

WRITE YOUR OWN OP-ED

An op-ed, short for opinion editorial, is a written piece published in a local, regional, or national media outlet that expresses an opinion on a certain issue. Op-eds give legislators, journalists, and members of your community a chance to learn more about your cause, form their own opinions, and, ideally, take steps to get involved.

Before you get started on your own op-ed, here are a few things to keep in mind:

- ▶ **Choose your signer carefully.** To ensure the best chance of earning placement on a news platform or gaining people's attention, enlist a high-profile influencer to sign and submit your op-ed. Ideally, this influencer should be well known within your community and the audience of the publication, such as a doctor, researcher, teacher, active parent, school principal or superintendent, or politician. Keep in mind that if you write an op-ed that mentions legislation and ask a legislator to sign it, all costs related to researching, writing, and placing the op-ed are lobbying expenses.
- ▶ **Check the submission guidelines.** Most news outlets have strict guidelines on op-eds, including limits on word count (typically around 500) and specific directions on how to submit (via email or online). We recommend you check your paper's requirements before you start writing. This information can typically be found on the "opinions" page of the media outlet's website.
- ▶ **Write like you talk.** Avoid jargon, fancy words, and slang. Your op-ed must be understandable to the general public, including people that may have no knowledge of the issue or your campaign.
- ▶ **Get to the point.** Make your key points early and often, and back them up with facts and examples.
- ▶ **Offer a short, snappy headline.** A good headline gives readers a preview of what your op-ed is about and grabs their attention.
- ▶ **Share a story.** A personal story is a great way to humanize your issue. Whenever possible include a story in your op-ed.
- ▶ **Be prepared to be edited.** Op-ed submissions are subject to revisions, editing, and fact-checking. Sources for factual statements should be listed at the bottom of your op-ed or linked to in the text to expedite review and placement processes.
- ▶ **Include your contact information.** Be sure to include your name, title, organization (as needed), email, and phone number in case the editors want to contact you/the signer.

For sample op-eds on different issues visit: <https://voicesforhealthykids.org/get-involved/>. Open the toolkit for the issue you're interested in, click on "resources" and scroll down to the "sample content" section.