

LDDI Training Exercise – Effective Letters to the Editor

Time: 45 minutes

Background

As part of your work to pass the Kids Safe Chemical Act (KSCA), your coalition is planning a massive Letter to the Editor campaign. The KSCA has recently been introduced in Congress and will be debated over the next four months. Your goal is to have letters published in 90% of the daily and weekly newspapers in the state and to have at least 5 published in each of the 5 largest circulation papers over this time period. As part of this campaign, you need to come up with a model LTE that could be used by volunteers to inspire and guide their own letter writing.

Task

Each person will write a brief letter to the editor – **no more than 150 words** – conveying a compelling message about your issue. We will complete this exercise in three parts:

1. You will have 20 minutes to write your letter.
 - You will be addressing this letter to your local daily, or weekly paper
 - Recall that your message needs to be **credible, concise, relevant**, and **compelling** to your targeted audience
 - Recall that an effective letter is brief, personal, and timely (tied to ongoing events)
2. We will then break in to groups of three and spend 10 minutes reading our letters and giving feedback to each other. Some questions to ask of each letter:
 - Who is the intended audience? Will the letter connect with them?
 - What do you think the letter writer wants you to know or do? This should be given by the people hearing the letter – not the writer. Was this response the letter-writers intent?
 - Is it clear?
3. During the last 15 minutes we will ask for volunteers to read their letters aloud to the group with an opportunity for discussion and feedback.