



### **Foster Care Recruitment Media Tool Kit**

- The media can help with GENERAL foster parent recruitment efforts
- The Coalition for Children, Youth, and Families is responsible coordinating the state of Wisconsin's Foster Care Recruitment Campaign and works closely with major media outlets throughout the state
- Individual counties can utilize a variety of media outlets in their local area to spread the word about the need for foster parents

### **General Guidelines**

- Focus on local media outlets to build relationships with in order to share newsworthy stories about foster care and foster parenting
- Try not to purchase any media coverage. Purchasing coverage duplicates efforts, damages opportunities for future donations, and takes already limited financial resources away from other, more effective recruitment strategies
- Know your key messages. At the end of the story, what is it that you ultimately want to communicate?
- Be prepared with 3 sources of information - an agency expert, a family story, supporting data
- Do your research on who to contact. Try to make a connection to the person as close to the reporter as possible
- Be flexible and available - media outlets move quickly. Have people available at the ready to give the story
- Use a variety of contact methods: phone calls, emails, media alerts, press releases



### **The Pitch**

- This is your opportunity to reach out to news outlets and tell them why they should run your story
- Keep it simple, keep it compelling, keep it positive
- Outlets want to feel special, so give them a unique story that is just for them
- While negativity may draw news ratings, it doesn't recruit foster parents, so keep it positive

### **Email Pitch**

- While there may be times when you start with a phone call, most pitches start with an email
- Keep your email short and sweet
- Start with a compelling, attention-grabbing subject line
- Be sure to include your cause, what you are doing, what you would like from the outlet, what opportunities you have for the outlet

### **Sample Subject Lines**

- "Extreme" Foster Parent Recruitment Plans to Counter Skyrocketing Need
- What happens every 2 hours in Wisconsin?
- Going to Extreme Heights to Deal with Wisconsin's Foster Care Shortage
- Wisconsin's Foster Family Shortage reaches new heights

### **Sample Email Pitch**

Catchy Subject Line: The Next Foster Parent Could be Staring You in the Face

(Your County Name Here) county currently has (###) children and youth in foster care. This number has increased by (%) from the past and we desperately need more foster families who live in (Your County Name Here) so that we can keep kids safe, in their community, close friends and family.

To address the growing need for foster parents, (Your County Name Here) county is participating in a statewide campaign, "Life Interrupted." We've placed mirror clings around (Your County Name Here) that ask the question, "Who can be a foster parent?"

We hope you will help us in our effort to engage the community by covering how (Your County Name Here) county is working locally as part of a state-



wide effort to recruit new foster parents. If you are interested, please let me know and I can help arrange interviews with:

- A foster family in the county
- Representative(s) from County Human Services
- Representatives from the Coalition for Children, Youth, and Families who can talk about the critical need

### **Media Alert**

- The media alert lets news outlets know there is an event happening that may be of interest to them
- It provides the who, what, when, where, and why of an event
- Send media alerts out within a few days of the event



## Sample Media Alert

<<Date>>

<<Media Contact Name>>

<<Media Contact Information>>

### **Coalition for Children Youth and Families, Rock Climbers and Green Bay Packer Team Up to Address Wisconsin's Foster Family Shortage**

**WHAT:** Local youth will scale a rock wall in during rush hour on 12<sup>th</sup> and Walnut as a kickoff to the summer-long foster parent recruitment campaign entitled "Life Interrupted," which includes billboards, a website, and a television PSA.

The rock wall, which will sit at the base of one of the campaign's billboards, signifies how youth can reach new heights with the help of foster parents. Also on-site will be Coalition Resource Specialists and foster parents who can answer questions and talk with anyone interested in becoming a foster parent. Green Bay Packer Ty Montgomery and his mom – a long-time foster parent – will be in attendance, as well.

**WHEN:** Wednesday, May 25

**TIME:** 4:00-6:30 p.m.

**WHERE:** Corner of 12<sup>th</sup> and Walnut

**WHO:** Green Bay Packer, Ty Montgomery, and his mom, a long-time foster parent

**The Coalition for Children and Families**

**Serve Marketing**

**WHY:** Every 2 hours, a child in Wisconsin enters into foster care because of abuse, neglect, or alcohol and drugs in the home. This year alone, the Coalition for Children, Youth & Families projects they will need 1,500 NEW foster families just to keep pace with the need.

Note to EDITOR - For links to the Facebook page, television PSA, photos of the billboards, along with information on foster care in Wisconsin, visit:

**[www.fosterparentsrock.org](http://www.fosterparentsrock.org)**

\*Advance Interviews available with foster families in and foster care officials.\*

**\*\*LIVE Interviews available with rock climbers, Ty Montgomery and his mom, event organizers, and foster families.\*\***



### **Press release vs. no press release**

What Reporters & Editors Want in a Story:

- ▶ Uniqueness, something they won't see anywhere else
- ▶ Specials, Scoops & Exclusives
- ▶ The next Pulitzer
- ▶ Features that tell a personal stories
- ▶ Ratings (stories with classic story elements: conflict struggle and resolution)
- ▶ Stories that make people feel
- ▶ Stories that people want to share and talk about

What Sending a Press Releases says:

- ▶ This information has been broadly distributed
- ▶ You are not special
- ▶ You won't earn a Pulitzer with this story
- ▶ Other media outlets may report this story
- ▶ This is general information for the public
- ▶ This is information more background in nature



### **Key Messages**

- Key messages are the points YOU want to make sure come across in your story
- Try to answer EVERY question with one of your key messages
- What do you want people to know or do as a result of this story
- Even questions that are off topic can be brought back to your key messages
- Limit your messages to 3-4

### **Sample Key Messages about Foster Care Recruitment**

- Every month in Wisconsin, between 350-400 children are removed from their birth parents due to neglect or abuse.
- The need is ongoing but, over the past two years, has been increasing by an additional 500 children over the average each year (a 27% increase over the previous average).
- After a foster child turns eight, he or she is more likely to stay in foster care than become adopted.
- Every two hours in Wisconsin, a child enters into foster care because of neglect, abuse, or drugs and alcohol in the home.
- The recruitment campaign kicks off in May (National Foster Care Awareness Month) and is running throughout the summer, but the need for foster families is year-round.
- We're going to extreme measures to get the attention of potential foster families, but the shortage of foster parents is an extreme issue in our community and across our state.

Here's a [link](#) to the Media Toolkit from the National Resource center for Diligent Recruitment which includes additional, more in depth information.



### **Additional Tips**

- Remember there are deadlines! Reporters are always under pressure, and they appreciate it if you help them meet their deadlines.
- Don't assume they know anything about the topic. You may have to start with the ABC's.
- Listen carefully to the question and don't hesitate to ask for clarification.
- Keep your answers short and simple.
- You don't have to answer every question directly; use them to make your main points.
- Negativity is generally bigger news than positivity. Don't let a reporter lead you down a negative path.
- Reporters hate when someone misleads or lies to them. Reporters don't like it when their stories have to be corrected through no fault of their own and because of inaccurate information provided to them.
- Don't "wing it." Come prepared with notes regarding the topic.
- If you don't know the answer to a question, tell the reporter that you'll get back with an answer.
- An interview is not a legal hearing. It's okay to tell a reporter that some information is proprietary.
- Just because a reporter puts away a notebook or turns off a tape recorder doesn't mean the interview is over and you can say anything without it being used.
- If a reporter makes a statement that you do not agree with, say so. Remaining quiet may give the impression that you agree.
- Don't answer if you are not sure of a reporter's question. Always ask for a clarification.
- Never say anything negative about an individual or company.



- Don't stray from the subject of the interview to comment on the day's news. That might open up a new line of questioning.
- Reporters like facts and figures. Instead of just voicing an opinion, back it up with facts and figures.
- Prior to departing, let the reporter know how you can be contacted if additional information is needed.
- And most important, never lie to a reporter.