

UNVEILING NAHU'S HEALTHY ACCESS DATABASE IN YOUR CHAPTER



2008

NAHU's Health Care Coverage Options Database

NAHU has developed a new and comprehensive online Health Care Coverage Options Database to make American health care consumers more aware of all of the coverage options available to them. This database can be used to compare health care coverage options for Americans on a state-by-state basis.

With as many as 45 million Americans living without health insurance coverage at some point during the last year, NAHU feels it is time to do something. The association's primary goal is to help ensure that Americans have access to appropriate health coverage. This new tool is not only for consumers, but will be very useful for the media and policy makers, which is why it is crucial to unveil this in the most public way possible. **The database is something that is very newsworthy and should get an abundance of media coverage, and will – if it is presented in the most effective manner.**

This package gives step-by-step instructions on how to launch this information in your particular area on the state and local level. Enclosed there is a copy of the Media Advisory and Press Release that was distributed at the national level, as well as tips on garnering more press and developing relationships with your local media. If you have any questions, please contact Kelly Loussedes, NAHU director of public relations at 703-276-3835 or kloussedes@nahu.org or Brandi Travis, NAHU manager of communications at 703-276-3815 or btravis@nahu.org.

Announcing the News -- Press Release

The press release is the most commonly used public relations tool to announce news to the media. To be most effective, it should follow a certain format that succinctly relays the essence of the news .

The standard release has several familiar components:

- a crisp headline that captures the significant news
- an introductory paragraph that leads with the most newsworthy information
- several paragraphs that describe the news and its relevancy in more detail
- at least one quote from a credible spokesperson (preferably local)
- a closing paragraph known as the "boilerplate" that clearly identifies the association issuing the release
- each release must include the date and city from which it is being issued, and a contact name and number.

While press releases are the most familiar press tool, they are often overly used or misused altogether. The most effective release conveys legitimate news -- information previously unknown. It works best to relay such things as key developments within the industry; policy or legislative initiatives at the local, state or federal level; or recent news occurring in your company or state chapter ("Day on the Hill" meetings with governors or legislators, awards, charitable activities, member achievements and professional achievements).

As with all the media tools, distribution of the press release must be coupled with personal follow-up calls to make certain it was received by the appropriate reporter and to explore whether it is something that can be included in the publication. This type of follow-up also provides another opportunity to suggest an interview for a more in-depth discussion of the news.

Developing and Using a Press Kit

A press kit is a set of materials designed to communicate your message in detail to your local media. It's used to help reporters gain an understanding of the association so they will write about it. You may send the kit to the media when you make a significant news announcement, present the kit at a meeting you may have with a reporters, or distribute the kit at a press conference or other chapter event. The press kit should be updated at least annually with a new fact sheet and new biographical information on officers and chairs.

Every press kit should include the following:

1. **Fact Sheet** – A concise summary of the association's important data such as founding date, mission statement, number of members, names of officers/committee chairs, and affiliation with NAHU.
2. **News Clips** – Samples of past press coverage helps sell the newsworthiness of your story.
3. **Brochures or Newsletters** – Including business literature will help identify you as an expert in the industry.
4. **Sample News Story** -- often times reporters will print this verbatim. Editors see ready-to-print-stories as an easy way to fill up space with little effort on their part.
5. **Glossary of Terms** – A glossary will help reporters become familiar with the complex issues in our industry.
6. **Contact information** -- Provide a clear indication of whom reporters should call, and where to reach them, for more information.
7. **Business Card** – Place a copy of the contact person's business card on one of the sides of the folder so when the reporter opens it up it's one of the first things that he or she sees.
8. **Cover Letter or Pitch Letter** – A cover letter is a short correspondence (no longer than one page) that allows you to introduce yourself to the reporter. This also serves as a motivator for the reporter to review the contents of the press kit by quickly and clearly explaining why the media's audience would be interested in stories about our industry and association.

Your press kit is a reporter's first opportunity to meet the association so make sure it is visually appealing and well organized. Also include the association name and logo on the front of the folder. Send your press kit and a short cover letter to all of your local media contacts.

Finally, it's a good idea to have a version of your press kit available on your Website. That way, reporters can get instant access to everything they need when writing a story.

Tips on Talking with Reporters

- Decide on what 3 points you want to convey before the interview.
- When you reach a reporter, introduce yourself and ask if the reporter is on a deadline for another story.
- Know the goal of your call – do you want the reporter to attend one of your events? Write a story? Schedule a meeting with you? Tell the reporter the purpose of your call early in the conversation.
- Speak clearly and concisely – be able to explain your story in two brief sentences.
- Present your conclusion first. This sounds odd, but your time talking with a reporter will be limited, you need to assert the main point first and then support the statement with facts.
- Be honest. If you don't know something the reporter asks, don't guess. Tell him or her you will get back to him promptly with the correct information.
- When the conversation is over, thank the reporter for his/her time and make sure he/she has your phone number if there are further questions.
- If the reporter calls you, return the call promptly.

Planning a Hill Briefing for State Legislators and their Staff

- Determine who your audience should be and compile a list
- Invite speakers first to be sure their schedule will work with yours
- Have the briefing at a location that is easily recognizable and accessible mid-day to maximize attendance
- Email and/or hand deliver invitations to maximize attendance
 - You can send invites to all state legislators using Operation Shout!
- Keep the invitation simple—only include the necessary information and a BRIEF summary of the event
- If you have a legislator or other person of interest speaking, be sure to include that information on the invitation
- Be sure to include a line explaining who you are and what the association does
- Be sure to call any legislators with staff you have relationships with to personally invite them to the event
- If your chapter has the funds—make the event a luncheon meeting
- Keep it concise—Legislators and their staff are very busy, so keep the presentations short and to the point
- Let your audience know what media are confirmed for the event
- Look at the committee calendar and agenda to be sure your event does not conflict with any important votes or hearings that may prevent your targeted audience from attending
- Have handouts outlining your material because many staff members may only have time to stop by and pick up information
 - Include in packets: contact information, fact sheet about your chapter, summary of the event's subject, and any information/handouts from the speakers
- Make sure you know what audio-visual equipment your speakers need and be sure it is available at the event location i.e) laptop, internet connection, projector
- Have all attendees sign-in and/or leave their business cards so you can send a thank you and follow up with additional information
- Leave enough time for a question and answer session at the end
- Don't forget signage – be sure to have a sign with your logo and briefing title, so attendees can easily find the room.