for television cameras and print photographers.

- Display visuals prominently near the front of the room for easy reference by the speakers.
- Keep visuals clean and simple. Remember, the visual may receive only two or three seconds of actual TV time.
- Use colorful charts and graphs to demonstrate goals you’ve set and achieved.

**Materials.** Media kits should be prepared for reporters attending the conference (and to deliver afterwards to those who do not attend). They should include:

- A copy of the spokesperson’s statement;
- A news release detailing the topic;
- Biographical information and photos of the speakers;
- A fact sheet or brochure about the hospital; Reproductions of charts or graphs used; and
- A slide of the hospital logo so TV stations can project it during the news story.

**Preparation of Speakers.** Before the news conference:

- Review the issues with the speaker(s).
• Take the role of a reporter and ask the spokesperson those difficult questions that may arise
• Have other officers attend the news conference to provide expert information and moral support.

**Tips When Conducting a News Conference:**

• Double-check the conference room about an hour before the event to make sure everything is set.
• Unlock the room and set up chairs.
• Provide a media sign-in sheet so that you can follow up and make further contact.
• Consider serving modest refreshments.
• Start the conference on time; limit it to 30 minutes.
• Introduce the speakers.
• Conduct a question-and-answer session after the statement/conference.
• Have a room available for follow-up interviews.