



## Final Transcript

### **HUD-US DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING & URBAN DEVELOPMENT: Tips for Press Release - External**

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#### **SPEAKERS**

Ben Yanetta  
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#### **PRESENTATION**

Moderator                      Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for standing by. Welcome to the Press Release Tips conference call. At this time, all participants are in a listen-only mode. Later we will conduct a question and answer session, and instructions will be given at that time. [Operator instructions]. As a reminder, this call is being recorded.

I would now like to turn the conference over to our host, Mr. Ben Yanetta.  
Please go ahead.

Ben

Hi, thank you, everyone, and thank you, everyone, for joining us today for this presentation on Press Release Tips. This is part of a series on social media and media relations that the Office of Housing Counseling has been providing to you. Actually our contractors have been doing most of the work. CMR, I can't say enough great things about the resources and tools that they've put together for you guys.

Before I turn it over to the experts, I'd like to go over a few of the logistics on the webinar. As mentioned, the audio is being recorded. We will post the transcript as well as an audio recording playback number with the presentation on our HUD Exchange site. Usually it takes us about seven to ten days to get that up and running, and it will be announced through Jerry Mayer's Listserve when it is posted.

All lines are being muted right now. Later we'll do a question and answer portion at the end of the presentation, and the operator will give you instructions on how to enter the queue to ask your questions verbally then. We will also have polling questions at one point, or actually at several points throughout the presentation. Please give us a moment of your time to respond to those, and the question and answer period, as I mentioned, will be you can ask those questions verbally by entering the queue, or you

can also type your question into the webinar's interface. Type them in there, and they go into a queue, and we'll be monitoring those throughout the presentation.

If you think of a question later, you can always send an email to [housing.counseling@HUD.gov](mailto:housing.counseling@HUD.gov), and if you put something in the subject line that lets us know what your question is regarding, it helps us route those to the experts a little bit faster.

If, during the conference call, you do ask your question over the line, we ask that you take your phone off speakerphone. It just gets a little garbled if you're trying to talk to us through a speakerphone. You don't really need to worry about muting your phones unless there's a lot of background noise while you're asking your question, in which case, we ask you to again pick up your handset and talk to us that way.

When you exit the webinar today, there will be a brief survey. We ask that you fill that out. It helps us figure out what worked for you during the presentation and what we can improve on. When the training is over, you'll receive an email that says thank you for attending. This email itself is your certificate of training. There's no attachment. You can print that

out and save it for your records, and you can also get credit once the webinar is posted to our HUD Exchange Archives. If you have a username and password for an account with the HUD Exchange, you can get credit for the webinar by selecting it and clicking get credit for this training, and that is tracked through the HUD Exchange website.

Without further ado, I would like to turn it over to Andrew Klain who is a public relations and research manager at Creative Marketing Resources.

Andrew, the floor is all yours.

Andrew

Thank you very much, Ben. Hello, everyone. Again, my name is Andrew Klain. I do public relations and research for Creative Marketing Resources. I'm excited to be here today on this lovely Friday. I'm here in Milwaukee. I hope everyone is enjoying their Friday wherever you are at.

Today, we are going to go through some press release tips. We're going to go over our goals and desired outcomes. We're going to do a brief recap. For those folks that joined me on May 18<sup>th</sup>, we talked a little bit about media relations, and we're going to do a recap of that webinar just to give us a refresher, and for the folks that didn't join us, you can kind of

get a taste of what we talked about. As Ben said, that webinar should be on HUD Exchange soon.

We're also going to talk about the press release format. We're going to dive a little bit deep into how a press release should be written. We'll talk about headlines, subheads, body copy. We'll give you all the information you need to write an effective press release.

We're also going to talk about some helpful tips and tools that you can use, and at the end after all this information, we're going to play a really fun game that I think you'll like, and then we can answer any questions that you have.

So, our goals for today. I'm going to demonstrate how to write an effective press release. I'm going to explain who to issue the press release to the media, and then show you how to pitch the release to reporters and editors, etc., and then provide some tips for you to save time to write an effective press release.

What we hope you get out of it today: improve your housing counseling agency's ability to communicate with local media, increase visibility for

your agency's services in your community, and then ultimately we want to get more consumers using HUD-approved housing counseling agencies.

So, let's go over a quick recap of our media relations webinar. Media relations are an important part of public relations. It's the company's communications and relationships with editors, reporters, journalists, and bloggers. It's the connections with newspapers, magazines, radio, television, internet media. You see a lot more blogging and news sources on the internet nowadays, so it's important to learn how to reach out to those editors who are in the digital world. The ultimate goal of media relations is to communicate your message, story, event, or information to the outlets that will talk to your consumers.

Why use media relations? Well, it creates exposure for your agency. It adds credibility to your reputation or message. It influences consumers' thoughts and opinions. It motivates them to take action, and I think that's one of the most important parts about media relations. Because your story comes through a trusted third-party resource, that can actually motivate consumers to take more action better than just advertising.

Also, media relations cost less financially than advertising, however, it does take a little bit more time, but it's well worth it. Lastly, we just want to make sure you understand that with media relations, nothing is guaranteed, and we don't say that to scare you to not use media relations and write press releases. We say that to let you know that as long as you write an effective press release properly, follow up with media relation professionals and reporters properly through what we're going to teach you today, you should have an advantage over others in getting press coverage.

We'll go over all of your stakeholders. Of course, renters, first-time homebuyers, people in default or foreclosure, folks who are looking to get HECM loans, reverse mortgagers, existing homeowners, and then of course anyone else you serve. Media relations can talk to all your consumer stakeholders.

A few basic media relations tools that we use in media relations is, of course the press release, which we're going to dive into today. That's arguably one of the most important tools that you could learn how to use and create. There are also media alerts and advisories that also serve their

specific purposes. Media interviews, of course, those are interviews on TV, radio, online, podcasts.

Other tools to use when you're talking to the media briefly, photos, graphics, charts. The media loves statistics and graphs. Lastly, social media is part of media relations as well. As you know, if you go on Facebook, there's a lot of news out there, and that's an important part of media relations to understand how to interact with your consumers through social media.

We actually have other webinars that covered social media previously, and that can be found on the HUD Exchange as well, if not now, soon. So, I recommend checking those out.

Alright. Let's dive right in. So, what is a press release? It's also referred to as a news release. It's used to disseminate information to the media. Usually it's about an event or an honor, a recognition, and a lot of times it's a ready-to-publish news story. So, if you write an effective press release, many reporters and editors will take your information that you write, and more or less copy and paste it into their publication, whether it be online or in a newspaper.

Many times they'll do that. A lot of other times, they will take that same information and then add their own take on the story, but it's important to know that when you write a press release, you should always write it as if it is ready to be published.

Lastly, an important statistics that you should know is that 94% of editors and journalists use press releases when they're writing their stories. So, these tools are great for editors and journalists to understand a story, an event, or something about your agency and help them write a story about your organization.

So, what you see on the screen right now is an example of a sample press release. This was put out by HUD in early May. We're going to use this as our example as we go through our presentation today, and we'll reference different parts of the press release, so you can kind of understand what I'm talking about, and I can show you where in the press release certain things should be and what certain formatting parts mean.

First off, it's important to understand the proper format of a press release. These bullet points you see on the screen here are very important. These

are very intentionally structured in this manner to give the reporter or the editor the greatest access to the information that you're trying to convey to them.

So, we're going to talk about the headline and subhead, the dateline, the introduction paragraph, the body of the press release, the close which includes the three hashtags or number symbols, or sometimes you'll see it as a dash-30-dash. We'll talk about the boilerplate and then media contact information.

So, arguably, one of the most important parts of a press release is the headline and subhead. This is the first thing that reporters and editors see when you pitch them. Many people just read the headlines and make judgments on whether or not to keep your press release or read on further or toss it aside because it's not compelling to them.

So, writing an effective headline and subhead is a useful tool for you to have when you're trying to pitch to the media. So, this headline here as an example says "HUD Launches HUD Strong Families Initiative." The subhead reads, "Effort helps strengthen family ties while promoting economic empowerment, educational opportunities, and health resources."

So, as we break this headline down, you'll see that the bolded headline is strong, worded very strongly. It uses obviously the word strong.

Launches, it's active, and the subhead supports the headline, so it kind of entices the reader to be like what do you mean HUD launches HUD Strong Families Initiative? Oh, it's an effort that helps strengthen family ties.

So, these two parts of a press release are very important. We're going to give you some tips on how to write an effective headline. These are a few things to keep in mind when you're writing the headline. Always write it as if it were the front page article. You all heard the saying oh, that's above the fold. What that is referring to is in newspapers, when they're stacked on like a rack next to a newspaper stand, what you see is the main headline of the cover story, and usually that's the most important piece of what's in that newspaper.

So, we want you to write your press releases like you're going to be above the fold. You're going to be that front page headline that you'll see on all the newspaper stands. It needs to be attention-grabbing, and you need to envision your release as that front page.

Always use active voice. Similar to our example on the previous slide— here let me go back. “HUD Launches HUD Strong Families Initiative.” So, the word launches is active. It’s empowering. It’s inspiring. The style of your writing in the headline is as important as the words you use to attract readers. In general, passive voice takes the readers out of the action, so you always want to use active voice.

You want to use appealing data. As you know, a lot of people are attracted to data and statistics, so what you want to do is if you have data or statistics, you want to put that in the headline because that will attract readers to what you want to say. It will attract readers to your story. You should always prioritize statistics in the headline so that can prove that your story is unique. For instance, if your release talks about how you can reduce plaque on your teeth by 48%, us that statistic in the headline.

Use clever headlines. Puns, rhymes, double meanings, local community inside jokes, those are great ways to grab the attention of the media. Those are stories that they’ll want to share as well because that will captivate their audience.

Use your best judgment, and of course, make sure it's appropriate if you're going for cleverness, but rhyming is a great way. Alliteration, which we'll talk about in a little bit. Puns are a lot of fun, and double meanings, those are great ways that will attract people's attention to your story.

Paint a picture. Use strong language in your headlines, and we're not talking about profanity, of course, but we're talking about—let me go back to the last slide again. Launches, so that's a way that you can use strong words to paint a picture to your readers.

Answer a question. So, another way that you can write an effective headline is to answer a question or ask a question, and I have an example for you today. So, "What Does it Take to Buy a Home in 2018?" That would be an effective headline to kind of capture the reader's attention because it begs the answer. Oh, what does it take to buy a home in 2018? Writing it in question format is another way to captivate your audience and write an effective headline.

You can also answer a question. So, instead of saying what does it take to buy a home, you can say, "It Takes Five Things to Buy a Home in 2018."

So, that answers the question of oh, it takes five things to buy a home, and that will compel the reader to read on to figure out what those five things are. Always think either answer a question or ask a question that begs an answer. Those are great ways to attract readers.

A great thing to remember when you're writing a press release is to write the headline last. You can write your whole story, your whole press release first, and then after you're done, in your mind, you can kind of think of an overall theme that you want to portray with your press release. Maybe it's that one statistic that we talked about earlier that you want to put in your headline, but write the headline last.

You want to harness the power of punctuation. As an example, you can say something along the lines of in your headline when housing counseling agencies unite, colon, a call for leadership and advocacy in homeownership. So, a lot of times, press release writers and PR professionals will use the colon to help include a snappy header where you can leave the readers in a state of mystery. So, using the colon to transition from artful to an exposition in a short space is captivating, so it's another way that you can write a headline that is captivating.

Apply alliteration. We talked a little bit about that before, but again, it's a classic writing technique that will be captivating for people to want to read more about your release.

Then, lastly, you want to answer the who cares question. The big challenge with your press release is to make sure that people read your headline and care about learning more. In your headline, you need to answer the question who cares. A lot of PR professionals forget about this question, but it is probably the most important one to ask while you're writing your press release is who cares. Somebody does. You just have to make sure that you write it so that people do care.

As we're going through this presentation, I just want to let you know that we are going to have a toolkit that will accompany this webinar and the last webinar that will be available for download on the HUD Exchange because I know I'm going to get into a lot of detail and a lot of specifics today, but don't worry that there will be a toolkit that you can download and will have all this information in it for you to use.

The next part of the press release that is very important is the dateline, and it tells the professional or the media professional that you're pitching to

the city that the release is coming from and then the date. Both are important for the PR person to understand where this is coming from and when it was written. They get bombarded with a lot of releases every day, so having these two points of information at the front end right before the introductory paragraph is imperative for an effective press release.

A lot of times you'll see a major city and then the date after. In this case, this release was written in Washington, DC. If it's a major city, a lot of times you don't have to put the state. So, if you're writing for Los Angeles, you can just write Los Angeles; you don't need to write California or the abbreviation of California after. If you're in a small town or a lesser recognized city, it is necessary to add the state after the city.

You'll see a link here that we provided. It's a helpful tool for you to properly format your dateline. We'll also have information in our toolkit as well to help you out with that.

Alright. So, in order of importance, we have the headline, we have the dateline, and now we have the introduction paragraph. So, you've captivated the reporter's attention with your headline. They've realized that oh wow, this press release was written today in a city I care about

after seeing the dateline. Now, you have to give them those very specific detailed nuggets in your introduction paragraph that will let them know the basic answers to the questions of who, what, when, where, and why.

When constructed properly, that's where the rest of the press release will flow out of. It is your summary. It is the most important body portion of the press release that you need to keep in mind. Again, it's answering the questions of who, what, when, where, and why.

Now, we get into the body of the press release. This is where you can elaborate on your details of the release. You can provide quotations of specific people from your organization or important quotes that you've heard from other notable speakers. The body is really where you provide further explanation, additional statistics, more background information, or other details relevant to the news you're trying to convey.

The close. Very briefly, I'm sure a lot of you have seen this before or written press releases. You'll notice that at the end of the body paragraphs, there is a three-hashtag mark, or sometimes you'll see a hyphen-30-hyphen. This allows the reporter to know that all the information about the story has ended. It's more of a courtesy, traditional part of the

press release that's been used for many years, so make sure you put that in. It's more of a historical courtesy for writing press releases, and that of course, comes after all your body paragraphs before your boilerplate.

Then, of course, the boilerplate after the close. This is generally a short about section providing independent background information on the organization, so in this case, this was HUD's. In your case, you're going to have your own boilerplate where you talk about very succinct background information about your organization. We'll have examples in the toolkit to help you write your boilerplate as well.

Of course, when you send out your press release, you want to make sure that the editors and reporters can contact you to maybe inquire more information about the story. So, you want to make sure that you have at the top right, you have your contact name, your title, your phone number. This release did not have an email address probably because it's coming from HUD, but when you're pitching your local community, make sure you include your email address as well.

This is important for reporters to be able to contact you for further information. A lot of times they will, and a lot of times they'll ask for

maybe graphics or an interview, so you always want to make sure that you have contact information in your press release.

So, why write a press release? Very briefly, it provides tips for journalists and bloggers about a story that they should care about. It's cost effective. As we were staying before in media relations that financially, it is much more affordable than using advertising, and it also tends to be a lot more effective because it comes from a third party, so it is absolutely cost effective to write press releases.

It also forms industry connections. One of the things I want to hit home with you today is that writing press releases about your area of expertise can establish you in your community as the go-to person for housing. So, as you make relationships with reporters when writing these press releases and sending them out, they'll eventually start to call on you if they ever have other housing stories to write about because they maybe want your take on a certain issue or a topic or a trending conversation that's happening. So, it's important to form these industry connections and keep those going by creating relationships with reporters in your community.

You want to make sure you understand your audience. So, as you're writing these press releases and you're going to pitch journalists, make sure that the journalists you pitch are actually—they're going to be writing to the consumer that you serve. This might be obvious, but if you're writing a press release about first-time homebuyers, and you pitch a financial editor who only writes about the stock market, obviously that's not a match.

So, you want to make sure that the journalists that you do pitch are focused on your consumer audience. Some of the things that journalists and writers favor in terms of the format and content of a press release, you want to make sure that you're concise and specific with your words. You want to use objective facts, and of course, you always want to be honest. You never want to be leading. Uh-oh, hold on—I think—

Ben I apologize, Andrew. That was my mistake.

Andrew Oh, no problem.

Ben I interrupted your presentation.

Andrew Not a problem. Are you able to see my screen again?

W Yes.

Andrew Alright. Thank you. Of course, you want to be honest, and you don't want to candor to your audience—or, you want it to be candor.

So, we're going to ask a question of you today. How many of you have created or used a press release within the last year? I can gauge who are PR professionals here with us today.

Alright. It looks about there's 70% of you have not written a press release, and about 30% of you have. Great. I hope for the 30% that have that this is a good refresher, and it might provide further information for you to write an effective press release. For those who haven't, I hope this is helping you understand how to properly format a press release. In a little bit, we're actually going to get into how to actually pitch a press release effectively to reporters, and stick with me because we're still playing that game at the end, but we're going through a lot of important information that we believe is very helpful for you.

So, let's go over some tips. What makes news news? Your story must contain newsworthy information. Since press releases are used as a tool to arouse journalists and other writing professionals' curiosity in your message, you must provide newsworthy information.

A lot of times folks in the PR world will think that writing press releases for promotional events or promoting events or promoting products, I guess is what I'm trying to say, that's not a good way to write a press release. You don't want to be selling yourself. You want to create news that people should care about, stuff that will help the community be better. It has to be greater than just your organization.

You want to write about events that are—so, let's say you have a first-time homebuyer seminar coming up. You want to make sure that you want to pitch that to the media to let people know that hey, we have this resource for first-time homebuyers to use. Please join us for this event. So, that's a way that you can write a release about events specific to your services.

New hires. So, if you have a lot of new hires in your office because things are going great, that's something that the community would care about. You can write about important company changes. A lot of times these

will be positive. Let's say you're adding a new building. You added, again, new hires or new services. Those are things that you can write about while you're talking about your agency.

You always want to include on or more news values to increase the media's interest. So, you might be asking what are news values. Let's go into them. There's approximately eight of them. For some people, there's a lot more, but these are the eight most important ones that we believe that you should know about.

As you're writing, always think in terms of proximity. Write about topics that are related to your audience's community. So, for instance, I'm here in Milwaukee. If we pitch a story about a housing counseling agency out in Seattle, that wouldn't really resonate very well with our community, so make sure that you're talking about the community that you're impacting.

Also, think about impact as well. The more people your story effects, the better. If it's impacting one or two people, that's great, but as a community as a whole, you want to impact the most amount of people with your story.

You can think about prominence, so public figures in your community such as the mayor or county supervisors. Those public figures have higher news value than your average person, so you want to include prominent figures when you can or write about them when you can as it relates to your housing services.

Human interest stories. So, as you know, stories with an emotional appeal tend to get a lot more playtime on the TV, and you've probably seen in social media as well. So, human interest stories, particularly with housing counseling agencies as an example. If you have a success story of somebody who was down on their luck and came into the agency, and now they have their first home and their first dog, and life is great, that's a story that the news will want to hear about. That's a human interest story that you would want to pitch, and that will elevate your housing counseling agency's service in the public eyes.

A few more. Currency. So, what we mean by currency is topics that are currently in the public spotlight. Today is National Doughnut Day, by the way, so look in your local communities. There's a lot of doughnut shops that are giving out free doughnuts, by the way, but currency. So, topics that are currently in the spotlight.

So, let's say today you wanted to pitch that your agency is offering a free doughnut for everyone who comes in to get consultation for your services. That's something that's relevant in terms of the topic that is currently in the spotlight.

Conflict. This one you have to be very careful with. Of course, you don't want to come off as a conflicting organization, however, conflict does get picked up in the news quite frequently, and as long as you position yourself as a hero in this conflict, you should be fine, but again, writing about conflicts is a little more challenging. Reference our toolkit. We'll have a little bit more information about how to do that. Again, be careful if you're writing about conflict. If you're a hero of the story, then you should be fine.

Bizarreness. So, unique, unusual, uncommon events such as Doughnut Day today. Again, that's kind of unusual. It's bizarre. Not many people really know about that, however, it is interesting because who doesn't love doughnuts? So, you can write about stuff like that in terms of housing.

Let's say you housing counseled a first-time homebuyer, and their first house they purchased was this 14-bedroom mansion that has been vacant for 20 years, so that's kind of a unique, bizarre story that people would care about and would read into, and reporters would love to have, so keep your eye out for bizarre stories.

Of course, timeliness, recent happenings. If some housing legislation was just passed that's relevant to your community, and you have a cool story that talks about how that legislation has helped impact your community in a positive way, those kind of things are timely because those will be in the media for a month. So, you want to make sure you are timely with your stories. Again, we'll have more information on that in our toolkit that will be available online.

We're going to get into very briefly we're going to talk about some grammar rules. It's important to make sure that you use grammar properly. We recommend following the *AP Stylebook* that we'll have information on that in our toolkit. Otherwise, you can go online, and there's plenty of information on the AP style or the *Associated Press Stylebook*.

In general, except for dollar amounts, spell out the numbers one through nine. Use figures for numbers 10-plus. We have some examples on the screen, and we'll have some in our toolkit.

When providing a list, no Oxford comma. That's the comma that comes before the word and in a list. So, typically we don't use the Oxford comma. No superscripts when writing dates. Again, we'll have more information on that in our toolkit.

So, let's talk about formatting. These are just a few tips and rules that while you're writing your press release you should keep in mind. Always remember write in single space. Leave extra space in between paragraphs. If you remember when we showed the press release slide, the paragraphs were tight together, and then there was a space in between paragraphs.

Don't use indentation when beginning new paragraphs, and try to write as short as possible. This is not the most important thing to think about when writing a release. You always want to get your information across, but you want to get it across in as short as possible. This way the information can be read by the publisher or reporter quickly so they can make a decision on whether or not they want to run your story.

We recommend two pages maximum. There are always exceptions, but most, I want to say 95% of the press releases I've ever written were no longer than one and a half pages.

Again, with the headlines, as you may have remembered in the press release pages that we showed earlier in the presentation, you want to write the words news release. Typically, most press releases will have the words for immediate release on there, which indicates to the professional that it should be released immediately, which is great for the reporter. It's more of a classic formatting technique, however, it is imperative that you write that if you what you want to release needs to be released immediately. We'll have more information on that in the toolkit as well.

Then, of course, you always want to write for more information or your contact in the upper right hand corner so reporters can have easy access to who they should call if they need more information.

Again, headlines must entice the journalists to read further. You want to make sure that the story summarizes locality, and it has a main takeaway, and in the headline, you always want to capitalize and not use a lot of

punctuation, except for that colon. We love using the colon in our headlines.

Here's a few title case rules. Again, this will be outlined further in the toolkit. You want to capitalize the first and last words of the headline. All verbs, nouns, pronouns, adjectives, etc., they should be capitalized. Don't capitalize articles, prepositions, conjunctions, but you do want to capitalize prepositions with four or more letters.

So, again, this will be in the toolkit. A lot of the stuff that we're recommending to you is part of the *AP Stylebook*, so if you are familiar with that, you should be fine when writing this press release.

Some of the dateline rules. The city must be capitalized, and unless it's a large city, you should abbreviate the state that follows. Some cities stand alone such as the largest cities in the US. You can click on that link that we shared earlier in the presentation, and that should give you all the cities that don't require a state, and then assume all other cities require a state in your dateline.

Then, of course, the release date in parentheses. When you write, you start with the most important information. Again, in that intro paragraph, make sure you answer the who, what, when, where, and why. Your body should always have the supporting details. Include a quote whenever possible, and then towards the end, that's where the least important information should go and any additional information.

So, as we talk about quotes, make sure that your quotes express an opinion. Most press releases they will be written objectively, but when you have an opinion that you want to share, that should be shared as a quote. That adds value, and it can be properly attributed to the correct person.

When you're adding a quote, make sure you capitalize the person's title that comes after a quote. We'll have, again, more information in the toolkit that will get into specific details and formatting on how to format quotes within your press release.

Always use the word said, too, so within a press release, write a quote and then say said by so-and-so. That lets the reader know that this is an

opinion that was created by a single person, and it's not necessarily the views of the organization that the release is coming from.

Next, we're going to talk about the boilerplate. We talked a little bit about it before, so I won't belabor this, but it informs about your organization or company. It's a very short paragraph summary about your agency that goes at the end of the release. Make sure you keep a call to action.

So, as we look at HUD's boilerplate, it's very succinct. HUD's mission is to create strong, sustainable inclusive communities and quality affordable homes for all. Then, they provide a call to action at the end, so for more information about HUD and its programs, it's available on the internet at HUD.gov, and the Spanish HUD.gov website.

Again, make sure you include the close. That just lets the reader know that the information after the body copy, that's where the story ends. It's pretty much the PR professional's way of saying the end after your story.

Again, some things to remember. Be accurate, stick to the facts, always keep it newsworthy, be precise, use that inverted pyramid that we just showed a few slides ago. Write what's most important at the top, and as

you go down your press release, you can add the lesser important material and information there.

Be concise. Make sure that you're intentional with your writing. You want to make sure that you're short and succinct, and you're to the point. Make every word count. Also, make sure you edit, check, and proofread. A lot of times typos and errors are a turn-off for journalists and reporters. Just make sure you proofread your documents and your press releases before you send them to the reporters.

Alright. We have a few more slides, and then we're going to go into our game, so I hope you guys are all still with me today on this wonderful Friday. This next section we're going to talk about how to send your press release properly to the media.

So, when you're pitching a press release, after you finish writing and proofreading, you want to pitch your release as an introduction to your news, and 93% of media professionals prefer email. So, you don't have to worry about phone calls just yet when you pitch this release.

Once you find the reporters that you're looking for, and if you have a question about where to find these reporters, you can reference our previous webinar. We went into creating a media list where you can identify the reporters.

Again, that will be in the toolkit as well, so don't worry, but again, 93% of media professionals prefer email communication. It's a great way for them to organize themselves and their stories and prioritize. So, make sure you send your press release via email.

You want to create a compelling email subject line. A lot of times, this can be your headline that you wrote for the press release, but many times you can add your own personal spin on it, or if you have a relationship the reporter, you can include a more personal touch to your email subject line when you're pitching the reporter.

As a rule of thumb, we don't like to use attachments. They, a lot of times can be bulky, and it doesn't get straight to the point with reporters. They want to open up your email right away, and they want to read your press release, so make sure that you copy and paste your press release into your email and embed all information in the email body.

The parts of a pitch. As you're pitching this, you want to think about it in two ways. You want to tell your story when you're pitching the reporter, and you want to ask how does this story fit with the reporter or the publication.

Again, if we're pitching about a first-time homebuyer seminar that's coming up, you want to pitch a housing reporter, and part of the story you want to tell to them is oh, your audiences will want to attend this seminar. We're going to be educating folks who show up, all these great things about first-time homeownership. We're going to teach them about budgets and planning, so you want to tell that story to the reporter to pitch your story.

Then, of course, you want to tell the purpose of the pitch. So, how does this benefit the reporter's audience?

In terms of making an offer to the reporter, so a lot of times when you pitch a press release to the reporter, they'll answer back with is there anybody I can interview, or do you have any pictures or graphics that I can have for my story. Especially in this digital age, you'll want to provide

more visual content to the reporter after you make that initial connection, so you want to offer them material.

You want to offer in your pitch I can send any pictures, or so-and-so would be happy and available for an interview if you'd like. Then, of course, ask them if there's a deadline that they need to meet because we always want to be conscious about their deadlines.

Then, state what will happen next. Imply in your email how you will follow up, whether it be a phone call or another email. My recommendation is to follow up with a phone call. It's a great, direct way to reach a reporter.

A lot of times you'll reach their voicemail. That's okay. Leave a message, and they will get back to you. They are professionals, and they are on top of their business for the most part, so don't be afraid to call and leave a message.

Sometimes two phone calls might be what it takes, but they're used to it. This is how the game is played, so you always want to follow up with the

reporter. We recommend phone calls. You can also always follow up with emails, too.

You want to thank them for their time and consideration, and then of course, include that contact information so they can get back to you.

Here's a sample email pitch that we put together. You'll see this in the toolkit. It will be useful for you to read this over and kind of construct your own email pitch because each pitch should be personalized from your perspective and then to the reporter's organization and what they write about. Again, more information will be in that toolkit for you to have.

Alright. We're about to end the webinar. We have a few more slides, and we're going to play a game. I first want to thank everyone for sticking with me this far.

So, we have a game, and our last webinar we played this game called "Is it Newsworthy?" Well, this one is "Is it Newsworthy 2.0?" We wrote the questions in headline format. So, how the game is played is we have a headline that we created. "HUD Launches New Housing Education

Program for College Students.” Is that a newsworthy story, yes or no? I want to hear from you.

Alright. Everyone, you are correct, 100% of people said it is newsworthy. Of course, it is. Any new programs, additions to your services, or team or new milestones, they are always newsworthy.

So, when seeing this headline, this is something that reporters would want to see. They want to see active voice. They want to see something that’s happened or something good that’s going to be beneficial to the community, so you want to—this is an effective headline that will capture the reporter’s attention.

Next one. “In Honor of Doughnut Day, Barry from HUD’s Baking Office Loves to Bake Chocolate Doughnuts.” Is this a newsworthy story?

Alright. I am very happy to see that no one thought this was newsworthy. Unfortunately, not.

Even though we all love doughnuts, and today is Nation Doughnut Day, and even though the press might not be able to resist eating delicious chocolate doughnuts baked by Barry, they most likely won’t write about

that. However, if you talked about Barry's doughnuts, and maybe it tied into housing some way, maybe they might pick that up, but no, definitely not with the headline that we just shared.

Alright. Next one. "HUD Celebrates National Homeownership Month 2018 Nationwide." Hint, hint, today, June 1<sup>st</sup> actually starts National Homeownership Month, so Happy National Homeownership Month to everybody on the call. Thank you, everyone. Yes, this is a newsworthy story.

Again, if you didn't know, today is the first day of National Homeownership Month, and HUD is celebrating, so we have a few webinars that are happening next week Thursday—or no, we have one webinar happening next week Thursday that is talking about National Homeownership Month.

We also have a National Homeownership Month toolkit that we'll be presenting as well, so check you emails from Jerry, and make sure that you sign up for that webinar because we're going to be having a lot of fun for National Homeownership Month.

Lastly, “The Neighborhood Housing of Richmond Hosts 23rd Annual Housing Seminar.” Is this a newsworthy story? Alright, yes, thank you, folks, for all your answers. Yes, you are all correct. This is a newsworthy story. I can’t reiterate enough that events that relate to consumers and your services are always newsworthy.

We know that your agencies, you put on a lot of seminars or workshops that are focused on your stakeholders. Don’t be afraid to write a quick press release about an event coming up and pitching it to the media. It will help your attendance numbers and position you as a housing expert as you get press hits.

As we close today, thank you again, everyone for sticking with me. I know it’s been a lot of information. Here’s just a few takeaways. When you’re writing a press release, but brief but informative. Meet media deadlines.

Be available to answer questions, and remember nothing is guaranteed, and we’ve put this in here just to let you know that with public relations, sometimes you might not get all the coverage that you want, but there are many times that you will get a lot of unexpected coverage. If you create

relationships with reporters, a lot of times, they will start calling you as the housing experts in your community.

So, what we're trying to say is don't get discouraged. It's an important part of getting your information out. It's a great way to support your agency and communicate your message to your consumers. It's trustworthy. We can't reiterate enough how important media relations and writing and pitching press releases is.

What's coming up next? Again, join us Thursday, June 7<sup>th</sup> at 2:00 Eastern for our National Homeownership Month webinar. We're going to go over to same social media. My coworker, Kevin Michaels, will be on. He's our social media expert. He's excellent in terms of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, you name it.

I'll be presenting some other press release information specific to National Homeownership Month. We're going to have a lot of fun, and then next week, Friday, we're going to have a Tools for Communication webinar, where we're going to introduce some really cool-looking communication materials to you that will be available to you very soon. So, please join us for those two.

Does anybody have any questions? I'm here to answer anything that you have.

Ben I believe at this time, the operator can give instructions.

Moderator [Operator instructions].

Ben You can also type your question into the webinar interface. Currently we do not have any questions in the queue, but now is your time, of course, to ask any question you have regarding press releases with the expert. You have him available to you right now.

While we're waiting for a couple of questions to come in, I wanted to mention that HUD itself just did put out a press release regarding Homeownership Month, and you can find that if you just Google HUD National Homeownership Month press release. It's the first thing that pops up, and you can take a look at what we put out just today.

Judy Ben, this is Judy. Can I also let the audience know that within that press release is a link to our website that has a bunch of wonderful brochures for

first-time homebuyers and a general housing counseling brochure that I think will be really, really helpful for agencies to see and for consumers.

Ben

A question came in. How do you sign up for the webinar on June 7<sup>th</sup>?

Those webinars are announced through Jerry Mayer's Listserve. If you're not a member of that, you can always go to the

HUDExchange/housingcounseling—actually I'm going to misspeak there

because the link is a little bit longer than that, but if you go to HUD

Exchange and search for housing counseling you can find our training

calendar on that page. They're listed there in chronological order, so just

look for the one that's scheduled for June 7<sup>th</sup>.

Most everybody that's part of the housing counseling gets those emails

from Jerry Mayer, and if you're not already signed up for that, you can

also do that on the HUD Exchange page.

Moderator

There are no questions on the phone lines. Please continue.

Ben

Okay, a question did just come in. When doing a press release, is it ever going overboard by placing the press release in the newspaper, on the

website, Facebook, etc.? Is Twitter able to reference a website page?

Two questions in that one.

Andrew

Yes, so when you're writing a press release, if you put it on your own website like HUD does, you can go to HUD.gov and reference all their press releases as well, as Ben was talking about. Yes, you can share a link on Twitter. You can share a link with PR professionals, reporters as you're pitching them.

Let's say that you have a press release, and you put it on your website, you can send an email to a reporter and write your pitch letter. Then, you can simply say click on this link. You'll find our press release that talks more about the information that I am talking about.

So, yes, absolutely you can reference a website page on Twitter. Twitter's a great place to do that by the way, so if you're doing that or if you're thinking about doing it, that's a great place to share press releases via a website page link. I hope that answered your question.

Ben

Thank you, she responded. Those are wonderful ideas. That way we are not sending attachments to editors either.

Andrew Yes, it was a great idea, and yes, if you have the ability to put your press release on your website, and maybe you have a number of them, you can certainly send links to editors and reporters. I believe they'd appreciate that, too.

Ben I'll leave things open for just a moment longer. Please, if you have any questions to get them in soon because otherwise we will wrap up the webinar for the day. Is anybody calling in to ask a question over the phone?

Moderator There are no questions. Please continue.

Ben Okay. Alright. Well, I think that then we will actually wrap things up, but we're always available to answer your questions. If you think of something that you'd like to ask us, please send us an email to [housing.counseling@HUD.gov](mailto:housing.counseling@HUD.gov), and we'll definitely get a response to you.

I want to thank everybody again for your time today, and if you have anybody that would like to view this webinar and wasn't able to make it today, or you'd like to share the contents of this presentation with your

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staff or colleagues, this will be archived on the HUD Exchange page in the very near future.

Thanks again for everybody's attention today. Have a good day.

Andrew Thank you, everyone.

Moderator Thank you. Ladies and gentlemen, this conference will be available for playback beginning today at 3:30 p.m. Eastern Time running through June 1, 2019 at midnight Eastern Time. You may access the AT&T playback service by dialing 1-800-475-6701 and entering the access code of 449932. International participants, please dial 320-365-3844 and enter the access code of 449932.

That does conclude our conference. Thank you for your participation and for using AT&T Executive TeleConference. You may now disconnect.