



# Media Guide for Treatment Courts

*Developing Your Message and Sharing Your Success*

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# INTRODUCTION

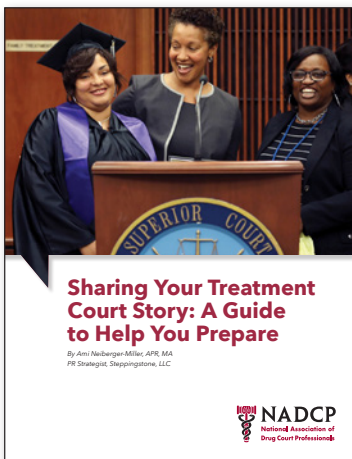
It has never been more important for treatment courts to tell the stories of their success. After all, these stories help ensure continued funding and community support that will save more lives and reunite more families. But working with the media can be daunting, so much so that many programs are not engaging with the press, and thus are missing opportunities to expand their support. The National Association of Drug Court Professionals (NADCP) developed this publication to help treatment courts confidently and effectively describe their accomplishments to the media and broader community.

This publication is part of a series on messaging. For an in-depth review of crisis communications, we encourage you to download *Managing the Message During a Crisis: A Guide to Planning and Implementing Your Response*. To prepare your alumni for sharing their story in a variety of contexts, download *Sharing Your Treatment Court Story: A Guide to Help You Prepare*.

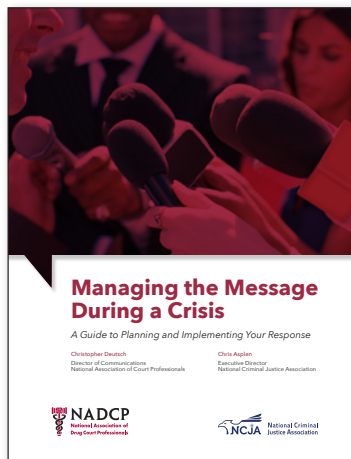
NADCP stands ready to assist with your media preparation, outreach, and follow-up. If you would like assistance, please email [communications@allrise.org](mailto:communications@allrise.org).

## A Note on COVID-19

Development of this publication began before the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the guidance provided is as applicable to these uncertain times as it will be when life returns to normal. The pandemic has generated significant interest in stories about virtual court, treatment, and supervision. This may be an opportunity for your program to tell the story of how you have responded and how you ensure the well-being of your participants. Before reaching out to the media, however, it is important to be sure that your program's policies are aligned with Centers for Disease Control and state guidelines, that you have reviewed NADCP's COVID-19 resources, and that you are following recommended practices.



Sharing Your Treatment Court Story



Managing the Message During a Crisis



National Drug Court Month Kit

## UNDERSTANDING THE MEDIA LANDSCAPE

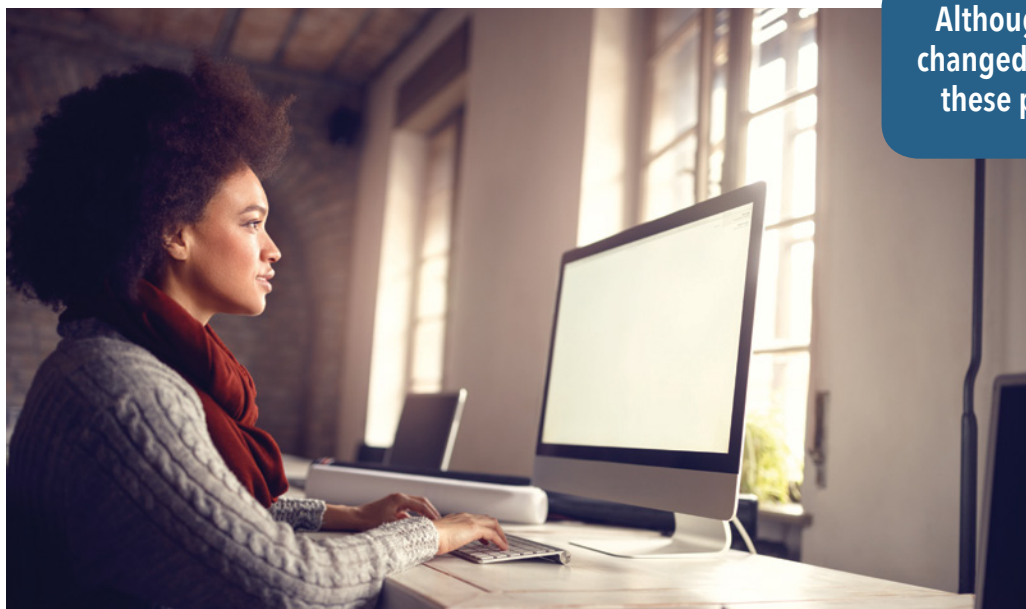
The news media can impact how the public, decision makers, policy makers, and others view and support treatment court programs.

We rely on newspapers, radio stations, television networks, and online news outlets to relay the news to us. But the media landscape is changing rapidly. It increasingly offers a combination of information and entertainment—all at a frenetic pace. And thanks to our smartphones, we can consume news at any time of day. Due to this lightning-fast marketplace, the media have a constant need for content. This appetite for stories provides opportunities for treatment courts with compelling stories to talk about their life-saving work.

The internet has also become a great equalizer that amplifies stories with attention and eyeballs. In the past, a small weekly newspaper might reach only 2,000 people. Now a story in that local newspaper, published online, can reach millions, as many as or more than a nationally broadcast television news story.

News stories today are succinct. Printed news stories can be 600 to 800 words or even less. Longer-form journalism, with feature stories of 1,000 to 2,000 words or more, is not printed as often, but online platforms have given some of these stories a new lease on life, since they aren't restricted by needing to fit on the printed page. Many television broadcast news stories now average less than two minutes long, and online stories are often chopped into digestible news nuggets.

Can you say everything you want to say about treatment courts in two minutes or less? Or in a 10-second sound bite? And convey context, details, or empathy? It can be done, but excellent storytelling is required. This guide is designed to help you be a confident, well-informed, and engaging storyteller who knows how to pitch reporters and convey a powerful message.



Although the pandemic has changed the media landscape, these principles still apply.

# THE POWER OF STORIES

There are numerous ways to tell a treatment court story. Your challenge is to identify an angle and tell the story in the most compelling way possible.

What do treatment courts have to offer that is newsworthy? Treatment courts demonstrate justice reform, they are on the front lines of the addiction and mental health epidemics, they help people overcome the odds and inspire the public, and they offer redemptive or human-interest stories as communities come together to support a graduate or hold a celebratory ceremony, and as families are reunited.

A good story does more than inform or amplify, it creates emotional resonance with the audience. A great story accomplishes this while stimulating the desire to get involved.

## What Makes an Effective Treatment Court Story?

**Character:** Because most media stories are so brief, they generally focus on one compelling individual who serves as the “main character.” This person must be credible, honest, and sincere. Often, most of the message in a treatment court story comes from a treatment court graduate, someone who has been living securely in recovery for several years and is able to reflect on and talk about their experiences. Sometimes the main character is a treatment court judge or staff member who is talking about the program and how they see it change lives, or what they hope to accomplish. The main character does not take away from the many other individuals involved in a treatment court’s success; instead, they amplify the work of the team and demonstrate the collective success of all involved.

**Immersion:** A good story offers enough details to help the viewer or reader understand the issue. This does not mean that the story goes into all the details of a person’s addiction or recovery, or the specifics of the treatment court model. An immersive story compellingly shares enough details to generate empathy and understanding among viewers and readers.

**Context:** A good story connects to the larger treatment court movement. Sometimes this is done with numbers or statistics, research study anecdotes, a quote from the NADCP, or a discussion about justice reform and what that looks like in a community. It can be as simple as a prosecutor saying, “We know that jail is not always the answer. It is far more effective to connect individuals with treatment and recovery support so they can be a productive part of society.”

**Call to action:** How do we make a good story great? Give the audience something to do with the emotion it generated. Calls to action may be specific or general, but they are important because they engage the audience more deeply. Specific calls to action may be to ask the public to contact elected officials and support funding, or to donate food to a holiday event. More general calls to action can simply lead the audience to consider how they might help. Imagine a graduate telling their story in an interview following their graduation. They detail their journey and transformation, surrounded by their children. “Treatment court saved my life. Not only that, it saved my family.” On its own, this story carries emotional weight. But they are not done! “As I stand here today, I can’t help but think about the families out there that need help. We have to make sure treatment court is available to save their lives too.” This simple call to action is not specific, but it gives the audience an idea to latch onto the next time they hear about potential budget cuts to treatment or the courts.

# MESSAGING 101: WHAT IS A TREATMENT COURT?

When planning for a media event or an interview, it is important to consider the audience you wish to reach and to develop messaging specific to that audience.

The most common question asked by media is also the simplest, but it can be difficult to answer. **What is a treatment court?** There is no one way to answer this question. In fact, how you answer it should change depending on the context in which the question is asked and the audience you are trying to reach.

For example, elected officials generally prefer to hear about money and resources saved, reductions in crime, and evidence-based practices. The public might respond more to messages about saving lives and reuniting families. You know your community best; think through how you can convey the important work of your program in the most impactful way possible.

Consider the three definitions of a treatment court below. They all describe what a treatment court is, but they do so by emphasizing different messaging points that appeal to specific audiences.

“In treatment court, **treatment providers** ensure that each person receives an individualized, **evidence-based treatment** plan, and **work as a team** with law enforcement, probation, defense, prosecution, and the judge to hold participants **accountable** and provide ongoing support. Together, we **save lives, reunite families, and make the community safer.**”

“Our treatment court is an **accountability court**. We use a combination of **close supervision** and **rigorous treatment** to hold participants **accountable** for their actions and teach them to be **productive members of the community**. Our program **saves \$13,000** for every person we serve, money that can go to **help law enforcement** focus on **violent criminals.**”

“Every family has been impacted by **addiction**. In treatment court, **instead of simply punishing people**, we offer **evidence-based treatment and ensure accountability through a holistic, team-oriented approach**. Not only does this approach help **people get better** and go on to live productive lives, it frees up **law enforcement to focus on violent criminals**, which makes us all safer.”

These messages all work well, but there is one more trick you can use. Illustrate what a treatment court does through a story.

“One of my first participants was a young veteran who was really struggling with opioid use disorder. When he came into the program he was living out of his car, and his family wasn’t speaking to him. He had nowhere to turn and was hopeless. My team, including our outstanding treatment providers, worked with him to develop a treatment plan to meet his needs. He came before me regularly so we could talk about his progress. It wasn’t always smooth sailing, but over time we began to see a change. He was able to reconnect with his family, and he was healthy and optimistic about his future. I’ll never forget the day he came to court with a smile on his face because he had gotten a job. He’s a manager now. I can’t help but think about what might have happened had treatment court not been here to help save him.”

Take some time to develop several ways of defining your program based on the messaging most important to your community. Identify a couple of stories that highlight the work you do. And practice with the individuals most likely to speak to the press so they are comfortable with the message.



## AUDIENCES

- Funders
- Skeptics
- General public
- Colleagues
- Legislators
- Community



## MESSAGES

- Lower recidivism
- Restore communities
- Reduce crime and make people safer
- Save money
- Reunite families
- Address the opioid epidemic
- Make better use of resources
- Help folks get back to work
- Send people back to school
- Improve public health
- Ensure public safety

# WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

## Identify Your Local News Media

How do you find the local news media? Start by looking around your community. Is there a local newspaper, radio station, television station, or other news outlet? Larger cities will have more news coverage than smaller ones. Suburbs of big cities will often be covered by news stations that are anchored in a metropolitan area. If you aren't sure where to start, use Google to look up news media for your town, city, or county.

1. Create a list of news outlets, including the address, the phone number for the news desk or metro desk, and any email addresses listed to receive press releases.
2. Do a search on the news outlet website to see if they have any coverage of treatment courts or related issues. If you have a veterans treatment court, DWI court, or family court, look for stories about veterans, drunk driving, or foster care and try to identify reporters who might find your program of interest. Add the reporters who wrote these stories to the list too, in addition to the news desks.

3. Review your spreadsheet and update the email addresses and phone numbers. Check media outlet websites once every three months for staffing changes. As you work with reporters, you will probably add names and contact information to your media list.

## Invite the Media to Cover Your Program

How you approach the media about covering a story can vary depending on what kind of story you are trying to offer. Some stories are event-specific—such as a graduation ceremony, the 100th treatment court graduate for your court, National Drug Court Month, or the opening of the court. Some stories are topic-specific. An in-depth profile of a treatment court graduate, a sit-down with the judge to talk about treatment court and justice reform, or a story about new technology being used in a treatment court program may all require different approaches.

TYPE OF EVENT	WHO TO INVITE	WHAT TO SEND	REACH
Treatment court graduation ceremony	Newspapers, radio, television	Basic press advisory; mention availability of interview subjects and film or video	Send to all assignment desks and contacts
Holiday lunch for treatment court graduates and their families	Newspapers, radio, television	Basic press advisory; mention availability of interview subjects and film or video	Send to all assignment desks and contacts
Profile of a treatment court graduate	Pick one news outlet to target for the profile, and identify a reporter to approach	Draft a one- or two-paragraph pitch showcasing key story elements	Send to one reporter, wait for response, and if no, send to another
Judge and staff reflect on treatment court anniversary, share vision for court's future	Pick one news outlet to target, and identify a reporter to approach	Draft a one- or two-paragraph pitch showcasing key story elements	Send to one reporter, wait for response, and if no, send to another

## Make the Pitch

Pitching gets your story to someone at a media outlet who can make a decision on coverage. If you are focusing on one outlet or reporter for a story, you'll use a direct pitch. If you are trying to reach several outlets to cover an event, you'll use a media advisory.

Here are the elements of a pitch:

**1. The hook:** Link your pitch to a recent new story or recent coverage by the reporter. Help them understand the relevance by giving some brief context.

**2. The timing:** If a reporter likes a story, they will do their own pitch to their editors. This takes time. Be sure to pitch well in advance and, if about a specific event, provide clear dates.

**3. The available resources:** The more you can prepackage the story, the better. Let them know who will be available for an interview and what assets you may have that will create a compelling, well-rounded story.

In each case, you will need to be persistent and follow up any emails with a phone call.

### SAMPLE DIRECT PITCH

Dear XYZ,

I read your recent story about an increase in impaired driving in our community and wanted to reach out with a unique and timely story that I think you'll find compelling. When Robert Smith came before the judge at the county DWI court, he was afraid he would be sent to prison for years. Instead, Judge Taylor looked beyond Robert's crimes and recognized a need for substance use disorder treatment. Judge Taylor and his team connected Robert with treatment; provided support, supervision, and accountability; and watched him earn back the trust of his community and, most importantly, the love and trust of his five-year-old daughter. Now Robert mentors others struggling with addiction who are coming through the same court. A profile of Robert will help readers understand that while impaired driving is a critical issue, there are solutions in our community that make a difference.

Robert and Judge Taylor are both available for interviews. Footage of Robert's graduation from treatment court is also available. Thanks for your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

## SAMPLE MEDIA ADVISORY

### **[Your treatment court] to Celebrate National Drug Court Month with Special Graduation Ceremony; [Name] Will Deliver Keynote Address**

[CITY, STATE, DATE]—In celebration of National Drug Court Month, the [treatment court] will hold a [graduation ceremony/event] on [date] at [location]. [Name (judge, member of Congress, etc.)] will deliver the keynote address. The event will recognize [#] individuals whose lives have been transformed by the treatment and support provided by the program. Media is invited to attend, with interviews available upon request. To RSVP please contact [contact information].

**What:** National Drug Court Month Celebration

**When:** [Date, time]

**Where:** [Location]

**Why:** Treatment courts across the nation are holding special events to celebrate National Drug Court Month. Drug courts and other treatment courts are considered the most effective strategy for reducing addiction, crime, and recidivism while saving taxpayer dollars.

With their friends and families in attendance, this graduation will honor men and women who have completed an intensive program of comprehensive substance use disorder treatment, close supervision, and accountability.

[If you have information on a few graduates willing to share their story, include three to five sentences on each here.]

National Drug Court Month is coordinated by the National Association of Drug Court Professionals (NADCP). This year marks the 30th anniversary of treatment courts. In recognition, treatment courts throughout the nation are advocating to ensure continued federal and state funding for these effective, evidence-based programs. Our uplifting graduation is evidence of the tremendous impact the [treatment court] has had on our community and will send a powerful message that these programs are vital to the health and well-being of our state.

There are more than 3,000 treatment courts in the United States, serving 150,000 people annually. Since 1989, treatment courts have served 1.5 million people and saved billions of tax dollars. Learn more at [NADCP.org](http://NADCP.org).

**Contact:** Name, phone number, email address

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## Op-eds and Letters to the Editor

Writing an opinion editorial (op-ed) or a letter to the editor is one way to share your message and advocate for treatment courts. An op-ed is generally longer and tackles a relevant issue in the community. A letter to the editor is shorter and written in response to a published article. It's important to follow the newspaper's word count requirements and submission guidelines, which are typically listed online.

**Monitor the news.** Monitoring the news will give you a feel for the types of stories reporters are looking for, and which reporters are writing about your issue. It is also a great way to look for story ideas. If a news outlet runs a story about an increase in drug overdoses or impaired driving, it will generally welcome a pitch, op-ed, or letter to the editor from your program offering a solution.

**Find a news hook.** National Drug Court Month, held in May, gives you an opportunity to talk about treatment courts. Veterans Day is an opportunity for media to highlight stories about veterans and to talk about veterans treatment court.<sup>1</sup>

**Know the word limit.** Newspapers have limited space, and editors don't have the time to cut your piece down to size. In gen-

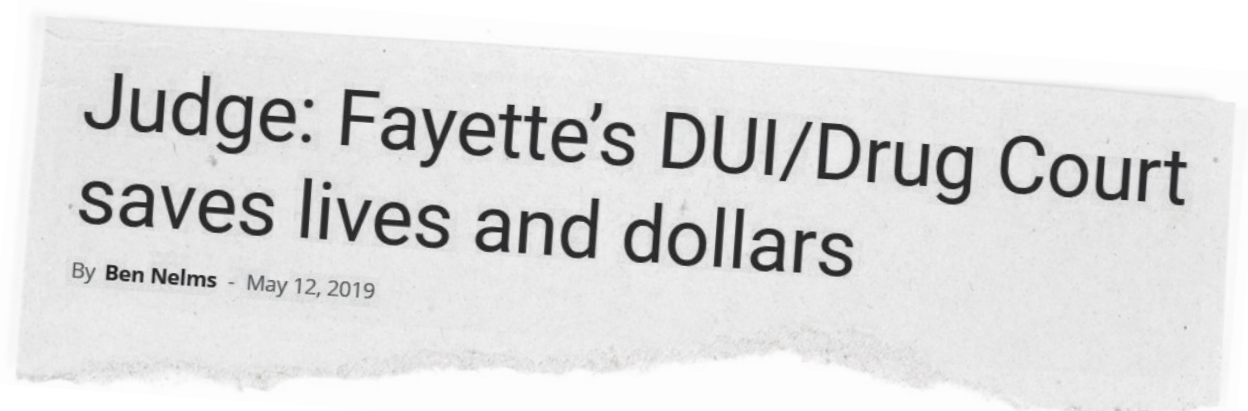
eral, 600 to 800 words will do for an op-ed, but check the paper's op-ed page to find out their preference. Letters to the editor are often under 300 words, and many newspapers even request that letters be under 200 words.

**Stick to a single point.** Make one point clearly and persuasively. "Humanize" your op-ed. Illustrations, anecdotes, and personal stories help explain and bring complicated issues to life. Think about your personal experiences in treatment court, and use them in the op-ed. Make a specific recommendation.

**These are opinion pieces.** State your opinion on what is needed to ensure that your treatment court can continue to operate effectively.

**Draw the reader in and get to the point.** Your first paragraph should draw the reader in by using a dramatic vignette or a well-stated argument. If you choose to open with an anecdote or other device, make sure you quickly get to the point.

**End with a bang.** Your final paragraph is as important as your opening paragraph. Be sure to summarize your argument in one strong final paragraph.



<sup>1</sup> The current COVID-19 pandemic has led numerous outlets to write stories about how institutions, including the courts, are responding. This is another possible news hook for your program.

## SAMPLE OP-ED

### **Celebrating National Drug Court Month** (457 words)

Oct. 27, 2019 at 6:54 p.m., *The Washington Post* (260 words)

A courtroom is not a place where you expect to find scenes of celebration and tears of joy. Unless, of course, it's drug court. This May, drug courts throughout [state] will join more than 4,000 such programs nationwide in celebrating National Drug Court Month. This year alone, more than 150,000 individuals nationwide who entered the justice system due to addiction will receive lifesaving treatment and the chance to repair their lives, reconnect with their families, and find long-term recovery. National Drug Court Month is a celebration of the lives restored by drug court, and it sends the powerful message that these programs must be expanded to reach more people in need.

More than 30 years ago, the first drug court opened its doors with a simple premise: Rather than continue to allow individuals with long histories of addiction and crime to cycle through the justice system at great expense to the public, use the leverage of the court to keep them engaged in treatment long enough to be successful. Today, drug courts and other treatment courts have proven that a combination of accountability and compassion saves lives while also preserving valuable resources and reducing exorbitant criminal justice costs.

*[Insert a brief graduate success story. Example: Several years ago, a young woman entered our treatment court. After years of struggling with a substance use disorder, she resorted to stealing to support her addiction. She was arrested numerous times, but nothing changed. She was facing years in prison when she got the chance to participate in our treatment court.*

*In treatment court, she met regularly with a case manager and received rigorous treatment and counseling. With the help of the court team, including community-based treatment providers, she began to put her life back together. While in the program, she enrolled in college and found part-time work, with our help. She completed the treatment court program and went on to get her bachelor's degree and reconnect with her family.*

*Today, she has no criminal record holding her back. She is happy, healthy, employed, and contributing to our community.]*

This is just one of the thousands of individual stories that demonstrate why treatment courts are so critical in the effort to address addiction and related crime. And the scientific research agrees: Numerous studies have found that treatment courts reduce crime and drug use and save money. Research shows treatment courts also improve education, employment, housing, financial stability, and family reunification, which reduces foster care placements.

Treatment courts represent a compassionate approach to the ravages of addiction. This year's National Drug Court Month celebration should signal that the time has come to reap the economic and societal benefits of expanding this proven budget solution to all in need.

## SAMPLE LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### Drug court diversion is of great help in the opioid crisis

Oct. 27, 2019 at 6:54 p.m., *The Washington Post* (260 words)

As a West Virginian and a substance use disorder clinician with more than 11 years in recovery, I read with interest the profile of my state's fight to hold drug companies accountable while still struggling to get help to families impacted by addiction ["An easy target," front page, Oct. 21]. There is no greater tragedy of the opioid epidemic than the trauma inflicted on children. I know from firsthand experience: No program is more effective at providing treatment to families and children than drug court.

I started experimenting with opioids when I was 12. By 21, I was facing 20 years in prison for burglaries committed to support my addiction. I'd still be locked up if I weren't offered the opportunity for treatment and recovery in the Boone/Lincoln County drug court. It saved my life. I now have a master's degree in social work and serve as program coordinator for a new family-focused substance use disorder program at Boone Memorial Hospital called Brighter Futures Substance & Mental Health Treatment. I am mom to a beautiful 7-month-old healthy baby boy.

Boone County launched its first family treatment court, which provides treatment for parents struggling with addiction and trauma. (I serve on the board overseeing the program.) Our family treatment court will help heal my community by providing services to keep families together instead of placing children in foster care. I am filled with hope for my community and work to give back to those who are struggling.

Addiction tears families apart, but recovery can restore the opportunity for a bright future.

Chelsea Carter, Madison, W.Va.

Treatment courts — including drug court, D.W.I. court and veterans treatment court — offer an alternative to incarceration and a path to recovery. They connect participants with evidence-based treatment and other services in their community, including housing, employment and family reunification. Research confirms the majority of those who complete treatment courts go on to live healthy, productive lives. When considering a public health approach to addiction, treatment courts must be part of the solution.

Carson Fox  
Alexandria, Va.

*The writer is chief executive of the National Association of Drug Court Professionals.*

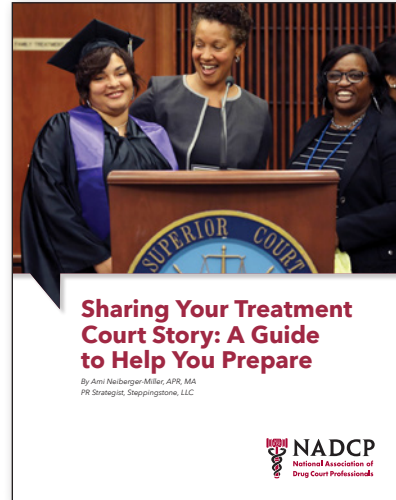
## The Interview

The decision as to who talks with the media about your treatment court program is critical. The person should be credible, authentic, and willing to share. Most importantly, they should be prepared. Pull out your messaging and review it in advance of the event or interview. Practice answering likely questions. Being interviewed is a skill, and while it may come more naturally to some people, everyone must practice to excel. If you are asking treatment court alumni to participate, it is best to avoid new graduates if possible. Recovery is fragile, and it is always best to prioritize those individuals who are most stable in their recovery. That said, setting up interviews with recent graduates may be unavoidable if the media is covering a graduation. It is the responsibility of the court to ensure that graduates are fully aware of the presence of media, have the choice to opt out of having their picture taken, and are prepared in advance to speak about their experience.

**NADCP advises never asking an individual in early recovery to interview with the media. They may be willing, but they may not be in a position to thoroughly evaluate the long-term impact of telling their story publicly.**

Because treatment court graduates have experienced some challenging situations in their lives, it's important to help any graduates participating in press interviews feel comfortable. It's also important to talk about what they will say and how they will say it. The types of stories often told in the recovery community—with the storyteller revealing significant personal details about life during addiction—may not be entirely appropriate or ready for news coverage. Worse, news media can focus on the shocking aspects of life before treatment court and not really talk about the court program or the hard work of recovery.

**Before any graduate speaks to the public, it is critical that they review [this document](#) and understand all the considerations that come along with sharing their story publicly.**



Talk with anyone being interviewed to gauge their comfort level and to help them know how to share their story in a way that is truthful and honors their past and where they are today without jeopardizing their recovery, job, or family relationships. New employers, family members, and others in the community could see a news story and ask the graduate personal questions. Neighbors seeing the front of a house in a news story filled with details about life before treatment court could gossip. Interview locations can be changed. Details about life before treatment court and recovery can be shared but can be structured to illustrate what a big difference recovery is making now.

## Messaging Box

A simple messaging box is a handy way to organize your thoughts and capture your most important message. Below is an example of the messaging box for an interview on medication-assisted treatment.



<b>PRIMARY MESSAGE</b>			
Medication-assisted treatment (MAT) is a critical component of a larger continuum of care available to treatment court participants.			
<p><b>SUPPORTING MESSAGE</b></p> <p>Treatment providers are active members of the treatment court team, responsible for developing and implementing individualized evidence-based treatment plans, including MAT when clinically appropriate.</p>	<p><b>SUPPORTING MESSAGE</b></p> <p>If a treatment plan includes MAT, our treatment providers work with a local physician to provide the appropriate medication. Many of our participants have an opioid addiction and are currently receiving MAT under the supervision of our treatment providers.</p>	<p><b>SUPPORTING MESSAGE</b></p> <p>We have seen numerous lives saved by the combination of MAT, counseling, recovery support, and social services provided by the treatment court team.</p>	<p><b>SUPPORTING MESSAGE</b></p> <p><i>Notes on your message:</i></p>

## Staying on Message

Once you've identified your key messages, it is important to stay on message. Reporters tend to ask the same questions in different ways to try and draw out a different response, but you are under no obligation to change your answers! Sticking to the message will emphasize its importance and make it less likely that your answer will be misinterpreted.

There are times when a reporter will veer off an agreed-upon subject to ask about other topics. Or they may probe into areas about which you are not comfortable responding. When this happens, simply pivot back to your key message. Think back to the last time you watched a political debate. Did you notice that the candidate seemed to answer the question they wanted to answer, regardless of what was asked? This is pivoting. Pivoting does not mean being evasive or not forthcoming, it simply means directing the conversation back to the topics you are most comfortable with, prepared for, and able to speak authoritatively on.

For example, during an interview about MAT a reporter may say, "There is concern that drug courts have been slow to embrace MAT. Is this true?"

You are under no obligation to speculate about a general concern or offer a national perspective on all treatment courts. Your focus is on your court, and using a pivot can bring the conversation back to the great work of your program. You may say, "Our focus is on ensuring that our treatment court has the latest best practices related to MAT. Here are some of the things we are doing...."

Below are examples of pivots you can use to remain on message:

### Pivots

- It's important to understand ...
- I want to point out that ...
- A bigger issue is ...
- Our focus is ...
- Let's not forget that ...
- If we take a closer look, we see ...
- The evidence on this is clear ...
- This is a common misconception ...

## MEDIA RULES TO LIVE BY

**You are in control.** The media operates in a fast-paced environment, and working with them can often feel out of your control. It doesn't have to be. You are under no obligation to talk with media when they call or approach you for an interview. It is perfectly acceptable to take their information and let them know you will be back in touch. When setting up an interview, specify the duration. Reporters love to extend interviews, because the longer it goes the more likely it is that you will drop your guard and say something you regret. Offer 10 minutes, and when the time is up politely inform them that you have to move on to other work.

**Know the reporter and the angle.** Media invited to cover an event are generally supportive. When fielding an interview request via email or phone, take time to review any coverage the reporter or outlet has done on your program. Are they new to treatment courts, or have they covered them in the past? Have they been supportive or critical? A little research will help you determine the messaging needed to respond to the inquiry.

**Keep it simple.** When speaking to a reporter, try to use layman's terms and lose the jargon. Do not dumb down what you have to say, but try to speak plainly, like you are talking to a family member or friend who is not familiar with your work. Never assume a reporter has any prior knowledge of treatment court programs. If you need to avoid a particular subject, simply say you aren't able to discuss that and pivot to a topic you can talk about in more depth. Try to avoid saying "no comment."

**Always be truthful, and always be prepared.** Take time to do your research and prepare your messaging/talking points. If you plan to discuss statistics, be sure to verify them first. If you are unsure of a statistic, it is better not to offer it.

NADCP is a resource for [national statistics](#). You can also reach out to contacts at the state level for data specific to your state or community.

**Tell a story.** Facts and data are important, but the most likely quote to be featured in a story is one that has emotional resonance. Think of an individual story that captures the transformation that occurs in treatment court.

## DWI Court program gives hope to offenders

By Chad Washington [cwashington@fbherald.com](mailto:cwashington@fbherald.com) Mar 12, 2020 0



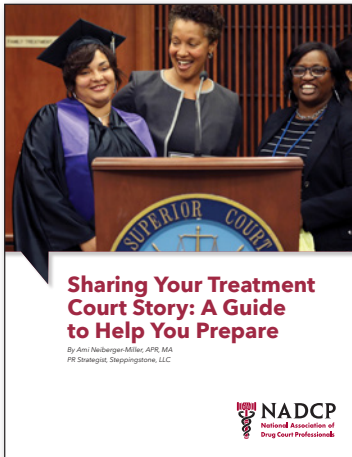
## After the Story

After the story runs, there are several ways you can amplify your message. Here are a few ideas:

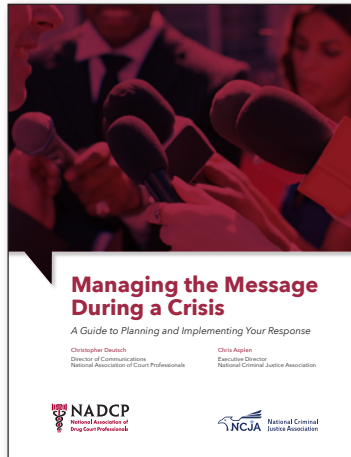
- Post the story to court and individual social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, or LinkedIn.
- Link to the story from your court's website.
- Email a link to the story to staff, supporters, graduates, etc.
- Email positive coverage to your elected officials, including your member(s) of Congress and their staff. They will love it!
- Write a thank-you note or email to the reporter.

## Getting Help

If you need help with your efforts to reach out to the media and share the treatment court story, NADCP and its staff of experts are only a phone call or email away. Please email [communications@allrise.org](mailto:communications@allrise.org). We can provide coaching and fact sheets, and connect you with a number of resources, including:



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Managing the Message During a Crisis



National Drug Court Month Kit



**National Association of Drug Court Professionals**

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