Tip Sheet for Press Releases

A press release is often the best, most proactive way to introduce a subject to your local media. It can be emailed or faxed, depending on a reporter's individual preference. There is a basic format that should be followed when drafting a press release. Follow these general tips in writing your news release:

Release Date: This tells the reporter when the information on the release can be published or broadcasted. The release can be released immediately to the public, in which case you can put "For Immediate Release: 00/00/00" at the top of the page with the current date. Reporters can also hold the information until a future date. In that case, you would need to put "Embargoed Until: 00/00/00" with the date the information is to be released. The release date is typically located on the top left-hand corner.

Contact Information: This includes your name (or the name of the person handling media inquiries), a phone number, and your email address.

Headline: A short phrase summing up the essence of the release. An example: ***Congressman Visits Local Hospice Program***

Dateline: The dateline is the location of the story, which usually includes the city/town and state. An example:

ALBANY, NY – A bill signed into law today ensures access to quality and compassionate end-of-life care for the 1.4 million patients and families who seek hospice care each year.

Body: This is where you will tell the reporter/editor the "who, what, where, when and why" of your story. Your release should follow an inverted pyramid style of writing, where the most important information or newsworthy "hook" appears first, and is followed by supporting information. This writing style is necessary for any news materials, because your readers (reporter/editor) are busy and receive many different pieces of news. The reader may not have time to get through the entire page, so you must give the most important information – the reason why they should pursue a story – at the beginning.

- **The first paragraph, the lead, should be the most powerful.** This is where you should tell the most important information of the release, in order to get the interest of the reporter/editor reading it.
- **Keep your sentences and paragraphs short and use plain language.** Avoid acronyms and jargon. Also, you should try to keep your release to one page.
- **Include a quote.** This puts a human face on the news you write. The quote should substantiate the lead, be from a significant person, and add value to the point of the release. Try to place the quote in the first three or four paragraphs of the release.
- **Finish with a "tag."** This is usually one paragraph of "boiler plate" information about your organization and its involvement with the issue covered in the release.
- **End.** Reporters/editors look for a symbol (### or -30-) at the end of a release to let them know that the release is complete. If your release is more than one page, it is important to add "—more—" at the bottom of the first page to indicate that there is another page to the release. These symbols (### or -30-) and instructions (--more--) should be centered at the bottom of the page.

Photos: Photos from a meeting or an event can be helpful in getting coverage. Digital ones are the easiest to submit, and offer the best quality for printing. Include a brief caption that has information about who is in the photo, and the purpose of the event. (<u>Note</u>: Notify your contact that you will be emailing a photo, before you send it. Emailed photos often weigh down a system, or may get caught up in a "spam" filter file.)

Let us know if your press release generates a story. Please forward the date and title of the publication as soon as possible, along with any web links or scans of your piece, to advocacy@nhpco.org.