



A Media Guide for Phoenix Staff

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1 Part One: All About Phoenix

All About Phoenix

A Reference for Phoenix Staff



The Organization

Phoenix Youth Programs has been operating in Halifax/Kjipuktuk since 1987 offering youth programming and support to the local community.

Over the years, Phoenix has expanded to **13 locations** in Halifax/Kjipuktuk serving **youth ages 11-24** and their families in the community.

Phoenix's Mission

Together with the community, we support youth and families in their journey to thrive. We are a voice for social justice and community engagement.

Phoenix's Vision

We believe that we all have the right to respect, dignity, support and the opportunity to thrive.

Services and Supports

- Shelter
- Food
- Health care
- Housing support
- Money management
- Parenting support
- Recreation programming
- Education services
- Employment counselling & support

Our Programs and Services

Financial Advocacy*

- Trustee Program works with Phoenix youth providing financial guidance that supports their efforts to maintain their housing.
- Trustee will help youth develop monthly budgets and improve financial management skills to increase their independence, stability and help gain control in their lives.

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Our Programs and Services

Art and Recreation*

- After school programming
- Girl's group
- "It's More Than A Game" basketball program
- Summer programming
- Inter-generational programs
- Family nights
- Community kitchens
- Support for community events

Health Services*

In partnership with the IWK Phoenix has a nurse that offers free health care for our youth that includes but is not limited to:

- Health assessments
- Referrals for immunizations
- STI referrals
- Mental health support and coordination
- Nursing & physician care for some illnesses and injuries
- Obtaining a Nova Scotia Health Card

Phoenix Youth Shelter

1094 Tower Road, Halifax

Provides support to youths between the ages of 16 and 24 in offering free and safe emergency housing.

Phoenix Centre for Youth

6035 Coburg Road, Halifax

A walk-in centre open to support youths navigating their day-to-day lives where all services offered are confidential and non-judgemental.

Services include:

- housing support*
- advocacy
- crisis intervention
- counselling
- parenting support
- referral to community & internal resources
- health services*
- financial advocacy*
- food
- clothing
- shower & laundry
- computer & phone access

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Our Programs and Services

Housing Support*

The Housing Support worker works with Phoenix youth who are currently living in the shelter and those potentially at risk of entering the shelter system to support them in sourcing and maintaining housing.

Phoenix Supportive Housing Program

- Youths can apply to live at the Phoenix House where staff are available to support them finding longer-term and permanent housing.

Phoenix Homes for Independence

- Three homes each staffed with a Phoenix employee who lives as a roommate and offers in-house support to youth while they participate in Phoenix programming.
- Female, male and co-ed homes available to youths between the ages of 16 and 24.

Phoenix House

- 10-bed long-term solution for housing available to youths between the ages of 16 and 24 with the long-term goal of moving to independent living.

Phoenix Youth and Family Therapy

5547 Young Street, Halifax

Offers a team of clinical therapists and masters-level social workers that provide therapy services to youth from age 11 and older, ranging in supports for challenges such as:

- difficult family relationships
- coping with emotions
- grief and loss
- discrimination and poverty
- peer conflict and bullying
- histories of abuse
- challenges at school
- low self-esteem

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Our Programs and Services

Phoenix Learning and Employment Centre (PLEC)

6196 Quinpool Road, Suite 220, Halifax

Supports youths between the ages of 16 and 24 in sourcing employment.

LE@P at PLEC

Learn and Explore at Phoenix encourages youth to try their hand at new activities, build their skills, and therapeutically get involved in their community.

Phoenix Youth and Community Centre

Mulgrave Park, Halifax

At the invitation of Mulgrave Park, the centre offers a variety of programming including:

- art & recreation*
- team-building
- communication
- life skills development
- employment & education support programming

Youth Outreach Program

122-123 Jarvis Lane, Halifax

Provides support to youths between the ages of 16 and 24 within their family and community context.

Areas of specialized support include:

- mentorship
- advocacy and accompaniment
- housing
- employment and education
- arts and recreation
- health services
- family support

2 Part Two: Media Practices

Journalism is a way to stay connected

The practice of journalism is the production and distribution of newsworthy information. Stories are chosen based on the **five criteria of newsworthiness**:

- **Impact** - How many people does this story impact?
- **Conflict** - What type of conflict is present?
- **Novelty** - Is it unusual, bizarre or off beat?
- **Proximity** - How close to the story is the audience?
- **Timeliness** - When did it happen? Is it currently happening?

Journalists will reach out to organizations for stories to cover or to comment on a piece they may already be writing. Journalism is largely how communications are relayed between private and public sectors.

Deadlines

Deadlines are crucial in the communications profession as well as the journalism profession. It's important for all individuals involved to understand and meet the all set deadlines. News cycles are timely and in order to meet the demand of the story, deadlines need to be met by all parties.

Gatekeepers decide what stories are told

Gatekeeping is when an individual or an organization limits or filters the access to information. At times this may be beneficial to the organization but **can be seen negatively by the media**.

To ensure ethical access to information, a spokesperson should be readily available for questions or concerns regarding gatekept material. Ensure the spokesperson is equipped with all available information as well as potential responses.

Not all media is the same

The media operates very differently depending on what median you're dealing with.

Media as a whole operates to serve four functions:

- **To inform**
- **To persuade**
- **To entertain**
- **To transmit culture**

Not all media outlets are going to hit all four functions. They need to know their audience, grab their attention and hold onto it.

DO'S

- **Take your time.** You don't need to respond right away.
- **Include contact information on all documents** for a clear flow of communications.

DONT'S

- **DON'T** use the phrase "NO COMMENT." Instead, explain why you can't comment at this time.
- **DON'T PANIC.** Always take time to think before you respond.
- **DON'T** let problems get bad. Address them right away.

News Story Pathway

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What to do when the media calls:

- 1** Journalist contacts a Phoenix program location
- 2** Program staff forwards email and contact information to the Phoenix marketing and communications officer
- 3** The marketing and communications officer discusses potential story with director of communication
- 4** The marketing and communications officer contacts journalist for more information to find out timeframe and availability
- 5** Director of communications informs Phoenix's executive director
- 6** Marketing and communications officer and director of communications select best fit for the media interview
- 7** Program staff are contacted to check availability
- 8** The marketing and communications officer connects journalist and program staff to schedule interview
- 9** Program staff member is prepped by marketing and communications officer and communications director

**SADE
STACEY**

Communication and Marketing Officer
sstacey@phoenixyouth.ca

3 Part Three: Interview Preparation

Interview Preparation

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Successful interviews always begin with preparation.

- **Gather all the information you need to feel confident speaking on the subject.** Gathering this information allows you to prioritize important information on the topic and anticipate the reporter's questions.
- **Select the top three things people would like to know on the subject.** These three things should be key messages featured in many of your answers, but only if it's appropriate to include and sounds natural.
- **Understand that reporters are trying to gather as much information to share a story with the public.** They are not personally out to get you or the organization.

Things to keep in mind when preparing for interviews:

TV Interviews

- Avoid wearing patterns and bright colours
- Wear simple hairstyles and jewelry
- Wear appropriate and comfortable clothing

Online Interviews

- Select a quiet location with good lighting
- Warn housemates that you will be doing an interview
- Remain aware of your background and remove anything unnecessary or inappropriate
- Ensure your camera remains eye level and look at the camera while speaking
- Test your technology beforehand

Radio Interviews

- If the interview is over the phone, be aware of background noise
- When possible, use a landline instead of a cellphone
- Avoid nervous ticks that make noise, such as pen tapping

**NOTHING IS
"OFF THE
RECORD."**

Always remain polite and act as if the mic is on at all times.

Interview Preparation

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How to anticipate questions

Know the Five W's

The reporter's goal for an interview is to gather enough information to provide the public with a well-rounded story. It's important that you have the answers to the five W's to anticipate the questions that will be asked.

WHO

WHAT

WHEN

WHERE

WHY

Ask the Source

When you are contacted for an interview, you can ask the journalist what information they are looking for. This allows you to anticipate and prepare for the types of questions they will ask.

An Exercise

Think of and write down the potential questions for the interview. Once you have all the questions, **find a partner to review them with you and add any questions they feel will be asked.** Make your partner ask each question and provide a response to practice. This exercise will allow you to anticipate questions and reduce your stress during the interview.

Responding to tricky questions

- **"No comment" is never an appropriate answer to a question.** It assumes guilt or that you are hiding something.
- If the reporter asks you a confusing question, **don't hesitate to ask for clarification.** You never want to answer a question you don't understand.
- When faced with a tricky question, **never use speculation to answer.**
- **Instead,** if a reporter asks questions that can only be answered with speculation, respond with something similar to, **"I can't predict what will happen in the future."**

Interview Preparation

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Types of tricky questions

Double-ended questions

If the reporter asks you a double-ended question, answer the one you know the answer to first. If the other question is important to the reporter, they will ask after.

Pausing

Reporters often pause after you have answered a question. This is a strategy used to get a longer response. Don't be afraid of the silence and it is not your responsibility to fill.

Repeating questions

Reporters will use this strategy to see if you respond differently or provide more information. When appropriate, provide the same response to the repeated question.

Bait words

If the topic of the interview is intense or sensitive, reporters will often use bait words in their questions. This strategy is used to assert a specific tone to the interview. **Do not fall for this bait word or use it during your response.** Just because the reporter wants to insert a certain tone does not mean that you must respond with that tone.

“Would you like to add anything?”

This question is typically used at the end of the interview. This is your chance to add anything you feel should have been discussed. It is also your last chance to repeat your key messages.

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What is bridging?

Bridging is making the transition from the question asked by the journalist to the key messages about the event, program or story that needs to be shared.

This allows you to remain in control of the interview. It's important to answer the question being asked quickly and not be dismissive before moving to key messages.

Here are some phrases that can be used to bridge:

- "To focus on the main issue..."
- "Speaking of which..."
- "Let me emphasize again..."
- "Before we move on. I would like to add..."
- "I would also like to add that..."

Bridging Tips

Remain polite and courteous.

The journalist wants to know the information you are providing them.

Don't interrupt the journalist to make a point.

Working with the media is a mutually beneficial relationship so it's best to keep it positive.

When the interview is wrapping up, the journalist will most likely ask, "Is there anything you would like to add?"

This is a great opportunity to reiterate key messages again to ensure they are heard.

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What if I don't know the answer?

It's okay to not know the answer to a question.

Phoenix is a large organization, and no one is expected to know everything. If you are asked for information that you don't know, you can ask to call them back promptly with more information. Make sure you do get back to them because silence will only create negative feelings from the journalist or misinformation being released.

You may also pass them to someone who does know the answer.

It's never okay to lie to a reporter or decline to answer.

By declining to answer it can lead to assumptions, misinformation or the possibility that the media won't contact Phoenix again.

Examples

- "That's a great question. I'm not sure the answer to that right now. Can I call you back in three hours when I find out more information?"
- "Great question. I'm not sure how to answer that but I know ____ would know. Let me get you their contact information."

NOT

- "Great question, as an expert in underwater basket weaving, I know rocket science."
- "NO COMMENT."

Afterwards

It's always a good idea to write down the questions the journalist asked you and your responses.

This will help you prepare for future interviews by knowing the questions they asked. You can track how well you were able to insert the key messages into your answers. Interviewing is a skill that takes practice. Read, listen or watch the news after the interview to see how well the journalist shares the key messages.

4 Part Four: Phoenix's Voice

Key Messages

Key messages are the essential information you want the journalist to share with their audience.

When working on a specific event, service or location, make a list of three or four key messages that are typically one to two sentences long. These can be worked on with the communications and marketing officer.

Examples of Key Messages

Phoenix's Mission

- Together with the community, we support youth and families in their journey to thrive. We are a voice for social justice and community engagement.

Phoenix's Vision

- We believe that we all have the right to respect, dignity, support and the opportunity to thrive.

Other Key Messages

- Phoenix Youth Services proudly offers **nine programs across 12 locations in Nova Scotia.**
- Phoenix supports **youth between the ages of 11 and 24**, their families and communities across Nova Scotia.
- Since 1987, Phoenix has been dedicated to supporting youth and contributing to a vibrant community.
- Phoenix Youth Programs are **free of charge and accessible** to all that need them.
- Youth seeking Phoenix shelter should contact us by phone or email at:

Language

It's important that the language and terms used for Phoenix Youth Programs and the youth at Phoenix is consistent.

With so many programs and locations it's easy for terms to get confused. Phoenix works with vulnerable populations and it's necessary to ensure that they are met with the highest degree of respect.

Phoenix House was the first of 13 locations. However, it's common for many people to still refer to us with this title. To avoid confusion, **use the full organization name or the alternative title.**

Language Tips

- Full organization title: **Phoenix Youth Programs**
- Alternative title: **Phoenix**
- **NOT** Phoenix House
- Avoid using any possessive terminology.
- People are the leaders in their own lives. Phoenix leads by supporting them.
- Unless referring to a specific healthcare context **do not use "client."**
- For youth, use:
 - **"youth that we serve"**
 - **"youth at Phoenix"**
 - **"under supported youth"**
 - Do not use "youth at risk."