

Selecting a Spokesperson

Preferably, your Give Kids A Smile® event spokesperson should be a volunteer who has already been media trained and has experience with interviews. Presentation skills are very important. In television especially, audiences tend to pay more attention to *how* you look and say something than *what* you actually say. Try to select a spokesperson with a warm demeanor and the ability to speak in conversational, layperson terms. A good voice is a plus for any spokesperson, especially for radio or television interviews. Your Give Kids A Smile spokesperson should not be identified as an ADA spokesperson. Instead, the person could be identified as “a spokesperson for the local event...”

How To Do Media Interviews

Brevity and clarity are most important things to remember when doing a media interview. Your spokesperson must crystallize for reporters in a few, extremely brief sentences: (1) what Give Kids A Smile is, and (2) how your local Give Kids A Smile event can help, but not solve the overall problem of access to oral health care for children from low-income families.

The Talking Points included in this section should be helpful. But we also encourage Give Kids A Smile spokespersons to put things in their own words and to discuss the issues in ways that are relevant to the local situation.

Tips to keep in mind:

- Relax and speak in a conversational tone. Try to imagine the reporter is a neighbor or patient and you're explaining Give Kids A Smile and access to oral health care. Convey interest, concern and confidence.
- State the most important information first; then provide background information.
- Be concise and clear. Print reporters will want more depth than broadcast journalists because they have more space to run stories.
- Don't use technical jargon—remember you're speaking to a lay audience. For instance, instead of “restorations,” say “fillings and crowns.”
- Most broadcast interviews will be taped and edited before airing. The reporter will probably pull out a 10-15 second sound bite from your interview and summarize the rest of the information you provide.
- Think before you speak. It is easier to edit out a silence than many “umms” and “aahs.”
- The reporter wants *your* voice on tape, so avoid simply answering “yes” or “no” to questions—expand and provide details that help tell the story.
- A brief story of a child in dire need of access to oral health care is a much more memorable interview than a lot of statistics, which the reporter can pick up anyway from your press materials. Describe in general terms one of the worst pediatric cases you've seen due to lack of access to oral health care, then bridge to what your volunteers would like to see happen to improve access in your state.

- For television interviews, always look at the interviewer, not the camera. The cameraperson will find you.
- Remember that *anything* you say to a reporter before, during and after the interview can be used in the story. There is no such thing as “off the record,” so if you don’t want your comment to appear in the story, *don’t say it*.

Give Kids A Smile spokespersons, please feel free to contact the ADA Division Public Affairs at 800-621-8099, x2806 for additional advice on media interviews.