

Media Toolkit

Getting media attention for your event requires planning and lots of follow-up. Below are a sample timeline and templates you can use to pitch your local reporters.

Because of COVID-19 safety concerns, it's likely you will be doing virtual events. Make sure that your event can be easily monitored by the media and that your organization spokesperson and participants are available in some manner to be interviewed safely, either by telephone, Zoom, Skype, or in a socially distant fashion.

1 month before your event ...

Start building or updating your media list. Make a spreadsheet of the information you'll need to contact reporters or outlets you want to cover your events.

For newspapers:

- Find out which editor or reporter covers community events. Look to see if there is another reporter who covers issues specifically relating to older adults, healthy aging, fitness and health, or caregivers. Note the reporter's name, email, and phone number.
- Find out if your local and/or community newspapers accept calendar announcements. Note where to send the announcement, the information to include, and how far in advance the paper needs them.

For radio and television:

- Collect phone numbers and emails for the station assignment editor.
- Call and ask for the phone number and email for the producer of the specific show where you would like to appear. Generally local news stations include community, non-policy issues in the morning show and in the early evening newscast.
- If your stations have a local lifestyle show, it may have a different booker for guests or stories. Check their website for contact information. Also consider asking their host if they would participate in one of your activities (if appropriate).
- Ask if the station or website accepts calendar announcements. Find out where to send them, what information you should include, and how far in advance the station needs them.

3 weeks before your event ...

- Evaluate your media contacts. Determine which contacts you want to personally invite to cover your event (this is called pitching), which contacts you want to invite with a media advisory, and if there are any you only want to alert with a press release.
- Send out your calendar announcements. Use the sample included in this guide (page X) and distribute it to local media based on the list you've collected.
- Pitch important media. Use the sample pitch included in this guide (page X) to begin approaching specific reporters and assignment editors about doing a story on your event. Remember, you must give them a good local story idea and all the elements to tell the story to get them interested.

- Prepare and distribute a media advisory. Use the sample media advisory included in this guide (page X). Send the advisory via email to the media list you've collected.
- Start social media promotion across your channels. Remember, you're trying to reach participants, reporters, and local influencers. Use similar messages across all the social media outlets you use, including Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, or Pinterest.
- Spread the word. Encourage your participants to tell their friends and families about your event. You never know who they know—they may have an association with members of the media that will give you a head start.

10 days before your event ...

- Make follow-up calls to the media contacts you pitched to see if they are planning to do a story. Offer to help coordinate the interviews or photos they need and provide background that will help them tell the story you've pitched.
- Develop a strategy to ensure a big turnout for the event, including virtual events, including emails and follow-up phone calls to older adults and their families.
- Let older adults know there will be press at the event and let the press know there will be older adults they can speak with.
- Develop a list of specific older adults with stories to tell and connect media with them when appropriate.

1 day before your event ...

- Email a final media advisory or news release to newspapers, daybooks, radio stations, and television stations. Be sure to include a phone number where reporters can reach you throughout the day.
- Make follow-up calls to the media you invited personally to see if they are planning to cover your event, if they haven't already committed to attending.

Your event day!

- Carry your cell phone or check your messages frequently. Often media outlets don't decide until the last minute whether to cover your event.
- Assign a staff person to meet and greet reporters. This person will also be responsible for helping the reporter arrange any interviews or photo opportunities.

After the event ...

- Phone or email reporters to thank those who covered your event. You can also use this opportunity to offer to be a resource for future stories about aging well in your community or aging policy stories.
- Compile your stories, articles, and photos in a special section on your website to highlight the accomplishments of your event.
- Share your success! Send links to your media coverage to press@ncoa.org.

Sample Calendar Announcement

Send this announcement to your local newspaper, TV station, online publication, or municipal office to be included in their local calendar. Typically, you will need to send announcements at least 2-3 weeks before your event. Including a list of invited special guests will increase media interest. If you don't have a commitment from all special guests, but you have a pretty good indication they will attend, you can say "Mayor Jon Smith (invited)" on your materials.

[ORGANIZATION LOGO]

CONTACT:

[Name]

[Title]

[Organization]

[Phone]

[Email]

[NAME & DATE OF EVENT]

The coronavirus pandemic has changed a lot of things. One thing that's still the same? Falling is NOT a normal part of aging.

[ORGANIZATION] is committed to empowering all older adults in [COMMUNITY] to age well and stay falls free. We are partnering with the National Council on Aging (NCOA) to mark **Falls Prevention Awareness Week on September 21-25, 2020**.

This is a perfect opportunity for older adults and caregivers in our hometown to learn how to prevent falls and take steps to reduce their risk.

Join us [DATE] at [TIME] for [EVENT] to learn how you or an older relative, friend, or neighbor can stay falls free.

The event will feature a brand-new online falls risk assessment tool available at no cost to individuals across the country. Visitors to www.ncoa.org/FallsFreeCheckUp can complete a short, 12-question survey that screens for the most common falls risk factors.

For more information about [EVENT], call [PHONE] or visit [WEBSITE].

Sample Media Advisory

Use a media advisory to highlight events you want media to attend or cover. Email the advisory a few weeks before your event to newspapers, radio stations, and television stations and directly to the reporters on your media list who you do not want to invite with a personal email pitch. Follow up with 1-2 phone calls as the event gets closer. Send the advisory again the day before your event because broadcast media, such as television stations, often make decisions about what to cover on a day-to-day basis. Ensure you have ways for media to access your virtual events through Zoom or Skype and that they have ways to interview your organization spokesperson and participants digitally or in a safe socially distanced manner. Also make sure you have visuals such as photos or posters to supplement your story.

[ORGANIZATION LOGO]

CONTACT:

[Name]

[Title].

[Organization]

[Phone]

[Email]

MEDIA ADVISORY

[Date] – for immediate release

[ORGANIZATION] to Mark Falls Prevention Awareness Week with [NAME OF EVENT] and New Online Tool for Older Adults

[CITY, STATE] [DATE] — The coronavirus pandemic has changed a lot of things. One thing that's still the same? Falling is NOT a normal part of aging.

[ORGANIZATION] is committed to empowering all older adults in [COMMUNITY NAME] to age well, and that includes avoiding falls. On **September 21-25, 2020**, we are partnering with the National Council on Aging (NCOA) to observe **Falls Prevention Awareness Week**.

Falls remain a leading cause of injury for people aged 65 and older. Falls threaten older adults' safety and independence and generate enormous economic and personal costs. However, through practical lifestyle adjustments, evidence-based falls prevention programs, and clinical-community partnerships, the number of falls among older adults can be substantially reduced.

WHAT:

[Description of the event. Be sure to include planned activities and interesting information, including that you will be offering falls assessments using www.ncoa.org/fallsfreecheckup]

WHO:

[List of special guests. Make sure to list in order of importance, with elected officials first.]

WHEN:

[Date and time of event]

WHERE:

[Address of event]

About [ORGANIZATION]

[Your organization description]

About NCOA

The National Council on Aging (NCOA) is a trusted national leader working to ensure that every person can age well. Since 1950, our mission has not changed: Improve the lives of millions of older adults, especially those who are struggling. NCOA empowers people with the best solutions to improve their own health and economic security—and we strengthen government programs that we all depend on as we age. Every year, millions of people use our signature programs BenefitsCheckUp®, My Medicare Matters®, and the Aging Mastery Program® to age well. By offering online tools and collaborating with a nationwide network of partners, NCOA is working to improve the lives of 40 million older adults by 2030. Learn more at ncoa.org and @NCOAging.

Template Press Release

[ORGANIZATION LOGO]

CONTACT:

[Name]

[Title]

[Organization]

[Phone]

[Email]

[Organization] marks falls prevention awareness week sept. 21-25 with special event and new online tool to help older adults in [community] stay falls free

[CITY, STATE] [DATE] — The coronavirus pandemic has changed a lot of things. One thing that's still the same? Falling is NOT a normal part of aging.

[ORGANIZATION] is committed to empowering all older adults in [COMMUNITY] to reduce their risk of falls, which are one of the greatest causes of serious injuries and death among people over age 65. On September 21-25, 2020, [ORGANIZATION] is partnering with the National Council on Aging (NCOA) to mark Falls Prevention Awareness Week.

As part of this national outreach campaign, [ORGANIZATION] is holding an event to raise awareness among older adults in our hometown. The event will feature a new online falls risk assessment tool available at no cost to individuals across the country. Visitors to www.ncoa.org/FallsFreeCheckUp can complete a short, 12-question survey that screens them for the most common falls risk factors.

“[Quote from organization spokesperson about why this event is so important for older adults in the community],” said [name, title, organization].

WHAT:

[Description of the event. Be sure to include planned activities and interesting information.]

WHO:

[List of special guests. Make sure to list in order of importance, with elected officials first.]

WHEN:

[Date and time of event]

WHERE:

[Address of event/or link to virtual event]

“[ORGANIZATION] has a strong history of helping older residents in [COMMUNITY],” said [NAME, TITLE, ORGANIZATION]. “We’re proud to be part of this national education and outreach initiative that is helping millions of older adults age well and stay falls free. We encourage people to attend our event and visit www.ncoa.org/FallsFreeCheckUp for a free assessment.”

About [ORGANIZATION]

[Your organization description]

About NCOA

The National Council on Aging (NCOA) is a trusted national leader working to ensure that every person can age well. Since 1950, our mission has not changed: Improve the lives of millions of older adults, especially those who are struggling. NCOA empowers people with the best solutions to improve their own health and economic security—and we strengthen government programs that we all depend on as we age. Every year, millions of people use our signature programs BenefitsCheckUp®, My Medicare Matters®, and the Aging Mastery Program® to age well. By offering online tools and collaborating with a nationwide network of partners, NCOA is working to improve the lives of 40 million older adults by 2030. Learn more at ncoa.org and @NCOAging.

Media Pitching Tips

A news pitch is very similar to an elevator pitch in business. You have under one minute to get the journalist's attention and convince them to engage with you and ask more questions and hopefully cover your event. There are a few points you want to make in your pitch—some will be generic (apply to all reporters) and some will be media specific (depending on what type of news organization it is). Whether your pitch is in writing or by phone, it should include the elements below.

Generic

- Emphasize why the story is important to the community and audience the journalist covers. For Falls Prevention Awareness Week, you could point to the dangers that falls pose to older adults, the statistics (including the serious injuries and deaths, the economic and emotional costs in your local community and/or state), and the growth of the older population and how this will continue to impact more people in the community.
- Emphasize how unique and easy it is for older adults to use the new online tool to assess their falls risk. Invite them to visit www.ncoa.org/FallsFreeCheckUp.
- Emphasize the role your organization plays in the community and what you are doing to address the issue through this event. Briefly describe the event and why it may be interesting or unique—whether it's the event itself or the people who are participating in it.

Specific Pitches by Medium

The second part of your pitch should be why this is a story that will work specifically for the reporter's medium:

- TV reporters love stories that have interesting images and action. Try to create an event that will offer this. If you have a high-quality video that your organization has used in the past, put it online and tell the reporter they can download it. Tell the journalist the event will provide good images. TV reporters hate to cover stories that are just people giving speeches at a podium. If your story includes testimonials from some of your clients or success stories, be sure to have the clients offer digital pictures of themselves or plan to give reporters access to them in their homes (safely), so they can tell an intimate portrait of the good work you do and be able to visually document this.
- Radio reporters like events that include sound. Events where there is singing, or some type of activity make for good radio. Even more than TV, radio reporters rely on interviews, which requires a spokesperson and interviewees who can convey your messages in a clear and compelling fashion. Line them up in advance and train them on what to say by giving them 3-4 key messages. Consider giving access to interviewees in their homes.
- Print and digital reporters like more information and data, as they usually must write much more than TV and radio reporters. They also appreciate photo opportunities, infographics, or other high-quality visuals they can insert in their digital versions. They will want access to spokespersons and interviewees who can speak compellingly. Train your interviewees and provide them with 3-4 key messages they need to convey.
- Online Events: Emphasize that reporters will be able to access your online event live and record it, or you will make a recording available as soon as possible. Also emphasize your ability to provide interviews through Zoom or other similar platforms.

Sample Pitches to Reporters

The most personal kind of contact you can have with a reporter is to send them a pitch. Below are two suggestions of how to pitch reporters about your activities. Pitches should include a story idea and information about the data and audiovisual elements you can provide to better tell the story. Be sure to customize these pitches and adapt them for email or telephone. Try to make your initial pitch 1-2 weeks in advance and then follow up once or twice with new information about the event as it gets closer.

Email Pitch

Dear [REPORTER's NAME]:

The coronavirus pandemic has changed a lot of things. One thing that's still the same? Falling is NOT a normal part of aging.

Yet, falls remain the leading cause of serious injuries and death for older adults. The good news is they are preventable, and there are proven steps people can take to reduce their risk.

September 21-25, 2021, is Falls Prevention Awareness Week, sponsored by the National Council on Aging. [ORGANIZATION] is hosting an event locally to get the message out. [DESCRIBE THE EVENT AND WHY ITS NEWSWORTHY AND EXCITING.]

The event also will feature a brand-new online falls risk assessment tool available at no cost to individuals across the country. Visitors to www.ncoa.org/FallsFreeCheckUp can complete a short, 12-question survey that screens them for the most common falls risk factors.

Please join us on [DATE OF EVENT], for [NAME OF EVENT OR VIRTUAL LINK] to see how participating in Falls Prevention Awareness Week can be life-changing for older adults.

I would be happy to talk with you about our programs and services or put you in touch with some older adults who have benefited from them. You can reach me at [PHONE] or [EMAIL].

Sincerely,

[YOUR NAME]

[EMAIL SIGNATURE or TITLE/PHONE]

Phone Pitch

YOU: Hello, my name is [NAME, TITLE], and I'm calling from [ORGANIZATION]. Do you have a few minutes to hear about a great event we are organizing here in [LOCATION]? I know you are busy, and I promise to be brief.

REPORTER: Okay

YOU: September 21-25 is Falls Prevention Awareness Week, a national campaign to educate older adults, their caregivers, and health professionals about the dangers of falling and the steps to prevent falls. We will be rolling out an innovative online tool that helps older adults assess their falls risk and take steps to prevent them: www.ncoa.org/FallsFreeCheckUp. As you may know, falls are one of the major causes of serious injuries and deaths for older adults, and the long-lasting effects of a fall are not just physical but also economic and emotional. [ORGANIZATION] is hosting [EVENT AND DESCRIPTION] here in [LOCATION] as part of this national initiative. It's happening [DATE AND TIME].

VARIATION 1

REPORTER: Sorry, I don't cover these topics [OR ANY OTHER KIND OF NEGATIVE REBUTTAL].

YOU: I understand. Who else in your newsroom do you recommend I make this pitch to? I would really appreciate their name, email, and phone, so I can try with them. Is there an editor or assignment desk person or maybe your public affairs director?

REPORTER: [Either gives you the names or not]

YOU: Thanks so much for your assistance. Have a great day.

VARIATION 2

REPORTER: Tell me more.

YOU: [THREE POINTS ABOUT WHY YOUR EVENT IS EXCITING, INTERESTING, NEWSWORTHY]. I am happy to arrange interviews with a few of the [NUMBER] of participants, as well as [DESIGNATED SPOKESPERSON]. We are also happy to share our exciting new online assessment tool that helps people determine their risk of falling and the steps they can take to stay falls free. If you give me your email and any other contact information like a mobile phone, I am happy to send you our media advisory and release and set up any interviews you need before, during, or after the event, and help you with any visual elements or background for your story.

REPORTER: Ok, here's how you can reach me.

YOU: Excellent, thanks for your time, and I will send you details as soon as we hang up and look forward to helping you put together a great story. Meanwhile, can I give you my contact information as well? [PROVIDE YOUR CONTACT DETAILS]. Thanks again.