

# Communication Toolkit



**BUILDING HEALTHY  
COMMUNITIES**  
CONSTRUYENDO COMUNIDADES SALUDABLES  
SOUTH KERN · SUR DE KERN

**health  
happens  
here**   
An initiative of  
The California Endowment.

# Building Healthy Communities South Kern Communication Toolkit

Introduction .....	1
Press Release Writing .....	2
Press Release Template.....	3
Social Media Writing.....	4
How To Interact With Media .....	5
The “Opinion” Process.....	6
Digital Storytelling Filming Tip Sheet .....	7

## Introduction

The Communication Toolkit is a resource provided by Building Healthy Communities South Kern (BHC-SK). It has been developed to serve as a guide for media relations activity. This document provides a framework for developing a comprehensive communication plan to support your organization’s needs. When adapting these materials, please refer to the BHC-SK branding guidelines on our website for additional information: <http://www.healthysouthkern.org/tools/>

## Background

### What is Building Healthy Communities?

Building Healthy Communities is a comprehensive community initiative that is creating a revolution in the way Californians think about and support health in their communities. Residents are proving that they can make health happen in their neighborhoods with prevention—and in doing so, they are creating a brighter future for their children. In South Kern, over 2,000 residents, youth, businesses and organizations are leading the BHC-SK effort to positively change the health of our communities through a shared vision, goals and action plan. Residents in Arvin, Lamont, Weedpatch, and the unincorporated areas of Greenfield are proving that we have the power to build healthy communities for the next generation.

Inspired in 2009 by the California Endowment, a private foundation, BHC-SK is promoting healthy change in the areas of:

**Improving Pre-K to Adult Education with Preparation and Local Access to College/University Programs**

**Creating a Healthy Environment with Clean Air and Water**

**Increasing Access To Better Health Care Systems**

**Improving Access To Recreation Activities, Facilities and Parks**

**Improving Economic Development with more jobs and businesses**

Although making real change can be difficult, our children deserve clean water, healthy food, safe places to learn and play, and access to health care so they can live long and healthy lives. People who live, work and play in South Kern are proving that we have the power to make health happen in our communities.

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## Acknowledgements

Thank you to the following individuals who contributed to the development of the Communications Toolkit:

### Stephanie Brooks Pickering

Communications Coordinator, Building Healthy Communities South Kern  
917.617.1879 | [spickering@mentioncommunications.com](mailto:spickering@mentioncommunications.com) | [healthysouthkern.org](http://healthysouthkern.org)

### Reyna Olaguez

Editor, South Kern Sol  
661.817.3577 | [rolaguez@newamericamedia.org](mailto:rolaguez@newamericamedia.org) | [www.southkernsol.org](http://www.southkernsol.org)

### Jason Gutierrez

Owner, ENIGMA  
661.496.9245 | [Jason@thinkenigma.com](mailto:Jason@thinkenigma.com) | [www.thinkenigma.com](http://www.thinkenigma.com) | Twitter: @jpg\_pr

### Timothy Douglas

Communications Coordinator, Building Healthy Communities  
916.207.8771 | [tdouglas@valleypbs.org](mailto:tdouglas@valleypbs.org)

### Ernesto Guevara

Director of Operations, Center for Multicultural Cooperation  
559.445.0015 | [ernesto@cmcweb.org](mailto:ernesto@cmcweb.org) | [www.cmcweb.org](http://www.cmcweb.org)



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## PRESS RELEASE WRITING

Press releases are an essential part of any public relations strategy and have **two purposes**: 1) Telling a compelling news story and 2) selling the story to the reporter/editor so they will give the story coverage. While the format for a press release is basic, the content of the release should be detailed.

### Your press release should answer these questions:

- Who = who is presenting the program, who is the performer, etc.
- What = what is the name of the program or cause for the press release
- When = date and time
- Where = which branch, location in branch
- Why = what is the reason and what is so important about this program or situation

Follow these eight tips to write a great press release that will make your organization look interesting to writers.

1. Grab attention with a good headline: A strong headline hooks the reader and will pull in journalists seeking good stories.
2. Get right to the point in the lead paragraph: The beginning of a press release is the most important. All additional information can be included in two to three supporting paragraphs.
3. Include hard numbers: Pack your press release with data that support the significance of your announcement and remember to cite your sources.
4. Make it grammatically perfect: Proofread your press release before sending it out. Even a single mistake can discourage a reporter from writing your story.
5. Include quotes: Using quotes can strengthen your point or give life to your story. Anyone who is quoted should be identified by name and title.
6. Include contact information and access to more information: Add a point of contact including an email address and phone number on the release, plus include relevant links to your website or social media page.
7. One page is best -- and two is the maximum: Short is always more effective.
8. End with a boilerplate: This is essentially an "about" section that tells the reader about your organization.



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## PRESS RELEASE TEMPLATE

Media Contact:

Person Name

Phone Number

E-mail

### **Headline** **Sub Headline**

City, State (Example: Bakersfield, CA) - The introductory paragraph should briefly summarize the entire press release in three to five sentences. The first paragraph will make or break the story and needs to be clear and concise or most people will not read any further.

The middle paragraphs go into more detail. For example, explain the importance of the event and why it is taking place. This is a good place to provide detail about the participants, who stands to benefit, who stands to lose, etc. Remember that the most important information should be placed at the beginning of the release as information at the end is less likely to be read. Be sure to answer who, what, when, where, and why.

This is a good place for a quote from a reliable spokesperson. If a reporter covers your press release, this person may be called for further comment or an interview.

Another section could discuss the history of the particular event or program. For example, this is where you will go into detail about how it got started and what services have been offered in the past. Discuss how things are changing for the better (or worse). Remember to include relevant links for more information, such as a website or social media site. Once again, you should keep paragraphs at about three to five sentences in length.

The very last paragraph is called the “boilerplate” and is a summary developed by the organization and used in all communications. It is usually no more than three to four sentences.

The pound symbols below are used at the bottom center of a press release to signify the end of the document.

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## SOCIAL MEDIA WRITING

### Goal

Increase audience, fans, broaden outreach and online awareness.

### Purpose

Control of specific information to specific audience groups. Tailored messaging and ability to control own budget.

## Sponsored Post versus Paid Advertisement

When creating a Page on Facebook, it's important to know that your message will not be seen by everyone who likes your page? Why? Facebook is in the business of making money and that means you have to pay to play.

When posting an update (status, coupon, photo or event) the people who most interact with your page have a higher chance of seeing the post. That is because Facebook recognizes the online relationship and pushes the information toward the most engaged users. Those who use Facebook casually or never Like or Share your Page's information may or may not see your postings as broadcasted online.

Sponsored Posts, funded in increments of \$5, come directly from a preset funding source (credit card or Paypal). The audience can be set by the person posting. They can directly target new audience or existing audience. They can also control, location, age, gender and language demographics. This helps target who your message is seen by and who may interact with your post.

Paid Advertisements, like all media outlets are limited in wording and imagery. They cost a little bit more online but can help raise awareness of your page's existence, a special event or fundraising goal. These too are set up to be linked to a credit card or PayPal account.

### Hashtags

Facebook has just begun using the hashtag method of marketing. Much like Twitter and Instagram, hashtags are used to convey keywords directly linked to the post or convey dialogue marks to share with your online community. Like online search engines, hashtags are used as key points for searching and communicating.



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## HOW TO INTERACT WITH THE MEDIA

### Announce Your Story

If you want media to cover an event, a new program you have started, or to report on new research, you can start by doing a press release or media briefing. You can also get a hold of a reporter you may have worked with in the past.

### Pitching Your Story

Generate excitement. Stress importance of the story.

### Messages

- Learn talking points. Study key messages. Choose 2-3 simple messages to convey, repeat often.
- Your statements should resonate with your audience, and compel them to action.
- Address concerns to audience.
- Appeal to audience logically and emotionally.
- Keep important points simple and concise.
- Begin with your conclusion and validate with evidence.
- Build bridges to arrive at your messages.

### Bridging

- "what I do know is..."
- "and let me just add..."
- "another thing I would like to point out is..."
- "it's important to also keep in mind that..."
- "the critical issue is..."
- "yes, but..."

### Reporters

- Build personal relationships with individual reporters. Learn reporter's history, background.
- Who, how many people are they hoping to interview.
- Location, time and length of interview, deadlines, when it will air or print.
- Prepare 1-2 page fact sheet.
- Make reporters happy.
- Be available at "anytime."
- Be interesting.
- Get their phone number and email.
- Always follow-up.
- Is there anything else I can get for you?
- Did you get everything you needed?
- Thank them profusely.
- Put stories into local perspective.
- Pitch stories in advance and remind them.



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## THE “OPINION” PROCESS

Opinions or op-eds are very valuable means of communication. They are much longer than letters to the editor which gives the author much more space to develop persuasive arguments and provide compelling information.

*Here are some guidelines for drafting, submitting and placing an opinion.*

## Research

The opinion starts with research on your topic and the selected newspaper. If you’re writing an opinion, you already have command of the facts and the topic, but there may be some new information. Be sure to check. Also, know the paper and how to submit. What is the tone? What are they likely to print? What is the word limit? How do they want it submitted? As an attachment? In the body of an email? Does the paper prefer a particular format? And note, each paper has different rules. So find out these answers in advance. But there are a few common standards. For example, it’s only one space after a period when writing as a journalist.

## Identify Your Intent. Target The Author

Why do you want to write an op-ed? Focus on one objective in your op-ed piece and frame your article around it. Make sure it’s timely (op-eds that are connected to current events are more appealing) and has interesting and pertinent facts. If you are “ghostwriting”, be very focused on who the “author” is so you can replicate style and tone. Note, it’s ok to submit for someone—it’s very common for PR professionals to submit on behalf of a client—but newspapers often suspect that the PR pro is the actual writer, which reduces the chance that the piece will be published. It’s a very good idea to have the “author” submit whenever possible. And if the opinion is ghostwritten, have the author copy and paste the material into a new document created by the author, which will show the author as the “writer” in the properties.

## Format

Develop your issue in standard essay format, with an introduction, three key points and a powerful conclusion. Keep your piece concise and organized. Try to limit your piece to 750 words or less, depending on the guidelines of the newspaper. And be prepared: the paper may edit the opinion, or ask you to edit on short notice. Use an active voice for more strength and be sure to write a catch recommended headline and a first sentence. You only have a few seconds to draw your reader into your article, so make sure you grab their attention with a strong headline and a powerful first sentence, and finish strong. Summarize your argument in a strong final paragraph with a memorable last sentence.

## Conclusion

Don’t forget to edit. Have a picture handy [newspapers will often print your photo with your opinion. And be sure to give the newspaper a brief description of who you are (title, etc.)]. The paper will usually let you know if they intend to run it, but a follow up email or call is ok if you submit and haven’t heard anything for a week or so.



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## DIGITAL STORYTELLING FILMING TIP SHEET

Video is one of the most engaging ways for you and your organization to share your efforts, disseminate information, and promote yourselves. While there are a lot of steps and factors that go into creating a video, we hope this guide can get you started by showing you the best practices when filming your video for your media.

## Filming

### Lighting/Exposure

Lighting can make the difference between a good shot and a bad one.

#### Balance

Not too bright and not too dark. Try to film in an area where lighting can be controlled (lamps, light kits, etc.). Make sure the subject is brighter than the background and avoid shooting in front of windows. Try to get an even lighting and avoid shooting in a location with multiple types of lighting sources. If unable to control lighting source(s) then use camera's internal settings.

- *Open iris to allow more light in*
- *Adjust Gain*
- *Adjust exposure settings.*

All light sources light at different temperatures. Use white balance to correct color balance.

## Sound

What your audience hears is just as important as what they can see. You can produce the most visually compelling video but if your audience has trouble understanding the message then is it worth it?

- Your camera has an internal microphone to record the audio. This option should be used as a last resort.
- If available use an external microphone whenever possible. If recording outside remember to use a wind sock.
- Make sure to check your camera's internal audio levels to ensure that the audio you are recording is neither too soft nor too loud.
- Use headphones to listen to your recording whenever possible.
- When filming pay close attention to every fine sound that you can hear, as the camera will record the same sound you hear (e.g., electronic hums, cars passing by, planes flying overhead).
- Confirm that your sound is of good quality by playing back your video on your camera.
- Do a test run on your audio before you begin any actual recording.

## Composition

Taking the time to plan and frame shots can help to drive a story and make it more interesting.

### Tripod

Plan on using a tripod as much as possible.

### Rule of thirds

The rule of thirds helps to create a professional and more appealing shot, especially when conducting an interview. By breaking an image down into thirds (both horizontally and vertically) and placing points of interest in the intersections or along the lines, you are able to create a more balanced shot.

### Angles and shots

When framing a shot, try to be creative. Just remember that the most important part is the message. Try not to frame a shot where it distracts the audience from your message.

### Exporting your video to the web

Vimeo: <http://vimeo.com/help/compression>

Youtube: <https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/1722171?hl=en>



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Lamont Weedpatch Family Resource Center/Lamont School District  
7839 Burgundy Avenue, Lamont, CA 93241

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