

# Ceisler

*Media & Issue Advocacy*

## How to Engage in Media Relations



**Advancing quality. Improving lives.**

May 30, 2018

**Kurt Knaus**, Managing Director  
*Harrisburg*

# Who We Are, What We Do

# Ceisler

*Media & Issue Advocacy*

With offices in Philadelphia, Harrisburg and Pittsburgh, Ceisler Media & Issue Advocacy is the largest statewide issue advocacy firm in Pennsylvania. Ceisler Media's 28 employees execute strategic media relations, reputation management, crisis communications, political consensus-building, grassroots mobilization and issue advocacy campaigns on behalf of public agencies, multi-national corporations, non-profits, associations and coalitions.

**If you've read about it in the news in Pennsylvania, chances are we're involved with the issue in some way.**

# How to Engage in Media Relations

## What we'll cover today:

- Mastering the Art of Interview: Tips and Techniques for Successful Engagement
- Learning from Example
- Finding Opportunities to Tell **YOUR** Story
- Understanding How to Win the Q&A Game

# Sample Interview



**Bob Newhart - how not to do an interview**

from **Jonny Bentwood** 3 years ago NOT YET RATED

[https://www.dropbox.com/sh/pl6o2ksclxjley9/AADjuw8WIFD64\\_XF00gw8g2Ka?dl=0&preview=Bob+Newhart.mp4](https://www.dropbox.com/sh/pl6o2ksclxjley9/AADjuw8WIFD64_XF00gw8g2Ka?dl=0&preview=Bob+Newhart.mp4)

# Key Messages

What comes to mind for you  
when someone says ...

**“Long-Term Care”**

*Nursing Homes • Assisted Living • Personal Care*

# Key Messages

## HIGH-QUALITY CARE

- Pennsylvania's long-term care network **ranks among the nation's best** --- providing the highest level of care to the men and women who rely on these centers for their daily living needs, and comfort to the families who entrust them with their loved one's care.
- Demand for services is high. Pennsylvania ranks fourth in the percentage of population 65 and older and percentage 85 and older. But, **every resident can take comfort** knowing that no matter the setting, high-quality, compassionate care is there.

# Key Messages

## COMMITTED CAREGIVERS

- Pennsylvania skilled nursing centers, assisted living residences and personal care homes are **lifelines for families** who can no longer care for loved ones.
- Employees care deeply about the residents and families they support and look after. No matter their role --- nurse, aide, activities director, therapist, social worker, dietician --- **caregivers commit themselves** to providing the compassion and dignity that residents deserve to get healthy and stay healthy.

# Key Messages



These key points may differ slightly depending on the facility, i.e., skilled nursing, assisted living, personal care, or the specific situation. But one thing always remains the same: **Your commitment to provide high-quality care to patients and residents.**

<https://www.paforqualitycare.org>

21<sup>st</sup> Century  
LONG-TERM  
CARE

# Sample Interview



[https://www.dropbox.com/sh/pl6o2ksclxjley9/AADjuw8WIFD64\\_XF00gw8g2Ka?dl=0&preview=Golden+Living.mp4](https://www.dropbox.com/sh/pl6o2ksclxjley9/AADjuw8WIFD64_XF00gw8g2Ka?dl=0&preview=Golden+Living.mp4)

# Long-Term Care: Under the Microscope

## LancasterOnline

### Inspection reports

LNP reports quarterly on all local nursing home inspections, including penalties and fines assessed.

The latest, from May, is at <http://bit.ly/LNPNursingInspection8>.

**Sooner or later, you will be called, even if you don't do anything other than what's required of you.**

- Health Surveys
- Medicare Cost Reports
- Regulatory Compliance Guides
- Media Tracking

## Health inspection reports for nursing homes in Lancaster County



HEATHER STAUFFER | Staff Writer May 22, 2017 (0)

# Long-Term Care: Under the Microscope

**The Inquirer**  
DAILY NEWS philly.com

Business

## The nursing gap in nursing homes

Updated: JUNE 11, 2017 — 3:01 AM EDT

**READING EAGLE**

The newspaper of record for Reading and Berks County, Pa.

## Study finds Pennsylvania nursing homes deficient

Written by *Nicole C. Brambila*

Sunday December 4, 2016 12:01 AM

**York Daily Record**  
YORK SUNDAY NEWS

## How do I check a personal care home's inspection report?

Staff, Daily Record/Sunday News Published 10:56 a.m. ET Feb. 25, 2017

**PENNLIVE**  
PA Patriot-News

## PennLive's 'Failing the Frail,' an investigation of Pa. nursing homes, wins national award

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Updated on April 6, 2017 at 9:54 AM, Posted on April 5, 2017 at 2:05 PM

# Art of the Interview: Tips & Techniques

## When an interview might occur:

- All of your interviews should be pre-arranged with the support of management or your internal communications operation ... **or seek help from PHCA's professional team.**

## Understand what your facility's media policy is:

- Gain approval before conducting an interview.

If a reporter contacts you unexpectedly, politely offer to forward their inquiry to management: ***"I'm not authorized to speak about that, but I would be happy to connect you with someone who is."***

# Art of the Interview: Tips & Techniques

## Understanding the Interview Process:

- Reporter's job is to get information.
- Your job is to provide truthful, strategic information.
- Media interviews are almost always non-threatening ... although they sometimes can be painful.
- Make sure you understand the nature of the request.
- Prepare and rehearse repeatedly. **REPEATEDLY!**
- Beyond just answering questions: Attitude can make or break the interview, or impact or amplify the messages you're trying to convey.

# Consider the Source: TV, Radio, Print

## TELEVISION: For the eye (visual)

- ❖ Arrive early.
- ❖ Be friendly --- smile.
- ❖ Accept makeup (if in studio).
- ❖ Look at interviewer, not the camera.

*This also helps with nerves, allowing for a “conversation” rather than an “interview.”*

## RADIO: For the ear (audio)

- ❖ Speak at a normal volume.
- ❖ Use notes.
- ❖ Cite examples, stories and anecdotes:

*“The hundreds of men and women who rely on our long-term care centers tell us ...”*

*“Their families tell us ...”*

## PRINT: For details (long-form)

- ❖ Great opportunity to speak in depth and offer greater detail about issues.
- ❖ Print reporters are more likely to take printed materials, reports, etc., that can support claims.

# Art of the Interview: Tips & Techniques

## Before an Interview

- Get the reporter's name and phone number. Ask about the nature of the inquiry and deadlines.
- Anticipate key, relevant questions.
- Anticipate negative questions ... and your responses to them.
- Prepare and practice key messages.

## During an Interview

- Strictly adhere to key messages and strategy.
- Remain calm and positive --- breathe!
- Always give honest answers.
- Correct mistakes.

# Art of the Interview: Tips & Techniques



- Go “off the record.”
- Say “no comment.”
- Call a reporter on deadline.
- Over-answer.
- Get fixated on one question.
- Let false facts go uncorrected.
- Repeat a reporter’s negative statement.
- Wing it. Get the facts --- even if you have to do so after the interview --- and stay on message ... **it’s about the people you serve.**

# Sample Interview



[https://www.dropbox.com/sh/pl6o2ksclxjley9/AADjuw8WIFD64\\_XF00gw8g2Ka?dl=0&preview=Ambulance+Company.mp4](https://www.dropbox.com/sh/pl6o2ksclxjley9/AADjuw8WIFD64_XF00gw8g2Ka?dl=0&preview=Ambulance+Company.mp4)

# Don't Throw up Walls

**You are the face  
of the operation.  
Leave a lasting  
impression.**

- **Be polite and act professionally.** People respect someone who remains calm, courteous and professional, especially when confronted.
- **Attitude can make or break a situation.** Stay positive and confident. Don't seem angry or dismissive. Stick to your key points.
- **Say only what you know.** If you can't answer for legal/privacy reasons, or you don't know the answer: Just say so! Don't "wing it."

# Sample Interview



[https://www.dropbox.com/sh/pl6o2ksclxjley9/AADjuw8WIFD64\\_XF00gw8g2Ka?dl=0&preview=Interview+with+110+Year+Old+Wom+an%2C+Flossie+Dickey.mp4](https://www.dropbox.com/sh/pl6o2ksclxjley9/AADjuw8WIFD64_XF00gw8g2Ka?dl=0&preview=Interview+with+110+Year+Old+Wom+an%2C+Flossie+Dickey.mp4)

# Finding Opportunities to Tell Your Story

Interviews are opportunities for you to share **YOUR** story, to comment personally about an issue, to shed light on a complex situation, and to correct inaccuracies or build credibility.

# Reactive: Embrace the Opportunity

- **First, embrace the opportunity.** Interviews give you a chance to comment productively and position your company as an industry leader or strong community partner.
- **Second, be positive and confident.** Don't be afraid to reach out to media to tell a good story. **It's important that these stories are shared.**
- **Third, prepare and rehearse your message.** Know who your audience is and to whom you're speaking. Understand both before you engage.
- **Fourth, personalize the story.** Tell it from your perspective, or from that of the resident and/or family member. Leave a lasting impression.

# Proactive: Take Advantage of the Opportunity

**Contact your communications manager or utilize PHCA.**



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**Research your media market.** Before you start reaching out to reporters, understand which media outlets (i.e., newspaper, radio, TV) fit best for the story you want to tell. Specifically look at how some journalists report to look for a style or tone that matches what you want to pitch.

**Find the phone and email information.** Don't have a media list? Visit the website for the local outlet you want to reach and look for the "Contact Us" link. Unless you have a specific reporter in mind, check with editors or assignment desks.

# Proactive: Take Advantage of the Opportunity

**Write a relatable pitch.** This is one of the most important elements when contacting media outlets. Without communicating how your story will benefit their readers, listeners or viewers in a direct and creative way, you don't stand a chance. Be succinct.

**Create a subject line that grabs attention.** In order for your email to get opened, it needs to have a hook or no one will ever read your pitch and you won't be featured. Writing a headline like they write in their articles or asking a question is a good way to get your email opened.

**Take action and submit your proposal.** No matter what you do, if you don't act, then the story will never be told. It's not personal if you don't get a response. Don't be afraid if they say "no thanks." Take a chance on the next outlet or come back later with something else.

**Follow up like a diplomat.** Persistence works. You will eventually fit in somewhere.

# Sample Interview



[https://www.dropbox.com/sh/pl6o2ksclxjley9/AADjuw8WIFD64\\_XF00gw8g2Ka?dl=0&preview=PA+Newsmakers.mp4](https://www.dropbox.com/sh/pl6o2ksclxjley9/AADjuw8WIFD64_XF00gw8g2Ka?dl=0&preview=PA+Newsmakers.mp4)

# Q&A Scenarios and Responses

**The Machine Gunner:** Reporter bombards you with several questions (some of which may be loaded).

*“Recent reports indicate the quality of skilled nursing care has diminished. How do you respond to these charges? What’s your CMS star rating? How was your last survey?”*

- Slow down the process. Ask the reporter to re-state his or her questions ... one at a time.
- Answer at your own pace, not the reporter’s pace.

*“You’ve asked me several questions. Let me start with the first one. The fact is that Pennsylvania’s long-term care network ranks among the nation’s best.”*

# Q&A Scenarios and Responses

**The Loaded Question:** Forces you to choose between two negatives.

*“Isn’t it true that if all of these long-term care facilities are settling lawsuits, then they must have been doing something wrong in the first place?”*

- Don’t get pushed into a corner by a negative anecdote or a person’s pessimism.

*“That’s not the case at all. Pennsylvania’s skilled nursing facilities, assisted living residences and personal care homes remain the target out of out-of-state predatory lawyers who are filing frivolous lawsuits seeking large cash settlements because of the state’s lax tort laws related to long-term care, not because of the care they provide.”*

# Q&A Scenarios and Responses

**The Open-Ended Question:** The reporter is looking for you to lead the conversation, or offer opinions.

*“So, what’s your take on the outcry about everything going on in Washington, D.C., and how it might affect your sector?”*

- Walk into the interview with things you intend to talk about.
- Pivot to what you know and trust.

*“We pay attention to any policy that’s proposed, whether at the state or federal level, and study it closely. But what I really want to talk about today is the work we’re doing here ...”*

# Q&A Scenarios and Responses

**The Paraphraser:** Attempts to simplify or sum up what you said.

*“So what you’re really saying is that Pennsylvania isn’t prepared to handle it’s rapidly aging population and facilities aren’t equipped to serve them?”*

- Repeat YOUR words and messages, not somebody else’s.

*“What I’m saying is, providing quality care each and every day is hard --- and very costly --- work, especially as residents suffer from more clinically complex medical conditions such as dementia or Alzheimer’s disease that can’t be managed well or as safely at home.”*

# Q&A Scenarios and Responses

**Headlining:** Encourages a broad conclusion without the facts to support that conclusion.

*“Isn’t it fair to say the majority of residents don’t want state government to spend more money on things like long-term care?”*

- State ***only the facts***. Don’t answer for others.

*“That’s not true. A recent independent poll by Opinion Access Corp. showed that, with our rapidly aging populations, eight in 10 Pennsylvania voters believe lawmakers should increase funding for long-term care.”*

# Q&A Scenarios and Responses

**Needling:** Did you really mean that? Do you really think that's how it should be?

*“You’re an incredibly large organization with a massive budget. Are you saying there’s no way to make these improvements or enhance your services?”*

- Affirmatively restate your message and back it up with additional facts and information.

*“The cost of care is rising, as are the costs for everything from labor to drugs and medical supplies to food and utilities. It gets to a point where, after years of being asked to do more with less, you simply can’t do more. We are at a breaking point.”*

# Q&A Scenarios and Responses

**The Hypothetical “IF”:** Seeks an answer about something that never happened.

*“If Pennsylvania decided to cut all long-term care funding from its budget, what would happen to all the people in these facilities?”*

- Don’t answer questions for which there are no real answers.
- Respond frankly and clearly.
- It’s a win if you can neutralize and pivot to your own messaging.

*“Protecting our seniors is a core function of government, and they have a responsibility to them. What I can say is that we work with elected leaders to ensure resources are used in the best way to care for those in need.”*

# Helpful Tips: Navigate the Interview

**Pivot to the point  
you want to  
make.**

- **If your facts are correct, stand by your statements and, tactfully, correct the reporter: *“I think that’s a generalization. The fact of the matter is ...”***
- **If the reporter interrupts, listen politely and then continue with the point you were making: *“Well, as I was saying ...”***
- **Make sure you have the final word. And be ready for it. What will you say when the reporter asks: *“Is there anything I missed? Anything you want to add?”***

# Summary

## **Keys to successful media engagement:**

- Understand the nature of the request, the reporter making the inquiry, and the medium where it will air.
- Know what YOUR message is and what YOU want to say. Stick to your message and say only what you know.
- Anticipate key questions, especially the difficult ones, and prepare and rehearse repeatedly.
- Don't be afraid to ask for help. There is help available to guide you through media challenges. And don't just wait for a call. Look for opportunities to tell your story.

# Ceisler

*Media & Issue Advocacy*

Ceisler Media & Issue Advocacy executes media relations, issue advocacy and grassroots organization. We use the relationships we've forged with a wide network of elected officials, public leaders, foundations, community groups, media providers and others throughout the state to ensure the most compelling messages are delivered to the most appropriate audiences.



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