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## Tips for Handling a Media Interview

- Be knowledgeable about the issue. Anticipate likely questions and have answers ready.
- Whenever possible, support your statements with facts, statistics, quotes from experts, comparisons, or personal experiences.
- Talk from the viewpoint of the audience. Don't use jargon or "insider" terminology such as acronyms.
- Speak in personal terms. To be more believable, use "I" not "we."
- Listen carefully to the question and always tell the truth.
- Don't be evasive. Never say "no comment." If you cannot answer a question, always give a valid reason for not being able to answer.
- Don't speculate. If you don't know the answer, say so, then offer to find out.
- Don't answer hypothetical "what if" questions. Say "We don't speculate" and bridge to the real issues.
- If you don't want a statement quoted, don't make it. There's no such thing as "off the record."
- Don't lose your temper or argue with a reporter. You may win the battle, but lose the war.
- If a question contains negative language, don't repeat it in your answer.
- If asked several questions at once, pick the one question you want to answer, answer it, and let the reporter re-ask the others.
- With a forced-choice question, you don't have to accept the reporter's choices, but you can offer a third alternative.

## **Dealing With the Media: Know Your Rights!**

When responding to media inquiries, you have the right to:

- Know who you're talking to - ask the reporter's name and publication or station.
- Know the topic or story angle the reporter wants to pursue.
- Change the location of the interview.
- Have a question repeated or clarified.
- Say you don't have an answer at hand, but will get back to the reporter to clarify. Find out the reporter's deadline and honor it.
- Direct a reporter to the appropriate spokesperson. Be sure to alert the spokesperson to expect a call from the reporter.
- Be treated with the same courtesy you extend to the reporter.