

Communications Resources: Press Release Best Practices

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Press Release

WHAT IS IT AND HOW SHOULD I USE IT?

A **press release** is an official statement that your facility shares with the news media. Press releases live in the public domain, which means that any stakeholder may see them. Think of a press release not just as a way to earn news coverage, but as an important marketing tool.

Press releases can help enhance facility brand exposure, effectively communicate important news with your community, or control the narrative and manage public perception when a crisis arises.

WHEN TO USE A PRESS RELEASE

Draft a press release to announce the hiring of new, key team members, share important facility news (like new patient service offerings or a major renovation), or share must-know information with the community (an extended closure, for instance).

DO NOT draft a press release to manage local facility issues or crisis situations without first consulting your RVP and PACS VP Corporate Communication, Brooks Stevenson at brooks.stevenson@pacs.com.

ELEMENTS OF A PRESS RELEASE

When drafting a press release, use [AP Style](#) and consider the following guidelines for each element of the press release template (example below):

1. **Headline:** The most important element that should grab the attention of audiences, provide a high-level overview of what the full release is about, and answer why they should continue reading.
 - Be concise and pithy
 - Include the name of your facility
 - Answer “what” with your headline
 - Use facts and figures, if you have them
 - Always consider your target audience
2. **Sub-head:** Opportunity to provide more context to the “what” headline while expanding on the “why” should audiences keep reading. While it’s technically optional, the sub-head should be used, as it allows for more space to communicate quickly with audiences. However, it’s important that new information and language is used for the sub-head.
3. **Dateline:** Signifies where and when the news is occurring. Typically, the location is the headquarters or city in which the facility is located, and the date is when the announcement is distributed. Typically, the name of the city is in capital letters. Reference AP Style for state abbreviations.
4. **Introduction:** Directly following the dateline, start with your facilities official name to lead directly into the “what” of the announcement. This is where you can expand on the headline and sub-head by providing information about what happened and why the reader should care. Because the audience for press releases are typically reporters, they are looking for easy-to-understand and to-the-point language.
5. **Body:** The majority of a press release is the body section that follows the lead. It should include quotes and additional proof points that continue to tell the story. Quotes should highlight spokespeople who are central to the story, and they should be ordered per their relevance/title. Ideally, each quote is followed by a supporting paragraph. Each paragraph should be about the same length and the full length of a press release shouldn’t be more than a page long - between 300 and 400 words. There are always exceptions; however, this is a good rule to follow.

6. **Boilerplate:** This is the “About Us” section in which provides a space for background and context about who is sending out the press release. If you don’t already have a boilerplate specific to your facility, you can start with the “About Us” elevator speech used on your website or other materials.
7. **Media contact information:** List who media should contact if they are interested in learning more or want to set up an interview with one of the spokespeople quoted in the press release.

HOW TO DISTRIBUTE A PRESS RELEASE

A press release can be “distributed” in a number of ways. Importantly, once it leaves the internal network, it’s considered “distributed” unless specified that the news is under embargo.

- **Post approved press release to facility website** in designated “News” section.
- **Work with a wire service - such as Business Wire or PR Newswire** - that will broadly distribute the approved press release for a fee.
- **Send approved press release as an attachment or link, along with a brief note,** to local media contacts who may be interested in covering the news.