

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT MEDIA ADVOCACY**

### **What is media advocacy?**

Lawrence Wallack defines media advocacy as “the strategic use of news media and, when appropriate, paid advertising, to support community organizing to advance a public policy initiative.” In other words, it’s consciously using the media to initiate change.

### **How is media advocacy different from a media campaign and public relations (or marketing)?**

Marketing and public relations are usually designed to increase recognition or positive public opinion about a group or an issue. A media campaign also seeks to get a message to a large target group. Media advocacy is different in that it should be centered around a specific change that your group is after, such as a policy change. In many cases, the entire target of a media advocacy effort may be one person, such as a governor or mayor. As with many policy issues, only one person or a small group may actually have the power to make change.

### **How is media advocacy commonly used in prevention?**

Media advocacy is most commonly used to enhance environmental efforts. Media advocacy should be used to get community merchants to believe that a compliance check could be happening anytime a potentially underaged person tries to purchase alcohol or tobacco. It also should be used to let community members know that sobriety checkpoints are always a possibility, so they should be especially mindful to not drink and drive. A media advocacy campaign might also be designed to get city council members to make a certain public event alcohol-free.

### **Why is media advocacy important?**

The media can stretch the effectiveness of a little bit of effort into a lot of change. If you only do a few compliance checks but use media advocacy to make merchants think they are widespread, then you still get the desired effect of fewer merchants selling. If you want a policy change, you can target those few with power instead of trying to change the minds of hundreds of citizens who really can’t make that same change happen.

### **What are some common media advocacy tips?**

A few tips of media advocacy are to know your local reporters’ deadlines and story preferences, try to find out what type of media is of greatest interest to your targets (i.e. politicians may focus on the letters to the editor), learn how to write press releases, piggyback on breaking news, remember that news is about people more than issues, and phrase your key message succinctly and powerfully.