

Tenant Guide for Speaking to Media

Whether you're reaching out to journalists to tell your story or have been contacted by journalists who are looking for information, documents or quotes, interacting with the media can be daunting. Here is a guide for dealing with journalists.

The ideal story is well documented, will strike a personal chord with an audience and will have wide-reaching implications. Often,

those stories are bred out of many smaller ones, and the fact that you are willing to tell your story will

Many reporters take landlord talking points as truth. It takes practice to push back and reframe the narrative to be positive toward tenants.

make a big impact on the broader struggle for renters' rights. If you make claims, have proof. Give details. Return phone calls, and be respectful of deadlines.

If reporters are asking you for information or an interview, respond in some form. If you do not want to be quoted or provide information, tell them that, even if only through e-mail. Make sure you get confirmation from the

reporter if you want something to be "off the record." Without a commitment, they may use what you say or write. Be clear about which information is OK for them to use for publication and which is not. It is important to remember that public events and public spaces – including parks, sidewalks and some government buildings – as well as the people in them can be photographed and

recorded on video without specific permission. However, you can always ask not to be included in footage.

Usually, journalists will want to verify your name for photo or video captions or narration. If you do not provide your name, you are less likely to be included in their coverage. Photographers and multimedia journalists cannot trespass on private property, though they can get shots of it from a public area. If you give an interview on video or allow one to be recorded for radio, be aware that the footage will be edited at the reporter's discretion.

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DURING INTERVIEWS, DO:

- Ask your own questions.
- Speak about things you know.
- Tell your story, using examples and anecdotes.
- Follow up, both after the interview to find out when and how your information will be used and after the story has been published to give feedback.
- Take your time to answer a question or collect your thoughts if needed.
- Correct misinformation the reporter offers or cites.
- Assert that tenants are valuable members of the community and deserve to be treated with respect.

KEY TERMS:

- **Angle:** The focus, approach or perspective of the story.
- **Beat:** A reporter's area of focus. Examples include public safety, health, crime or education.
- **Embargoed:** requesting a reporter not release event or report details until a specific date.
- **On background:** Information given to a reporter that provides important context, which might be included in the final report but will not be attributed to you by name and cannot be quoted.
- **On the record:** Information given to a reporter that can be quoted, paraphrased, cited and attributed to you.
- **Off the record:** Information given to a reporter for his or her personal understanding but cannot be quoted, paraphrased, cited or otherwise attributed to you in any way.
- **Fact checking:** Verifying that objective statements made in the published product are accurate.

DURING INTERVIEWS, DON'T:

- Don't apologize for asserting the right to housing and tenants' rights.
- Don't accept framing that characterizes tenants as: transient, criminals, not contributing to community as much as homeowners, having too many rights, not taking care of property.
- Don't be pressured to give up personal information that you are not comfortable sharing.
- Don't give information you are not confident is accurate.

- Don't answer questions you don't understand – break the questions down, or ask the reporter to do so.
- Don't allow the interview to be taped or recorded unless you have given consent.
- Don't expect to see the story before it is published. However, you may ask to see your quotes that are being used.

Not sure if you're ready?
Training available!
Contact Tenants Together
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