

News Conference

PLANNING GUIDE

Cover the Uninsured

A great way to attract attention to the fact that too many Americans are living without health care coverage is to hold a news conference in your community and invite the local media. The news conference can demonstrate community support for action on the issue, announce your participation in the national *Cover the Uninsured* effort, and highlight other events you are holding, such as a health and enrollment fair or business seminar. Participants in the news conference could include representatives from local broad-based *Cover the Uninsured* coalitions, state and local elected officials, and an uninsured person, family or business owner.

The National Communications Staff is available to assist you in planning an activity in your community. You can contact the National Staff by phone at **1(877) 655-CTUW [2889]** or by e-mail at info@covertheuninsured.org. In addition, many event planning tools, tips and free materials are available at www.CoverTheUninsured.org/materials.

The goals of your press event are to:

- Host a highly visible event that shows the depth and breadth of support for the issue
- Illustrate the effect of the issue of the uninsured in your state and community
- Demonstrate a community wide commitment to solving the problem of the uninsured and covering kids
- Gain local press coverage that helps drive attention to the campaign's messages and activities
- Emphasize the diverse interests of the members of your local coalition and an agreement among all parties to find a solution for uninsured Americans
- Put a human face on the issue by sharing specific stories about the uninsured
- Highlight the range of activities that will be taking place
- Promote local enrollment events
- Highlight organizations and coalitions that have worked together on promising local solutions
- Drive media to the *Cover the Uninsured* Web site, www.CoverTheUninsured.org

PLEASE NOTE:

By law, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation cannot lobby in support of or opposition to any specific legislation on a national or local level, nor can it promote any political candidate. As such, events sponsored by the Foundation must be ideologically and politically balanced and cannot serve as platforms for politicians or legislative agendas.

Press Conference Framework

The press conference could:

- Last approximately 30 minutes and convene mid-morning
- Include a limited number of speakers (no more than five)
- Begin with welcoming remarks offered by a high-profile local coalition member or representative of a local partner group
- Include a presentation of research by another high-profile coalition member or representative of a local partner group
- Highlight remarks by an uninsured individual or family, a family covered by Medicaid or SCHIP, a small-business owner struggling or unable to provide coverage to their employees, or a doctor or nurse who cares for uninsured individuals
- Include a proclamation announcing *Cover the Uninsured* in your community. You can download a template proclamation at www.CoverTheUninsured.org/materials.
- Include participation from representatives of hospitals and health clinics and a health care professional

Holding a Successful Press Conference

To ensure a successful press conference, organizers will need to:

- Create a budget for the event that includes items such as materials reproduction, audio-visual equipment, and event signs and staging (explore possible in-kind donations for event materials and equipment)
- Create a planning timeline for your event
- Identify and secure sites that are easily accessible to the media
- Identify and help prepare press conference spokespersons
- Work with coalition members to build attendance
- Work to identify uninsured individuals/families covered by Medicaid or SCHIP willing to tell their story
- Coordinate the release of research
- Develop, tailor, copy and assemble print press materials
- Prepare talking points for spokespersons
- Provide media training to uninsured spokespersons and others as needed
- Work with spokespersons to ensure that they can participate; help make transportation, child care and other arrangements as needed; provide a stipend for missed work
- Set up the venue

- Call reporters to publicize the press conference and to encourage coverage and attendance at the event

Go to www.CoverTheUninsured.org/materials, to access materials to help you plan your news conference and media outreach, including a *Guide to Working With the Media*; *Guide to Op-Ed Placement*; *Letters to the Editor and Editorial Board Meetings*; template media materials and other tips and tools.

Don't Be Afraid to Ask for Help

Reach out to individuals and organizations that could help plan a press conference, including:

Doctors, nurses, dentists and other health care providers

Hospitals

Health clinics

Community health centers

Uninsured people

Teachers and other school officials

Main Messages for Spokespersons

Go to www.CoverTheUninsured.org/messages to see the latest campaign messages and updates.

Timeline

PLANNING A SUCCESSFUL PRESS CONFERENCE

∴ PLANNING THE EVENT

- Identify a small group of people who can help you organize the event.
- Schedule an initial working group meeting to plan the press conference.
- Begin developing media lists.
- Discuss budget and funding issues.
- Secure the event venue and time.
- If you have a coalition, invite any members who were not present at the initial coalition meeting to participate.
- Look for stories of local uninsured people or families for possible use at the news conference.
- Create a narrow list of possible speakers, keeping in mind the importance of balanced representation.
- Identify all possible costs related to the event, such as equipment rentals (e.g., tables, chairs, audio-visual, power), and set the budget.
- Discuss any fundraising needs with the coalition, if applicable.
- Go to www.CoverTheUninsured.org for information, tips and tools to help you plan your event.

∴ FOUR WEEKS PRIOR TO EVENT

- Send invitation letters to speakers.
- Follow up on invitation letters to confirm all event participants.
- Meet with representatives from the event venue to clarify site layout, access for the disabled, clean-up and set-up times, security guidelines, space for the press (e.g., riser or platform for cameras), a point of contact during the event, fees, audio-visual equipment (e.g., podium, microphone, lighting, stage), and restroom locations.

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- Begin drafting or tailoring template media materials (e.g., news advisory, news release, speaker bios and fact sheets). For template materials, go to **www.CoverTheUninsured.org/materials**.

⚡ THREE WEEKS PRIOR TO EVENT

- Once all participants are confirmed, finalize basic media materials such as the press fact sheet, community calendar listing and news advisory. If you have a coalition, compile descriptions of all organizations involved in your coalition for the press kit. Template media outreach materials are available at **www.CoverTheUninsured.org**.
- Set dates for media training for spokespersons and event participants.
- Draft talking points for speakers and the moderator.
- Go to **www.CoverTheUninsured.org** to register your event.

⚡ TWO WEEKS PRIOR TO EVENT

- Download promotional materials at **www.CoverTheUninsured.org/materials**.
- Finalize all press kit contents and get approval from all appropriate coalition members, if applicable.
- Finalize bios of all participants and get their sign-off.
- Send out op-eds, letters to the editor and community calendar notices. Make follow-up calls.
- Send packets of information and final details to all participants and/or meet with participants and spokespersons for event briefing and media training.
- Create a “day of event” checklist. Run through all the steps that need to happen the day of your event. Make sure that you have the staff and materials on hand to make things happen.
- Send a confirmation letter with event details to each speaker.
- Set up meetings to discuss event details with speakers.
- Finalize talking points and review them with all the speakers.
- Finalize the agenda, news advisory and news release.
- Assemble press kits with the agenda, news release, press fact sheets, coalition member descriptions (if applicable) and speaker bios.
- Walk through the event venue and finalize last-minute logistics. Consider inviting speakers to join you for the walk-through in case they have any questions.
- Confirm arrangements and details with all vendors (e.g., equipment, audio-visual, etc.).
- Prepare plenty of signage for your event. If there is a walk from the parking lot to the event site, make sure it is clearly marked so that participants and reporters do not get lost.
- Buy film or disposable cameras to document the event. Consider assigning a volunteer with few event day responsibilities to photograph the event.

⌘ WEEK PRIOR TO THE PRESS EVENT

Four Days Prior to Event:

- Fax or e-mail the news advisory, make follow-up calls to media contacts and contact the local Associated Press daybook editor.
- Schedule pre-event media interviews for your spokespersons.
- If you have a coalition, host a final coalition meeting to run through all last-minute details.

Friday Before Event:

- Place reminder calls to all media contacts. Resend the news advisory.

⌘ MORNING OF EVENT

- Check in with media contacts to confirm attendance. Distribute press releases.
- Place sign-in sheets at the event for media attendees.

⌘ AFTER THE PRESS EVENT

- Follow up with media representatives who requested additional information or who showed interest but were not able to attend the event.

⌘ ONE WEEK AFTER THE EVENT

- Send thank-you notes to all speakers and coalition members who participated in the kick-off press conference.
- Make sure all rented equipment has been returned.
- Track media coverage and update media lists for future use. Send copies of all clips and tapes to the staff for inclusion in the national media report. Fax materials to **(202) 338-4480** or mail them to the national campaign office at 1010 Wisconsin Avenue NW, Suite 800, Washington, DC 20007.
- Organize folders and file contact lists and notes for future use.

Cover the Uninsured Web Site

The *Cover the Uninsured* Web site offers many resources for planning your event and working with the media. Go to **www.CoverTheUninsured.org** to:

- Provide information such as the date and time of your media event so that this information can be accessible to those who visit the site
- Find answers to your questions or get technical assistance
- Find the most current list of national supporting organizations
- View fact sheets and other information about the issue of the uninsured (**www.CoverTheUninsured.org/facts**)

- Register for a weekly news digest and updates about the campaign (www.CoverTheUninsured.org/register)
- Find state-specific handouts on resources available for those without health care coverage (www.CoverTheUninsured.org/individuals)
- Learn more about what you can do to help get America covered

Cover the Uninsured Materials

The following free materials are available to help volunteers plan and promote their events. Materials are available to download or order at www.CoverTheUninsured.org/materials. There will be a limited number of free materials available for order from the Web site. Order early to be sure you receive materials for your event.

- **Guide to Working with the Media** – This guide offers tips and planning tools to guide you in your media outreach. Available for download.
- **Guide to Op-Ed Placement, Letters to the Editor and Editorial Board Meetings** – This guide will help you draft and place op-eds and letters to the editor in your local publications. Available for download.
- **Media Tools** – Tools to help you write a news advisory, press release, radio public service announcement (PSA) and community calendar listing are available for download.
- **Guide to Finding Health Insurance Coverage** – These state-specific guides outline help that may be available to uninsured individuals. Available for download in English or Spanish.

Go to www.CoverTheUninsured.org/materials for a complete listing of all available materials.