

## ***Writing Letters to The Editor***



Letters to the editor are one of the easiest, most effective ways to increase public awareness about an issue. Most publications reserve space for letters from readers or members of the public. Published letters reach an important audience – decision-makers, community leaders, and people who influence public policy decisions.

### ***Some Tips***

#### **1. Start with a little research:**

Each publication has its own way of dealing with letters. Most provide some basic instructional information about the length of letters and how they like them submitted

- Look on the letters page or contact the publication to get some basic information about how to submit letters
- Look at the letter being published for examples of format

#### **2. Letters are more likely to be published if they:**

- Relate to previous coverage or a topical issue.
- Are short and to the point.
- Are passionate and/or well reasoned.
- Speak to issues the paper thinks are of interest to others.
- Are witty, amusing or provocative.
- Stick to the issue and avoid personal attacks on others

#### **3. Writing:**

- Get your ideas down on paper, and then refine or edit.
- Focus on your most important point.
- Have someone you trust read your draft letter for feedback.
- Keep sentences short and punchy.
- If you are having trouble writing, try telling someone what you want to say. Get them write it down, then refine or edit.
- As a general rule, limit your letter to 3 paragraphs, with not more than 3 sentences in each.
- Personal stories are powerful. You do not have to be an expert. Write from the heart.

#### **4. Getting it in:**

- The only letters published are the ones submitted.
- Do not be discouraged if your letter is not published. Try again. Your chances improve the more times you write.
- The first letters to arrive are the most likely to be printed. If possible, use fax or e-mail to get the jump on others.
- Lots of letters on the same topic improve the chances of publication and additional coverage.
- There are a lot of different publications. Submit your letter, or a variation, to as many as you like.

1-800-499-1986 • [www.cdnaids.ca](http://www.cdnaids.ca) • [www.HIVandPoverty.ca](http://www.HIVandPoverty.ca)