



Helpful Hints for Spokespeople

PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW

- **Develop your story or message points.** These are the three main ideas you want to emphasize and repeat during your interview; they should be based on your family's adoption story. Weave these points into all of your answers. The event organizer should provide examples of the types of questions reporters may ask.
- **Learn more about the interview.** The event organizer should explain to you what the reporter is looking for. What is the goal of the story? If it is for print, radio, TV or online?
- **Determine the time and location for the interview.** If preparing for an interview, the event organizer will set the interview during a time that is convenient to the family and the reporter.
- **Wear the right clothing.** Dress should be business casual. Look conservative – women should avoid wearing elaborate jewelry, neon-bright colors or clothing with repeating patterns; men should not wear white or striped shirts. Also, if the interview or event will be on TV, consider wearing make-up or powder on your face. Bright lights make you look paler and shiny.
- **Relax and focus.** Breathing exercises may feel silly, but they will go a long way toward helping you feel calm. Arrive at your location early (10-15 minutes) and spend time practicing your story and message points.

DURING THE INTERVIEW

- **Maintain eye contact.** Eye contact will hold a reporter's attention and will make you look confident.
- **Be enthusiastic.** You have a great story to tell. Now, it is time to convey your compelling story to readers, viewers and listeners. Smile when it is appropriate.
- **Keep your answers succinct.** Don't feel compelled to keep talking. When you have covered your message point, stop talking. Answers under 30 seconds are usually best.
- **Stay away from filling awkward silences.** You shouldn't feel nervous when no one is talking. Wait for the reporter to ask you the next question. Remember: if you have covered your message point, stop talking.
- **NOTHING is "off-the-record."** If you don't want it printed or broadcast, don't say it. Assume from the moment you pick up the phone or walk into an interview that everything you say can and WILL be quoted.
- **Never say "No Comment."** It makes you look guilty and untrustworthy. If you can't comment on a point, emphasize what you can say and return to your message points. And, it's okay to say "I don't know" if you don't know the answer to a question.
- **Don't worry about repeated questions.** If the reporter's questions are the same, the content of your answers should remain the same. Reporters sometimes ask the same question in order to get new



information for the story, but it may also be to encourage you to give a more correct answer – making for a better sound bite. Try saying the message in a more succinct way if you notice this happening.

SPECIAL TIPS FOR BROADCAST/ TELEVISION INTERVIEWS

- **Use a conversational tone.** Avoid reading from your notes. This technique will go a long way toward keeping you relaxed and building a rapport between you and the reporter.
- **Use your voice.** Remember to change your tone to emphasize key points in your story or message points. By using inflection, you can make the key ideas stand out. This also helps because you can continue to sound upbeat.
- **Don't be afraid to start your response over again.** If the interview is taped, your answer can be edited. This, however, is not the case with a live interview. If you must, correct yourself and move on.
- **Ask for water.** If your mouth or throat gets dry, you will be glad it is there during the interview. But, be careful! Drinking too much too quickly not only looks sloppy; it could send a message that you are uncomfortable.
- **It's important how you sit or stand.** If you are sitting at a desk, keep your arms on the tabletop and do not tap your hands. Sit up straight and lean slightly forward at a 15-degree angle. You will look better on camera. If you are standing face to face with the reporter, keep your feet about shoulder-width apart and your hands at your side. If you are seated, don't swivel in the chair or sway. The more important rule: be natural.
- **Never look at the camera.** Keep eye contact with the reporter. Looking away or averting your eyes connotes that you are uncomfortable or untrustworthy. There is no need to talk down to the microphone; it will pick up your voice.
- **Be careful about nodding your head.** Besides the fact that it looks jarring, it implies that you agree with what a reporter may be saying. Also, refrain from waving your arms during an interview. The camera angle is probably not wide enough to capture your movements.
- **Remain upbeat.** Smiling when it is appropriate makes you more attractive on camera, even during a stressful interview. Stay focused and positive.
- **Consider wearing make-up or powder on your face.** The bright lights of television will make you look more pale than you are normally. If you are offered powder, take advantage of it. Avoid looking shiny on television.

SPECIAL TIPS FOR FAMILY SPOKESPEOPLE

Families adopting on National Adoption Day that are asked to be spokespeople should expect to participate in a press conference event and/or in interviews with print, radio and/or television reporters. Event organizers should prepare families before all speaking engagements, including:

- Set up the interview at a convenient time for the family and the reporter;
- Explain the goal of the interview or press conference;
- Explain that the family should focus on their adoption story or provide a list of “message points” to which the family should refer; and
- Provide examples of the types of questions the family may be asked.