

# *Public Service Announcements*

## The What, Why & How for Early Childhood

**PSA's** or Public Service Announcements are short, “non-commercial” announcements that are designed to provide information to the public. A non-commercial announcement contains information that benefits its intended audience.

**PSA's** in have been used to:

- Promote a celebratory event, such as the Week of the Young Child.
- Announce events that would be of interest to children and families, usually including some type of activity, often educational.
- Inform the public about issues and opportunities to learn more about a subject.
- Develop an informational campaign about resources available through an organization.
- Provide tips about an issue...health and safety for young children, choosing a quality early childhood program, the how and why of state regulations of child care.

**PSA's** must include information that is beneficial to the community and should not include controversial or self-serving material. For our purposes, they can be developed along the **SECA JUST ASK US! public awareness campaign theme** and highlight the expertise of the state early childhood affiliate.

PSA's can be developed in two ways:

- By the **organization**: The organization provides a recorded PSA (voice or video) to the station.
- By the **media outlet** that is willing to air the PSA: In this case, the media outlet records or films the PSA to be utilized by the station.

There are several types of media that can be utilized as PSA's.

- Radio
- Television
- Print

Each type of media requires a different approach and you'll find brief explanations of how to develop them in this advocacy kit.



## SOME TIPS TO WRITE A GOOD PSA

- 1) Avoid clichés such as “this is an announcement” or “we are holding an event”.
- 2) Use repetition in a radio PSA to make sure your message is heard but don’t use it in close proximity within the message.
- 3) Emphasize and maintain a narrow focus.
- 4) Include a “hook”, something to grab the listener’s attention.
- 5) Use present tense and active voice.
- 6) Use a conversational style.
- 7) Avoid words that are difficult to pronounce.
- 8) Vary sentence length to give rhythm.
- 9) Break up complex sentences.
- 10) Test your script before you send it out.

Source: *How to Write a PSA, Program Training and Consultation Center, The Media Network*, [www.ptcc.cfc.on.ca](http://www.ptcc.cfc.on.ca), Retrieved 4/7/14

## WHO TO CONTACT

Radio, TV stations and newspapers all have someone who is tasked with connecting with community resources and accepting PSA’s. These contacts may include:

- ❖ Public Service Manager
- ❖ Advertising Sales
- ❖ Promotion Managers

You’ll need to contact each media outlet individually to determine who receives the PSA’s and makes a decision about whether they will be utilized. This person can also let you know what type of format you need to submit, any PSA guidelines specific to the media outlet, and the dates/days on which they will accept PSA’s.

Make sure that you follow their guidelines exactly when you submit. Anything that doesn’t follow their guidelines will automatically be sent to the “do not use” pile.



## GUIDELINES FOR RADIO PSA'S

These PSA's are usually utilized during a community calendar segment or to fill a little time between commercials and regular programming. Here are the most popular lengths of PSA's and the number of words that usually make up that time segment.

<b>Length of PSA</b>	10 seconds	15 seconds	20 seconds	30 seconds
<b>Number of words</b>	20-25 words	30-35 words	40-50 words	60-75 words

Source: *How to Write a PSA*, Program Training and Consultation Center, The Media Network, [www.ptcc.cfc.on.ca](http://www.ptcc.cfc.on.ca), Retrieved 4/7/14

Some radio stations want a **recorded PSA** that they can simply play when they have time. If you submit a recorded PSA (and this can be as simple as having someone in the organization record a message), make sure it's in the format that the station requires. Also, label the recorded PSA with your organization's name, the person to contact, including phone & e-mail. The recorded version of the PSA should be accompanied by a written copy of the PSA in case there's a problem with the recording.

Other radio stations prefer to have their **on-air talent read the PSA** and, in this case, you would submit a written script. You may also have the option of having one of their media "celebrities" record the PSA for you, particularly if that celebrity is a supporter of your organization or cause.

You'll need to determine which avenue your radio station prefers.

## GUIDELINES FOR TELEVISION PSA'S

There's really no difference between the radio and TV PSA in terms of content, other than you'll have a video presentation to accompany a script. This PSA will be visual and will feature either a member of your organization or a "personality" who has agreed to assist.

Producing **this type of PSA should be done professionally** and TV stations will have strict guidelines about what they will accept. You may be able to work with the station's community or public service manager to have the PSA recorded in the TV studio at little or no cost to the organization. Each station is different and will approach this "community service" activity differently. If this is not an option,



consider budgeting sufficient funds to produce a quality product that will appear professional and send the message that you're a professional organization.

## ***JUST ASK US!***

### **Sample PSA Scripts**

**To assist you in developing your PSA**, here are two options that can be customized to work for your affiliate. You'll need to insert the name of your affiliate and contact information in the appropriate slots in the copy. (The contact line can be revised to reflect how you want them to make contact...phone, through your website, e-mail?)

#### **By the Affiliate/Organization**

Length: 20 seconds

- **JUST ASK US!** We're the experts.
- The *(name of state affiliate)* knows that high-quality early childhood programs can really make a difference in the lives of young children.
- What is a high quality program? How does it make a difference? Want to know more? We've got the answers.
- Contact us at: \_\_\_\_\_
- **Don't forget: JUST ASK US!**

#### **By Media Personality**

Length: 30 seconds

- High-quality early childhood programs can really make a difference in the lives of young children.
- *(Name of state affiliate)* is our state early childhood professional organization and they're the experts. They work with young children every day.
- What is a high quality program? How does it make a difference? Want to know more? They can answer your questions.
- Contact them at: \_\_\_\_\_
- The professionals of the *(name of state affiliate)* want you to "**JUST ASK US!**"



## OPTIONS TO ENHANCE YOUR PSA

### Music

PSA's can contain music and there are times when the music will enhance and amplify the message; however, you can't just take an item from the playlist on your iPod and add some sound. Music is considered "intellectual property" and requires a license or agreement from the artist to utilize that music. You may have a contact with a musician who has something appropriate to use as background music but make sure that you have gotten the appropriate agreements in place before you incorporate it into a PSA. Some artists will be delighted with the additional exposure this grants them but get their approval in writing before you move forward.

### Logos/Photos

If you're utilizing a filmed version of the PSA, you can insert your logo into the visuals to enhance the message of **JUST ASK US!** If you want to utilize photos, you must have photo releases from everyone that is included in those photos. Be particularly careful if you're using photos of children. If you need a sample photo release, click here. [Photo Guidelines and Sample Release](#)

## OTHER RESOURCES

*How to Write a PSA*, [How to Write a PSA - PTCC](#), Program Training and Consultation Centre, The Media Network,

*Writing a Good PSA*, [PSAguides.doc](#), Oregon State

*Effective Public Service Campaigns*, [public\\_service\\_ad.pdf](#)

*Public Service Announcement Scripting Template*, [publicserviceannouncement\\_scriptingtemplate.pdf](#)

