



Rhode Island Tobacco Control Network

Media Advocacy

Interview DOs and DON'Ts

DO's:

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW:

- DO talk informally with the reporter about the focus of the story.
- DO preview the questions.
- DO prime reporters with your thoughts.
- DO take the initiative.
- DO ask how much time the reporter has.
- DO contact RI Tobacco Control Network to help prepare your talking points for the interview.
- DO carefully prepare talking points or “sound bites” that you want to be sure to include during the interview.

DURING THE INTERVIEW:

- DO be yourself! Be likable and engaging. SMILE.
- DO keep answers short and simple. SIMPLIFY.
- DO use colorful words, analogies and absolutes to emphasize a point.
- DO talk in sound bites.
- DO shift the focus to your objectives, if necessary – go back to your sound bites.
- DO make your points in every answer.
- DO say “I don’t know” when you don’t, but offer to get back to them with info when able, in a timely manner.
- DO be positive.
- DO remain cool.
- DO always behave as if the camera/tape recorder is on.
- DO repeat your key message when ending the interview – again, sound bites!

DON'Ts:

- DON'T speak “off the cuff” without time to prepare. If a reporter calls unexpectedly, say “I am in the middle of something right now, but if you tell me a little bit about what you’d like to discuss and what your deadline is, I can call you back.” Then hang up, prepare your talking points, and return the call.
- DON'T use jargon, acronyms or technical terms.
- DON'T speak off the record, ever! (There’s no such thing.)

- DON'T become angry or provoked.
- DON'T speculate, guess or conjecture.
- DON'T speak for someone else.
- DON'T lie.
- DON'T answer dumb or impertinent questions.
- DON'T personally attack people.
- DON'T say “no comment” –don’t answer a question you don’t want to answer, but you can avoid saying “no comment” by responding with one of your sound bites.

Dressing for success (on TV)

DOs:

- DO wear something appropriate for the subject matter you are discussing – you want the seriousness or good nature of the interview to reflect in what you are wearing.
- DO wear something you feel comfortable in – you don’t want to look stiff.
- DO ask the reporter if there are colors you should stay away from.

DON'Ts:

- DON'T wear all black.
- DON'T wear all white.
- DON'T wear clothes with small patterns such as pinstripes and polka dots – they squiggle on TV.
- DON'T wear logos for products not associated with the interview.

And ALWAYS...DO let *the RI Tobacco Control Network* know when you've been interviewed by the media and share any resulting press coverage!