



DPH MEDIA RELATIONS

Media Training Manual for Agency Personnel



1

Lesson 1.
Why Media
Matters

2

Lesson 2.
Mastering
the Message

3

Lesson 3.
Interview
Preparation

4

Lesson 4.
Interview
Skills

5

Lesson 5.
Following-Up

COURSE OUTLINE

WHY MEDIA MATTERS: TYPES OF MEDIA

- * **OWNED** – YOUR WEBSITE, CREATED CONTENT AND SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

- * **PAID** – ADVERTISING YOU BUY – TV, BILLBOARDS, SPONSORED SOCIAL POSTS/INFLUENCERS

- * **EARNED** – NEWS MEDIA COVERAGE, EXTERNAL SOCIAL MEDIA, WORD-OF-MOUTH

Of these, earned is by far the best, most trusted type. It increases credibility, positive exposure and builds trust

WHY MEDIA MATTERS: WHERE DO YOU LIVE?

Q: What's the most valuable real estate in the world for a state agency?

A: The first thing that comes to your mind

- How do you change neighborhoods?
- The same way you move in real life: one box (engagement) at a time.

WHY MEDIA MATTERS: WHAT'S AT STAKE

“Every engagement with a journalist is a chance to build an ally/advocate.”

- Why is this important?
- Who does it benefit?

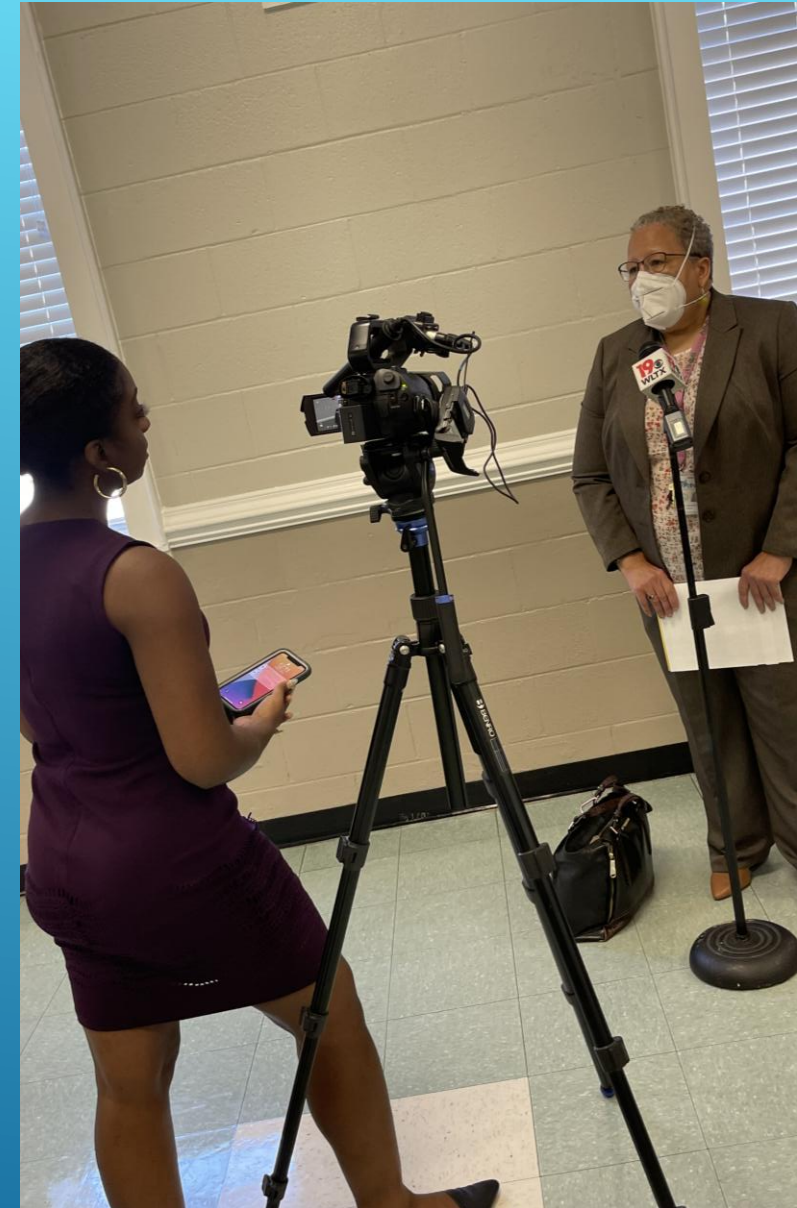
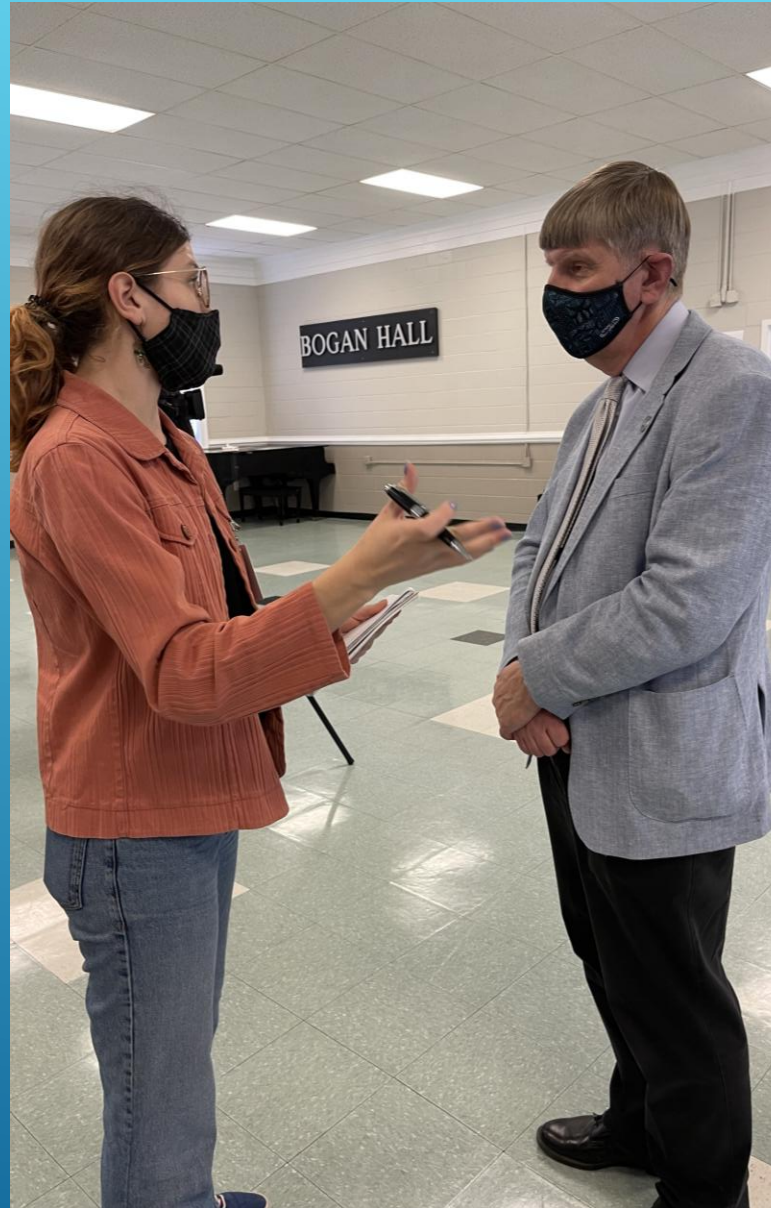
MASTERING THE MESSAGE

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY 'MESSAGE'?

First, we need to say what the message isn't – the message is not the information we deliver. That's just data, and it's routine.

The *message* is the overall goal of the media interaction, the theme we want our delivery of the information and handling of the interview to create.

The message will vary based on your role, but the overall message, always, will be that DPH is a responsible, responsive agency with people who are passionate about the work they do on behalf of all South Carolinians.





► ROLE 1: AGENCY LEADERSHIP

- In media interactions, DPH leadership has a responsibility to deliver the message of an agency with the mission of improving the quality of life of all South Carolinians by protecting and promoting the health of the public and the environment.
- No matter the issue, topic or project being discussed, the way we describe our actions should aim to reflect both our total commitment to being responsible public health stewards and the sincere dedication and professionalism of our employees.
- We are the only agency responsible to safeguard the health and welfare of every person in South Carolina. That role and our employees' passion to achieve it is our greatest strength and our best story.

MASTERING THE MESSAGE



MASTERING THE MESSAGE

ROLE 2: SUBJECT MATTER EXPERT

If you're a Subject Matter Expert (SME), managing the message is simple because the message is *you*.

You are the leading expert on what you know about the topic, and the reporter is relying on *your* expertise for their story. Your role is a powerful one: to educate the reporter so they can tell your story to the public.

If you think the reporter doesn't understand something, take the extra time to explain it until you're confident they do. Think about it this way – they aren't there to interview you, you are there to educate them.

Like a good teacher, make sure by the end of the interview they understand the material so they get the story right.

As the expert, give your answers thoughtfully and in your own time, at your own pace. Project confidence, calmness and use the interview as a valuable opportunity to teach others about what we do.



LESSON 2: INTERVIEW PREPARATION

INTERVIEW PREPARATION

WHY PREPARE?

- Confidence
- Calmness
- Shows respect and professionalism
- We prepare in order to succeed.

If an interview is an opportunity to create an ally and promote both the agency's message and its people, preparation is crucial



INTERVIEW PREPARATION

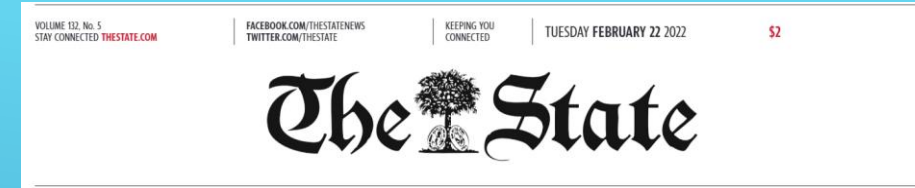
REPORTER RESEARCH

Media relations will familiarize you with the reporter you'll be talking to.

If possible, you should spend a few minutes on your own researching that reporter. Look at past articles/stories to get a feel for how they write and what they know.

If they post to social media, read the last couple of posts/tweets. If there's a bio to read online, learn what you can from it to see them as people -- where they're from, where they went to school, families, pets, etc.

When a reporter sees you took the time to learn something about them, it establishes a human connection that can pay huge dividends.



INTERVIEW PREPARATION

WHAT'S THE STORY?

Media relations works with the reporter beforehand to determine exactly what story the reporter is looking to tell (also called the 'angle' of a story).

When the precise type and nature of the story is understood, the media relations team will communicate that information to you in advance.

Not only will they tell you what the reporter intends to ask but *why* they're asking, what other questions may arise, and what points we want to emphasize. In this way when the interview begins, you're totally prepared for every question and positioned for success.



BEST PRACTICES TIP SHEET



SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF
PUBLIC HEALTH

BEFORE/DURING INTERVIEW

- ▶ Be prepared and on time
- ▶ Greet at door, if interview is in person (if possible, a media relations staff member will also be there to assist/make introductions)
- ▶ Welcome warmly
- ▶ Thank for interest in DPH
- ▶ Engage genuinely
- ▶ Show hospitality

DISCUSSION POINT

“Treat others the way you want to be treated.”

- Should we treat a reporter as a guest or a pest?
- How could either approach impact the agency?



LESSON 3: INTERVIEW SKILLS



INTERVIEW SKILLS

TELEVISION

- ▶ Doing a television interview can be an unsettling experience; even confident people can get rattled by the process because it tends to make people overly self-conscious.
- ▶ **To be comfortable, start comfortable** by dressing appropriately and being prepared through your prep-work with media relations. Comfortable = confident.
- ▶ **Sound bites:** The longest TV stories are 12-14 sentences for a 90-second piece. They'll only use 1-2 sentences from you, so know the key piece of information you want to convey *and* how you want to say it.
- ▶ Remember, they can edit out any mistakes you make, so never hesitate to ask to start over if you want to.
You are in control of your message.
- ▶ If asked '**Is there anything you'd like to add?**', that's your opportunity to a) repeat your soundbite if you need to say it better or weren't asked, or b) hit larger message of DPH.



INTERVIEW SKILLS

TELEVISION BASICS

► DO

- Look at the reporter, not the camera, while you speak
- Go at your pace, not anyone else's
- Stop an answer midway through if you realize you'd like to re-phrase it
- Treat the interview as an educational conversation
- Be direct and precise with your answers; don't overshare. They won't use it and it only leads to trouble
- Know your key point/sound bite and how you're going to say it

► DON'T

- Attempt to provide an answer you're not 100% sure of or is out of your area
- Answer a question unrelated to the purpose of the interview
- Offer an opinion about any politician, political party, law, or pending legislation
- Speak negatively about another person, place, company or agency



The State



Longtime judge, educator McDuffie dies at 87

BY CHRIS TRAINER
chrisher@theestate.com

Columbia has lost one of its brightest lights in the education, local government and legal communities. Judge Mildred Weatherly McDuffie, who worked in local public school systems for more than three decades, was a former member of Richland County Council and later worked as a summary court judge with the Richland County magistrate's office, died Monday morning. She was 87.

McDuffie was long associated with the Richland 1 school district. A graduate of Booker T. Washington High School, she had a 34-year career in Richland 1, first as an elementary school teacher and later as an assistant to the superintendent. She also was Richland 1's first ombudsman.

She was inducted into the district's hall of fame in 2020. "Judge McDuffie was a fervent community advocate who was an inspiration and a mentor to many, including several local elected officials and community leaders," the district said in a Monday statement. "Our thoughts and prayers are with her family and friends."

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SEE McDUFFIE, 6A

Hate crimes bill urged by House Democrats isn't Senate priority

BY EMILY BOWMAN
ebowman@theestate.com

COLUMBIA, S.C. — South Carolina House Democrats pushed Tuesday for the Senate to pass a hate crimes bill and send it to Gov. Henry McMaster to become law. Their calls come as Senate Majority Leader Shane Massey, R-Edgefield, has made it clear that the hate crimes bill is not a priority in the upper chamber this year.

SEE BOWMAN, 6A

Haley meets with SC lawmakers at old stomping grounds

BY JOSEPH BURTON
jburton@theestate.com

COLUMBIA, S.C. — Former South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley was back at the State House Tuesday to meet with a handful of state lawmakers to discuss the upcoming 2022 elections.

SEE HALEY, 6A



McMaster as well as House and Senate leadership, her spokesman confirmed. "In the meetings they discussed (the) 2022 elections and how she could be helpful (to) reflect members and building the success of the GOP in statewide elections," Haley's spokesman said.

SEE HALEY, 6A

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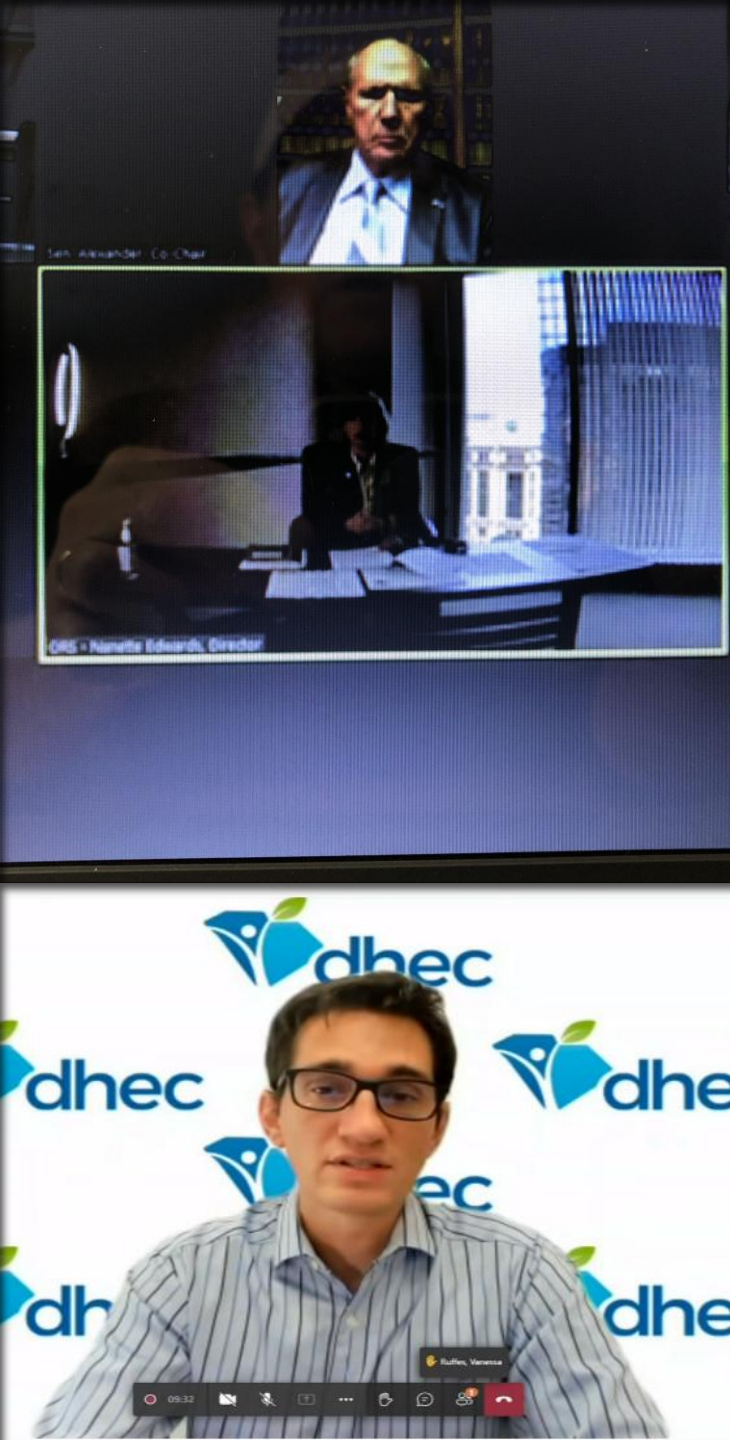
INTERVIEW SKILLS PRINT/DIGITAL

- ▶ Newspaper stories provide by far the best opportunity to tell our story because of length (versus TV), accessibility and lifespan.
- ▶ Reporter education remains key. Unlike TV, in print interviews you have far more time with the reporter to ensure they completely understand the issue at hand, the context of the situation and why you/the agency did what you/it did.
- ▶ In this interaction you're both educating and storytelling, which has the benefit of reinforcing the message of a responsible, responsive agency. This is important because...
- ▶ Narrative persuasion is statistically the most effective and powerful form of persuasion, so it's up to us to use it to our advantage every time we can.
- ▶ If you don't know something, say so. Say you'll be happy to get that information for them later. They understand.
- ▶ Be honest and authentic in your answers and it will pay dividends. A good relationship is powerful currency.

INTERVIEW SKILLS

WEB INTERVIEWS

- ▶ Zoom/Teams interviews have gone from a rarity to a staple across all media platforms. Knowing how to succeed in them is not as easy as one might think.
- ▶ Position camera at or slightly above eye level, not below your eyes.
- ▶ When speaking, look only at the camera. Unlike TV, when you look at the reporter and never at the camera, it's the opposite with web interviews. Make strong eye contact with the camera lens when answering and avoid looking at the reporter.
- ▶ Test the lighting, speaker and microphone beforehand. Don't log on at the last minute while the reporter waits; be there first.
- ▶ No matter who it's with, dress as if you're going on television on the seven o'clock report. Put your best foot forward because even if you're at home you're representing the entire agency.



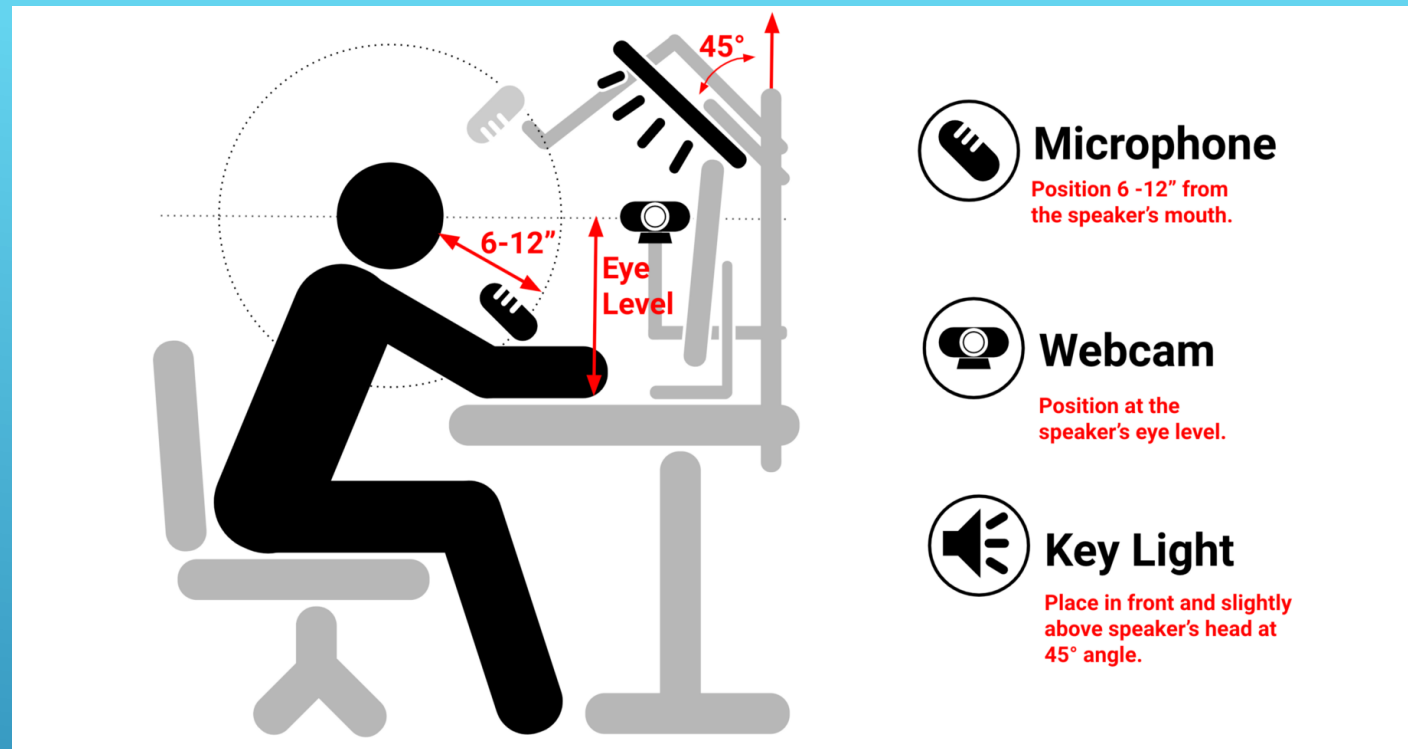
WEB BASICS

Do

- ▶ Remove any personal items/pictures from your background
- ▶ Test your camera, lighting and sound beforehand
- ▶ Make sure your camera is at eye level or slightly above
- ▶ Look at the computer camera only
- ▶ Dress like it's a TV interview
- ▶ Maintain good posture

DON'T

- ▶ Move around a lot/squirm
- ▶ Get distracted by something else going on around you
- ▶ Dress inappropriately
- ▶ Act/speak too casually
- ▶ Leave a filter on





LESSON 4: AFTER THE INTERVIEW



AFTER THE INTERVIEW FOLLOW-UPS

- ▶ Even when you're done, you're not done. Reporters will likely have follow-up questions after the interview, so expect them and answer them as promptly as you can through **media relations**.
- ▶ Sometimes, it's a detail as small as a date, a correct spelling or a figure. At other times, it's a separate list of questions going into detail about something that came up in the interview.
- ▶ Follow-ups go both ways. If you think of something after the fact that the reporter needs to know, let **media relations** know and we'll alert the reporter immediately. Reporters hate being wrong and appreciate it hugely when your call ensures their story is accurate.



BEST PRACTICES TIP SHEET



SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF
PUBLIC HEALTH

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

- ▶ Get reporter contact info, air/run date from reporter or **media relations**
- ▶ If you can, walk them out of the building with **media relations**, thank them again for their interest in the agency and this important story
- ▶ Provide any additional materials or resources promised in the interview
- ▶ Read piece & alert **media relations** of any inaccuracies so they can be corrected



TRAINING SUMMARY

- **Every interview is an opportunity to build an agency ally**
- Welcome those opportunities with open arms and do your best to accommodate requests.
- In-person or phone/zoom interviews are FAR superior to emailed responses for building relationships, avoiding misunderstandings and making sure the reporter is fully educated on topic.
- **You are the expert on you.** The reporter needs what you know, so go at your pace, answer in your way and explain issues thoroughly. DPH chose you because **you're fantastic!**

SNL



ANY QUESTIONS?

25

► Ron Aiken

Media Relations Director

aikenrd@dph.sc.gov

(803) 898-3253

► Casey White

Public Information Officer

whiteca@dph.sc.gov

(803) 898-3315

CONTACT US



FURTHER TRAINING
OFFERED BY MEDIA RELATIONS
AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST:

- Advanced Individual Interview Training
- Refresher Training