



Awareness/Media Relations Tips and Tricks

General Notes

- Media coverage can increase awareness of PKD in your community. It may not directly impact the attendance at your walk, as personal connections to PKD are the most likely reason people participate. However, increasing awareness about PKD is important and this is an effective way to get the word out. Just remember a personal connection goes much further in getting Walk participants than a high profile promotion such as a billboard.
- A key tip to getting media coverage is to talk about the people in the community affected by PKD and how the event can help them, not just the event itself.

Steps to reach out to local media:

1. Customize local news release template

- Find a person in your area willing and able to be interviewed and feature them in the local news release. Customize for your local area using the provided template and example from the St. Louis Chapter.
- This is key to success with media coverage, giving the media a local and personal angle to the story
- The media may want to interview the person featured in the press release. Inform the person featured of that possibility when asking for their participation.

2. Obtain and review media list

- [Sara Kiszka](#) in the Marketing Department can pull a media list for your local area with TV, radio and print contacts.
- Once you have the list, review it. Do you know anyone on the list, or does a local volunteer? A personal connection can improve the chance of getting coverage.
- The list you receive will include a broad range of media. Identify key targets on the list and remove those that need not be contacted.

3. Distribute the press release and pitch the story

- Send the first press release two weeks before the event.
- It is best practice to email the press release inside the body of an email, not as an attachment. Most spam blockers are set up to block emails from unknown addresses with attachments. So, paste your release into an email.
- It is also best practice to not send out a mass email with all of the addresses in the To field. Ideally, you can send individual emails, but depending on the size of your list, you should put all the email addresses in the bcc field.
- Include a pitch above your email that shares your personal connection to PKD in a brief manner and identify yourself as a contact for questions. Your pitch should be in your own words, but below is a sample. Be brief and direct.

Sample pitch:

Dear (Contact),

My name is (insert name) and I have polycystic kidney disease (PKD). Below is a press release with more information about how people in our community are affected by PKD and about the Walk for PKD, coming up on (insert date and location). Please let me know if I can provide any further information or set up an interview.

4. Media Follow-up

- Follow up means contacting the media you pitched to find out if they saw your press release and if they intend to run it or cover it. Sending the release is only the first step. Due to their busy schedules and all the releases they receive, it is likely you won't hear back from your first attempt.
- It is important to always follow up with a telephone call or email to your press release. This can also work as a reminder for them, since they receive so many per day. Hopefully a gentle reminder will help them give the Walk for PKD some thought. And it can provide the chance to build a relationship with that contact.
- If you send the press release two weeks before the event, you can follow up with an email or phone call one week out, and then a few days before. But don't be a pest, give them time to digest the information. Sending the release and calling 10 minutes later is annoying, not thorough.
- Unfortunately, you may not ever get a response of any kind. With their busy schedules and multiple press releases, you may not hear anything. But it is worth a try!

Sample follow up phone call pitch:

Hi (Contact),

My name is (insert name) and I wanted to follow up with you about the Walk for PKD. Have I caught you at a good time?

They may be on deadline, so check with them before going taking too much time.

The Walk for PKD is a significant event for those affected by PKD in our community. I sent you a media release on (insert date) and I wondered if you had a chance to read it, and if I could provide any further information.

Sample email follow up pitch: (reply to original email with press release in body copy):

Hi (Contact),

I wanted to follow up with you regarding the Walk for PKD. Please let me know if I can provide any further information on this event. Any interest in covering it?

5. Promoting the PSA

- PSAs are typically used in unsold ad space on an as-needed basis. The Foundation provides high-quality TV and radio PSAs in several lengths for you to get placed on a local level.

- To place the PSA, use your media list and contact local TV and radio stations to see who is responsible for PSAs. Check the station website to see if there are specific guidelines to follow for submitting PSAs.
- If there are not specific guidelines, you may follow a similar pitching format to the local press release to get the PSA placed.
- If a station does run your PSA, please send them a thank you.

Tips from your fellow Walk Coordinators for promoting the Walk for PKD

Laura Moyer's Tips:

- Make things personal. I always give the media my personal story and open the door for any questions they might have.
- Ask any sponsors to hang up a flyer, set up brochures and list it on their website.
- I hit up all the regional media on the online community event pages, they are free and easy.
- I keep in close contact regionally with my Convention and Visitors Bureau and Chamber of Commerce, they are always willing to help out.
- Ask the media to sponsor the walk in-kind, then it becomes a win-win. I thank them personally when they do write articles or cover the Walk. I send them yearly t-shirts as a thank you. The media partner I work with is a large enough in-kind donor to be featured on the t-shirt.
- Ask a local media personality to emcee your Walk. That will help you get your foot in the door and they are more likely to promote the event.

Patti Ruffin's Tips:

When I assumed the coordinator position in 2009, one of my goals was to increase media for the Walk. It took at least two years to get the momentum going. The following were the keys for me.

- **Persistence.** Using the media list from the Foundation, I reach out to media with each year. I begin in late spring. The week of the walk, I do one last blast with our media release. I take the opportunity to get on all online calendars. I also check contact info for newspapers and local community papers to see if there are opportunities for getting our Walk listed.
- **Networking.** Our actual big break came when a planning committee volunteer knew one of the KENS-5 co-producers for Great Day SA program. Our first show was 2010, and now they give us a spot each year. That connection led to Mat Garcia, the morning co-anchor for KENS-5. He plans on being our honorary emcee again this year with his colleague Sarah Forgany. We also have a connection with Cox radio for radio interview that airs on six stations every year. I believe most radio stations have a Sunday early morning program that promotes local community events. Find out who runs these programs. And don't forget to call/email contacts that the Foundation provides.
- **Most importantly, tell your story!** Put your face with the cause. Create a one to two paragraph story with your photo and other family members. People you approach will always remember seeing that face/connection.