News Release Template/Tip Sheet for Local Programs

Below is a news release template/tip sheet for CTCP-funded programs to utilize when reaching out to your local media regarding a newly passed ordinance, as well as way to promote the Helpline for those wishing to quit now that the ordinance is in effect. The left column includes examples of items contained in a news release, as well as sample copy and data to be revised to specifically address your community and ordinance. The right column includes tips which correspond with the number in parentheses on the left.

Insert agency or program logo here

(1)

News Release

(INSERT PROGRAM'S NAME) (2)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Program website
www.NoButts.org (if desired to include)

DATE:
CONTACT: (3)
PHONE: (4)
EMAIL:

XX PROGRAM ANNOUNCES PASSAGE OF XX SMOKE-FREE ORDINANCE (5)

New Law Prompts Protects Residents from Secondhand Smoke and Motivates Smokers to Quit (6)

ORGANIZATION'S CITY, CA - The XXX program announced today at (location) the passage of the XX city/county's smoke-free outdoor ordinance, which will protect citizens against the harmful effects of secondhand smoke. The law will go into effect on XX, XX 20XX. (7)

The Ordinance prohibits smoking in all public places in the City of XX at times when other persons can be exposed to secondhand smoke. These places include indoor and outdoor businesses, hotels, parks, sidewalks, restaurants and bars where people can be reasonably expected to congregate or meet. (8)

-more- (9)

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(1) Logo: Insert your agency or program logo, if one exists.

(2) Header: Include a large header that specifically states it is a "News Release" to grab attention of the editor, as well as the name of the organization that released it.

(3) Contact info: Provide a contact who is authorized to represent the program, is readily accessible and knowledgeable on the topic.

(4) Contact number: Use a cell phone number if contact will be out of office the day of the release.

(5) Headline: The headline is one of the most important components of a press release as this needs to "grab the attention" of the media. It should be in bold type and a font that is larger than the body text. Keep the headline to 80-125 characters maximum. Capitalize every word with the exception of "a", "an", "of" and "the" or use all caps.

(6) Sub-head: Include an informative sub-headline, provide data when possible and differentiate the font from the headline (e.g. italicize).

(7) Opening paragraph: Should contain: who, what, when, where, why in 25 words or less. Never take for granted that the reader has read your headline. It needs to contain information that will "entice" the reader.

(8) Body copy: The remainder of body text should include specific details of the law and any relevant information to your services.

(9) Continuation note: Add "-more-" to the bottom of each page if there are more pages to the release to follow.

"I am very pleased to see this ordinance pass to protect the citizens of XX," Mayor XX XX said. "This law will allow them to work and spend time outside without being exposed to the devastating health effects secondhand smoke imposes." (11)

According the American Cancer Society, secondhand smoke causes 35,000 heart disease deaths, as well as 3,000 lung cancer deaths in non-smoking adults each year. (12)

With the passage of the new law, it is expected a number of tobacco users in XX City/County will make an attempt to quit. According to the National Cancer Institute, such policies not only protect the public from exposure to secondhand smoke, but also encourage smokers to quit.

The California Smokers' Helpline (1-800-NO-BUTTS), launched in 1992, was the nation's first statewide telephone counseling service. Research has shown the Helpline doubles a smoker's chance of success (13)

Since its debut, the Helpline has provided free and confidential statewide telephone counseling services to nearly 500,000 Californians from diverse communities throughout the state. Quitting assistance is offered in English, Spanish, Mandarin, Cantonese, Vietnamese, and Korean as well as TDD for the hard of hearing. (13)

"Despite a great deal of progress in tobacco control, many children and adults are still exposed to secondhand smoke," XX XX, director of XX program said. "The California Smokers' Helpline is a valuable resource that can help XX County/City's smokers quit to protect their loved ones." (11)

Adult smoking rates in California declined from 22.7 percent in 1988 to 13.3 percent in 2008. This reflects a 41 percent overall decline and a decrease in per capita cigarette consumption of 67 percent in twenty years. The implementation of local smoke-free policies is one factor that is attributed to the significant decline in smoking. (12)

For more information on the smoke-free ordinance, contact the XX program at (555) 555-1234 or XXX.org. For assistance in quitting tobacco, contact the Smokers' Helpline at 1-800-NO-BUTTS or www.nobutts.org. (14)

(15)

(10) Additional page header: Use an abbreviated headline and page number at the top of all pages after the first.

(11) Quote: Include quotes from no more than two local public health officials, experts, successful quitters or organization's staff members with their title or position.

(12) Data: Provide current data on topic, when possible.

(13) Program information: Include information about how the program and/or Helpline are available to provide cessation support.

(14) More information: The last paragraph should include details on obtaining additional information with a contact name and your program and/or the Helpline's website (www.nobutts.org).

(15) Completion note: Use "# # #" or "-END-" to indicate the news release is complete.

Overall tips:

- Answer the questions "who", "what", "when", "where", "why" and "how" as quickly as possible. Press releases should be written with the most important information up front to the least important. This assists editors who need to trim your article for space, who will cut from the bottom up. It also is important for readers who do not always read the complete article.

- Your text should include pertinent information about your service or event. Make sure to include details on when it is occurring, where it will be held and the cost.

- Write at a 5th grade level so it is easy for all to understand.

- Keep your sentences and paragraphs short; a paragraph should be no more than 3-4 sentences. Your release should be between 500 to 800 words, spell checked and proofread for errors by multiple people.

- The mood of the release should be factual, not hyped; do not use a sales pitch as it will ruin your credibility with the reader. Also, avoid using contractions, such as "don't" and "isn't."

- Do not use jargon, acronyms or uncommonly used words. You might eat, sleep and breathe "SHS" in "MUH" and "cessation" services offered by "LLAs", but your target audience does not.

- Email the story to journalists in your local area preferably in PDF format (to ensure layout stays intact). Follow up with a phone call to ask if they have any questions or would like a one-on-one interview.

- Always place a hyperlink of your website in the press release for better online search engine optimization and visibility.

For an example of local ordinance news release and other materials, visit the City of Calabasas's website: http://www.cityofcalabasas.com/secondhandsmoke.html.