

Public Relations Toolkit for Members of the
National Association of School and Therapeutic Programs



Developed by:



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Welcome to the NATSAP member promotional toolkit!

This toolkit was produced for members of the National Association of Therapeutic Schools and Programs (NATSAP). The purpose of the kit is to provide NATSAP members with ways to promote their schools and programs and their NATSAP membership.

The kit contains the following items:

PAGE	DOCUMENT
3	Understanding NATSAP messages
5	Separating myths from fact
7	Talking about NATSAP--a one-page document
8	Promoting your NATSAP activities
9	Writing sample bios (NOTE: prepare bios similar to these for key staff)
10	Creating a local media list
11	Writing a press release--with a sample release
14	Responding to a crisis
16	Talking to journalists
18	Inviting a journalist to your facility
19	Writing and placing a guest blog.

We hope you find this document helpful.

If you need more help, don't hesitate to contact:
NATSAP
301-986-8770

Key Messages

These are the key messages used by NATSAP to describe who they are, whom they represent, and the purpose of the organization. Feel free to use these messages or incorporate them into your own messages.

- Since 1999 the National Association of Therapeutic Schools and Programs has been the trade association representing residential treatment centers, therapeutic boarding schools, and wilderness programs that help troubled teens, young adults and their families.
- With many success stories, NATSAP has nearly 160 member schools and programs that treat 5000 adolescents and young adults annually.
- As with any program that focuses on behavior change, there is the occasional failure to have a child graduate. These isolated incidents shouldn't cast a negative shadow on the success of the majority of programs that help troubled teens and young adults lead productive adult lives.

State Regulations

- In the 42 states where there are state licensing standards, the standards vary from state to state making it challenging to create an industry standard.
- Eight states do not have these licensing standards. All NATSAP members in those states must be accredited by a nationally recognized behavioral health accreditation agency.
- Our members only represent programs that are state licensed or accredited. In fact, previously NATSAP has helped states develop licensing regulations, and offers assistance to those programs in states that do not require licensing.

Cost of NATSAP Member Programs

- The programs cost an average of \$4000-\$8000 per month, with the average length of stay 12 to 18 months.
- Many NATSAP members offer limited scholarship options and a growing number work with various insurance programs on behalf of the individual. According to a NATSAP recent economic survey, approximately one in five NATSAP programs accepted more than 50% of their tuition payments from insurance. In addition, NATSAP has partnered with several fundraising organizations that assist families of teens struggling with substance abuse and emotional issues. These partnerships are designed to help families who could not otherwise afford these services that their children so desperately need.
- The majority of this cost is not paid for by health insurance, although that is changing. Many programs have changed their bills to itemize services, particularly psychotherapy. The results: more families are successful in having part of the cost covered by health insurance, although it is still challenging and requires great perseverance.

Other Messages

- NATSAP has nearly 160 members and several associate member categories. These associate member categories include individual professional members as well as companies providing related services to program participants.
- Most of NATSAP's individual professional members are educational consultants who provide guidance to potential program participants and refer them to specific programs.
- NATSAP members represent programs that must be either state licensed and/or accredited.
- NATSAP has helped states develop licensing regulations, and continues to offer assistance to those states that do not currently have licensing to do so.
- NATSAP strongly supports state regulation and feels states are best equipped to create and enforce licensing standards.
- Currently, NATSAP's Alumni Advisory Council is creating a national alumni association to serve program graduates, their parents, and other families just beginning to research these programs on behalf of their child. The proposed association provides program graduates with opportunities to share their successes and challenges, learn from their peers, and connect with other graduates after leaving the program. The proposed association will allow parents to share both positive and negative post-graduate experiences with others in their situation, and to serve as an unofficial resource for families just embarking on this journey.

Frequently Asked Questions

These questions represent questions that NATSAP has encountered from the media, elected officials or other stakeholders. Feel free to incorporate them when speaking to external audiences.

Question: Is NATSAP an accrediting body?

Answer: No, NATSAP is neither an accrediting nor licensing organization. NATSAP is a membership organization, which helps inform health care professionals and families about the many residential placement alternatives available to struggling young people. NATSAP requires that our members be licensed by the appropriate state agency authorized to set and oversee standards of therapeutic and/or behavioral healthcare for youth and adolescents, or accredited by a nationally recognized behavioral health accreditation agency.

Question: Will NATSAP provide recommendations to parents?

Answer: No, NATSAP is not a referral or placement agency. As a volunteer membership organization, NATSAP provides support to professionals and programs in their efforts to help troubled young people. NATSAP publishes an annual directory that includes information about each NATSAP member, however, NATSAP makes no recommendations for one program over another.

Question: Is NATSAP a program?

Answer: NATSAP is not a program. NATSAP is a national nonprofit organization whose members are Therapeutic Boarding Schools, Residential Treatment Centers, Wilderness Therapy Programs, and adult therapeutic programs. These programs provide treatment for adolescents and young adults with emotional and behavioral difficulties. NATSAP is a resource to help inform health care professionals and families about the many residential placement alternatives available to struggling young people.

Question: Are consultants unduly influenced by NATSAP members to choose their program?

Answer: Teen programs in the NATSAP association are forbidden from paying finder's fees to educational consultants, and any educational consultant or firm found to have accepted referral fees from programs loses Independent Educational Consultant Association (IECA) membership. NATSAP has informed their members that referral fees and other incentives, including gifts and trips, are inconsistent with NATSAP's ethics.

Question: Are Therapeutic Boarding Schools, Wilderness Therapy Programs, and Residential Treatment Centers too expensive and out of reach?

Answer: Many NATSAP members offer limited scholarship options and a growing number work with various insurance programs on behalf of the individual. According to a NATSAP recent economic survey, approximately one in five NATSAP programs accepted more than 50 percent of their tuition payments from insurance. In addition, NATSAP has partnered with several fundraising organizations that assist families of teens struggling with substance abuse and emotional issues. These partnerships are designed to help families who could not otherwise afford these services that their children so desperately need.

Question: Is there any research that suggests Residential Treatment Centers, Therapeutic Boarding Schools, and Wilderness Therapy Programs can help a child?

Answer: NATSAP is committed to outcome studies and a number of members have participated in outcome research studies. Here are a few examples of such studies:

- NATSAP and the University of New Hampshire are working in cooperation to study the long-term effects of Residential Treatment Centers and Wilderness Therapy Programs on clients. This provides a unique opportunity to quantify the benefits of attending our programs well beyond student graduation. Outcomes are a key component guiding NATSAP's Best Practices Committee. The Journal of Therapeutic Schools & Programs is circulated on a yearly basis to augment the findings of our Outcome Research.
- Dr. Ellen Behrens, PhD, Canyon Research and Consulting, Tucson, reported findings from a multicenter study of youth outcomes in private residential treatment at the 2006 American Psychological Association Convention in New Orleans, LA. Dr. Behrens abstract of the findings states: *Parents and adolescents reported significant improvement during treatment on adolescent communication, family relationships, and compliance. Taken together, the analyses suggested that adolescent problems improve significantly during private residential treatment and that, with only a few exceptions, discharge functioning and in-treatment change are relatively similar, regardless of adolescent background, history, problems, and treatment factors.*
- Dr. Keith Russell, PhD, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, began conducting an assessment of outcomes in outdoor behavioral healthcare treatment in 2000. Dr. Russell's abstract of the assessment states: *Results indicated that at admission clients exhibited presenting symptoms similar to inpatient samples, which were on average significantly reduced at discharge. Follow-up assessments using a random sample of clients found that on average, outcomes had been maintained at 12-months post-treatment.*

Five things you can promote as a NATSAP member

By leveraging your NATSAP membership, you provide credibility among your peers in the therapeutic schools and program community. Here are five simple things you can do to promote your school or program as a NATSAP member.

- Elected as a board member. If you are elected as a board member or officer of NATSAP, you can prepare a news release that announces your new position. The release should be straightforward and include your name, title, school or program, city and state and the new position. Also include a paragraph about NATSAP. See the attached sample of a news release.
- Participated in the Capitol Hill fly-in or a visited state legislature. If you visit your federal, state or local officials to talk about your school or program, you can promote this activity by sending a news release to your local media outlets. The release needs to contain your name, title, program or school, whom you visited, what you discussed, and a paragraph about NATSAP.
- Won an award. If you have captured a national or local award or your school or program wins an award, you can distribute a news release to your local media outlets about that award. Be sure to include the name of the award, why you won it, and include contact information in the event a journalist wants to interview you about the honor.
- Wrote an op-ed or guest blog. If an article appears in the newspaper or online that relates to your school or program or a local event occurs that relates to your facility, you can respond by writing an op-ed or guest blog and submit it to the outlet. Be sure to follow up with a call to the op-ed or guest blog editor to ensure that your copy was received and it is being considered. (See the section on How to Write a Guest Blog.)
- Responded to an online post. If an article, blurb or blog appears online that relates to your school, program or NATSAP, you can post a comment to respond to the article online. If the blog is in anyway negative regarding your program or our field in general, delay your response and notify NATSAP. We can help you decide on a response strategy. With these types of comments, sometimes the best response is no response at all.

Sample Bios

Here are two sample biographies. Feel free to model your short bio from these examples.

Dane Kay, Owner and Administrator, RedCliff Ascent, Provo, UT

Dane Kay began working with at-risk youth in 1987. He is an owner and administrator of RedCliff Ascent, Discovery Academy, Discovery Ranch, Discovery Connections, Discovery Ranch for Girls, Medicine Wheel at RedCliff, and Oxbow Academy.

Dane serves as the President of the National Association of Therapeutic Schools and Programs.

He enjoys serving in industry association capacities and appreciates the opportunity to get to know others who are involved in this great work.

Dane received a Bachelor's of Science from Brigham Young University in Finance and minored in economics. He is married with five children and lives in Spanish Fork, Utah.

Trina Packard, Executive Director, Youth Care, Draper, UT

For the past eight years, Trina has been the Executive Director for Youth Care. She has been with Aspen for more than 15 years. In this capacity, Trina has taught at-risk youth in public, private and residential settings from elementary to secondary levels.

Before joining the Youth Care team, Trina worked as the Director of Education for Olympus View Hospital (Utah) for five years. Her responsibilities included working, counseling and managing students struggling with substance abuse, eating disorders, ADHD, physical and sexual abuse, and mood disturbances. She also worked as the Executive Director of the NorthStar Program (Oregon).

She earned a Bachelor's degree in Special and Elementary Education from Southern Utah University and also holds a Masters of Educational Counseling from the University of Phoenix. Her educational background includes experience in learning disabilities, testing and behavior modification.

Creating a local media list

If you want to reach out to your local media outlets, the first step is to create a media list. This list includes all the relevant media outlets (newspapers, Internet outlets, and radio, TV, and cable stations), a reporter or producer to contact and their contact information (email, phone). Here are the steps to create your local media list.

Finding your local outlets

- Go online to Google
- Type in:
 - Newspapers in [your city, state]
 - Radio in [your city, state]
 - TV stations in [your city, state]
- Click on each of the entries that come up on your Google search
- Scroll the page and look for contact us, editorial, etc.
- If there is no "contact us," call the general number and ask for the name of the reporter that covers healthcare, education, parenting and small business.
- If the paper is small and they don't have reporters that cover those topics (or beats), ask for the name of the managing editor or editor and add that name to your list.

What to include on your media list

- Reporters (newspapers, online outlets) or producers (TV/radio) covering:
 - Mental health
 - Parenting/family issues
 - Education
 - Small business

If the publication has a small circulation, they may not have specific reporters on customized beats. In that case, include the managing editor or editor on your list.

Where to keep the media list

- Place the list onto an Excel spreadsheet so it can be easily updated
- When listing the journalists, be sure to include the following:
 - Name of the outlet
 - Reporter's name
 - What the reporter covers (healthcare, education, parenting, etc.)
 - Email address
 - Phone number.

An example of a listing is as follows:

Washington Post Bob Jones, Education jonesb@washpost.com 202-334-6000

Writing a news release

Once you have created your local media list, you have to decide what information to send to the journalists and in what format. The traditional way to reach out to reporters is to send them a press release. Here are the steps you need to take to draft a news release.

- Be sure that you have news to report. Before you start to write your news release, ask yourself: "What is the news?" Can you envision what you think is news as a headline in a newspaper or online? Be sure that whatever you have to say is relevant to journalists working in the trade or consumer press.
- Include contact information. At the top of the news release, include a contact name, email and cell phone number. It is better to include your cell phone number so that you can be sure not to miss their call.
- Put a date on the release. Oftentimes, you see "For immediate release" at the top of a news release. You need to put an actual date on the release so that reporters know when they can release the information. The date also helps you to remember when the release was distributed.
- Write the release similar to a news story. With the shrinking of newsrooms and less reporters covering more topics, journalists have less time to focus on researching and writing stories. That means that your release may be picked up as is and printed in the newspaper or posted online. Therefore, your release should answer the questions who, what, where, why, when and how first paragraph or "lead." The release should be no longer than two-pages and contain hyperlinks connected to relevant websites. No more than two quotes should be part of the copy. The release also should include a descriptive paragraph about your school or therapeutic program at the end of the copy as well as information about NATSAP.
- Draft a compelling headline. As you know, the subject line in an email or in a news story either draws you in or encourages you to skip the information. News headlines work the same way. Your headline should summarize your release and include a hint about the news so that the reader is encouraged to read the entire release.
- Link to infographics or other visuals. Visuals are the new attention grabbers for journalists and consumers alike. Where possible, link your release to infographics, videos or other visuals.
- Send your release via email.
 - *Make sure your subject line is compelling.* Journalists may receive up to 800 emails a day. To cut through the clutter, make sure that the subject line of your release provides the news hook. Never send a subject line that reads: "Press release" or "Information you need."
 - *Draft an email pitch.* The first few lines of your email appear above the release and summarize the news in the release. At the end of the email, offer the reporter a chance to interview a key spokesperson or get more information and close with your name and cell phone number.
 - *Cut and paste the release into the body of the email.* When you email your release to reporters, be sure to copy the text and paste it into the body of the

email rather than sending the release as an attachment. Most newsrooms have strong spam filters that will not permit the reporters to open attachments.

A sample news release follows here.

NEWS RELEASE

For Release: Wednesday, July 23, 2014

Contact: Sheri L. Singer, sheri.singer@verizon.net, 703-346-7111

10 National Nonprofit Organizations Gather to Find Common Ground When Helping Troubled Youths and Young Adults

BETHESDA, MD -- Ten national nonprofit organizations focused on helping troubled youths and young adults met last week to see where they may be able to work together to improve services designed to help youths and young adults struggling with mental health, substance abuse and other related issues. These organizations help troubled youths and young adults through therapeutic schools, residential treatment programs, wilderness programs, young adult programs, and home-based residential programs.

Convened by the [National Association of Therapeutic Schools and Programs](#) (NATSAP) and [American Association of Children's Residential Centers](#) (AACRC), additional participating organizations included:

- [Association for Child & Youth Care Practice, Inc.](#)
- [A START](#)
- [Child Welfare League of America](#)
- [Coalition for Residential Education](#)
- [National Association for Children's Behavioral Health](#)
- [National Association of Psychiatric Health Systems](#)
- [National Organization of State Associations for Children](#)
- [Outdoor Behavioral Healthcare Council](#).

"While there are some differences among the participating organizations--the most prominent being how the members within different associations are financed--there are places where our interests intersect," said Cliff Brownstein, Executive Director, NATSAP. "This meeting helps identify those intersections and that's where we can work together to move our collective agendas forward."

To this end, the participants discussed identifying common goals and projects; measuring outcome and performance measures based on the results of a recent report; setting and upholding the highest standards; discussing how to resolve basic differences between the participating organizations; exploring opportunities for collaborative public and government relations efforts; and developing a plan for continuing the dialogue among the participating organizations.

"Our hope is to continue to discuss these topics and to find interesting, important and mutually beneficial projects to work on so we can achieve our shared goal of helping troubled youths," said Dane Kay, Vice President, NATSAP and Owner and Administrator, RedCliff Ascent, Provo, UT.

For more information, contact Sheri Singer, sheri.singer@verizon.net or 703-346-7111.

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About the National Association of Therapeutic Schools and Programs (NATSAP)

Founded in January of 1999, NATSAP is a national resource for programs and professionals assisting young people with emotional and behavioral difficulties. Located throughout the U.S., NATSAP members include Therapeutic Boarding Schools, Residential Treatment Centers, Wilderness Therapy Programs, and young adult programs. The Association is governed by an elected, volunteer Board of Directors comprised of representatives from its membership. NATSAP members are independently operated and owned; therefore, NATSAP does not provide placement services. All NATSAP member programs that treat children under 18 are overseen by state therapeutic licensure or accredited by major mental health bodies, and in most cases, both.

Responding to a crisis at your school or program

On a daily basis, your facility runs well and with a minimum of challenges or public attention. But on occasion, there is an incident that if handled incorrectly could reflect negatively on your facility and the therapeutic school and program community. Here are a few items to keep in mind to prepare you to manage a crisis effectively minimizing the damage to your brand and reputation.

- Understand the three steps to a crisis. These steps are:
 - *Before the crisis.* Doing everything you can do to prepare your organization before the crisis hits.
 - *During the crisis.* This stage address the putting out the fire and minimizing the damage.
 - *After the crisis.* This portion addresses the most critical part of the crisis-- reputation management. It also involves putting together the lessons learned from dealing with the crisis and moving forward in a positive way with the least amount of damage done to your school or program.
- Create a crisis management plan. Because the very definition of a crisis is an unstable and unplanned situation, it may seem counterintuitive to draft a crisis management plan. But it will be to your best interest to develop a plan and put whatever you can into place before you encounter the crisis so that you are as prepared as you can be before the crisis occurs. The plan would include the following information about your audience, Rapid Response team, key and sub-messages, what to say and when to say it, and what you need to do to successfully navigate a crisis. These elements are further defined below.
- Identify your target audience. This pertains to both internal (staff, board of directors, current clients) and external (parents, community, funders, etc.)
- Develop a Rapid Response team. Develop a Rapid Response team of no more than 3 to 5 people from various parts of your organization--staff, administrators, board of directors' members, etc.. Be ready to assemble that team when the crisis hits.
- Determine the roles of the Rapid Response team. Clearly identify the roles of the members on your Rapid Response team. Be sure to consider the fact that rumors can circulate within seconds via social media so you need to define who will monitor and handle comments posted online. Here are some of the questions to ask to identify those roles and responsibilities:
 - What will you say?
 - Who will say it?
 - When will you say it?
 - Who will you say it to?
 - How will you deliver it (online, email, letter, etc.)?
- Work with your legal team and NATSAP. In most crisis situations, you need to have your legal team involved from the start. They need to approve your messages, determine what can be said when and basically will guide what you can and cannot say due to legal constraints. Contacting NATSAP to alert them to the crisis allows NATSAP to work with you and your legal team as well as pass along information to other programs that may also be affected.

- Develop key messages. You need to wait until the crisis hits before developing your sub-messages. The sub-messages will address the issues surrounding the specific crisis.
- Don't delay. Define what your spokespersons will say, who they will say it to (audience), and when is the appropriate time to say it. Delaying the inevitable just makes it worse so deliver the information as soon as you have it.
- Present a solution. While a crisis tends to focus on the negative, it's your responsibility to highlight the positive, mention past successes, and the way you will move forward from the crisis.
- Obtain media training. Oftentimes in a crisis, the media drives the story-- particularly how long it continues to grab the public's attention. With good media/message training, you may be able to stem the bleeding and turn a potential negative story into a more positive one and shorten the time span the press and the public is paying attention to your school or program.
- Prepare yourself. It's stressful to deliver any type of crisis or negative news. So when you deliver information about the crisis, you may find yourself exhibiting physical signs of stress--shallow breathing, upset stomach, sleeplessness, headaches, tense muscles. Take deep breaths, go for a walk, eat properly, get rest, etc. Make sure you take care of yourself as you move through the crisis.
- Follow these guidelines.
 - Don't delay
 - Work with your legal team
 - Be transparent, honest, direct
 - Stick to the facts--depersonalize it
 - Find the silver lining--the positive out of the negative
 - Present a solution.

Talking to journalists

Many schools and programs administrators and staff believe that talking to reporters is an anxiety producing, stressful, or scary situation. This guide is designed to provide you with action steps to transform the way to talk to the press into a positive, low-stress opportunity for you to express your opinions and control the conversation.

When a journalist calls you...

- Understand the tone of the interview. When the reporter calls, you need to figure out quickly the tone of the interview. Is it friendly or hostile? Is the story investigative or is it a short story about your school or program? Listening to the initial questions the journalist poses and asking a few of your own based on their questions, will allow you to understand the tone of the interview.
- Return the reporter's call. Never hesitate to ask the reporter if you can return their call. Simply say, "I'm in a meeting, would it be possible to return your call? What is your deadline?" Then gather your thoughts, jot down some messages and call the reporter back when you are better prepared for the interview.
- Keep in mind the type of media. The interviews may be different depending upon the medium the reporter represents. For example, print interviews are typically by phone and often are a longer interview format than radio. Online interviews may be conducted by email or another social media channel. Radio interviews are conducted either on the phone or in studio and TV interviews are either on the street or in studio. The type of medium often dictates the way the interview is conducted.

When you call a journalist...

- Determine the main news hook. Ask yourself, "What is the news here?" "Why should consumers or other program staff members care about this issue?" The #1 news hook is the ONE thing that will grab the attention of the readers or listeners.
- Identify the pitch points. Using the main news hook and your news release as a starting point, identify three main news items that you can use in your verbal and email pitches to targeted journalists.
- Write a telephone pitch script. Before you pick up the phone to place your first call, draft a phone pitch script. The script should open with this:
Hi. My name is [YOUR NAME] and I'm calling from [NAME OF SCHOOL OR PROGRAM] to give you a heads up about [MAIN NEWS HOOK]. Do you have a minute?

The remainder of the pitch should be no longer than 1 minute and 30 seconds. If the pitch is longer than that, you need to edit it so that it fits into that time span.

- Draft an email that summarizes the news. The email pitch should be an extension of your two-minute phone pitch. Again, it should summarize the main news hooks from your release.

- Determine the subject line. The subject line of your email is going to determine whether the reporter opens your email and reads your email pitch and the release. Therefore, the subject line is critical to your outreach effort. Do not put press release or you need to read this as the subject line of your email. It needs to contain the main news hook. For example, in promoting NATSAP's fly-in to the participants' hometown newspapers, the subject line might read: Los Altos Resident Talks to Rep. Brown on Capitol Hill in DC.
- Disseminate the release. All the journalists on your media list should get a copy of your release. However, you aren't going to call every reporter on your list. Select a smaller number of reporters to call. Since reporters may receive as many as 700 emails per day (according to a Wall St. Journal reporter in October 2014), a call may help you cut through the clutter and bring your release to the reporter's attention.
- Practice the pitch. Before you place your first call, practice the pitch aloud. Make edits so that it flows naturally. You may want to start by pitching smaller outlets to get warmed up before pitching your main metropolitan newspaper.
- Contact several reporters. If you contact a reporter from an outlet and they aren't interested in your story, you can contact another reporter from the same outlet. With the news around therapeutic schools and programs, there are a number of possible reporters that may be interested in the story including education, business, parenting, education, and metro reporters.

Inviting a journalist to your facility

There may be an opportunity for you to invite journalists to tour your facility. Here's a step-by-step action guide to conduct a facility tour with local journalists.

- Invite the journalist(s) to your facility. Ask the journalist or a small group of journalists if they would be interested in touring your facility. You can do this by email or with a phone call. Be sure to customize the invitation to meet the journalists' needs. For example an education reporter may be interested in the schooling portion of your services while a health reporter may be interested in your therapeutic services.
- Invite more than one journalist. If you choose, you can invite 2 to 5 journalists to tour your facility at the same time. If you do this, recognize that it will be more challenging to customize the tour and your explanation of the facility.
- Adhere to HIPAA and other requirements. When journalists are touring your facility, they are guest and need to abide by HIPAA and other federal, state and local restrictions.
- Serve a meal as part of the tour. Journalists are likely to show up at an event, such as a tour of your facility, if you offer them a meal. Lunch or breakfast should suffice.
- Tell your story. As you are touring the facility this is a great time to tell your story. Share what is unique about your school or program, tell them about your successes, share who you are and the need you fill in your community.
- Follow up with the reporter. Following the visit, make sure to follow up with the reporter and see if they have any questions or need any additional information.
- Lower your expectations. The purpose of the visit is to introduce your school or program to the journalist and to start to build a long-term relationship. It is not to get a story placed in a local outlet--although there may be some reporters that write about your facility. Primarily, the facility tour is a way to inoculate the reporter in the event that your school or program has an incident where you need a journalist to allow you to tell your side of the story.

Writing and placing a guest blog

Getting your opinion out in your community, especially when you can comment on the news of the day, is one way to raise your positive profile. If you are writing and placing an op-ed in a newspaper (whether online or in print), or you are writing a guest blog on a site related to therapeutic schools and programs, here are some steps to follow.

- Scan your local news sources. As a routine, you should keep up with the news by reading, listening and watching newspapers, bloggers in the field, online outlets, broadcast outlets, posts to radio and TV stations, etc.
- Piggyback on the news of the day. When a story breaks related to your school or program, take the opportunity to draft a short (400-600 words) piece.
- Turn the piece into a guest blog. Your 400+ word opinion piece is now ready to be turned into a guest blog. Today, newspapers, radio and television stations all have websites. While these media outlets don't necessarily have the space to air every story they receive, they often take stories that wouldn't make the paper or airtime and post them as a guest blog.
- Pitching a guest blog. To pitch your guest blog to a media website, contact either the online editor, guest blog editor, managing editor, online producer of the outlet and make the appeal as to why your guest blog is of interest to their readers. Sign the pitch with your name, title, school or program, website and phone number. An example of a guest blog pitch might be:

Last week, John Brown was turned away from our state mental health facilities because there were no beds and after threatening his fellow college classmates and created chaos at Baldwin University, he committed suicide.

I am the president of The Woods, a private facility aimed at helping troubled youths, adolescents or young adults. We help people like John and their families to cope with these issues. I have attached a guest blog about how facilities like ours can help troubled young people like John. I hope you will consider publishing it.

- Submitting your guest blog. When you send your guest blog via email to the targeted reporter, cut and paste it into the copy of the email. Strong spam filters prevent many newsrooms from opening attachments.

PLEASE NOTE: Only send one guest blog to one outlet at a time. Wait until you get a rejection from the outlet before sending the guest blog to another outlet.