Media Guidance for CDC Overseas Assignees

Use the following guidelines to request clearance from CDC and HHS to respond to media inquiries. This is to ensure CDC/HHS are aware of media interest in the work of CDC global programs. You should also consult your supervisor, Country Director, or US Embassy press officer about existing in-country media guidance and clearance steps.

- **Non-deadline, in-country or regional US media request for interview**
  - Email or call CGH Media Contact (see below for contact information).
  - Provide the reporter’s name/contact information and your availability (date/time) for interview.
  - Indicate if you will need assistance developing messages.
  - When available, provide existing messages (4-5 bullets unless sensitive topic).

- **On deadline, national US or international media request (NY Times, Washington Post, USA Today, Time, BBC, CNN, etc)**
  - Call or email CGH media contact
  - Provide reporter’s name/contact information, your availability for interview, and proposed messages for CDC/HHS clearance

- **Media request related to publication in national or international journal or presentation at national or international meeting**
  - Email or call CGH media contact
  - Provide close-to-final or final article or presentation
  - Provide name of journal/meeting, date of release/meeting
  - Provide proposed messages
  - Provide availability for interviews

- **Request from Ministry of Health or other in-country partner to participate in press conference**
  - If time to clear with Atlanta:
    - Email or call CGH/CDC media relations contact
    - Describe event, CDC role in press conference, proposed messages.
  - If no time to clear with Atlanta:
    - Clear with CDC Team Leader and CDC Country Director
    - Use messages relevant to CDC support for the investigation (surveillance, epi, lab, communication, other)
    - As soon as press conference ends, email CGH/CDC Media Relations with summary of event, including media present, MOH and CDC messages, unresolved media questions, etc.

CGH Press Contact: Kathryn Harben*
Kxh9@cdc.gov
Ofc: 404-639-7407
Cell: 404-232-5733

*If no response, call 770-488-7100 (Emergency Operations Center) and request On-Call Press Officer.
Putting Your Best Foot Forward With the Media

Clearance for Interviews
- If you’re approached directly by media for comment on an issue you know, clear with CGH Media Contact or CDC on-call press officer. If clearance isn’t possible, stick to messages you’ve used in the past. If it’s a topic you don’t know (for example, HIV and you work on influenza), ask the reporter to call the CDC main press office (404-639-3286).
- If the deadline isn’t immediate, contact CGH Media Contact and request follow up with the reporter on focus of story, deadline, date/time of interview.
- All on-camera interviews with US national media must be cleared by CDC/HHS public affairs.

A Good Soundbite
- Simple
- Single thought or no more than 3 key messages

“CDC is working closely with the Minister of Public Health to ensure that the country is prepared for a possible outbreak of avian influenza. No one can predict when a pandemic will occur, but we are working together to prepare for it by strengthening surveillance, laboratory capacity, and health worker response.”

Tell People What to Expect
- Tell people in advance what to expect, including how they are likely to react

“Right now, we are testing samples from the family that may have been infected with avian influenza to confirm the diagnoses. We don’t know yet if this is the start of an outbreak. We will tell you when the laboratory results are final. Until then, we are taking steps to minimize risk for the people who are caring for those who are ill.”

It’s Okay to Empathize
- Show the human side of the agency

“We wish we had more information now. We will have another briefing tomorrow with an update. For now, we’re doing everything we can to care for the people who are ill and to ensure others are not infected.”

Rules of the Road
- You’re always on the record
- Stay “on message”
- Repeat your key messages at the beginning and at the end of the interview
- When the camera stops rolling (tape recorder is off, or reporter puts away pen, pad) the reporter is still “recording” what you say

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