**Influence Editorials: Conduct an Editorial Board Meeting**

Before open enrollment begins on October 1, you have likely already scheduled a meeting with your local newspaper’s editorial board. Consumers, policymakers, health care professionals and many other audiences that we work to communicate with often read and are influenced by editorials. Meeting with your newspaper’s editorial board can help you set expectations, reinforce the benefits of the ACA, and demonstrate broad support in order to shape the newspaper’s positive coverage of enrollment.

**When should we request an editorial board meeting?**

Right away – as October 1 approaches, media coverage of the Marketplace and the open enrollment period will continue to increase. Making sure the benefits of the ACA and the Marketplace are top of mind for the editorial board is important, especially as opposition ramps up their attacks.

In general, an editorial board meeting gives you a chance to influence the board’s opinions in your favor or, if the paper seems likely to oppose your viewpoint, gives you the opportunity to try to move the coverage of the ACA in a more favorable direction.

**What’s the best way to request an editorial board meeting?**

In preparation for scheduling the meeting, research editorial coverage to see how they have editorialized on the ACA and the Marketplace in the past. Knowing if the editorial board has been generally supportive of the ACA will help you decide what information to share and what stakeholders you should invite to the meeting.

Based upon your research, decide the one to four people who should serve as the spokespeople at the meeting. These may be staff from your organization, members of a coalition, etc. It’s a good idea to assemble a team that will all convey the same message but can offer slightly different perspectives. Potential people to invite to the editorial board meeting include:

* + Navigators
  + Community clinicians
  + Nonprofit leaders and advocates
  + Hospital administrators
  + Doctors, nurses and other health care providers
  + State Health Department colleagues
  + Chamber of Commerce
  + Small business owners
  + Low-income consumers who will benefit from Medicaid expansion and new more affordable private options
  + Consumers with pre-existing conditions
  + Young invincibles
  + Parents, expecting mothers

Don’t feel limited to think inside the box. This is an opportunity to take the time to tell the stories of your constituents and address the values and barriers of your newspaper’s readers.

Contact the editorial page with a letter sent via e-mail, fax or mail. (A sample letter follows below). If you can find out the name of the person that writes on your issue, address the letter directly to him or her. If you’re unable to do this, address the letter to the editorial page editor. In general, the person that writes on your issue will take the lead in scheduling the meeting and will help to shepherd you through the process.

When asking for a meeting, briefly outline your position, the people who will attend, and suggest a time frame for the meeting, such as a few days of a particular week.

**How should we prepare for the meeting?**

Once the meeting is secured, ask if you should send materials in advance of the meeting or bring them with you. A background packet should include fact sheets, stories of people who will benefit from the Marketplace and op-eds or letters to the editor about the ACA. You may also include past editorials on the issue by the paper that you are meeting with.

It’s a wise idea for the meeting participants to talk in advance of the meeting about how it will go, who will speak, and what will be said. Each participant will want to plan to speak for three to five minutes. It is important that everyone is in agreement on what key messages to use and what they are asking for.

**What happens during the meeting?**

When you go to meet with the editorial board, one participant should act as the moderator. The moderator will outline the reason for the meeting, introduce himself/herself and ask other participants to briefly introduce themselves. Each participant will speak for three to five minutes on his or her perspective on the issue at hand. The moderator will then ask for questions and direct them to the appropriate member of the team. Make sure to conclude by asking if there is any more information that you can provide. Finally, close the meeting by asking the editorial board to do something. The ask will depend on the situation. If the newspaper has not editorialized on the ACA and the Marketplace recently, you may ask them to editorialize in support of your position. If they’ve written editorials in the past that oppose the ACA, you might ask them to consider the new information that you have provided when writing future editorials.

**What should we do after the meeting?**

Follow up after the meeting with a letter thanking the editorial board members that you met with for their time and restating your position. Include any materials that you promised to send.

Dear [Name of Editorial Writer or Editor]:

On October 1st we will open a new chapter in American health care. When open enrollment begins, [XX] uninsured [STATEians] will have a historic opportunity to find affordable health care like never before. The Affordable Care Act is working and we at [ORGANIZATION] would like to introduce you to the people that are benefiting directly from it and those that are making it possible.

In [TOWN], [NAME], a [mother, father, etc w/ kids, disabilities, etc] will be eligible to enroll in affordable health care. Now [he/she] has access to prescriptions, doctor’s visits, emergency room visits, and maternity care at an affordable price, and [he/she] can’t be turned away for a pre-existing condition. If [he/she] has a medical emergency or just needs a checkup, it won’t break the bank.

[NAME] is a navigator. [He/she] is standing by to help [XX] uninsured [STATEians] get enrolled in affordable health care. [Exchange.com] has no wrong doors: regardless of your income or healthcare needs, you have a one-stop shop to find the coverage you need at a price you can afford. If you have questions, need a translator, or want to understand what subsidies or tax credits you qualify for, [he/she] is there to help.

Let’s not forget about the big picture and the incredible opportunity that the Affordable Care

Act will bring to [XX] million uninsured Americans. When everyone is insured, we will have a healthier, safer, stronger America.

If you have any questions on [STATE’s] exchange, don’t hesitate to ask. We will follow up with you to schedule a time to tell these meaningful stories. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

[Name]