



GUIDELINES  
FOR PLACING PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS  
ON RADIO STATIONS IN YOUR COMMUNITY

*What are radio PSAs?*

In simple terms, radio PSAs (public-service announcements) are messages about important social and community issues, produced for the public benefit primarily on behalf of non-profit organizations. For many years, stations were *required* to donate time to community causes; now it is *encouraged*. But both national and local radio outlets often use PSAs, even though they are not obligated to do so.

Many non-profit organizations successfully use PSAs at national, regional and local levels. And most stations donate time for an endless number of good uses and for all the right reasons.

That's the good news. The bad news is the tremendous competition for PSA airtime. It is not unusual for local radio stations to air several hundred PSAs in a given month; many more never get on the air.

*Choosing a station*

Listen to your local stations until you understand why others do so. Find out as much as you can about their program formats, coverage areas and on-air personalities, and what each has done to support causes like yours. Stations report on the good and the bad in the community; their staff's human compassion often pushes them to use their medium for good.

*Making contact*

Once you have decided which stations are best to contact, start the process. If time permits, send a brief note complimenting the station on its past efforts, outlining your issue and your concern, and paving the way for your later phone call.

No single individual or department controls PSA access in radio stations across the country. The decision-making process differs by radio station. Generally, however, the person to contact to place PSAs is the director of community affairs, public affairs or public service, or at some smaller radio stations, the program director, news director or perhaps even general manager.

### *Making a strong case*

*Be personable* – State why you believe the Igniting Ministry PSA is important, making clear that you, as a United Methodist and a local citizen, care as much for the community as the station does. Your relationship to the community and to the church can help do that without being self-promotional.

*Be compelling* – Facts alone can be impersonal. Compelling stories about how your issue affects people in the local community can be powerful and can demonstrate local relevance. Let the media representative know how important media involvement is by pointing to any successes you've seen success from earlier PSAs.

*Be brief* – Remember that numerous important issues are presented to the media by organizations vying for time. Be professional and thorough in your approach and respect the media representative's time.

*Be grateful* – If the station uses the PSAs, follow up with a letter of appreciation, an inexpensive certificate of appreciation or perhaps a small gift such as an Igniting Ministry coffee mug. When sending letters of appreciation, thank the general manager for the support and time provided by station staff and send copies to those staff people.

*Be a partner* – Don't forget successful PSA placement is a partnership. Station employees, like you, are members of the community. You need them and they need you.

A few do's and don'ts . . .

### DO:

- Find out as much as you can about the stations' program format, coverage area, personalities, etc.
- Explain why you want to place the Igniting Ministry PSA. Mention that the 30-second PSA was produced by The United Methodist Church as a public service because the tragedy and war are important issues to all people of faith in your community. The message will more likely be aired if it is not seen as a

“promotion” of The United Methodist Church. In fact, if it is perceived as promotional (advertising), the station may refuse to play it as a PSA.

- Bring the CD with you, making SURE you identify the cut on the CD as the PSA. Ask politely if the station can copy the CD for its use; if not, leave the CD with the station. If necessary, provide the Web site address ([www.ignitingministry.org/downloads](http://www.ignitingministry.org/downloads)) from which to download this PSA.

#### DON'T:

- Call the message an advertisement (always refer to it as a public service announcement).
- Ask when your PSA will play on the air (since PSAs are placed on a “time available” basis, guarantees are impossible).
- Force a personal meeting (if busy station staff can't see you personally, handle your contact in writing and a follow-up phone call).
- Be pushy (remember that you represent The United Methodist Church).

*God's speed!*

*11/02*