

Media Basics

A How-To Guide for Publicizing Block The Sun Not the FunSM Sun Safety Days



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Media Basics for *Block The Sun, Not The Fun!*™ Sun Safety Days

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INTRODUCTION

Block the Sun, Not the Fun! is designed to educate children grades 2 – 4 about the importance of sun safety. By practicing sun safe behavior, kids can enjoy their time outdoors in the sun while reducing the risk of developing skin cancer later on in life.

Coordinating a *Sun Safety Day* for your class, school, and community will help spread the lesson beyond the classroom. And if you include your local media as an “audience,” potential coverage in local newspapers and on radio and TV will increase the reach of the lesson to many others in your community.

This guide will help you with the basics of how to work with local media -- the TV stations, newspapers and magazines in your town, city, or state. It includes tips and ideas for activities and spokespeople, for gaining participation from parents and community partners, and for ensuring media coverage.

Since 80% of lifetime sun exposure occurs before the age of 18, sun safety education is critical for young children. Congratulations on your commitment to teaching sun safety!

GETTING STARTED: PLANNING YOUR SUN SAFETY DAY

Step One: You've decided to organize a Sun Safety Day at your school. But what should it be? It could take any form, from an educational school assembly featuring a speech by the local TV weatherperson to a tree-planting ceremony with instruction on maintaining shade trees by the local garden nurseryman. Whatever you decide, the common thread for most successful events is that they are tailored to specific audiences, interactive, and fun.

The goal of Sun Safety Days is to create an educational experience for your students, their parents and the school's community. Planning the agenda for the day is Step One; Step Two is thinking about how to invite community participation – if desired -- and how to solicit media coverage that will bring attention to your efforts.

Here are some ideas to start your thinking about the day's agenda. In the next section, we'll talk about how to enlist the help of the media to write about your event.

Sun Safety Day Ideas

- Invite a panel of experts to make a school assembly presentation about the importance of sun safety, what kids can do to help protect themselves and how kids can educate their parents, brothers and sisters.
 - ✧ Local dermatologist – how does sun exposure cause skin cancer?
 - ✧ Local pharmacist – how does sunscreen use help protect the skin from burning?
 - ✧ Local TV weatherperson or scientist from regional EPA office – UV rays, local weather conditions, the ozone layer and you.
 - ✧ Local resident who has survived skin cancer – finding out you have melanoma, what it means and what to do.
- Ask your local lumber yard or hardware store to donate materials for a playground shade area. Apply for proper permits. Enlist parents to help build the area and lead educational session on the importance of shade, sunscreen use and proper protective clothing
- Ask a local nursery or garden center to donate a shade tree; conduct a tree-planting ceremony in the playground.
- Have your class write and perform a play about any aspect of sun safety (e.g., protecting the environment against ozone depletion, how to be sun safe)

when going to the beach or playing soccer, etc.), and perform it for parents, teachers and community members.

- Host a Sun Safety Fair with games and contests; raise money for shade structure or local cancer clinic.

EVENT ATTENDANCE

To help generate attendance at the Sun Safety Day, you will need to get the word out. The "Sample Materials" section of this manual provides templates for communicating about your Sun Safety Day.

- Flyer: This is an invitation to be distributed to your students at least four weeks prior to Sun Safety Day, and which they will take home to their parents. It also can be posted at school, in community store windows and on public bulletin boards, to raise awareness of the event.
- Letter to Parents: This letter explains the purpose of the *Sun Safety Day* and encourages parents to attend with their children. A permission slip/registration form will be included. This should be distributed in conjunction with the flyer. (Please obtain on page 18 of the Scholastic Teaching Guide.)
- Sun Safety Day Description for Newspaper Calendar Listings: Many local newspapers have a calendar section that includes upcoming events. You can distribute the Sun Safety Day description to local newspapers for inclusion in their calendar listings four to six weeks prior to the event. This can help generate attendance.

CONTACTING THE MEDIA

You can play an important role in educating a wider audience by bringing your Sun Safety Day Event to the attention of local journalists.

Local newspapers, TV stations and radio stations are part of their communities, and pride themselves on reporting about issues and concerns that affect their constituents. Health is an area of keen interest to reporters, and community efforts to raise awareness of the link between sun exposure and skin cancer – especially in the many states where annual sunshine levels are high -- is newsworthy.

The first – and easiest – way to reach reporters is to think about who you already know. Does your best friend work at the local television station? Does your colleague's husband work at the local radio station? If so, talk to them first and see if they can help you get the right contact at their news organization to ask about covering your Sun Safety Day. Otherwise, you can contact local papers, magazines and stations directly. Simply call the main office and ask for a contact to send information to. This might be someone with a title such as health/science reporter, assignment editor or the community affairs reporter. Try to get a name, if you can; that way, it will be easier when you follow up. See more detail about identifying journalists in the next section, "Developing Media Contacts."

Why Publicity?

Publicizing *Block the Sun, Not the Fun Sun Safety Day* will increase awareness and, through the media, provide a number of benefits including:

- Equip children and their families with the information and knowledge to help them lead healthy, sun safe lives.
- Reinforce the commitment of your school to the long-term health of children.
- Illustrate the importance of school programs.
- Help to increase visibility of your involvement and the involvement of your school in health education for children.

Developing Media Contacts

If you've never worked with the media before, the first thing you should do is to develop a list of appropriate local reporters who would be appropriate to cover this story.

Start by looking at your local newspaper. The masthead of most newspapers will include a staff list and a main telephone number. Look for titles like Managing Editor, Health Editor, Education Editor or Metro Editor. Typically, the staff members are helpful and will direct you to the correct person.

For broadcast and radio, it is most helpful to use the internet or information to obtain the phone numbers of your local stations. Once you have the main number, it usually won't be necessary to get a specific person; the assignment desk is usually all you will need to ask for.

Next, send out the media alert that we have provided. Fill in all of the appropriate information that is specific to your Sun Safety Day. After you have sent out the media alert, follow up with a phone call. Let them know about the Sun Safety Day. Share the details with the reporter; let him/her know that they are welcome to attend, or that they will be able to interview attendees.

Reporters may ask you who is attending the Sun Safety Day. Will the Mayor be there? The head physician of a local hospital? A TV weatherperson? Will there be a particularly good photo opportunity, such as a team from the lumber yard helping to build a shade structure? Think about what the news value and visual appeal of your "story" is, and talk to the reporter about it.

Local reporters are typically interested in covering local stories; the information from your Sun Safety Day can be used to help generate media interest at publications in the outlying areas surrounding the city where the Sun Safety Day is being held. Sometimes, reporters may even consider contacting some potential attendees to determine their interest and availability in being interviewed.

- ❑ Please note: It is important to obtain written permission of attendees and/or presenters before offering them for interviews. We have attached an Interview Release Form specifically for this purpose.

Spokespeople

- ❑ Presenters: Your presenters can do more than present information to your students. They can also serve as expert spokespersons for media. Very often, reporters will request to interview one or more of the presenters from your Sun Safety Day. Be sure you have their agreement on this in advance before promising a reporter an interview.

- ❑ Audience members: As mentioned above, reporters may want to contact some potential attendees to determine their interest and availability in being interviewed.

Creating a Media “Tool Kit”

Reporters are busy professionals and prefer to receive information in a certain way. A Media Tool Kit will help you present your story in a crisp, compelling way. Samples of each of these materials are included in the "Sample Materials" section of this manual.

- ❑ Media Alert: A media alert is a one-page description of the event designed to generate initial interest and provide reporters with the pertinent information. It lists the "who", "what", "when", "where", and "why" of the Sun Safety Day. List anyone of note who will present or appear at the event on the media alert, and make sure they can be available for interviews the day of the program.

- ❑ Sun Safety Tips. A one-pager with bulleted facts to help reporters understand the importance of sun safe behavior, as well as the issues surrounding sun safety.

- ❑ Spokespeople Biographies. It is helpful to have one-page biographies available to offer reporters should they want more information about the presenters. A biography consists of three to four paragraphs about the person's credentials, and in the case of the patient presenter who has dealt with skin cancer, a personal perspective of their experience dealing with melanoma, while leading a healthy, active life.

- ❑ Flyer. Provide a copy of the flyer to reporters as additional background information.

These documents comprise the Media Tool Kit, and should be mailed to your target reporters two weeks before the Sun Safety Day.

Media Distribution and Follow Up

We know you are very busy, but if you can spare any time, following up with media after they've received your mailing can go a long way to ensure attendance. Generally, for the best results:

- ☀ Distribute the media alert (you can send by fax or regular mail) approximately two weeks prior to Sun Safety Day and again one day before as a reminder (by fax).
- ☀ Follow up with media by phone to encourage attendance (the best time is typically immediately after the distribution of the media alert –approximately two weeks prior to the workshop).
- ☀ It can be very helpful to place reminder calls to the media who say they will attend the day before or the day of the workshop. Sometimes other news stories will have pushed your event off their radar screen.
- ☀ After the event, try to follow up with reporters who attended to ensure that they have all the information they need to develop their stories.

Some reporters may be interested in developing a story about children and sun safety, but may not be able to attend the workshop. In these cases you can:

- ☀ Set up interviews with presenters prior to, or after, the workshop.
- ☀ Reporters work on tight deadlines, so be mindful of their time constraints when providing information and coordinating interviews.

SUMMARY

We hope that you are as excited as we are to *Block the Sun, Not the Fun* during your *Sun Safety Day*.

If you are conducting a Sun Safety Day, experts from the public relations agency Fleishman-Hillard have been retained by the Sun Safety Alliance and are available to answer questions or to discuss these materials. Please feel free to call Fleishman-Hillard at (212) 453-2000 and ask for Kuleni Gebisa, Kasey Pickett or Diana Levine.

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SAMPLE MATERIALS



Block the Sun, Not the Fun™

**Don't Let the Sun's Rays Keep You Inside!
The [School Name] Wants to Teach [You, Class,
Everyone]
What to Know About Sun Safety!**

***[GUEST/DOCTOR/WEATHERMAN] from
[ORGANIZATION]***

Will Show You How to Have Fun in the Sun

Learn:

***The Latest Information, [how to check the UV index, how
to plant a tree, how to apply sunscreen, etc.]***

Where: [Location, Address]

When: [Day], [Date], at [Time]

***Who: Children, ages 6-11, who want to Block the Sun, Not
the Fun [adapt as necessary]***

***Proudly Sponsored by [Name of your School],
the Sun Safety Alliance and Coppertone®***



Calendar Listing

Free sun safety program specifically designed for elementary-school children. Program will feature [DOCTOR, WEATHERMAN, ETC.] leading specialized activities for attendees addressing important information related to having fun in the sun, safely. Sponsored by [SCHOOL NAME] the Sun Safety Alliance, and Coppertone, all of which are committed to educating the public about how to protect yourself and your children from the harmful effects of the sun and prevent skin cancer. The event is open to [YOUR CLASS, YOUR SCHOOL, YOUR COMMUNITY]. [DAY, DATE, TIME]. Registration required. Visit www.sunsafetyalliance.org for more information.



RELEASE AND CONSENT FORM

I hereby acknowledge that my child has permission to participate in the “Block the Sun, Not the Fun” program (the “Program”) including participation in interviews conducted by the Sun Safety Alliance and/or its agents relating to the Program. In consideration for having my child participate, I, individually and on behalf of my minor child, hereby release the Sun Safety Alliance, its affiliates and each of their officers and directors, employees and/or agents (the “Releasees”) from any and all claims, suits and/or expenses, including but not limited to any personal injury, arising in any way from my child’s participation in the Program.

Additionally, I, individually and on behalf of my below named minor child, hereby grant the Releasees and all media members full permission and rights to the use of my child’s name, voice and likeness in photographs, videotapes, motion pictures, recordings, or any other record of the Program in perpetuity for promotional purposes or for any other purpose without compensation or payment of any kind and hereby waive any right to approve such use. I, individually and on behalf of my below named minor child, further agree that none of the above listed parties shall be held responsible for any third party use of footage obtained throughout the Program.

I hereby certify that my child is in proper physical condition to participate in the Program.

Date

Name of child

Signature of Parent/Guardian
Guardian

Name (printed) of Parent/Legal

Address



*******MEDIA ALERT**

Number] **Contact:** [Name, Phone

Block the Sun, Not the Fun™

Local [Teacher, Doctor, Weatherman, etc.] Rallies with [Your School] to Raise Understanding of the Sun's Rays and Having Fun in the Sun, Safely

What: ***Block the Sun, Not the Fun™*** interactive program and discussion encourages children to adopt sun safe behavior throughout their lifetime.

⇒ [PERSON] will demonstrate [ACTIVITY] to help children understand the effects of the sun and how to have fun in the sun, safely.

⇒ [DOCTOR] from [ORG/PRACTICE] will:

- Explain the effects of the sun's rays
- Provide the latest information on the importance of sun safety
- Answer questions for kids and their parents

Who: [WEATHERPERSON, TEACHER]
[DOCTOR, AFFILIATION]
[TEACHER, SCHOOL NAME]
Children, ages [X to X]
Families

Why: Although information is available about preventing skin cancer, research shows that parents and children are still not practicing sun safe behavior. Children in particular are at risk from sun exposure – regular use of sunblock with a SPF 15 or higher during the first 18 years of life can lower the risk of certain types of skin cancer by up to 78 percent! The Sun Safety Alliance believes that children need to be educated about why a lifetime of sun safe behavior can help prevent skin cancer. It is vital that children and their families understand how to block the sun, not the fun.

When: [DAY, DATE, TIME]

Where: Location, Room
Street

City, State

Media interested in attending this program and interviewing presenters and attendees should call [NAME] at [PHONE NUMBER].

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Sun Safety Tips

- **Apply sunscreen every day.** The skin can be damaged by incidental sun exposure even on cloudy days, so apply sunscreen every time you go outside. Pay special attention to the parts of your body that get the most exposure: the face, hands, forearms, shoulders, ears, back of the neck, top of the head. Use a lip balm with a sunscreen for your lips, which can blister if unprotected.
- **Reapply sunscreen often.** You should reapply after toweling off, excessive perspiration, prolonged swimming or vigorous activity.
- **Wear sunscreen all year round.** Regardless of the season, it is estimated that 80 percent of the sun's rays can penetrate light clouds, mist and fog.
- **Wear protective clothing.** Hats with wide brims and tightly woven, dark colored shirts and pants provide additional sun protection.
- **Don't forget sunglasses.** Whenever outdoors, wear sunglasses that block UVA and UVB rays.
- **Avoid the midday sun & seek the shade!** Limit outdoor activities between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m., when the sun's rays are the most intense.
- **Choose the appropriate SPF.** The SPF number indicates how many times longer a person can stay in the sun before beginning to burn, when using the product than they would without using any sunscreen at all, and usually range from 2-50. Select an SPF based on skin type, activity and time in the sun.
- **Be extra careful around reflective surfaces.** Sand, water, concrete and snow reflect 85 to 90 percent of the sun's damaging rays. Apply sunscreen even when under a beach umbrella – the rays can reflect off the sand and reach you.

- **Moisturize skin after sun exposure.** Look for aftersun products containing moisturizers such as aloe, to replenish lost moisture after sun exposure.
- **Protect children.** Eighty percent of lifetime sun exposure occurs before the age of 18. It is important to minimize sun exposure and apply sunscreen to children aged 6 months and older. Babies under 6 months old should spend very little time in the sun and wear protective clothing, including a hat with a brim that shades their face and sunglasses that filter harmful UV rays.
 - Children over 6 months should always wear a broad-spectrum sunscreen with an SPF of at least 30.
 - Sunscreen should be applied before children go outside and reapplied often. Reapply after swimming, vigorous activity; or toweling even if the label says the product is waterproof. Don't forget the nose, lips, ears and backs of hands and feet!
 - Children should wear tightly woven protective clothing -- long sleeved shirts and pants when possible and hats.
- **Consult your physician or pharmacist.** Talk to your doctor or pharmacist when taking prescription medication, since some medications can make your skin extra sensitive to the sun.
- **Be careful in high altitudes and tropical climates.** In these areas, solar radiation is more intense, so it is important to wear a high SPF and to reapply often.
- **Learn the warning signs of skin cancer.** If you have any of these signs, consult your doctor immediately:
 - A skin growth that increases in size;
 - A mole, birthmark or beauty mark that changes color, increases in size or thickness;
 - A spot or growth that continues to itch, hurt, crust, scab, erode or bleed;
 - An open sore or wound on the skin that does not heal or persists for more than four weeks, or one that heals and then reopens.

For more information, please visit www.sunsafetyalliance.org.