

# WHAT'S YOUR COVID-19 MEDIA PLAN?

## A TOOLKIT TO GET YOU STARTED

*Today, we are faced with the reality that if there is a COVID-19 case in a hospital, it's a statistic, but in a skilled nursing facility, it's a story. In addition, media inquiries are frequent as reporters are searching for COVID-19 headlines and stories. The goal is to stay out of the headlines while providing relevant and accurate information. If a reporter is interested in your facility, the next goal is to evaluate the inquiry, identify the best response strategy and process, and respond in a timely manner. In an ideal world, the responsibility of managing media could be centralized, when possible, so facility management can stay focused on staff and resident safety. Like you, we've been faced with countless media inquiries and we're sharing the toolkit and plan we implemented to navigate these challenging times.*

### PHASE ONE: PREPARING FOR MEDIA

- 1 – DESIGNATE** a person in your organization to serve as a central point of contact for receiving all inquiries. Or, secure a retainer with a reputable PR firm that has a deep knowledge of your organization and can serve as an expert within your organization and unemotional third party, and ensure opt in practices are in place.
- 2 – DESIGNATE** a spokesperson that will publicly respond to media inquiries if asked for an in-person interview. This could be your CEO to represent the company policies and practices or it could be your Clinical Director to speak to the infection control protocols.
- 3 – CREATE** a company fact sheet that provides an overview of your organization and service offerings. Then, pair this with general talking points about how you are managing COVID-19 and the steps you are taking to keep staff and residents safe.
- 4 – IDENTIFY** your market media list for proactive outreach. If you choose to proactively approach media, be sure to evaluate the pros and cons and understand that positive press will still come with a reporting of all public statistics and facts.
- 5 – CREATE** an email alias to funnel media inquiries. All inquiries should be sent to this email and the person or team from step 1 should be the recipient(s) of the email. This takes the responsibility of managing and responding to inquiries off facility staff so they can focus on facility operations..
- 6 – POST** signage on facility exterior, directing media to email alias. Additionally, train staff who answer phones to redirect media inquiries to the designated email alias.

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## PHASE TWO: REACTING TO MEDIA

- 1 – UNCOVER** reason for the media inquiry and ask for the details of what they are working on and what their deadline is. Determine the best way to get the reporter the information they need in the timeline provided. That may include a statement, written answers to questions, or an interview.
- 2 – RESEARCH** the reporter to understand how they've covered similar topics in the past to inform how they may approach this story. Reporters generally follow a style and you can gain insight into their approach by reading past articles.
- 3 – RESPOND** directly, honestly, and timely. Reporters are often on a tight deadline and will want to hear from you immediately. Gather your prepared statement and fact sheet from phase one, focus on authenticity and compassion while avoiding defensiveness. Remember not to share anything that you haven't already shared with facility staff and responsible parties. You want facility staff to hear information and updates directly from you first.
- 4 – MONITOR** for media coverage. This can be done by routinely checking common media outlets and/or by using [Google Alerts](#).

## PHASE THREE: PROACTIVELY PITCHING POSITIVE MEDIA

- 1 – CREATE** a media alert when you have a positive story. [See example here](#).
- 2 – SHARE** the media alert with the fact sheet out to the media list you created.
- 3 – MONITOR** for media coverage. See step 4 above.
- 4 – UTILIZE** existing channels to share the story, including your website, social media channels, and email platforms.

*\*If your company has a media policy, refer to that first, and use these steps as a guide to reinforce or enhance your policy.*