



Reaching the Media: A Toolkit for *We Can!* Communities

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I. INTRODUCTION

About this kit

Created by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI), part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), this media toolkit is designed to assist you in engaging your local and state media, to help spread the word about **We Can!**TM (**W**ays to **E**nhance **C**hildren's **A**ctivity & **N**utrition).

It will provide you with the inside scoop on what's "newsworthy;" who to approach and how to do it; tips for creating and disseminating materials such as news releases, advisories, and pitches; guidance on how to identify and prepare spokespeople; and pointers on the art of interviewing.

Because the media is bombarded with hundreds of story possibilities every day, we want to help you present your "news" so that your story *stands out*, making it one of few that is chosen for coverage.

As you move forward in your outreach, please make use of the other online resources offered by **We Can!**, and make sure to adhere to the program's brand and logo guidelines. (<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/wecan/whats-we-can/logo.htm>)

About **We Can!**

As a community site, you know a lot about **We Can!** at the ground level. You know that our curricula differ from others because they are science-based, easy to tailor to your needs, and supported by national partners both in the private and public sectors.

What you might *not* know is that since its inception in 2005, **We Can!** has grown rapidly through word-of-mouth, expanding from 14 intensive community sites to more than 1,000 registered sites in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and 11 other countries (May 2009).

In fact, **We Can!** has evolved into a grassroots, *national movement* to help youth ages eight through 13 maintain a healthy weight through improved food choices, increased physical activity, and reduced screen time.

We Can! is *also* unique in that it is the first prevention-oriented collaboration among four Institutes of NIH:

- National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute
- National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases
- *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of Child Health and Human Development
- National Cancer Institute

We Can! was also one of the Acting U.S. Surgeon General's signature childhood overweight prevention programs in 2008.

We Can! & the Media

As you know, the media not only play an immense role in setting the tone and priorities of all issues, they can assist you in spreading the word about your successes and help you recruit support for your programming. Rather than waiting for your local media (i.e., reporters, producers, editors) to learn about you through other channels, we encourage you to take the first steps in reaching out to them.

By helping your local media understand the nature and incredible benefits of your local programming, and how it ties into the *We Can!* national movement, you'll be accomplishing several things:

- Framing the message
- Creating greater awareness of the program among potential participants and partners
- Building a bridge for future coverage

This toolkit provides you with both the tools and guidance to begin that process.

II. LAYING THE FOUNDATION

Identifying Key Media & Building Contact Lists

The first step in working with the media is to identify the news outlets you'd like to have cover your story, the appropriate contacts at those outlets, and then create a database of those individuals. Potential news outlets include your local and state newspapers, local radio programs, local television-news programs, news Web sites and blogs, and community newsletters.

Media Beats

The next step is taking a good look at who would be interested in the news you're announcing. Depending on the story you want covered, it's likely that you will be seeking and pitching reporters, writers, editors and producers who cover the following issues or "beats:"

- *Children*
- *Families*
- *Health*
- *Diet, weight, and obesity*
- *Education*
- *Lifestyles*
- *Nutrition*
- *Fitness*

Don't limit yourself to this list, however, since you might have a story that falls into another beat or section. For example:

- *Business beat*: Signing a new corporate partner to help with *We Can!*-based programming could be a great story for your paper's business section or business journal.
- *Media beat*: A public service announcement (PSA) created by participants in the Media-Smart Youth® curriculum that's broadcast on your local radio station may be of interest to the reporter who covers the local media-beat for your hometown paper (or a features reporter or editor.)
- *Food/Recipes beat*: If your site has helped tailor nutritional foods recommended by *We Can!* to fit the cultural needs of a specific community, this may interest an editor of the Food section. Or, if you have a recipe to share, it could go to a recipes columnist at your local paper or city magazine.

Don't forget the Style, Metro, or City section reporters who cover community-related feature stories, either. They could be enticed to do a story about how Lawanda Jones, Jose Martinez, and other local students learned to make better food choices by creating a PSA on nutrition. And, if you have an event you want announced, make sure that the calendar editor is on your contact list.

Background Research: Finding the Right Contact

Identifying the best contact may be as simple as turning on your local news and/or picking up a hard copy of your local newspaper (or magazine) and leafing through it. You can also go to an outlet's Web site to find e-mail addresses. Keep your eyes open for specific e-mail addresses dedicated to receiving news stories from the community (e.g., newsroom@wjla.com, stories@pronews7.com, etc.). If you don't find what you need on the Web site, you can call the outlet directly to ask. Just be prepared—they might put you through to the reporter.

Internet search engines are another source of information. They not only allow you to search relevant words or phrases, they can lead you to a reporter's previous stories, which we suggest you reference if there's a topical connection to your pitch. Make sure to gather the following essential information for each contact

- Full name
- Title (e.g., reporter, editor, medical writer)
- Outlet name
- Mailing address
- E-mail address
- Fax number
- Preferred way of receiving information

Media Structure: Who Decides What Stories Are Covered

PRINT

In the print-news hierarchy, every reporter answers to an editor. That's why it pays to approach *both*.

Newspapers (a.k.a. “dailies”)

Newspapers have editors for each section and each beat. The easiest way to find out who they are and how to reach them is to call the paper’s general number and ask. Since it’s possible that you’ll be put through to that person directly, be prepared to give some background on your *We Can!* programming, as well as about *We Can!* itself (see our section on key messaging for help). Also, don’t forget to look for local newspaper columnists writing on relevant topics, and add them to your media list.

Newsletters

Unlike newspapers, newsletters have small editorial staffs. For newsletters, seek the editor for your list. Sometimes, the editor and the publisher will be the same individual. Call to confirm.

Magazines

When it comes to magazines, there are those that publish weekly (i.e., *Time*, *The Week*), and others that publish monthly or quarterly. Each group has a different deadline for receiving information. What they have in common is that it is usually *best* to approach the associate deputy editors and those who assist them. You can find their names in the masthead on the first or second page of the publication. Unless you know them personally, publishers, managing editors and editors-in-chief are *not* appropriate contacts.

BROADCAST

Television

Local television news has its own hierarchy. The first and most important thing to note is that unless you have a personal connection to your local television anchor(s), he/she/they *are not* appropriate contacts for a story idea. The people whom you should approach because they are the news decision-makers are the following, in order of rank:

- *Associate or managing news director:* This person is in charge of the “big picture” from day to day. In smaller towns, the news director is sometimes also involved in the decision-making process.
- *Individual show producers:* Every newscast, or “show,” has its own producer—morning, noon, 5 or 6 o’clock news, 10 or 11 o’clock news—and that person drives what stories go in the show.
- *Assignment editors:* These individuals collect story ideas and distribute them to reporters, news directors, and producers who ultimately make the decisions on what runs. There are two crews: daytime and nighttime.

- *Reporters*: They piece the story together. While they are often the source of story ideas, the decision on whether a story will be covered comes from the producers and/or associate/managing news director.

Radio

Not all radio stations cover the news, or have a newsroom. Turning on the dial (or logging onto their Internet site) and listening to the programming is often the best way to learn if a station has opinion programs/shows, host personalities and spokespeople who address issues of community interest such as children's or health topics, or news of any sort. The next step is to call the station directly to see if there is a *producer* or *news director* to whom you could send your story idea.

ONLINE

Web sites and blogs

Online outlets, especially bloggers, are a whole other ballgame. Some online outlets have a small staff and therefore just one contact. E-mail is the best way to contact them, and it pays to be patient and persistent. Bloggers, on the other hand, *are* the contact. The tricky thing about bloggers is that the vast majority does not want to receive “pitches.” That doesn't mean that they aren't open to good stories or ideas. It means that you first need to cultivate a friendly relationship with them, perhaps introducing yourself via e-mail as a fellow blogger (if you are one), or offering yourself as a local expert on what the community is doing to help keep children a healthy weight.

Creating Relationships

As a *We Can!* Community Site organizer who is skilled at building effective working relationships, we don't have to sell you on the importance of creating those relationships to getting the job done.

The same thing holds true with the media. Trust is built over time, with effort.

That's why as soon as you've identified your media contacts, we strongly suggest dropping them a simple introductory e-mail or calling to introduce yourself—or a spokesperson—as a source of information on the community's efforts to help children maintain a healthy weight.

Conversational openers could include:

- Asking if s/he is on deadline and if you could have 60 seconds of his/her time, or dropping him/her an e-mail about your programming.
- Asking whether s/he is working on current or upcoming stories addressing children's health or weight issues.
- Walking her/him through how your *We Can!* programming works.

- Inviting her/him to see it firsthand by attending one of the sessions (e.g., parents curriculum or one of the youth programs), free of charge.
- Giving her/him a specific example of a child/family who has changed their lifestyle because of the program. (Be sure that you first have permission from the family to use their story and their names.)
- Offering to introduce her/him to this child/family or other participants in the program.
- Suggesting s/he visit the **We Can!** Web site at <http://wecan.nhlbi.nih.gov> for an overview of the program and to see national success stories.

TIP: Investigate the reporter’s style and the type of stories they cover, to avoid pitching a story that is unrelated to his or her topic of interest. Also, make sure to confirm their preferred method of being contacted.

Staying in Touch

After you’ve provided the initial information about your **We Can!**-related programming, follow up to ensure they’ve received it, and to answer any questions they may have. After this contact, maintain a professional relationship with your contact by following up with him/her *judiciously*. We recommend limiting contact to when you have something *new* to share, or if the story did not get published despite a commitment to do so.

TIP: Know your contact’s deadlines and stressors. Unless you have breaking news, avoid calling contacts at your local newspaper(s) and television stations after 3:00 p.m. because of impending deadlines. Broadcast-media story assignments are made each morning, and during a 2 p.m. meeting, so plan accordingly. Magazines, depending on how often they are published, have longer leads (up to three months in advance for national magazines) and different schedules.

Identifying Opportunities

Whether you’re looking to announce that you have joined the **We Can!** movement, that your community site is hosting an event of interest to the community, or that your community is already helping local kids maintain a healthy weight through programming, there are many opportunities for you to approach the media with “news.”

The key is discerning what’s newsworthy and what isn’t. A good guide is that there has to be something “new” to make it “new”sworthy (e.g., new community programs, new partnerships, new collaborations, new funding, new curricula, etc.).

TIP: As you look for things that set your programming apart from the crowd, keep an eye out for the following differentiators:

- **First** (e.g., the first training to be held in your community, the first program in conjunction with local schools, the first PSA created by Media-Smart Youth participants)
- **Largest** (e.g., biggest community health fair, most participants—be sure you can back your numbers up)
- **Unusual/unique** (e.g., the translation of *We Can!*-based materials into Tagalog)
- **Compelling** (e.g., a success story of a family from an at-risk community)

TIP: Keep an eye open for local/regional/state health reports (e.g., reports with local or regional statistics regarding weight or diabetes), new health or obesity-related policies or legislation, or national research news related to *We Can!* topics that you could localize with your area’s own statistics as a way to talk about how your programming is working toward a solution.

III. KEY MESSAGES: WHY THEY MATTER

Earlier we mentioned the importance of being proactive in defining yourself and your program. One of the best ways to do that is to sit down and craft key messages based on some of the following:

- Overall mission of the program.
- Specifics about your site (i.e., number and type of curricula, number of participants, other *We Can!*-related offerings, specific success stories).
- Local or regional statistics on the number of overweight children, overweight or obese adults, prevalence of diabetes, or other weight-related complications.
- Your audiences (i.e., who they are and their needs).
- How *We Can!* meets the specific needs of these diverse audiences.

Now you have the framework for creating key messaging that can be used to talk about your programming in any number of contexts, be it through the media; in direct presentations to supporters, program participants, current or potential partners; or simply to someone you just met in the elevator who knows nothing about *We Can!*.

To assist you, we have already crafted key messages about the national *We Can!* movement. We *strongly encourage* you to use this messaging (attached below) in your own announcements, as a guide when you’re crafting your own site-specific messaging, and in interviews.

Our goal is for all community sites to speak in a single voice about the national program to create greater credibility and coverage for all. For this to happen, consistency in messaging is key.

We Can! National Movement Key Messages

Primary Messages

1. ***We Can!*TM (Ways to Enhance Children’s Activity and Nutrition) is a fast-growing national movement of families and communities coming together to promote healthy weight in children ages eight through 13 through *improved food choices, increased physical activity, and reduced screen time.***

2. ***We Can!* is a science-based, national education program.**
 - *We Can!* consists of science-based educational programs, support materials, training opportunities, and other resources based on the results of clinical and community studies supported by the National Institutes of Health, the nation’s medical research agency. These resources help health professionals, community groups, and others to implement programs for youth, parents, and families in their community.
 - *We Can!* is supported by the National Institutes of Health (NIH).
 - *We Can!* is a collaboration of **four NIH institutes**: National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute; *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of Child and Human Development; National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases; and National Cancer Institute.

3. ***We Can!* is a fast-growing national movement.**
 - *We Can!* has grown steadily since the program was launched in 2005, from 14 intensive community sites to more than 1,000 site in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and multiple other countries, as of 2009. The latest number of registered sites can be found on the *We Can!* Web site.
 - *We Can!* community sites include parks and recreation departments, YMCAs, faith-based organizations, medical/health systems, fitness centers, schools, universities, and work sites.
 - Communities can tailor *We Can!* to fit their specific needs and settings—rural to urban—and populations of diverse ethnic (African Americans, Hispanics, etc.) and socioeconomic backgrounds.
 - *We Can!* is appealing because it empowers children, their parents and caregivers at the community level—from the smallest towns to the largest cities—to make healthy lifestyle choices.
 - *We Can!* engages partners ranging from Fortune 500 companies and other corporations, to nonprofit organizations, to government agencies. Partners range from government agencies such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Division of Adolescent and School Health, to nonprofits like the American Academy of Family

Physicians, to corporations like SUBWAY® Restaurants. A complete list of partners in all categories is available on the *We Can!* Web site.

4. *We Can!* provides a centralized resource of science-based educational materials to promote a healthy weight in youth.

- The *We Can!* Web site is an invaluable resource for parents and caregivers of youth, as well as community-based and national organizations.
- For parents and other caregivers: Tip sheets and tools, plus *We Can!* Energize Our Families: Parent Program, a hands-on, multiple-session curriculum that covers the basics of maintaining a healthy weight through “energy balance.”
- Three youth curricula: the CATCH™ (Coordinated Approach to Child Health) Kids Club; S.M.A.R.T. (Student Media Awareness to Reduce Television); and Media-Smart Youth®: Eat, Think and Be Active!
 - CATCH Kids Club helps elementary school-aged children adopt healthy dietary and physical activity behaviors by positively changing the health environments of recreation programs, schools, and home.
 - S.M.A.R.T. is an in-school curriculum designed to teach third- and fourth-grade children about the need to reduce television, videotape and DVD viewing, and video and computer game use.
 - Media-Smart Youth is an afterschool program designed to help young people ages 11 to 13 understand the complex media world around them and how it can influence their health, especially in regard to nutrition and physical activity. (NOTE: the CATCH Kids Club and S.M.A.R.T. programs are sold by the NIH grantees who developed the programs; Media-Smart Youth is available at no cost.)
 - Regional *We Can!* trainings for site leaders are often provided at minimal or no cost.

Secondary Messages

- **Childhood overweight is a serious public health problem. In the U.S., nearly one-third of youths are overweight or at risk of becoming overweight.**
 - From 1980 to 2006, overweight more than doubled among children ages 2-5, almost tripled among youth ages 6-11, and more than tripled among teens ages 12-19.¹

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Childhood Overweight and Obesity. 2008 [accessed 2008 December]. Available from URL: <http://cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/obesity/childhood>

- One out of every six children in the U.S. ages two to 19 is overweight. That's 16.3 percent,² or an estimated 12 million³ youth. An additional 15.6 percent are at risk of becoming overweight.²
- Extra pounds can add up to life-long health problems. Overweight and obese adults increase their risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, certain cancers, and other chronic conditions.⁴
- **The *We Can!* Web site is an invaluable resource for parents and caregivers of youth.**
 - Parents can get information on “Go, Slow, Whoa” foods for their families by using the *U R What U Eat* fact sheet with their children.
 - They can use the screen time log to help their children track the hours spent in front of the television or playing computer games.
 - *Families Finding the Balance: A Parent Handbook*, available in English and Spanish, offers practical tips to help parents help their families find the right balance of eating well and being physically active to maintain a healthy weight.
- **Cities and communities interested in establishing a *We Can!* site can register for one of three program levels—general site, intensive site, city/county site—at <http://wecan.nhlbi.nih.gov>.**
 - The levels dictate the intensity of involvement. The vast majority of sites have registered as general sites (the lowest intensity), with the remainder registered as intensive sites and a select group of cities/counties hold the distinction of being declared a *We Can!* City/County (i.e., Boston, Las Vegas, and Caguas, Puerto Rico).
- **Other *We Can!* information can be found at <http://wecan.nhlbi.nih.gov>, or by emailing wecan@aed.org or calling (866) 35-WE CAN or TTY 240 629 3255.**

Again, the purpose of this messaging is to frame the discussion of *We Can!*, and to give you a guidepost for your own site-specific message development.

TIP: In an age of shortened attention spans and even smaller news holes, it's critical to craft your messages so that they lead with the most important information right off the top and run

² Ogden CL, Carroll MD, Flegal, KM. 2008. High Body Mass Index for Age Among US Children and Adolescents, 2003-2006. *Journal of the American Medical Association*; 299 (20): 2401-2405.

³ US Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program. General Demographic Characteristics: July 2006. 2006 [accessed 2008 December]. Available at URL: http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/QTTable?_ds_name=PEP_2006_EST&-qr_name=PEP_2006_EST_DP1&-geo_id=01000US.

⁴ Kumanyika SK, Obarzanek E, Stettler N, et al. Population-based prevention of obesity: The need for comprehensive promotion of healthful eating, physical activity, and energy balance. A scientific statement from American Heart Association Council on Epidemiology and Prevention, Interdisciplinary Committee for Prevention. *Circulation*. 2008;118:1-37.

between 15 to 20 seconds—that’s currently the average length of a quote or what’s known as “sound bite” in a television or radio news story.

IV. WORKING WITH SPOKESPEOPLE

The time will come when you will need to identify an individual or group of individuals who can carry your messages to multiple audiences. Perhaps you’ve already done this. For those who haven’t, here are some important pointers:

Identification

Yes, you can have several spokespeople. In fact, *you* can be one of the people to assume this role. Other spokespeople can be a health professional, a subject-matter expert, or one or more program participants, such as a parent or articulate child (get permission from the child’s parents or other caregiver before arranging any interviews). From the media’s perspective, a degreed healthcare professional is highly desirable because it is someone who can speak with authority.

Whomever you choose, that individual or individuals should not only be well-versed on your site-specific programming and messaging, they *also* should have a firm grasp on the national *We Can!* messages above.

We also encourage having at least one native Spanish speaker in the mix, if possible, especially if your community site offers *We Can!* programs in Spanish. (The same holds true if you offer programs in other languages.)

TIP: Look for someone who can speak genuinely, credibly, and confidently in order to effectively articulate your key messages. Also, seek someone who won’t get easily flustered when opposing points of view are expressed. Check on their availability for interviews, especially if you need them to promote a time-specific event.

Preparation

In addition to reviewing your own and the national *We Can!* messaging prior to an interview, we encourage you to create a set of anticipated questions and suggested answers. That way, you reduce your chances of getting caught off-guard. While spokespeople should stay on message, they also should be encouraged to articulate responses in their own style so they don’t appear scripted or robotic.

In addition, prior to any interview, you may wish to provide your spokesperson with background information about both the media outlet and the interviewer. Media training or practice interviews can help any spokesperson—be it a participant doing an interview for the first time, or an expert who has spoken on similar topics repeatedly—know what to expect and engage the media effectively.

Pointers on the “Art of the Interviewing” can be found on page 19.

V. REACHING OUT TO THE MEDIA

Once you have your media contact lists, your key messages, and your spokespeople, you need to think about what tools are appropriate for the type of announcement you plan to make. How do you decide what tool to use? The first step is to follow the *newsworthy/noteworthy rule* outlined earlier in this kit.

For instance, if your goal is to attract participants to a training, crafting a simple media advisory outlining the “who, what, when, where, and how,” and then contacting only *two* people—the newspaper’s calendar editor and the desk editor on that topic (e.g., nutrition, children, metro)—might be your best use of resources.

Unless your *We Can!* program is the *first* of its kind, or *unusual* in some other respect (e.g., a high-ranking or notable public official or celebrity is supporting your cause or attending your event), it is unlikely that you will have interest or get coverage from any other contacts.

By contrast, if you have a *noteworthy* development—one that could potentially change behaviors or attitudes in the community—and believe that it merits a full story, then a press release sent to multiple contacts is appropriate. Following is a look at some of the most common options.

Tools

- **Media Advisories.** Also known as media alerts, these are one-page written documents that alert, in a very brief manner, the media to upcoming local or national events. They provide the basics of what most journalists are eager to know—the “who, what, when, where, and how.” A media alert should:
 - Look somewhat like a party invitation—the “who, what, when, where, and how” bulleted, with brief corresponding answers.
 - Be one page long.
 - List contact information for reporters to access further details (the “how”).
 - Paste appropriate and approved logos from whichever organization is the source of the announcement at the top of the alert. Use the approved *We Can!* logos, and associated brand and logo guidelines (on the *We Can!* Web site) when the announcement is related to *We Can!* programming.
 - Be spare, simple, and to the point.
- **Press Releases.** Also known as *news* releases, these announcements are one- or two-page, stand-alone announcements that are written like a condensed news story that you would read in your paper. They should include:
 - A succinct headline.
 - A brief, two- to three-sentence opening paragraph that sums up the announcement and the reason readers/viewers should care.
 - Quotes from, and background on, the key spokespeople.
 - Background on the topic.

- The missions of the organizations involved.

Contrary to media advisories, releases should:

- Read like an article and be able to be published without any changes.
- Contain two to three quotes.
- Include facts and statistics on the subject (e.g., the number of overweight children in your city, county, and/or state).
- Include a boilerplate, which is a brief description of the organizations involved and their missions, placed at the end of the release.

TIP: Both media advisories and press releases should contain an eye-catching *headline* detailing the most relevant information. They also should always offer a relevant Web site address and contact name, number, and e-mail for more information.

- **Matte Articles.** Often known as matte releases, these are specially designed, pre-written feature articles provided by NHLBI for distribution and publication in newsletters, newspapers, and magazines or on community Web sites. You can find approved matte articles on the *We Can!* pressroom Web site, and an example in the appendices.

They are a cost-effective way of getting your message out, and may include a photograph or other appropriate artwork. They are distributed in a ready-to-use format, so that newspapers can run the “pre-packaged” story, saving on time and budget. Smaller, local, and lower-tier publications usually use the entire feature with very little change.

It is important to note that matte articles are not *advertisements*, and not for every outlet. Contact your local newspaper(s) directly to see if they are interested before sending them something.

TIPS for writing your own matte article about your specific programming:

- Share something unique with your audience (e.g., *We Can!* is designed for communities like ours to reach and communicate with parents and generate local nutrition and activity choices for children and youth ages eight to 13).
- A matte article is not like an advertisement—it’s not the appropriate vehicle for “selling” your programming directly. Instead, think of it as an opportunity to establish yourself as a thought-leader on a topic related to your *We Can!* programming.
- Include relevant high-quality artwork (e.g., a *We Can!* logo or spokesperson’s photograph). Some outlets run a story simply because it was presented professionally and ready to print.
- Keep the articles short (one page) and be sure to make references that resonate with your local audience (e.g., statistics on childhood weight challenges in your city or state).

- **Public Service Announcements (PSAs).** These community service announcements are non-commercial (non-paid) informational pieces that can be disseminated through all media outlets. Their purpose is to create awareness about specific topics of social interest in order to modify public attitudes and behavior. You can find sample scripts for each in the appendices to this kit.
 - **Radio PSAs.** Usually, these are produced in audio format in a production studio. However, if you can't afford production expenses, you can craft your own short, written piece—called a “live read” script—using relevant *We Can!* messaging. You then need to petition a station's news director or producer to have it read on air by the program host(s) or personalities. You can use these PSAs as an opportunity to advertise your local event.
 - **Television PSAs.** These tend to be professionally produced in video format. Again, if you are lacking production resources, you can do the same thing as you did for the radio PSAs—craft a short written script with your messages or event. Also, if you are using Media-Smart Youth as one of your curricula, consider promoting the children's TV or radio PSAs to your local media.
 - **Print PSAs.** These are usually distributed to magazines and newspapers. They are typically professionally designed and produced with images and artwork that contain short and to-the-point key messages.

TIP: PSAs can vary in length, but typically run up to 60 seconds. The most common TV and radio PSAs are usually 30 seconds in length. “Live reads” are typically 15 seconds long.

- **Editorials and Opinion Editorials (op-eds):** These are 400- to 500-word opinion pieces that either provide the opinion of an expert, or of the outlet's editors, on a specific topic or event. In the case of *We Can!*, you can serve as a third-party expert (e.g., a local health official or local community organizer) and write a piece on the importance of your program in providing the community with tools and training to help children maintain a healthy weight.
- **Letters to the Editor:** These are brief letters written with the intent of expressing an individual's or organization's views on a subject. They are sent to newspapers or magazines, and can also be a way to respond to other stories.

Timeline

After you've chosen your communication vehicle, take a look at your media targets and map out a timeline. It pays to back time from the date on which you would like news of your story/announcement to run. There are several factors you need to keep in mind when doing this, including the following:

Length of internal approval process

If you need outside approval of your announcement (i.e., partner buy-in, approval of quotes, oversight by a government entity), don't forget to build in the time necessary to acquire those approvals and come up with a finalized product.

Individual media outlet deadlines

Each medium will have a different set of deadlines (e.g., TV news has daily deadlines driven by the time of the newscasts, magazines have a longer lead of three to four months). Make sure you send your communication accordingly.

Pre-set announcement distribution timelines

- **Media Advisory:** These are usually sent out one or two weeks in advance, as a placeholder/save-the-date item. The exceptions are editorial calendars and magazines, which need information up to three months in advance (known as “lead time”) due to publication cycles.
- **Press/News Release:** These are ordinarily issued the day of the event at the time that the event starts or immediately following the event. If a media contact tells you that s/he has a deadline too close to the event time, and would like to craft the story in advance, you can provide that person with an advance copy and/or interviews as long as s/he agrees to honor the embargo date and publish it after your announcement.
- **Opinion Editorials & Letters to the Editor:** These depend on whether you are being proactive or reactive. If you are *trying* to trigger a story, then you should send this item one month in advance. If you are *reacting* to a story or news, then, ideally, you should send your reaction within a couple of days of the original posting. One week is the very latest timeframe in which to respond to the original issue.
- **PSAs:** Send these at least six weeks in advance.

Dissemination

Before you hit “send” or “fax,” we recommend that you set your goals and ask yourself the following questions:

- Are my release and the messaging within it a good fit for the media outlet I'm targeting?
- Will my news and messaging resonate with that outlet's audiences? (Reporters write for their audiences, and so should you. If your messaging speaks to their readers/viewers/listeners, explain how. This can create a hook for the media to take an interest and cover your story/event.)

- Do I know any local experts not affiliated with my program (e.g., physicians, health official) who could speak on our behalf, thereby giving us greater credibility?
- Is this an opportunity to talk about the *We Can!* national movement as well as our local programming? (If so, use the approved national *We Can!* messages, and don't be shy to mention the Web site, <http://wecan.nhlbi.nih.gov>, as a source of additional information.)
- How is my event or announcement *different* from other events or announcements?
- Does this event entail a call-to-action which should be explained in detail?

Once the announcement is written, you have a choice of channels by which to issue it.

- *Distribution channels*
 - E-mail
 - Pasting your advisory or release into the body of an e-mail is critical since many people no longer open attachments from strangers.
 - Mass e-mails are not recommended. Individualize each one for better response.
 - Fax
 - TV and radio stations often respond better to getting a fax than to e-mail—we recommend sending both.
 - Mail
 - An old-fashioned letter with accompanying background materials about your programming might also work, if you provide enough time for the reporter to receive it.

TIP: When you're thinking about where your story might fit, think *outside* of the box. What about a specific/niche cable or radio show in your area? Or, how about a local or regional call-in radio talk show that's covering children's health or a related topic?

TIP: Don't limit yourself to disseminating your announcements only to the media. To build broader awareness and support, send your press releases, PSAs, etc., to your partners, participants, and potential advocates of your cause.

Follow-up

Once you've distributed your announcement, it's important to follow up. *Remember*, you are not selling a product. Instead, you are trying to establish yourself or another *We Can!* spokesperson as an expert who is a source of valuable information.

You have a compelling story to tell about a health issue that affects many people in your community. Make sure that your media contact knows this.

Here are some other pointers:

- Be mindful of your contact's time. Like you, they have a job to do and are constantly on deadline.
- Do not wait until the last minute. Depending on the media outlet (broadcast versus daily newspaper versus long-lead magazine, weekly newspaper, or newsletter), it might be best to give a few weeks (or at least, a few days) of lead time to consider and report on your story. Keep in mind, though, that for daily newspapers or broadcast outlets, too much time could mean that your story is forgotten by the time it comes around. You might want to send reminder notices.
- Make reference to the organization you or the program represents, and always mention that *We Can!* is a science-based NIH program.
- Make your call quick, and offer to send more detailed information via e-mail.
- Capture their interest by using local statistics about the extent of the childhood overweight/obesity program in your area and the success of your programming.
- Provide them with your contact information and offer to answer any additional questions or furnish further information.

TIP: Remember that members of the media work under pressure and strict deadlines. They might not get back to you the first time you reach out to them.

Do not think they are not interested; try contacting them again until you make sure they have received your information.

Most busy reporters and writers prefer e-mail over phone calls, although now the trend is also showing a return to faxes and mail, too.

Sample Pitch Call Script:

"Hi, I'm _____ with [*Say the name of your organization*].

Do you still cover [*Say which beat the reporter covers: children's/health/nutrition*] issues, and have 30 seconds to spare?

I'd like to tell you about the how we're using an NIH-program here in [*Say name of area/town/city*] to help our kids maintain a healthy weight through better food choices, increased physical activity, and reduced screen time.

[*If it seems to be an inopportune moment, make sure to offer other options—time to speak, desk-side briefing, meet for coffee—before you are turned away*]

I also have additional information I'd like to send to you. Can I send it to you as an attachment via e-mail?

Thank you for your time. If you're ever doing a story on [*Say topic*] please feel free to give me [*Or spokesperson*] a call. I'll include my number in the e-mail [*Or on the fax*]. "

Press Kit

Last, but certainly not least, it may serve you well to have a press kit to give to the media as follow up to an interview or at an event. Press kits could contain the following:

- A press release or press releases
- A *We Can!* brochure
- A fact sheet on your programming
- Your spokesperson's bio
- A business card

VI. THE ART OF INTERVIEWING

Practice.

Practice.

And then practice some more.

That old cliché about practice improving performance is *true*, especially when it comes to delivering key messages. Of course, there are other, practical pointers.

Interviewing Pointers

- Know as much as possible about the interview, the reporter, and what you hope to communicate.
- Speak in 10- to 15-second sound bites, leading with the most important point(s) first, and then filling out the details later (to help ensure that your most important point will be used).
- Try not to numb the interviewer, who has limited time, by delving into minute detail. Instead, at the end of the interview offer background materials and information that you've either brought with you or will send later.
- Take every opportunity to reiterate your key messages.
- Steer the conversation as needed to stay on message.
- Never make any false statements.
- Never hypothesize or speculate. Redirect the conversation to one of your key messages.
- Avoid offering personal opinions.
- If it's not your area of expertise—or if you don't know the answer to a question—say so. Offer to look into the question and get back to the reporter with more information. Or, if

you know an expert who can answer the question, in a manner that *supports* your messaging, feel free to refer the media to that person.

- Listen to the question and take your time when answering.
- If you get a multi-part question, do not hesitate to break it into two answers.
- Speaks slowly and clearly, and try to avoid filler noises or words (i.e., “um” “like” “uh”).
- If you are doing an interview over the telephone, stand up and move around—you will naturally have more energy during the interview, which will be evident in your voice.
- Start with the positive, even if the response is negative in nature (i.e., “Our Media-Smart Youth program has already helped some 30 kids better understand nutrition, although the number of overweight children in our city has grown by X percent”).
- Instead of letting an antagonistic question fluster you, “bridge” to one of your key messages. For example:
 - *Question:* “Aren’t your tactics to control childhood obesity unrealistic?”
 - *Answer:* “Healthy habits need to be established early and parental guidance is key. Our science-based **We Can!** programming does this by showing parents, kids, and caregivers how food choices, physical activity, and reduced screen time can help.”
- Do not repeat the interviewer’s question when stating your answer, especially when it is a false or controversial statement.
- Try to answer in complete sentences—don't just answer the question.
- If you misspeak, stop, acknowledge you misspoke, clarify why, and give the correct answer.
- Remember, there is no such thing as “off the record.”
- Avoid saying “no comment.” Instead, refer back to one of your key messages.
- Remember, you’re in control. You can decide the time, the location, and other aspects of the interview.

Broadcast-specific pointers

- Dress appropriately for the interview setting. For instance, if you are a leader connected to parks and recreation, and your programming and interview are being conducted outdoors, come dressed in what you would wear for that programming. If you are being interviewed in an office setting or on-set in a studio, however, make sure to dress professionally.

- Avoid distracting and/or noisy movements, such as repositioning yourself in the chair, tapping a foot/pen/hands, or shuffling through papers.
- If you use your hands when you speak, continue to do so but avoid grandiose gestures.
- Be careful not to move forward too close to a camera or microphone.
- The microphone is always on, so don't make any remarks you wouldn't want broadcast even after the formal interview seems to be over.

TIP: Television anchors sometimes read their scripts out loud, in front of a mirror, to be aware of their facial expressions. You may wish to practice this with your key messages. It's a useful exercise since *non-verbal* communication is just as important as what is being said.

VII. TRACKING MEDIA COVERAGE

Tracking media coverage (a.k.a. "hits" or placements) has never been easier. The Internet provides additional tools such as:

- Search engines
 - You can use key words and phrases to monitor Google news, Yahoo news, Technorati (a blog-specific search engine), and others for coverage of your story.
 - On Google, you can also sign up for alerts which are sent daily to your e-mail address whenever one of your phrases/topics comes up.
- Outlet Web sites
 - Often, your story is likely to appear on the Web site of whichever print outlet carried it.
- RSS feeds
 - You can channel searches from a number of sites to a central location (e.g., a Google account) in the form of a feed. This helps you manage your hits according to topic, and to see all of them in a single grouping.
- Clipping services
 - There are outside vendors that will monitor the media for you, for a fee. This is the least cost-effective of all the options listed here, because these vendors tend to charge you by the hit/placement.

The *We Can!* team would appreciate it if you could send us clips or links to any coverage that you do get. Video clips of your event—whether shot by you or an third party—are *especially* welcome since we can use them to highlight your successes in the *We Can!* eNewsletter, on our Web site, and elsewhere.

It's a win-win situation! Contact us for details on how to do it.

VIII. TEMPLATES

There are several templates which you can use as a basis for crafting your media outreach, including:

- A stand-alone document containing *We Can!* messages
- Examples of a:
 - Media advisory
 - Media release
 - Letter to the editor
 - Public service announcement

You can access all of these items by clicking [here](#).

In addition, in this toolkit, you will find six, pre-set, stand-alone articles—known as matte articles or mattes—which you can send to your local newspaper or newsletter.

We also encourage you to check out other downloadable resources on the *We Can!* Web site (<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/wecan/>). They include print ads (in color, black and white, and Spanish); a brochure that you can give to your media contact after you've completed your interview or mail to him/her in advance of your initial outreach; an informational video that you can tell your media contact to view; and much more.

Together, you and *We Can!* have the potential to bring word of your good work and our national movement to thousands of potential participants and supporters who are hungry for a way to stay at a healthy weight.

Good luck!

Larger Portion Sizes Contribute To U.S. Obesity Problem

NewsUSA

(NU) - Food portions in America’s restaurants have doubled or tripled over the last 20 years, a key factor that is contributing to a potentially devastating increase in obesity among children and adults. **We Can!**[™] (Ways to Enhance Children’s Activity & Nutrition), a program from the National Institutes of Health, offers parents tips to help their families maintain a healthy weight.









“Super-sized portions at restaurants have distorted what Americans consider a normal portion size, and that affects how much we eat at home as well,” said Elizabeth G. Nabel, director of NIH’s National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute. “One way to keep calories in check is to keep food portions no larger than the size of your fist.”

Larger portions mean more weight. Consider, for example, the following meals:

- Breakfast: a bagel (6 inches in diameter) and a 16-ounce coffee with sugar and milk.
- Lunch: two pieces of pepperoni pizza and a 20-ounce soda.
- Dinner: a chicken Caesar salad and a 20-ounce soda.

In one day, you would consume 1,595 more calories than if you had the same foods at typical portion sizes. Over the course of one year, if consumed daily, the larger portions could amount to more than 500,000 extra calories. Controlling portion sizes and eating smarter can help you and your family avoid extra calories.

- Bring healthy, low-calorie “brown bag” for your children.
- When eating out, order an appetizer instead of an entrée, share an entrée or eat half of meal and bring the rest home.
- Cut high-calorie foods like cheese and chocolate into small pieces and eat fewer pieces.
- Substitute a salad for French fries.
- For snacks, serve fruits and vegetables instead of sweets.

Portion Distortion	
20 Years Ago	Today
Bagel	
 3 inches (diameter)	 6 inches (diameter)
Cheeseburger	
 4.5 ounces	 8 ounces
Popcorn (medium bag)	
 5 cups	 11 cups
Soda	
 6.5 ounces	 20 ounces
Source: National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute	

“Super-sized portions at restaurants have distorted what Americans consider a normal portion size, and that affects how much we eat at home as well,” said Elizabeth G. Nabel, director of NIH’s National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute. “One way to keep calories in check is to keep food portions no larger than the size of your fist.”

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diameter) and a 16-ounce coffee with

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appetizer instead of an entrée, share an entrée or eat half of meal and bring the rest home.

cheese and chocolate into small pieces

fries.

vegetables instead of sweets.

We Can! is designed to assist parents in helping children between the ages of 8 and 13 maintain a healthy weight through improving food choices, increasing physical activity and reducing television and recreational computer time. For a free parents’ handbook and other resources, visit <http://wecan.nhlbi.nih.gov> or call 866-35-WECAN.

We Can! and the **We Can!** logo are [trademarks](#) of the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS).

Your Child's BMI Could Signal Weight Problems

News USA

(NU) - About 13 million children in the United States are over-weight, and nearly that many are believed to be at risk of becoming overweight. How can you tell if your child is one of them?

The standard for screening for possible weight problems is the body mass index (BMI).

In children and teens, BMI-for-age is determined by comparing weight and height against a growth chart that takes their age and sex into account.

For example, a 13-year-old girl who weighs 100 pounds and is 5 feet 2 inches tall is at a healthy weight, but a girl of the same age who is 4 feet 7 inches tall is at risk of becoming overweight.

“It’s important that parents know if their child is overweight or at risk for overweight,” said Dr. Elizabeth G. Nabel, director of the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, part of the Na-tional Institutes of Health. “Excess weight increases a child’s risk of developing type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure and other chronic conditions later in life.”

The NIH’s **We Can!**[™] program (**W**ays to **E**nhance **C**hildren’s **A**ctivity & **N**utrition) recommends that parents ask their primary care provider or pediatrician to regularly determine their child’s BMI-for-age to track changes that could signal excessive weight gain.

We Can! is a public education program designed to help children between the ages of eight and 13 stay at a healthy weight through improving food choices, increasing physical activity and reducing television and recreational computer time.

What can parents do to prevent their children from becoming overweight?

“The best way to have your child grow at healthy weight is to balance energy in with energy out,” Nabel says.

“Energy in” is calories consumed from food and beverages, and “energy out” is calories burned during physical activity. An easy way for a child to cut energy in is to trade a bottle of regular soda for a glass of water each day, and to increase energy out, goon a family bike ride or hike.

For a free **We Can!** parents’ handbook and other tools, including BMI-for-age growth charts, visit <http://wecan.nhlbi.nih.gov> or call 866-35-WECAN.

For information about healthy weight in adults, log on to <http://healthyweight.nhlbi.nih.gov>.

We Can! and the **We Can!** logo are [trademarks](#) of the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS).



Less TV, Fewer Videos Help Keep Weight in Check

NewsUSA

(NU) - Every day, eight- to 18-year-olds spend, on average, nearly four hours watching TV or videos, more than an hour on the computer and 50 minutes playing video games. That amounts nearly six hours a day in front of a screen.

But health experts warn that too much screen time throws off a person's energy balance, making it hard to maintain a healthy weight. Energy balance is the balance between the amount of calories you burn through physical activity (energy out) the amount of calories you consume (energy in). Too much energy in without enough energy out is a formula for weight gain.



to

and
in).
out

“To help your family maintain a healthy weight, it’s important to keep energy balance in mind,” said Dr. Elizabeth G. Nabel, director of the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). “The Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend that children get at least 60 minutes of physical activity on most days. Cutting back on recreational screen time makes it easier to meet this goal.”

The NIH’s *We Can!*[™] (Ways to Enhance Children’s Activity & Nutrition) program provides the following tips to reduce children’s time in front of the screen:

- Turn off Saturday morning cartoons and take your child to a local recreational center, park or skating rink.
- Take the TV out of your child’s bedroom. More than two-thirds of young children have a TV in their bedroom.
- Make a family agreement to limit recreational screen time to less than two hours a day.
- Encourage every family member to think of fun activities to keep moving, such as biking to school events or training together for a charity walk.

We Can! is a public education program designed to aid parents help children between the ages of eight and 13 stay at a healthy weight through improved food choices, increased physical activity and reduced screen time. For more family-friendly tips and other tools, including a recreational screen time log and a daily activity log, visit <http://wecan.nhlbi.nih.gov> or call 866-35-WECAN.

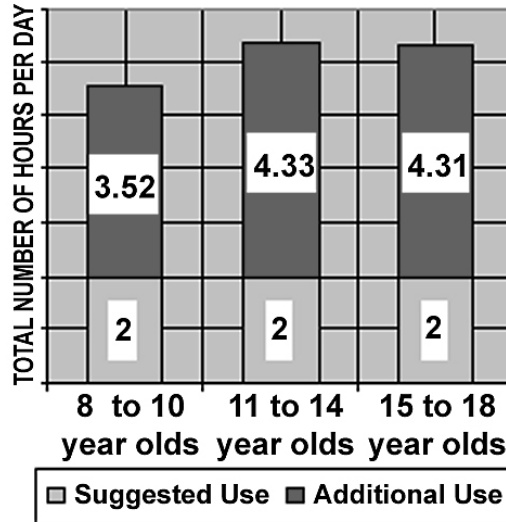
We Can! and the *We Can!* logo are [trademarks](#) of the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS).

More Screen Time Equals Less Activity Time

(NAPS)—Don’t touch that dial! Every day, children ages eight to 13 spend nearly six hours watching TV, playing video games or on the computer. Two-thirds of youth have a TV in their room, and those kids spend another 1.5 hours watching TV than their peers.

The more time children spend in front of the screen, the more likely they are to be overweight. And, children just aren’t getting the recommended 60 minutes of daily physical activity.

**Media Exposure, Use, and Budget
Among 8 to 18 year olds**



Source: Generation M: Media in the Lives of 8 - 18 Year Olds, Kaiser Family Foundation, 2005

What to do? *We Can!*TM (Ways to Enhance Children’s Activity & Nutrition), from the National Institutes of Health, has some tips:

- Agree to limit screen time to no more than two hours a day.
- Don’t put a TV in your child’s bedroom.
- Turn screen time into active time, by doing simple exercises during commercial breaks.

We Can! helps parents of children ages eight to 13 encourage better food choices, increase physical activity and reduce screen time. For more tools to help kids maintain a healthy weight, visit <http://wecan.nhlbi.nih.gov> or call (866) 35-WECAN.

Did You Know?

We Can!, from the National Institutes of Health, helps parents encourage better food choices, increase physical activity and reduce screen time. For tools to help kids maintain a healthy weight, visit <http://wecan.nhlbi.nih.gov> or call (866) 35-WECAN.

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HEALTH MATTE ARTICLE

Eat Healthy, Save Money

(NAPS)—Buying healthier food for your family does not have to cost more. *We Can!*TM (Ways to Enhance Children's Activity & Nutrition), a public education program from the National Institutes of Health for parents with children ages eight to 13, suggests these tips to help you plan healthy family meals before you go to the store:



- Make a plan and stick with it. With a meal plan and a shopping list, you can get most food items in one trip. The fewer trips, the more you save.
- Comparison shop. Use the unit price and the nutrition facts label to compare similar foods. Try store brands and save.
- Buy in-season fruits and vegetables. Try a farmer's market, where products often cost the same or less than your supermarket.
- Don't shop hungry. You are more likely to make unhealthy choices that you'll regret later.

For a meal planner, recipes and other tools to help your family maintain a healthy weight on a budget, visit <http://wecan.nhlbi.nih.gov> or call (866) 35-WECAN.

Did You Know?

We Can!, an educational program of the National Institutes of Health, offers a detailed chart and other family-friendly tools, including meal planners and recipes. Visit <http://wecan.nhlbi.nih.gov> or call (866) 35-WECAN.

A healthy diet is essential to helping families maintain a healthy weight. /// Do You Know Your GO, SLOW, and WHOA Foods?

HEALTH MATTE ARTICLE

Do You Know Your GO, SLOW, And WHOA Foods?

(NAPS)—A healthy diet is essential to helping families maintain a healthy weight. While people occasionally struggle with food choices, you can make healthy choices that not only taste good but are good for you.

*We Can!*TM (Ways to Enhance Children's Activity and Nutrition), an educational program of the National Institutes of Health for parents of children ages eight to 13, defines food options in terms of GO, SLOW and WHOA.

GO foods are the lowest in fat, sugar and calories, and can be eaten almost anytime. SLOW foods are higher in fat, added sugar and calories and should be eaten sometimes or less often. WHOA foods should only be eaten occasionally.

- **GO:** fruits, vegetables, whole grains without added fats, lean cuts of meat, water, fat-free or 1 percent low-fat milk, baked chips or pretzels.
- **SLOW:** pasta, fruits in light syrup, peanut butter, avocado, white rice, 2 percent low-fat milk.
- **WHOA:** fried foods, cakes and doughnuts, whole milk and regular soda.



For a detailed chart and other family-friendly tools, including meal planners and recipes, visit <http://wecan.nhlbi.nih.gov> or call (866) 35-WECAN.

Did You Know?

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