



ADA American Dental Association®

Program Promotion

Publicity



Media Coverage of Your Give Kids A Smile[®] Event

Media coverage of Give Kids A Smile[®] events offers a wonderful opportunity to educate reporters about the need to improve access to oral health care for children from underserved families.

While it's true that Give Kids A Smile will provide some desperately needed oral health services to many children across the country, the real story to convey to media is that a one-day event will never be enough and that dentists alone can't solve the oral health access crisis. Improving kids' access to oral health care is everyone's business—not just dentists.

This section of your Give Kids A Smile program planning guide will help you promote your event to the media and provide you with key messages about WHY Give Kids A Smile was created and WHAT dentists across the country would like to see happen to improve access to oral health care.

Throughout it all, our overriding message is, “It is simply unacceptable that thousands upon thousands of children in 21st century America suffer needlessly from untreated dental disease.”

Don't forget to note that Give Kids A Smile is celebrating its 10th anniversary in 2012. If your event is also celebrating its 10th anniversary, please mention that in your press materials as well. Maybe you've got a volunteer who has volunteered every year for the past 10 years. That's a good opportunity for a feel-good story.

Timeline For Give Kids A Smile[®] Publicity Efforts

Whether you are part of a planning group or handling an entire event yourself, it's important to promote your Give Kids A Smile[®] event to the media. Remember, the goal of Give Kids A Smile is to raise awareness of the critical need for access to oral health care and that solutions to this crisis can be developed at a state and local level.

Pitching the media requires persistent follow-up. It is not enough to mail a press release and assume reporters will turn up at your event. Reporters, editors and producers receive an avalanche of press releases every day from numerous sources, all of whom believe their story is newsworthy. You'll have to work hard to cut through all this clutter and get reporters' attention.

The challenge is to convince the media that your story is an important issue for their viewers, listeners and readers.

The following timetable should help guide you when it comes to contacting your local media about your Give Kids A Smile event:

Program Promotion Timetable

October

- After you register as a GKAS participant and requested dental supplies online at givekidsasmile.ada.org, continue by registering as a Give Kids A Smile Publicity Coordinator and/or Media Spokesperson for your event.

November

- Identify one or more spokespeople for your event and begin working to get them comfortable talking about access problems and solutions in your area.
- Invite elected officials to attend your GKAS event. (See sample letters in the Resource Section on the website.)

December

- Prepare your Give Kids A Smile press materials (e.g., press release, media alert, public service announcements, etc.). See the sample materials on the website. **It is critical that you tailor the materials to fit your local event. Journalists are more likely to ignore generic press materials that are not relevant to the communities they cover.**
- Check to see if any families of children who will receive oral health services in your upcoming Give Kids A Smile event would be willing to share their story with reporters. A moving story of a child helps to bring the issue to life for reporters and the public.
- Make sure your spokespeople are familiar with the points you want them to make, as well as some stories about local children who lack access to care, state or local statistics related to access to oral health care and whether an elected official will be attending your event.
- Choose and script the three key points that you want to get across in interviews or in discussions with elected officials and other influentials, so your program presents a unified vision of what you are trying to accomplish concerning access to care in your area. For example, “We need to put our money where our mouths are and give the children of our state something to smile about! The (NAME OF YOUR PROGRAM) strongly believes that (STATE) needs to revamp our dental Medicaid program in three ways. First, we need to (BRIEFLY DESCRIBE GOAL #1). We also must (BRIEFLY DESCRIBE GOAL #2) and lastly, we should (BRIEFLY DESCRIBE GOAL #3).”
- Follow up with the press officer for each elected official you invited to your Give Kids A Smile event to see if they will attend your Give Kids A Smile event. (Note: Many elected officials will not confirm until immediately prior to your event.)

January

- Right after the new year, distribute your press materials.

During the second week in January, follow up by calling reporters to make sure they received the materials and to talk about why this is an important story for your community.

- *For example, while you have the reporter on the phone, share some patient stories (without mentioning specific names) and offer to put the reporter in touch with families who have agreed to speak with the media about how lack of access to oral health care has affected their children. A personal story about a child without access to care is a powerful way to convince a reporter why dentists are trying to raise awareness of this issue.*

January/February

- Give your cell phone number to reporters so they can reach you the day of the event. Some reporters may not decide until the last minute whether they want to cover your story, so it's imperative they can reach you on the day of the event.

- If an elected official will be attending your event, contact his or her office and ask if they will be notifying political/public affairs reporters about it. You should follow up with these reporters, too, because it gives you the opportunity to give them the details about your event as well as explain to them the larger issue of access to oral health care.

- If children from a local school or club will be receiving treatment at your event, check to see if there is a blanket photo release that allows for photographs of children at such events and get a copy of that release before your event (*see Photo Release Form at http://www.ada.org/sections/newsAndEvents/pdfs/toolbox_sample_photo_permission_release.pdf*)

On site at your event

- Have several sets of press materials available on site. Though you've already sent these to media outlets, the reporters or photographers assigned to the story may not have received them, and they would likely appreciate having the background information.

- Greet reporters who cover your event, and show them around. As you walk with them, be sure to talk about the need for access to oral health care and that dentists want to be part of the solution (*see the Talking Points for Give Kids A Smile on the website*).

- Do not take photographs of a child undergoing treatment for your group's newsletter or Web site without first obtaining a signed Photo Release form from the parent or guardian (*see Photo Release Form on the website*). **You do not need to concern yourself with media photographers. They will handle photo releases on behalf of their media outlets.**

- Give reporters and photographers your cell phone number and your business card in case they have any follow up questions.

After your Event

_____ Watch for media coverage of your event.

_____ Keep a list of media outlets and the reporters who covered your event so you can approach them to cover Give Kids A Smile next year.

_____ GKAS programs are invited to send photographs from local events to the ADA after their event. Photos will be used for archival purposes and some may appear in the ADA News, online on ADA.org or in other ADA publications. Digital photos are preferred.

- E-mail photos to:
adanews@ada.org
Files should be 300 dpi, with no single e-mail larger than 3MB.
Please identify the individuals in the photo and indicate where and when it was taken.
- Mail photo prints to:
ADA News, 211 E. Chicago Ave., Chicago 60611
Please identify the individuals in the photo and indicate where and when it was taken.
Please indicate if and where you want the photos to be returned.

Additional Resources

The below resources can be downloaded from the GKAS website.

- [Working with the Media](#)
- [Talking Points for Give Kids A Smile](#)
- [Selecting a Spokesperson](#)
- [Sample Radio Public Services Announcement](#)
- [Sample Press Release](#)
- [Sample Media Alert](#)
- [Photo Release Form](#)