

## **Commissioned Officers Association of the United States Public Health Service MEDIA ACTION KIT**

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These tools are being provided to local branches to facilitate outreach to local media outlets so you can help tell the story of the United States Public Health Service (PHS) and increase visibility and public understanding of the PHS.

### **MEDIA OUTREACH PRIMER**

- This is an overview of when, why and how to reach out to local media.
- The Primer explains how use the other tools provided in this media action kit.

### **CORE MESSAGES**

- These central points should be incorporated into all communications.

### **FACT SHEET**

- This two-page overview of the PHS should be sent to reporters as an attachment to press releases or used as a handout at events or meetings with media outlets.
- This fact sheet can also be used as a reference point for when you are telling the story of the PHS to other audiences.

### **SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE**

- This draft press release is geared around the May Commissioned Officers Foundation (COF) PHS Scientific Training Symposium held in San Diego
- Local branches should edit this shell document to reflect their local story.
- While the COF conference is not “hard” news likely to be covered by local papers, it provides an opportunity to educate reporters about PHS and to introduce the local branch as a source of information on public health issues.
- The press release can be sent in advance of the conference and/or revised to reflect what local branch representatives accomplished at the conference.
- After any required clearances have been made, the press release should be sent to the health reporter or health editor via email or fax. It is important to follow-up the press release with a phone call. Even if they are not interested in a story, this is an opportunity introduce yourself as a source for that reporter’s future coverage of related issues.

### **SAMPLE LETTER-TO-THE- EDITOR**

- This draft letter is ready for branch presidents to edit and personalize to send to local newspapers.
- The shell letter could be sent without a triggering event, or it could be edited to include reference to an event that might provide a “hook” or added relevance to the newspaper.
- Letters can be faxed, mailed or submitted via email. Look on the editorial page where letters appear for the local paper’s contact information and preferences. This information is usually available on the newspaper’s website as well.
- The person who signs and submits the letter should provide a phone number that the newspaper can call to verify information.

### **SEND US YOUR NEWS CLIPS**

- If your local newspaper publishes a letter or an article related to your work, please send a copy to national COA.

**DISCLAIMER**

- When dealing with the media, all COA branches as well as national COA must be careful not to appear to be representing the Commissioned Corps itself, DHHS, or any of its agencies, or any part of the federal government.
- Disclaimers must be appended to all documents offered by COA branches making this distinction clear. Examples of such disclaimers are included.
- Individual members, especially active duty officers, are cautioned about press interviews. In some cases, it will be prudent to obtain clearance from DHHS public affairs before participating in a media interview, especially if appearing in uniform. COA members approached by the media for an interview should contact national COA for guidance and assistance.