

BEYOND THE HEADLINES




Quick Start Guide for Practice Interviews

Welcome to the Quick Start Guide for Practice Interviews! This guide is designed to help you enhance your media interview skills. Use it individually or with colleagues to simulate real interview scenarios, practice common questions, and receive constructive feedback. Group sessions are encouraged for collaborative learning.

Practice Interview Instructions

- **Review and Select Scenarios:** Allocate time to read and analyze each practice scenario or prepare talking points from your own scenario. Identify the main points and any specific requirements or challenges. Pay close attention to details of the scenario to understand the context. If you have an upcoming media request, you can use that to practice instead of the provided scenarios.
- **Set Aside Time:** Designate a specific, uninterrupted block of time for preparation. Use this time to carefully preparing your key messages, allowing you to be ready to deliver comprehensive responses.
- **Practice Interview:** Present your talking points as if in a real interview. Cover all relevant details, focusing on clarity, conciseness, and confidence. Each presentation should be no longer than 3 minutes.
- **Discuss and Reflect:** After each practice interview session, reflect on the performance. Identify areas for improvement based on your experience.

How to Provide Effective Feedback

- **Be Specific:** Point out specific aspects of the interview, such as delivery, tone, and content, rather than general impressions.
 - **Highlight Strengths and Areas for Improvement:** Mention what was done well, such as clear messaging or confident delivery, and areas that need refinement, such as pacing or response to questions.
 - **Provide Actionable Advice:** Offer concrete suggestions for improvement, like practicing responses to challenging questions or improving body language.
 - **Maintain Respect and Encouragement:** Deliver feedback in a positive and supportive manner, focusing on helping the individual enhance their media presence and interview skills.
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INTERVIEW PRACTICE SCENARIO A

Effective Message Preparation for Media Engagement

Part 1

Read the following scenario:

Your organization is attending a proclamation signing with your governor that announces April as Child Abuse Prevention Month. Your group is leveraging this opportunity to release an initiative you've been working on. Your initiative can be a program, new resource, partnership work, or another project you know is newsworthy. You're the spokesperson for your organization. You've been invited to speak after the governor to announce the initiative.

Example project (use this if you don't have one in mind):

Your organization has developed and is announcing a free 24/7 online database of resources that connects residents with health and social services locally. The database has resources in English and Spanish and includes referral services that are free or low-cost for all. Categories include childcare, healthcare, employment, education, food and housing assistance, financial aid and education, and more. The database is powered by Find Help, the national platform for finding services. The database has been developed to help parents and caregivers feel comfortable and secure seeking help for their families. Your organization has planned a demonstration training, online ads and signage, and booths at community events to engage parents and caregivers.



Part 2

Reflect on a set of key messages needed for the media to understand your initiative's (or the example project's) importance to families.

Part 3

Describe a main take-away about how this resource helps address a critical need facing families and communities.

- Be brief and clear.
- Connect the issue with the solution.
- Give two facts that add evidence to the above message. Keep it simple. Make people care.
- Practice the 27-9-3 rule. Write the above in 27 words that can be said in 9 seconds in 3 messages.

INTERVIEW PRACTICE SCENARIO A

Effective Message Preparation for Media Engagement

Part 4

Respond to interview questions with a partner playing the role of a journalist. Use best practices to answer with your prepared messages.



Questions for the interviewer to ask:

What's the main problem your organization is trying to address with this database?

What's the most important thing parents need to know today about this database?

How does this database help prevent child abuse and neglect?

Part 5

If time permits, debrief on message delivery.

- How clear was the person's message? What are some ways it could be more clear?
- How memorable was the person's message? Can you recite it back?
- What did you notice about the person's delivery of the message?
- What additional key messages could support preparation for media questions?



INTERVIEW PRACTICE SCENARIO B

General Media Interview Control

Part 1

Read the following scenario:

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention releases a new report on adverse childhood experiences with data for all 50 states and Washington, D.C. What's new is your state has among the highest rates of ACEs in the report. At the national level, reports of ACEs are higher among certain groups: 25–34 year-olds, American Indian or Alaska Native adults, multiracial (non-Hispanic) adults, adults with less than a high school education, and adults who were unemployed or unable to work. But the CDC's report does not provide that level of information by state. A journalist with the newspaper in your state capitol requests an interview with you about findings for an article due that day. Your communications staff schedules a phone interview in an hour.

Part 2

Reflect on how you would gather your thoughts, based on your current knowledge of these topics.

Part 3

Respond to interview questions with a partner or team member playing the role of journalist.

Questions for the interviewer to ask:

- Tell me about your organization and your work.
- Why are ACEs so high in our state?
- Were you surprised that our state's rates are so high?
- Why do some groups experience more ACEs in our state?
- What is your organization doing about ACEs?
- Have your efforts helped?
- Do you expect the increasing trend to continue?
- What are states doing where they are seeing lower rates?
- Is there more that can be done to respond to ACEs?

Interviewers: Probe and ask follow-up questions to responses.