



Tips for Healthy Interaction with Media

Media Participation is a Choice: You have the right to refuse an interview, end an interview, or ask for clarification, at any point in the process!

Deciding to Participate in a Media Campaign (interview):

- Whether you interview with a large news organization or a small blog, remember that when you share your story, **it's going out into the world**. That's because of the Internet. So think about if you really want to share your story, what you want to share and what you don't want to share.
- Do you have a **plan for self-care** if talking about an issue that could potentially trigger difficult emotions? Who is your support system? What has worked for you in the past when you are triggered by telling your story?
- From the moment you engage in conversation with a reporter, what you say is **"on the record"** and can be used by them. Even if they say it's "off the record," always act like you're on the record.
- When doing a broadcast interview, the mic is always on so be mindful of what you say. Even if you think the mic is off, remember **you're still on the record**.
- Before granting an interview, **research the reporter** - Is the reporter sincere? Compassionate? Have they written positive stories in the past related to mental health or foster youth?
- You don't have to do follow-up interviews – even if you agree to participate at an earlier time, it does not mean you have to continue to participate - **you can choose every time**.

Planning for the Interview:

- **Create a self-care plan** that includes planning for and debriefing the interview; touching base with someone who provides you emotional support before and after the interview.
- Set the **interview during a time that works for you**, you don't have to answer questions right away or respond to the 'stress' of the reporter's tight deadline.
- You can request to do an interview anonymously or ask that your face not be shown on camera. Reporters usually prefer their sources show their identity, but if they really want your story, they may go with **shielding your identity**.
- You can have **someone accompany you** to an interview for support.
- **Reach out to plan** for what you want to say - We can help you prepare for an interview.

During the Interview:

- If you don't feel comfortable – end the interview or **set your own terms** for how to proceed in a way you feel comfortable.

- You don't have to answer any question you don't want to – it's always your right to **decline to respond to a question**.
- For broadcast interviews, you can **ask for questions beforehand**. Some news orgs may honor your request, but keep in mind they may go off script.
- If you don't know the answer to the question that is ok, **you only know what you know!**
- If you don't think you are the best person to answer the question **just say so**.
- You can **offer suggestions to the reporter**: Do you feel race, class, gender, age, etc are impacting the interview or angle of the issue? It is ok to say so! “

After a Story is Released:

- If you need to **clarify a comment with the reporter** from the interview, contact them.
- If you accidentally said something that you don't want published/aired, contact the reporter and **ask them to remove it**. They don't have to oblige, and most probably won't, but some may.
- Any contact with media or those reaching out to you after a story has been released is completely voluntary – it is ok to say, **“No, thank you, I do not wish to comment.”**
- You **don't have to answer** the phone or respond to any requests from reporters or others.
- **Reach out for support!**

Resources

- **For general support you can contact Anna Johnson at the National Center for Youth Law, (510) 835-8098 ext. 3035**
- **For assistance in dealing with the media or preparing for an interview you can contact Lewis Cohen at the National Center for Youth Law (510)835-8098 ext.**