

# Questions for Reporters

A first step in conducting a successful media interview is to ask the journalist all or some of the following questions before the interview. It is your right to ask these questions and to receive reasonable responses.

## Background Questions

- \* Who will be conducting the interview?
- \* What is the reporter's name, media affiliation, telephone number, cell number, fax number, and email address?
- \* Is the reporter a staff member (full time or part time) or a free lancer?
- \* What stories have previously been covered by the reporter?
- \* Does the reporter specialize in any particular area?
- \* Will the reporter have any say in writing the headline or lead for the story?
- \* What type of publication or program is it?
- \* Who generally reads, sees, or hears the publication or program?

## Logistical Questions

- \* Where and when will the story appear?
- \* Is the story likely to appear elsewhere? If so, where?
- \* What is the reporter's deadline for the story?
- \* Is the reporter's deadline flexible?
- \* Will it be possible for the interviewee to get back to the reporter to do the interview later? If so, when?
- \* Where will the interview take place?
- \* How long will the interview take?
- \* How long will the story be?
- \* Does the reporter call back to verify the accuracy of specific quotes attributed directly to the person being interviewed?
- \* What is the format for the interview – for example, live, tape, sit down, stand up, panel?
- \* Will the person being interviewed be allowed to have a voice regarding the interview setting, such as seating arrangements?
- \* Will the interview be audio taped or video taped by the reporter?
- \* Will it be all right if the interviewee records the interview?
- \* Will it be all right if the interviewee uses notes?
- \* Who will write the headline or the lead to the story?

## Topical Questions

- \* What is the interview topic?
- \* What is the focus of the interview?
- \* What specific topics or subjects does the reporter expect to cover in the interview?
- \* What types of questions will be asked? Can the reporter provide examples?
- \* Has the reporter done any background research related to the topic of the interview? If so, what was found and where was the information found?

- \* Would the reporter like to receive background material related to the topic before conducting the interview?
- \* Who else has the reporter interviewed? What did they say?
- \* Who else does the reporter expect to interview for the story?
- \* Would the reporter like suggestions about who else to interview?
- \* How will the reporter use the interview material? How will the interview material fit into the story?
- \* If you are not the right person for the interview, would the reporter like suggestions about who would be a better person to interview?

Answers to these questions are critical for:

- \* Deciding if you are the right person for the interview
- \* Establishing a verbal contract with the reporter that can be called upon if needed during or after the interview
- \* Deciding what your key messages will be

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