
Getting Media Attention for Your Community-Based Doula Program

The White Paper can help you to secure media attention for your Community-Based Doula Program. It shows your community that your work is a unique approach to improving maternal and infant healthcare and is supported by Congress and multiple federal health agencies. It also shows that community-based doulas are not only helping underserved families in your community, but across the nation!

Why Media?

Media attention puts your program in front of new audiences, including potential new donors, and makes your current donors proud of their ongoing support.

Why Now?

World Breastfeeding Week is every year, August 1 – 7, and Community-Based Doula Programs consistently achieve high breastfeeding rates. This makes your program an excellent opportunity for a reporter who wants to cover World Breastfeeding Week in a new way.

What to do:

Send a Media Release.

If you decide to send a media release to local media, you are welcome to edit the Sample Media Release, or create your own. Be sure to include your program outcomes, as well as a quote from senior staff, and from a community-based doula, a client, and/or legislator(s). You can find tips on requesting a quote from your legislator on the accompanying pages.

After you send the media release, consider following-up with one or two reporters by phone.

If you speak to a reporter, even for a minute, be sure to thank them for their time.

Write an Opinion Piece.

If you decide to send a Letter to the Editor or submit an Op-Ed to your local media, here are some things to keep in mind:

1. Describe why your program is worthwhile; share positive outcomes; show how vital the Community-Based Doula Program is to your community. You can use some of the key messages below.
2. Choose a short, catchy title for your piece.

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3. Keep your piece under 500 words.
4. If you're feeling stuck, read the case studies on pages 34-36 of the White Paper. Your opinion piece can sound just like these, but with a closing sentence that wraps it all up. Your closing sentence might begin, "This is why we need..."

Consider Key Messages.

You might use these key messages in your opinion piece, and/or in your phone outreach to select reporters. Or you may decide to develop your own key messages.

1. **Experts love this program:** A panel of experts recommends that HRSA continue to promote and expand the Community-Based Doula Program with federal funding.
2. **This study shows that community-based doulas are a low-cost solution** for helping our most vulnerable babies get a better start a life, and it recommends that the government incorporate it in to health care reforms like the Affordable Care Act. We're calling on Congress to continue funding this program so we can help even more families here in our community and across the country.
3. **Sustaining this program means folding it into a variety of systems:** Sustainability of this model requires integration of the Community-Based Doula Program into a variety of systems and venues.
4. **This program is unique:** The Community-Based Doula Program is a unique, innovative program model that provides extended, intensive support to families throughout pregnancy, during labor and birth, and in the early months of parenting – in communities that face high risks of negative birth and developmental outcomes.
5. **This program achieves high breastfeeding rates and low C-section rates:** The most compelling data findings were the high breastfeeding rates (86% at 6 weeks vs. 54% of a similar sample) and the low C-section rates (24% vs. 30% of a similar sample).

Follow-Up.

When you DO secure media attention, follow-up is important:

1. SHARE THE STORY OR OPINION PIECE with your staff, your board, and all of your supporters. It will make people feel good to see their work – or their dollars at work – in the media. This is true even when the published article is not quite what you expected.
2. Thank the reporter who wrote a story about your program, or the editor who published your opinion piece.
3. Share, share, share again. Include this media mention with future grant applications. Share it on your website, and on social media. Send it to HealthConnect One for more sharing.
4. Take a minute to say to yourself and your team: Look at this cool thing we have done.