GUIDELINES FOR WRITING A NEWS RELEASE (WMA3A)

Heading

Does the heading contain the following:

- **NEWS RELEASE** in large font at the top
- Name of organization, address, phone number, and e-mail of organization
- Contact: Person and phone/e-mail of contact person
- “For Release” date or “immediate”
- **Today’s date (important and not the same as release date/time)**

Title

- Is the title short, catchy, and interesting?
- As a general rule, there should be an active verb in the title. Active verbs help make the title more attention grabbing and give the topic a sense of movement or immediacy. For example:
  - “An AIDS Free Youth Population” or “Saving our Youth—Stopping the Spread of AIDS”

Opening Line or “Hook”

- Is the opening line the most compelling “news,” for example, a result or finding from the research or from current data?
- Is it written in an interesting way that highlights the key finding and draws the reader in?

Inverted Order (read through the rest of the news release)

Once you’ve finished writing your news release, take a moment to review it from start to finish.

Check for the following:

- Does it stick with what is the “news,” in other words, the findings?
- Does it use actual data to present the information? If so, are data points used to present the information?
GUIDELINES FOR WRITING A PRESS RELEASE (WMA3A)

- Make sure that the description of the research study, such as how many people were in the sample size, details about who conducted the research, details about where it was conducted, methodology, etc. is buried at the very end of the news release. These kinds of details are NOT the NEWS. They are not particularly interesting to journalists and shouldn’t appear in the upper paragraphs of the release.

- Brief introductory statements early in the news release like “According to a recent study conducted by Population Services International, over half of teenagers are not using condoms on their first sexual experience” is fine because it is just a brief mention of the “what” and “who did it.”

Logic

Because the news release is a short summary of the research, researchers often tend to include key findings or jargon that may not be well explained. Make sure that your news release can be easily understood by a nontechnical audience.

- Is there a clear logic to the flow of the paragraphs?

- Is the information presented in a clear manner so that the data and findings are easy to understand and accurate?

Presenting Recommendations and Other Editorial Information

- In general, a news release summarizing new research or survey findings is not the place to list all the actions and recommendations that policymakers should take. Making a plea to take some type of action is probably best in an editorial (op-ed) piece.

- Recommendation(s) can be made within the text of a news release if they are stated as a quote. For example:

  o The NFHS-2 shows that about four out of every five infants are not given solid or mushy food—which should be introduced at six months—until they are much older. “By the time infants do start receiving solid food, many are already malnourished,” remarked Dr. Y.R. Sharma, director of Public Health and Family Welfare, “Some nutritional improvements could be realized by simply promoting better infant feeding practices.”

Technical Jargon

- Is it free of all technical terms, or if technical terms are used, are they well defined?
Final Description of Organization

- At the very end, there should be 1-2 lines set off by smaller font or a line that describes the contact organization (see examples). This is a good opportunity to remind the media about your organization and what it has to offer.

Review for Clarity, Errors, and Additional Edits

- Check for any spelling and grammatical errors
- Check that all names and contact information listed are correct
- Check that the data provided (if any) is accurate
- Ask a colleague(s) to read the news release and solicit his or her feedback