



CANADIAN  
UNITARIAN  
COUNCIL

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DU CANADA

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## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MEDIA INTERVIEWS RE REFUGEE SPONSORSHIP

With increasing requests for media appearances and interviews, CUC staff would like to offer some recommendations about your congregation's response.

1. **You don't have to say 'yes.'** It is entirely your congregation's decision about which requests you choose to accept and which ones you turn down. Further, you do not need to answer every question asked within an interview. I don't know or I'm not at liberty to discuss that, are perfectly acceptable answers.
2. **The board needs to make the decision.** Anything you say in an interview is out in the public domain, and once said, cannot be unsaid. It will stand as a representation of your congregation and might well be attached to the wider Unitarian Universalist reputation. Your congregation's board needs to make the decision, or have some protocols in place that will enable a designate to make the decision on their behalf - some requests are time-sensitive and need a quick decision.
3. **Designate a spokesperson or two.** Your spokesperson/s should be media-savvy if possible, articulate, know the subject matter, be able to think on their feet, not easily flustered, and has the approval of the board.
4. **Agree on what will be said.** Decide ahead of time as a group what you are willing to share in an interview. Check with the refugee family about what they are comfortable being made public – names, ages, photos, personal details? Or none of it? A refugee family should never be identified before their arrival to Canada, for their own safety and protection. Once they have arrived, be certain they understand that media interviews are not a requirement but a request: They may not always believe they have the **right to say NO**.

Most media will want information about who, what, when, where and why. Agree on how your group wants to address these, then write up a list of 4-6 talking points and stick to this. If you are asked a question you don't know how to answer or are not comfortable answering, you don't have to answer – say, "I don't have that information," or "I will check and get back to you," or "Let's move to the next question."

5. **Rehearse.** If possible, practice saying your statement out loud. With a live interview, every 'um' and 'er' and run-on sentence will be captured. Speak slowly and clearly.
6. **Photo and video release.** If photos or videos are involved, make sure everyone in the photo/video signs a release form. The interviewer will often have one, and if not, then no photo or video should be taken.
7. **You are in charge.** There is sometimes a tendency to say 'yes' to media requests or feel that all questions need to be answered. YOU make the decisions about what you want to say and disclose.
8. **Media releases.** If your congregation decides to issue a media release, some of the same recommendations above apply. A sample media release is appended.
9. **We are here to help.** If you are unsure and want to discuss a media request, please feel free to contact Vyda Ng, Executive Director at [executivedirector@cuc.ca](mailto:executivedirector@cuc.ca) or April Hope, Social Responsibility Coordinator at [april@cuc.ca](mailto:april@cuc.ca).