

**AMBER
ALERT**

HOW TO INTERACT WITH THE MEDIA

Effectively Engaging the Media

Interacting with media outlets during a missing child incident, while important, can be stressful. Media coverage of a missing child incident can be overwhelming to families, law enforcement and the wider community if preparations are not made. However, if a plan is in place, media coverage can be an incredibly valuable tool for successfully recovering the missing child. To ensure that you are getting the most out of media interactions, consider utilizing the tips/suggestions below.



Build Relationships Before a Crisis

The greatest opportunity for ensuring that the media will cooperate during a missing child case, is to build relationships with the press before there is a crisis. Particularly during the initial hours a missing child search, the press will be in contact with multiple individuals in an attempt to gain information. Having built a positive relationship with the press, along with protocols for engaging the press during crisis situations, will help ensure that accurate information is released during this essential period.

Setting Up a Main Point of Contact

When working with the media it is important to establish a main point of contact for all media inquiries and communication. Ideally, this point of contact should be the local police department's Public Information Officer (PIO). If there is no PIO it is important to select a reliable and trusted member of the investigating agency, or Tribe to take this position. Central points of contact are an essential component in the media relations process and ensure that the information the media receives is accurate and relevant.

Setting Up Press Conferences and Interviews

Media events such as interviews and press conferences grasp public attention and can help with the flow of information being shared about a missing child. It is important to announce specific times and locations where reporters will be able to ask questions and gather information on the missing child incident.

Choose a Prime Location for the Press Conference

The location of a press conference is significant because it can play an important role in humanizing the situation and making it more relatable to the public. The location must also be large enough to host all of the reporters that wish to attend. Hosting the conference outside of the missing child's home, school, favorite playground, or park allows the media to gain insight on the child's personal life while still keeping them at a distance that provides



the family their desired level of privacy. Remaining mindful of a family's privacy wishes can go a long way with developing and sustaining trust in Native communities.

Timing of a Media Event

When scheduling a press conference, pay attention to other community events occurring that day. If there is a large sporting event or any other public affair happening it is less likely that the press conference will receive as much attention or reach a significant number of viewers. Events taking place in the late morning and early afternoon on days with little news competition gives reporters time to write their stories and edit footage for the afternoon and evening newscasts.

Media Interaction with the Family

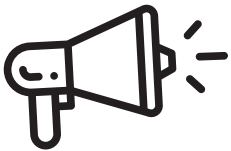
Humanizing the Investigation

Audience attention and empathy increases when involving the family in press conferences and media interactions. These interactions, while key to gaining media and public attention for the case, can be difficult. Family members should never be pressured to speak with media sources, however, it can humanize the situation. In this way, assisting the family to feel comfortable on how to interact with the media can be beneficial for both the family and the recovery of the child.

Preventing Frustrations

When family members feel like things are not moving fast enough in the investigation or disagree with the direction it is taking, they may communicate with the media independently and sow mistrust. It is important to remember that these family members are often scared and hurting, which may be why they attack the investigation. Keeping family members in the loop on developments, listening to their concerns, and showing genuine concern will help prevent family members from going to the press with their frustrations.

A Call to Action



A call to action is used to persuade an audience, typically community members or other members of the public to act in support of a missing child case. A common and useful call to action for missing children is a community canvass. When coming from the family, a call to action can be incredibly effective. An impactful call to action uses strong language that evokes emotion and tells the audience specifically how they can help. The statement should be direct and give the audience cause to join in the search for the missing child.