



PROMOTING FAMILY DAY CARE THROUGH THE MEDIA

WHAT IS 'THE MEDIA'?

The media is a collective term for organisations or groups of people who report news. Each media outlet makes decisions on what is news and what is not based on the hundreds of story leads they get every day. News is generated either electronically (ie radio, television, the internet) or through print (ie newspapers, magazines, newsletters, journals etc).

WHY USE THE MEDIA FOR FAMILY DAY CARE?

Local media is a powerful and cost effective tool that individual family day care schemes can use to raise the profile of the service in your community. Building strong relationships with local media provides opportunities to present powerful images and statements about family day care. Examples of media coverage achieved by family day care schemes around Australia can be found in the newsroom of the FDCA website at: www.familydaycareaustralia.com.au

THE IMPORTANCE OF STRONG MEDIA RELATIONS

Strong media relations enable you to:

- **raise the profile of your organisation:** a positive public profile reflects the culture of family day care and helps build a strong united national brand
- **reach potential clients:** the more people understand what family day care is, the more likely they are to contact your service for childcare
- **recruit carers:** people are more likely to enquire about something they have heard about and understand. The more media coverage family day care receives, the more likely it is that when you appeal for carers, people will come forward.
- **say thank you:** recognition is a great way to say thanks to hard-working staff and volunteers.
- **generate public awareness:** not only of the work of family day care, but of broader concepts like active, caring communities, and a sense of collective responsibility.

TEN STEPS TO GENERATING MEDIA COVERAGE

These ten steps are a comprehensive guide to generating media coverage for your family day care scheme.

1. Research your media

Before you start a media campaign you should create a list or database of all media outlets in your local area and get in touch with them to find out who the most appropriate contact person is. Include:

- Newspapers, radio stations, newsletters, corporate company newsletters, trade journals, café newsheets, Chamber of Commerce bulletins – any material that runs news or that are looking to cover local stories.

Ask if you can put your news stories on your suppliers' websites or local companies that are linked to children, eg maternity wear shops, toy shops, baby shops – anywhere that parents look.

2. Determine what your news is

Generally, news consists of stories that are new, current, prominent, of human interest, involve conflict, are sensational, controversial, unusual, significant and up to the minute.

Your family day care scheme has staff, carers, children and families – if you think of each individual with a story – you can generate enough stories for the next millennium! Here are just a few ideas:

- Anniversaries – landmarks for scheme, eg 10 years as a carer/staff member
- Upcoming events or coverage of an event
- Campaign/lobby – support of national campaign
- Celebrity – well known person supporting an event or using family day care (make sure you have their permission)

- Children/animals – always makes for a great photo opportunity
- Danger – eg carer teaches children about fire season
- Geography – new carer from another State starts new family day care business
- Human interest – a day in the life of / carer triumphs over adversity to have successful family day care business
- Link with national story – FDCA national conference / family day care week
- Money – how much money family day care generates in the community
- New – carer / staff member / childcare places / office etc
- Opportunities – recruitment campaign for more carers
- Photographs – a picture says a thousand words
- Success story/achievements
- Superlatives – first / best / newest / oldest etc
- Topicality – Christmas / Easter / show day / family day care week

When thinking of media stories make a point of involving your whole team – staff, carers, parents and even the children in family day care – you will be surprised with what they come up with. Remember, there are no silly ideas – often the strange or bizarre story is more newsworthy!

3. Make a plan

It is essential to plan your annual media activities so that you can target your local media regularly with prepared stories. Always remember to publish your own news stories in the scheme’s newsletter and website.

Start off with a table, similar to that below. List all 12 months and at least three stories for each month. Make sure that you highlight the audience that you want to reach, the media outlets that you are contacting, key messages that you want to get across and your communication method.

It is very important that you measure all media activity so that you can evaluate what worked well and what didn’t. List how you will do this in the table as well.

Sample Annual Media Plan

Month	Story	Target audience	Type of media	Key messages	Communication Method	Evaluation
Jan 2007	Recruited 3 new carers	Local families	Print Radio, Internet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local employment opportunities • 15 new childcare places created • Quality childcare available in your area 	Media Release Radio pitch Follow up phone calls Media kit	<p>How many calls did this generate?</p> <p>Have you noticed an increased awareness of family day care in the community?</p>
	Carer celebrates 25 years in family day care	Local community, families and businesses	Print Internet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family day care is an established childcare service • Carers are committed to providing quality childcare • Family day care is available in your area 	Media Release Follow up phone calls Media kit	<p>How many calls did this generate?</p> <p>Have you noticed an increased awareness of family day care in the community?</p>
	Accreditation successfully achieved	Local community, families and businesses	Print Radio Internet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • family day care is a nationally accredited service providing quality childcare 	Media Release Radio pitch Follow up phone calls Media kit	<p>How many calls did this generate?</p>

4. Develop a media kit

Send the media as much information as you can about family day care that demonstrates to them what an important service your childcare service provides to the community. Include facts and figures that demonstrate that family day care is a professional service with unique characteristics that are highly valued by your clients.

Prepare the following for your media kit:

- **Media release template** – every piece of news you generate should be delivered to the media using a media release format that is consistent and professional. A media release template is included in this marketing kit. Using this template will help increase awareness in the national family day care logo and brand.
- **Radio pitch** – this is much shorter than a media release as radio stations have less time to research a story. Your radio pitch can be a simple email that is clearly titled with a pitch headline. The radio pitch should just have dot points of the story and a brief profile of the person available for interview.
- **Photos** – if you already have photos (with permission to use from children's parents) make sure that you send these in or have them ready if asked. Keep copies of your photos.
- **Family day care fact sheet** – it is important to include facts about family day care, including numbers of children in care and the hours this equates to; the number of carers in the scheme (highlight how much money is kept in the local community by using local businesses); staff numbers; the scheme's accreditation status; numbers of carers around Australia (12,000) and how the scheme is funded. There are many facts that you can include – but don't overload them with information.

5. Write your media release and radio pitch

Once you have an understanding of your local media network and the types of stories that you think will interest them, then it's time to write a media release.

Your media release needs to capture your media contact's attention **fast** – you usually have just five seconds, so your first paragraph has to contain the **what, where, why, how, when** and **who** of the story.

Points to remember when writing a news release:

- Use short sentences
- Use short paragraphs – generally one sentence to a paragraph
- Use strong and energetic English
- Use positive words and phrases.

6. Send out your media release

When you have developed your media material, send it out to your media list. Make sure that you have contacted the appropriate journalist and find out how they would prefer to receive the information. These days most prefer email but some still like fax – so best find out first. Make sure you that keep a record of everyone that you send to and then follow them up. This all takes time – but remember you are building a positive profile with your media by following these steps and building a positive reputation for family day care in your community.

7. Follow up and pitch

Even though you have sent out your media release, it is vital that you follow each media contact up with a phone call. They receive hundreds of media stories every day and it is up to you to make sure that yours is read.

When you make your follow up phone call make sure that you know your story back to front and can pitch it to them in ten seconds. Be sure to answer all their questions truthfully and if you don't know the answer promise to find out and get back to them as soon as possible.

Always make the journalist aware of good photo opportunities and interviews with people in your family day care service.

8. Prepare for interview

Congratulations – a media outlet has picked up your story and they want to interview you. Follow this simple 'PACE' formula:

- **Prepare.** Read all media and have a good idea of what has been covered about your subject in the last few days. Have three main points that you want to get across and don't let the interviewer deter you. Answer the question but keep focused on your original message.
- **Attitude.** Have a positive and happy attitude. Do not be defensive or argumentative.
- **Control.** Do not let the interviewer rile you – again keep your main focus for being there in your mind – promoting family day care as a professional childcare service

- **Expression.** Your expression even comes across on radio, so be positive, have a smile and enjoy your interview.

9. Fielding bad news

If you hear or read negative media on family day care do you respond? A negative can be an opportunity for an organisation to highlight some positives. For example, the local newspaper reports that family day care has put up their fees. This is an opportunity for your scheme to write to the editor or put out your own media release highlighting that family day care is a professional service and competes on the same level as other services providing quality childcare. Fees have to be competitive to provide ongoing training, resources, playgroup and other services.

There must be some sort of response – even if it is just a denial or promise to review a particular policy or item of interest.

10. Evaluate, Manage and Measure

Keep a record of all your media coverage and measure its success in terms of:

- Increased telephone enquiries
- Increased carer numbers
- More families/children using the service
- Raised awareness of family day care in the community

SUMMARY

In summary there are four things to remember when you're working with the media:

1. **Be prepared:** work out your key messages and what you want to communicate
2. **Be proactive:** take the initiative, contact the media about events and campaigns
3. **Be positive:** present your story in the best light
4. **It is all about luck:** different moods, different personal interests, or just a quiet day can mean a different response to your media information; and if a major story breaks, accept that everything else will be dropped.

These steps are part of a media training presentation put together by FDCA. If you would like further advice or clarification, help in drafting a media release or radio pitch please contact us via email - enquiries@fdca.com.au