



Media Guide for SOPHE Chapters

Society for Public Health Education

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this *Media Guide for SOPHE Chapters* is to support your efforts to create policy, systems, and environmental changes in your community by harnessing the power of the media to inform the public and policymakers about what change is needed and why.

Media coverage of your SOPHE Chapter message and activities can help you:

- Inform the public of upcoming events.
- Increase public and policymaker understanding of what policy, systems, and environmental change is and why it is important to improve the health of your community.
- Build public support for the policy, systems and environmental changes you are trying to create.
- Educate policymakers that your proposed changes are needed and supported by their constituents.

Working with the media takes time and effort. Your SOPHE Chapter members can play a key role in building media support for your initiatives. It is most helpful to include a representative of the media in your Chapter that individual can advise you on what stories are newsworthy and can introduce you and your story to media colleagues. If your Chapter includes organizations, such as a health department or hospital with a strong public information/public relations office, you will find the support invaluable. Alternatively, you may look for a community volunteer who is willing to take on the role of working with the media to build interest in your message and your work.

This Guide is intended to help you:

- Focus your local SOPHE Chapter message.
- Identify contacts in the media who can help you spread your message.
- Build relationships with those contacts so they are receptive to your message and understand it.
- Identify newsworthy stories that convey your SOPHE Chapter message.
- Prepare for and participate in interviews with the media.
- Prepare press materials that are consistent with media standards.
- Use social media to communicate with media, policymakers, and the public.

Press materials included in this *Guide* include a media advisory, press release, op-ed, and letter to the editor. You can learn more about what these items are and how to use them, and review sample materials in later sections. The *Guide* also includes information about and samples of radio Public Service Announcements (PSAs) and a discussion of how to use social media to get your message out. It includes a template that you can customize with your local address and use to present your press materials.

FOCUSING THE MESSAGE

In order to get your message out successfully to the public and policymakers, you need to be clear on what your message is. Policy, systems, and environmental change is complicated and can be challenging to communicate to others.

Who are the SOPHE Chapters?

SOPHE's 19 Chapters span more than 30 states, western Canada and northern Mexico, and provide “boots on the ground” linkages for continuing education, partnerships, networking, and advocacy at the state/local levels.

Chapters are engaged in addressing health disparities through their continuing education activities, listservs, policy advocacy efforts, and collaboration with other organizations in their states/regions. Chapter outreach is complemented by SOPHE's connections to some 250 professional preparation programs in health education and public health around the country.



What is Policy, Systems, and Environmental Change?

Policy, systems, and environmental change is a new way of thinking about how to effectively improve health in a community. For many years, health programs have focused on individual behavior, assuming that if you teach people what will make them healthy, they will find a way to do it. Unfortunately, being healthy is not just about individual choices.

Today, we're realizing that it's not enough to know how to be healthy—you need readily available healthy options around you. That's where policy, systems, and environmental change comes in.

Policy, systems, and environmental change is a way of altering the environment to make healthy choices available to all community members. It makes the healthy choice be the easy choice. By changing laws, creating ordinances, and shaping physical landscapes, a big impact can be made with little time and resources. By changing policies, systems, and/or environments, communities can help tackle health issues like obesity, diabetes, cancer, and other chronic diseases.

Why is Policy, Systems, and Environmental Change Important?

Where you live, work, and play affects how you live—you simply can't make healthy decisions if healthy options aren't available to you. Policy, systems, and environmental change makes healthier choices a real, feasible option for every community member by looking at the laws, rules, and environments that impact our behavior.

FOCUSING THE MESSAGE CONT'D

About Policy Change

- Policy change includes the passing of laws, ordinances, resolutions, mandates, regulations, or rules.
- Government bodies (federal, state, local level), school districts and schools, park districts, health care organizations (hospitals, health systems), work sites and other community institutions (jails, daycare centers, senior living centers, faith institutions) all make policy change.
- Policies greatly influence the choices we make in our lives. Laws that are passed (i.e., workplace policies, school policies) greatly influence the daily decisions we make about our health.
- Examples: Adding sustainable transportation options to a city's comprehensive plan, passing a law allowing residents to plant community gardens on vacant lots, schools establishing a wellness policy that promotes the use of fresh, locally-grown fruits and vegetables in the cafeteria menu.



About Systems Change

- System change involves change made to the rules within an organization. Systems change and policy change often work hand-in-hand.
- Systems change impacts all elements of an organization. Often systems change focuses on changing infrastructure within a school, park, work site, or health setting.
- Examples: Establishing farm-to-school programs to help local farmers sell their fruits and vegetables to school food service; creating worksite wellness programs and exercise spaces at major employers.

About Environmental Change

- Environmental change is a change made to the physical environment.
- Environmental change can be as simple as installing bike signage on already established bike routes or as complex as sidewalk installation and pedestrian friendly intersections to promote walking and biking among its citizens.
- Examples: Municipality undertakes a planning process to ensure better pedestrian and bicycle access to main roads and parks; community development includes neighborhood corridors with pedestrian accommodations meeting the needs of seniors (e.g. adequate benches and ramped sidewalks).

FOCUSING THE MESSAGE CONT'D

What's Your SOPHE Chapter Message?

First, you need to determine what your overall goal is. Here are some questions to ask yourself when developing your overall strategy.

What is the problem you are highlighting? — This could be poor nutrition, inadequate physical activity, tobacco use, etc. But you should narrow your problem to a specific population. For example, if you start out trying to end all cigarette smoking, you will have a hard time developing a solution and gaining support. If you narrow it down to smoking in outdoor recreation areas where families and children spend time, you will have an easier time of coming up with a solution.

Is there a solution to it? If so, what is it? — Again, try to narrow this down to a specific population or setting. If you are focusing on outdoor recreation areas, you could advocate for smoke-free policies in county-run parks in your area.

What do you need to do or say to get the attention of those who can make the solution happen? — Do you want to use the media to get your message out by holding a news conference or briefing? Or do you want to use advertising to get the attention of the public? Remember, not all advocacy requires the use of the media. Sometimes it is easier to get your message out through marketing and advertising than through news releases and conferences.

Once you have defined your overall goal, then you can design the message that you want to get out in the public. You want your message to be simple and clear. Make sure you communicate:

- The problem you are addressing,
- Why your intended audience should be concerned with this problem, and
- What should be done about the problem.

Try to create a message that is compelling and that people can relate to by telling the story of a specific individual affected by the problem. By humanizing the message, your issues will have a greater impact on the public than if you just state statistics.

You can communicate your local SOPHE Chapter by customizing the policy, systems, and environmental change messages listed above with facts and statistics from your state and/or local community. For example, you may wish to include information about the incidence of major chronic diseases in your state, city, or county. You may be able to provide examples of local ordinances (e.g., clean indoor air laws) or policies (e.g., school wellness policies) that have already been adopted in your community.

In general, the more specific examples of policy, systems, and environmental change that you can provide, the easier it is for people to understand what it is. And the more local you can make your story, the more it will resonate with both policymakers and local residents alike.

FOCUSING THE MESSAGE CONT'D

Understanding When a Story is Newsworthy

In working with the media, it is important to understand what the news media consider newsworthy. If you flood your media contacts with information that is not of interest to them, they will begin to ignore your communications and may miss out when you have an important story to tell. Here are some factors that reporters and editors consider when determining when to report on a story:

Timing. The word *news* refers to that which is *new*. Topics which are current make good news. If it happened today, it's news. If the same thing happened last week, it's no longer interesting.

Significance. The number of people affected by the story is important. A law that affects 15,000 residents of your community draws people's attention.

Proximity. Stories which happen close to us have more significance. The closer the story to home, the more newsworthy it is.

Prominence. Famous people get more coverage just because they are famous. Adding prominent politicians and community leaders to your coalition can help attract reporters' attention to your story.

Human Interest. Human interest stories appeal to emotion. Everyone is interested in other people's interesting stories. Television news programs may place a humorous or quirky story at the end of the show to finish on a feel-good note. Newspapers often have a dedicated area for offbeat or interesting items.

Keep these principles in mind in deciding what stories to pitch to the media.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE MEDIA

Build your media contacts list

The first step in working with the media is to research and identify the news outlets you would like to cover your SOPHE Chapter initiative(s). You can identify any reporters who have covered issues related to your initiatives in the past. To make the research easier, set up Google Alerts online (www.google.com/alerts), so that you automatically receive updates on relevant news stories in your area. Scan your local newspaper daily for health and community stories. Remember to update your media list regularly so that you can use it for outreach efforts throughout the year.

You can purchase media contact information from services such as Cision (www.cision.com) or Burrelles-Luce (http://www.burrellesluce.com/Media_Outreach).

Once you've identified these outlets and contacts, build an electronic media list using a program such as Microsoft Excel. Electronic lists are easy to update, and users can merge contacts for effortless delivery of materials via e-mail or mail. Additionally, users can easily track who they've reached out to, and responses received. In a spreadsheet program include:

- Names of media outlets
- Key reporters and their titles and beats
- Contact information, including phone and email address
- If he or she prefers to be contacted
- A "notes" column to list other relevant articles that reporter has written
- Known deadlines and any previous interactions that you've had with the reporter

Build relationships

Once you have compiled your media list and are ready to begin your outreach efforts, you can begin to build your relationships with key media contacts. Remember that media relations is a two-way street: you are looking for accurate coverage of your initiatives and reporters are looking for good stories. On slow news days, a reporter might call you looking for story ideas. Be sure to have some in your back pocket, if that happens.

Here are steps you can take to build positive relationships:

1. **Call the reporter.** Introduce yourself and state why you're calling. Ask the reporter if he or she is on a deadline. If so, find a time to call back.
2. **Have a good story.** Practice your pitch before calling. You need to know your topic well, understand the reporter's interests based on your previous research, and be ready to revise your pitch as needed. Please see page 12 for pitch story tips.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE MEDIA CONT'D

3. **Plan a good strategy.** Do not use the same strategy for every story or media outlet. Think about how to create excitement for that particular media source or audience.
4. **Keep your word.** Building trust with the media is paramount. Provide follow-up information that you promised within the agreed upon timeframe.
5. **Follow-up.** While you may gain coverage after just one interview with some reporters, you may have to contact others multiple times before they will do a story.
6. **Send thank you notes.** Send a reporter a handwritten note expressing appreciation for the benefits gained from their coverage.

Distribute Your Press Materials Effectively

To distribute electronically, copy and paste your press release into the body of the e-mail. Many reporters will not open unsolicited attachments. Make sure they can clearly see the headline and first paragraph without enlarging or scrolling down in the e-mail, as this will increase the likelihood your release will be seen. Personalize each e-mail so the reporter knows it's not a mass message. For example, mention a story recently written by the reporter that caught your eye, or if you have had previous interactions with him/her, mention when and where to jog his/her memory.

If you'd like to send your press release to a large number of recipients, there are many online resources available to help you increase the awareness and visibility of your event. Some of these services may charge a fee, so it's important to research each option before submitting your event materials. Some may offer discounts to nonprofit organizations. Top distribution sites include:

- Business Wire (www.businesswire.com)
- PR Newswire (www.prnewswire.com)
- PR Log (www.prlog.org)
- 24/7 Press Release (www.24-7pressrelease.com)

Some free press release distribution sites include:

- Free Press Release (www.free-press-release.com)
- PR (www.pr.com)
- 1888 Press Release (www.1888pressrelease.com)

After distributing your press materials, follow up via phone or e-mail with your media contacts for the official "pitch." Make your calls short and direct, sounding confident to establish yourself as an expert providing valuable information. Offer to send more detailed information in an e-mail or to arrange an interview with a local expert. It may be helpful to write a brief script so your conversation flows easier. It's important to accommodate the media contacts as much as possible.

If you're unable to reach a reporter by phone, forward your media advisory or press release, with a brief note at the top offering to answer additional questions or to arrange an interview. Always provide your contact information in case the reporter needs more information.

SPEAKING EFFECTIVELY WITH THE MEDIA ABOUT YOUR SOPHE CHAPTER

Keep a list of people who are willing and able to talk with the media about your SOPHE Chapter's initiative. When reporters call looking for more information, you want to be able to direct them to experts in the issue that you're working on, chapter members with a point of view supporting your ideas, and/or others who may be affected by the issue, in addition to those who are "official" spokespersons for your initiative.

When choosing a spokesperson to talk about your SOPHE Chapter initiatives, make sure the person you choose is comfortable speaking with the media, answering questions, is knowledgeable on the issue, and can stay calm in stressful situations. Dealing with the media can be fast-paced, so it is important that your spokesperson be able to remain calm.

It may also be helpful to designate certain people on your Chapter who will speak with the media. They should be the only people to communicate with the press. This way, the media will not get conflicting information from your multiple sources, but the planned message you are trying to get across.

Use the following tips to prepare for a successful interview with the media:

- **Research the outlet and reporter before your interview.** Read or watch previous stories the reporter has developed to get a sense of his/her style. Think about what type of questions the reporter tends to ask.
- **Prepare any supplementary materials in advance of your interview.** You may wish to send graphs, photos, spokespeople biographies, or information about the issue you are addressing to the reporter in advance to enhance your interview.
- **Practice before your interview with a colleague or friend.** Rehearse what you intend to say during the interview and ask for feedback. To ensure your points are accurately portrayed, avoid using jargon and instead use short, catchy sentences that are easily understood.

The day before your interview, confirm the subject, time, location, and anticipated length of the interview with the reporter. Keep in mind that the primary goals of the interview are to communicate the key messages supporting your SOPHE Chapter initiative(s). Once the interview begins, it's useful to restate the question in your response so that the answer is a complete thought, and can be quoted independently. This also will ensure that your messages are clear. Use the following techniques to ensure a successful interview:

- **Bundling** – To ensure your messages are concise and clear, quantify your information, and tie it together giving the reporter verbal clues to follow. For example, you may say "SOPHE Chapters are a professional organization to provide global leadership to the profession of health education and health promotion and to promote the health of society. Our local SOPHE Chapter supports this goal by..." This tactic will allow all your key messages and thoughts to come across polished and brief.
- **Bridging** – A reporter may ask you a question that tries to distract you from your key messages or anticipated topics. Instead of directly answering, use the opportunity to tie it back to your points by "bridging" your response or reform the question in terms most favorable to you. For example, you may respond to an irrelevant question by stating "Yes, that's one perspective, but what is important to understand is..."

SPEAKING EFFECTIVELY WITH THE MEDIA ABOUT YOUR SOPHE CHAPTER CONT'D

- **Blocking** – In some instances, reporters may ask you a question that you don't know the answer to or may not want to answer. Never say "no comment," as it looks as if you are trying to hide something. Explain why you can't answer the question, and "bridge" to other discussion topics or offer to re-search the topic or put the reporter in contact with someone who may be able to answer the question. Follow up to ensure the reporter has received the answer.

In addition to the above techniques, keep in mind the following during an in-person interview:

- **Eye contact** – If you are on camera, remain focused on the reporter instead of staring directly at the cameraperson. Try not to be distracted by any commotion surrounding you.
- **Body language and voice inflection** – Effective body language and voice inflection are even more important than actual words when it comes to how messages are received. Sit up or stand up straight and use gestures sparingly. Also, you may want to vary your pitch by raising your voice slightly to emphasize key points.
- **Dress properly** – Although there are some exceptions (such as a walk/run), try to dress neatly and conservatively. A professional style ensures that the reporter and audience take your messages seriously.

These tips will help make a phone interview successful:

- **Location** – Try to call from a quiet place with no background noise. For a clearer and stable connection, call from a land line, not a cell phone.
- **Basic etiquette** – Remember to greet your interviewer with a smile on your face. Even if the person at the other end can't see you, this affects the tone and quality of your voice.
- **Ask questions** – Since there will be no visual cues to react to, it's important to ask questions to ensure the reporters understand the messages you have conveyed.

HOW TO PREPARE A PITCH STORY

Editors and reporters constantly need material, and you have a good, newsworthy story about your program. To bring these two elements together, you need to pitch the story idea to a decision maker with an angle of interest for the media outlet's audience. Offer to supply necessary statistics, quotes, interviews with experts, photos, etc. You may submit the pitch via telephone, letter, or e-mail, but it is best to follow up with a phone call. These simple steps can increase your media coverage:

Preparing a Pitch

- State with a newsworthy idea. Reporters want to hear immediately the news angle of the pitch. The story should be timely, affect the reporter's audience, and be focused on new information such as recent study of initiative.
- Make it interesting. Reporters like to know how to develop the story. Providing ideas for additional angles or pre-prepared sidebar materials will help the pitch.
- Consider the reporter's audience when giving the pitch. For example, if a radio station targets adults and you have a story about a program to reduce the incidence of childhood obesity, the pitch will focus on parents who may listen to that station.

Making a Verbal Pitch

- Be considerate of the time of day. As a general rule, reporters are more receptive to pitches in the morning, before deadlines loom. They are less likely to take unsolicited calls after 3 p.m. when facing deadlines.
- Identify yourself by name and affiliation.
- Ask if the reporter has time to talk. If not, ask when time is available in the near future.
- Make a 15-second pitch. State why the reporter's audience will care about the story. Add facts about how the topic affects the local community. Be prepared with the facts, offer to send additional information if the reporter engages in a discussion, and keep the door open for additional calls about other issues.
- Follow through if the reporter asks to talk at another time. Send any promised information immediately. Consider using overnight mail if the reporter needs the information quickly.

Writing a Pitch Letter

- Be brief. Try to limit the letter to one page. Create eye appeal for your letter by writing concise sentences and short paragraphs; use bullets to enhance readability.
- Writing the story lead as the start of the letter.
- Provoke the reader. One way to accomplish this is to begin a pitch letter with a question or a starting statistic.
- Don't oversell or make your letter sound like a commercial.
- Know what the reporter has been covering and tie your idea to it. Investigate what the target media person has been reporting and reflect this knowledge in your pitch letter. You will appear involved in the journalist's activities.
- Send background materials. A brochure, a press release, a photo, or even an article published in a non-competing media outlet (for example, a trade magazine story if pitching a newspaper) may be enclosed with the letter to provide additional background, if appropriate.
- Close the letter by stating you will follow up by telephone. Your call will be to discuss the story idea with the editor or producer.

Source: Media Access Guide: A Resource for Community Health Promotion, CDC's Healthy Communities Program (2009).
<http://www.cdc.gov/healthycommunitiesprogram/tools/pdf/mediaaccessguide.pdf>

PITCH LETTER TEMPLATE

[Place on your letterhead]

Date:

Name of newspaper

Newspaper address

Newspaper fax number

E-mail address

Dear [insert media contact's name here]:

First Paragraph: Begin your letter with information that will persuade the targeted media outlet to cover the story that you are pitching. The first paragraph should briefly explain why this news is important to local leaders, listeners, or viewers. To quickly capture the journalist's attention, it is a good idea to begin your letter with hard-hitting statistics or a thought-provoking question.

Second Paragraph: The body of your letter should highlight statistics or key messages that are specific to your program. Also, you can describe your projects and activities and explain how they will affect the local community.

Third Paragraph: Provide background material and cite how your program can help provide solutions to the problem. You also can offer to arrange an interview with your spokesperson or with individuals who have benefited from your services. In closing, state that you (or a program executive) are available for an interview and re-emphasize the importance of converting this news story.

Sincerely,

[Your signature here]

Name (typed)

Title(s)

Name of organization

Telephone

E-mail address

Standard Boilerplate About Your Organization:

Insert brief description of your program]. For more information about [your program name, please visit [insert your program's Web address] or call [insert phone number].

HOW TO WRITE A MEDIA ADVISORY

What is a media advisory?

Media advisories, or media alerts, are simple one-page documents that briefly alert the media to an upcoming event they may want to attend. Advisories provide the basics of what most journalists need to know. They should:

- Look similar to an event invitation, including bullets covering “who, what, where, and when” with corresponding answers on note-worthy event participants, photo opportunities, and how to schedule interviews.
- Include the contact information for your SOPHE Chapter or organizational partners so reporters can request further details.

How to Format a Media Advisory

- At the top left side of the page, write MEDIA ADVISORY.
- Underneath MEDIA ADVISORY, include the date of your event; for example, "For Sept. 19, 2011."
- Below the date include your contact information.
- At the bottom of the page, type # # # indicating the end of the advisory.

When to Send a Media Advisory

Advisories should be sent about one week in advance to the calendar editor of your local newspaper, and also the health care reporter or editor that covers local news or events.

SAMPLE MEDIA ADVISORY



SOCIETY FOR PUBLIC HEALTH EDUCATION

Global Leadership for Health Education & Health Promotion

MEDIA ADVISORY **For Oct. 21, 2011**

Contact: Julia Gin
Phone: 202-408-9804

HHS SECRETARY SEBELIUS SPEAKS OCT. 28 AT SOPHE ANNUAL MEETING

Secretary Sebelius to present Healthy Living Innovation Awards & discuss prevention at Annual Meeting for Society for Public Health Education

WASHINGTON – The Society for Public Health Education (SOPHE) is honored to host Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Kathleen Sebelius during its annual meeting on October 28, 2011. In a room filled with 500 public health professionals, the front line of American's public health system, the Secretary will discuss prevention strategies and the role prevention plays in public health, as well as present the Healthy Living Awards to communities for their outstanding work in health promotion.

**** MEDIA COVERAGE INVITED ****

Who: HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius discusses prevention strategies and presents the Healthy Living Innovation Awards

What: Society for Public Health Education Annual Meeting

Where: Renaissance Arlington Capital View Hotel, 2800 South Potomac Avenue, Arlington, Va.

When: Friday, October 28, 2011, 9:15 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.

Why: Our nation continues to transform our health care system away from a focus on sickness and disease to a focus on prevention and wellness

RSVP/Media Contact: Media interested in attending are asked to RSVP to Ami Neiberger-Miller, 703.887.4877, news@sophe.org

The Healthy Living Innovation Awards are a new HHS initiative designed to identify and acknowledge innovative health promotion projects within the last 3 years that have demonstrated a significant impact on the health status of a community or population. More information about the Healthy Living Innovation Awards can be found at: <http://healthylivinginnovation.challenge.gov/>

About SOPHE's Annual Meeting

Being held October 27-29, 2011 in Arlington, Va., SOPHE's annual meeting equips our nation's public health professionals to help Americans live healthier lives. Topics discussed include diabetes prevention, environmental health, community intervention to decrease high risk behavior, chronic disease prevention, LGBT health, adolescent health, smoking cessation and diabetes prevention and management.

About SOPHE

The Society for Public Health Education (SOPHE) is a non-profit professional organization founded in 1950 to provide global leadership to the profession of health education and health promotion and to promote the health of society. SOPHE's 4,000 international and chapter members work in various public and private organizations to advance health education theory and research, develop disease prevention and health promotion programs, and promote public policies conducive to health. For more information, go to www.sophe.org.

HOW TO WRITE A PRESS RELEASE

What is a press release?

Press releases, or news releases, are one- or two-page announcements sent to the media so they will cover your story or event. A press release goes into greater depth than a media advisory and is written like a news story. Press releases should:

- Contain approximately 500 words, formatted in short paragraphs.
- Use an inverted pyramid style of writing, meaning the most important information is at the top, filtering down to the less crucial details toward the end.
- Include a quote from your organization's spokesperson or key event figure. If you are partnering with another organization, their spokesperson should also be quoted.
- Close the press release with a paragraph that provides a concise overview of your program, including where to find additional information and your contact information.

How to Format a Press Release

- Use letterhead or the SOPHE Chapter template to identify your program.
- At the top left side of the page, write PRESS RELEASE.
- Underneath PRESS RELEASE, state the release date and time. Most often, this will state FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: and the date. If not, be clear about when and what time you want your release to come out, e.g., EMBARGOED UNTIL 11 A.M., Wednesday, November 2, 2011.
- Below the date include your contact information.
- Use an informative headline that tells what your story is about.
- Indicate the dateline or where the release originated and that day's date.
- Double-space your copy and allow wide margins.
- At the bottom of the page, type ### indicating the end of the press release.

When to Send a Press Release

Press releases are ordinarily issued the day of the event, either directly before or immediately following the event. If a media contact is on a tight deadline and needs the information in advance, you can provide him or her with an "embargoed" release. This implies they will honor your request to publish the story after your event or announcement, even though they have advance information.

SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE



SOCIETY FOR PUBLIC HEALTH EDUCATION

Global Leadership for Health Education & Health Promotion

Two SOPHE Chapters Awarded Funds to Address Diabetes Health Disparities in Minority Communities

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 29, 2010

Contact: Nicolette Warren
(202) 408-9804
nwarren@sophe.org

Washington, DC – The Society for Public Health Education (SOPHE) today announced awards of \$250,000 over five years to the Georgia SOPHE Chapter and Northern California SOPHE Chapter to build capacity with local community-based organizations and community members in addressing risk factors associated with diabetes in minority and underserved populations.

Georgia SOPHE's efforts will focus on the local African American/Black population in Jenkins County and Southeast, Georgia to expand the capability of the Jenkins County Diabetes Coalition to disseminate and develop resources for diabetes prevention and management. Northern California SOPHE will work with the San Francisco Bay Area American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) population to develop a strategic Community Action Collaborative partnership with Seva Foundation and Intertribal Friendship House for Diabetes Self Management Education programs. In addition, both SOPHE Chapters will be collaborating with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH) programs to facilitate policy, systems and environmental changes strategies to reduce disparities related to chronic diseases.

"Community engagement and empowerment are vital if we are to make progress in achieving health equity and improving the health of individuals and families," says Dr. Diane Allensworth, SOPHE President. "We are excited about the breadth and depth of the skills, innovation and commitment that the health education specialists in the Georgia and Northern California chapters will bring to this effort."

This micro-grant funding is made possible through SOPHE's Health Equity Project cooperative agreement with CDC's Division of Adult and Community Health. Developed in 2009, SOPHE's Health Equity Project aims to facilitate community action and capacity building to address health disparities; promote understanding of health disparities and social determinants of health; develop partnerships to support policy and environmental changes to reduce the burden of disease and disability; and develop resources, tools and strategies to eliminate health disparities.

For more information, about SOPHE's Health Equity Project and about the funded chapters, visit <http://www.sophe.org/healthequityproject.cfm>.

About SOPHE

The Society for Public Health Education (SOPHE) is a non-profit professional organization founded in 1950 to provide global leadership to the profession of health education and health promotion and to promote the health of society. SOPHE's 4,000 national, international and chapter members work in various public and private organizations to advance health education theory and research, develop disease prevention and health promotion programs, and promote public policies conducive to health. For more

HOW TO WRITE A BACKGROUNDER

What is a backgrounder?

Backgrounders are brief documents that contain additional information about a subject touched on in a news release. A backgrounder may accompany the release, or be distributed at a SOPHE Chapter event, or to reporters for further information. It can be written in paragraph form, or have bulleted key information. You could also put the backgrounder into a frequently asked question (commonly known as a FAQ) format to make it easy to read. Create a backgrounder that highlights:

- SOPHE Chapter as a national initiative
- Your organizational partners
- Your specific initiatives
- Information about the health issues that your initiative addresses
- Information about your community's policy, systems, or environmental change strategy

SAMPLE BACKGROUNDER



National Health Education Week 2011
Health Literacy: Gateway to Improving the Public's Health

Backgrounder

Making sound decisions about health choices are critically important for millions of Americans, but nearly 9 out of 10 people lack the basic knowledge or skills needed to make good decisions about their health. National Health Education Week (NHEW), October 16-22, 2011, aims to change that grim statistic. This year's theme is "*Health Literacy: Gateway to Improving the Public's Health*." As part of NHEW, the Society for Public Health Education (SOPHE) offers a toolkit to empower communities and public health professionals to improve health literacy rates. The toolkit, designed to be used throughout the year, stimulates community collaboration and is loaded with suggested activities. One of the resources is a sheet outlining potential questions adults can use when talking with health care providers.

Fact sheets, activities and resources will coincide with a special subject for each day of NHEW:

- Monday, Oct. 16: Introduction to the National Action Plan to Improve Health Literacy
- Tuesday, Oct. 17: Schools: Integrating Health Literacy into Curriculum
- Wednesday, Oct. 18: Healthcare Systems: Practice Changes to Improve Health Literacy
- Thursday, Oct. 19: Seniors: Health Literacy and Healthy Aging
- Friday, Oct. 20: Public Health: A Population-Based Approach to Health Literacy

Health education specialists aim to improve health literacy and help consumers make informed decisions about their health. Health literacy is the ability to access, understand, and act on health information. Health literacy is needed to understand nutrition labels, fill out health insurance forms, take medication correctly, communicate with health care providers, and decide when and where to seek care. Low health literacy can lead to poor health. People with limited health literacy skills are more likely to skip important preventive services, such as mammograms, Pap smears, and flu shots. Studies have also shown a higher rate of hospitalization and use of emergency services among patients with low health literacy skills.

Today's health system is complicated and overwhelming to many adults. "Even with the wealth of information available today, it can be difficult for consumers to understand written health materials and access health services," said Elaine Auld, MPH, MCHES, chief executive officer of SOPHE. "Health literacy, or the lack thereof, cross cuts all populations and education levels and takes a tremendous toll on individuals, as well as businesses and communities."

Deficiencies in health literacy impact our nation's physical – and financial – health. A 2007 study estimates the cost of limited health literacy to the Nation's economy to be \$106 -236 billion U.S. dollars annually.

SAMPLE BACKGROUNDER CONT'D

The core problem is frankly – literacy. A significant gap exists between the high reading levels of most health materials and the limited literacy skills of many adults. Only 12 percent of consumers have proficient health literacy skills, which mean that nearly nine out of ten adults lack the skills needed to manage their health and prevent disease.

Health literacy is particularly critical for patients with health conditions requiring treatment and follow-up care at home. “In this healthcare environment, patients and their family members are expected to assume tremendous responsibility for treatment and follow-up care at home. They must understand and be able to complete their care at home,” said Louise Villejo, MPH, MCHES, Executive Director of Patient Education at the MD Anderson Center of the University of Texas, who works with cancer patients.

All NHEW materials are available free of charge at www.sophe.org. Health education specialists, organizations and communities are encouraged to make additional copies and distribute them as needed.

#

HOW TO WRITE AN OPINION EDITORIAL (OP-ED)

What is an Op-Ed?

An op-ed, or “opposite the editorial pages,” is an opinion piece that allows you to express your perspective in a public forum with maximum exposure. Anyone can write an op-ed, expressing his or her perspective on an issue. For example, members of your SOPHE Chapter and partners will be able to speak authoritatively about the issues, as will individuals who will benefit from the initiatives you are introducing. For example, if you are promoting bicycle lanes, a commuter who now drives a car to work but would prefer to bike could write about why he or she is in favor of a bike-friendly community.

Check with the newspaper to determine the requirements for an op-ed. Most are limited to between 500 and 800 words.

Before you start to write, keep in mind the following tips:

Identify which publication in your area best fits your message and will allow maximum readership. Local newspapers usually publish op-eds that focus on community issues, while top-tier newspapers such as the *New York Times* or *Washington Post* focus on a broader, national scope.

Start early, as publications receive a large amount of op-eds, and you might have to submit it a month or two in advance, and sometimes more than once for it to be seen by the right person.

Create a relationship with the editor in advance to help push through your op-ed. Always plan out what you are going to say before you call or email the editor and provide background information about yourself, organization, and your SOPHE Chapter, in addition to any local and state issues related to your initiative(s).

Remember to have one clear and concise topic or idea. Simple messages allow readers to stay focused and walk away with the message you are trying to convey. For example, if you decide to speak about how community gardens positively affect your community, stay on the local level and don’t expand nationwide.

The tips below will help you when you’re starting to write.

Express an opinion through a strong lead paragraph that clearly states your viewpoint and the cause you support.

Provide background information or facts and figures to increase the impact. You can find helpful resources in the searchable Healthy Community databases on the CDC’s Healthy Communities Web site (http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/dach_chaps/Default/index.aspx).

HOW TO WRITE AN OPINION EDITORIAL (OP-ED) CONT'D

Use a recent local story to connect with readers and make it personal. Use an active voice, rather than passive voice. For example, active voice is “I quit because smoking became too hard” whereas passive voice is, “Changes in tobacco laws resulted in my quitting.”

Keep your op-ed to about 600 words, but be sure to confirm specific op-ed guidelines with your newspaper.

Make sure your op-ed is reader friendly by avoiding acronyms or terms unfamiliar to those outside your field. Newspapers are usually written at the 5th to 8th grade level. You can check the reading level of your documents by enabling the readability statistics option built into most word processing grammar checkers.

Include your name, contact information, and a description of who you are and any other facts that highlight your qualifications. Some newspapers will contact you before printing an op-ed to verify your information.

How Do I Submit My Op-Ed?

While you may submit your op-ed to several publications at once, if you receive word that it will be published, you have to withdraw your other submissions, as it is usually considered an exclusive to the paper. Publications receive a large amount of op-eds and most newspapers won't publish your op-ed if they think it will be printed elsewhere or has already been published in another outlet. Also, if your op-ed is rejected at first, be open to modifications as long as it keeps your message intact. Only move on to a new outlet if you are certain that the first paper contacted won't publish your op-ed.

The tips below will help you when you're submitting your op-ed.

Research the publication's guidelines for submitting an op-ed, submission deadlines, word count minimums or maximums, and how the editor wants to receive the op-ed (some prefer U.S. mail or fax instead of e-mail).

Include a cover letter to introduce yourself when sending your op-ed, include previous interactions with the editor, a brief overview of the op-ed, and information about your SOPHE Chapter.

Place a follow-up call to the editor one week after submitted. If he or she has not had time to look at it, follow-up a week later. Be polite; state the importance of publishing your piece to help others. If your op-ed is rejected, or your local paper does not publish op-eds by community members, consider exploring online outlets as options.

Ask the publication's Web site editor if your op-ed can be posted on the online version of the newspaper. Other online publications such as Slate, iVillage, and The Huffington Post might be interested in your op-ed, especially if it ties into the larger theme such as Complete Streets.

Blogs are another online outlet to consider. Tweaking your op-ed to directly relate to a specific readership online can help spread your message. Many bloggers enjoy covering local, altruistic events for their audience and most newspapers now have online bloggers that focus on specific issues. There may be a local community blogger dedicated specifically to news and events in your area and those outlets might be interested in your SOPHE Chapter initiatives.

OP-ED TEMPLATE

Date:

Contact:

Telephone:

E-mail:

Web site:

Title: Give your op-ed a title that emphasizes the main point and attracts attention.

Opening: The introductory paragraph should engage the reader, clearly state the issue at hand, and begin with a statement of fact, a true-life story from a third-person perspective, or a reference to current events.

Body: The paragraph should explain why the issue is important. Give overall statistics that explain the extent of the problem. Use local statistics to help the readers empathize with the situation. Tell why this subject matters. Use projections to indicate what will happen if nothing is done or if the current situation continues.

The body of the op-ed should also suggest a solution to the issue. Illustrate how this solution has worked for other issues or in other areas and demonstrate how it can be implemented the expected results. Describe local efforts and results if they are available.

Call to Action: Ask readers or decision makers for support in a specific way.

Conclusion: Wrap up the op-ed by referencing any personal stories used in the opening paragraphs. Give a clear picture of the situation with the solution in place. Re-emphasize the main point.

Standard Boilerplate about Your Organization:

[Insert brief description of your program]. For more information about [your program name], please visit [insert your program's Web address] or call [insert phone number].

[Include author name, title, and brief summary of qualifications that make him or her an expert.]

###

SAMPLE OP-ED

The Register-Guard

Eugene, OR

It's up to all of us to help in the fight against obesity, hunger Guest viewpoint

By Laurie Trieger

Appeared in print: Monday, June 28, 2010, page A7

In Oregon, and across the nation, childhood obesity and hunger rates are on the rise. One in three Lane County children will eat out of an emergency food box this year. At the same time, one in three children born in the United States today will develop diabetes, an obesity-related illness, losing an average of 10 to 15 years off their lives. How can these two conditions co-exist? Consider the definition of food security and you're on your way to an answer.

As defined at the 1996 World Food Summit, food security exists "when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life." Without access to nutritious food, conditions of malnutrition, both hunger and obesity, are often consequences.

Hunger and obesity can, and do, occur at the same time within the same community, the same families and sometimes even in the same individual. This is because they share the same underlying causes. Who suffers most? Often it is low income families that lack access to the resources needed to lead a healthy, active life.

Families trying to stretch their dollars often must buy cheaper, higher calorie foods in order to make their food budgets last, and to stave off sensations of hunger. While obesity-related diseases affect every community in Oregon, low-income populations and communities of color experience a disproportionate burden of premature death and disability from these diseases.

Data collected by the Centers for Disease Control indicate that while 25 percent of the white population in Oregon is obese, an alarming number in itself, obesity affects more than 40 percent of the African-Americans in the state.

But income and race alone are neither predictors nor indicators of a child's need for good nutrition. An ongoing pattern of poor nutrition is hard on all developing minds and bodies. Hunger and obesity are overwhelming problems, but they can be solved.

As a community, we can take a variety of steps to begin this process: supporting funding for physical education and improvements to school food; increasing the availability of full-service grocery stores, community gardens, and farmers' markets; and restricting marketing of unhealthy foods and beverages to children.

And we can support community initiatives such as the Summer Food Program, which is critically important to the health of youth in our community. All children, ages 2 to 18 years, are welcome at any of the 64 sites located in parks, playgrounds, summer schools and other settings across Lane County,

SAMPLE OP-ED CONT'D

from Oakridge to Florence; Junction City to Cottage Grove. FOOD for Lane County is a clearinghouse for information about this program and other vital, local food resources.

By offering balanced and nutritious foods in socially acceptable, safe settings, the Summer Food Program provides a shining local example of how to create health-promoting food environments for our youth. By including all children, with some positive role modeling and supervision by caring adults, this program feeds kids with no stigma, no judgment, and no cost to families. The need for good child nutrition knows no income boundaries. Children of all ages, shapes, and colors need good food to grow and thrive.

The social conditions that have created hunger and obesity will never be addressed effectively if we remain focused on individual behavioral changes. Problems of the magnitude and severity of obesity and hunger require we use a comprehensive approach of collaboration, education and intervention; and adequate investment of resources, along with making bold changes to systems and policies, in the private and in the public sector.

Some of these changes are already in progress; all take long-term commitment, investments and courage. But children's health cannot wait. In the meantime, with the help of a caring community, parents and their children can take simple steps to improve their health. Sometimes a solution can be as easy as a trip to the park.

Laurie Trieger is executive director of the Lane Coalition for Healthy Active Youth, a non-profit organization dedicated to the prevention of childhood obesity in Lane County. This piece was submitted on behalf of the Early Childhood Planning Team, an advisory committee to the Lane County Commission on Children and Families.

<http://special.registerguard.com/csp/cms/sites/web/news/sevendays/24952441-35/obesity-hunger-community-lane-county.csp>

HOW TO WRITE A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

A letter to the editor is the simplest way to communicate an opinion to the general public. Your chance of having the letter printed is quite good at smaller or less prominent newspapers or magazines. On average, many local papers publish up to 80 percent of the letters they receive.

Make sure your letter is no longer than what the target newspaper tends to publish. A much longer letter is more likely to be discarded or the editor will decide what information will be cut in order to fit the length requirements. Short, pithy pieces are best.

Before you begin writing your letter, look at the editorial pages of different newspapers. Often, specifications on writing letters to the editor will be on this page.

In general, follow these tips for writing a letter to the editor:

Be brief and concise. Limit your letter to 250-300 words. Focus on just one concept or idea.

Refer to other stories. If possible, refer to other articles, editorials or letters the newspaper has recently published. This should be done as soon as possible after the article was published, as it will increase the chance of your letter being printed.

Include contact information. Include your name, address, and daytime and home phone numbers so the paper can contact you with any questions. Also, include any titles and degrees that are relevant to help the media know you have expertise. And make sure to refer to your organization in your letter.

SAMPLE LETTER TO THE EDITOR #1

The Standard Times

New Bedford, MA

Letter: Join in to help change health policy

May 26, 2011 - 12:00 AM

Join in to help change health policy.

Thank you for Our View: "Live healthy, reduce costs," in today's paper. I would like to invite all interested citizens to get involved with a local coalition promoting a healthier lifestyle across SouthCoast. We are called "Voices for a Healthy SouthCoast" and our next meeting is at 4 p.m. on Tuesday, May 31, and will meet at the Southeast Regional Health Office, 1736 Purchase St., New Bedford.

The coalition has been working for a little over a year on policy and environmental changes that will contribute to active living, better nutrition and tobacco prevention in our 17 communities along the SouthCoast. The two lead partners are YMCA Southcoast and Southcoast Hospitals Group.

If you would like more information, please visit our website: www.voicesforahealthysouthcoast.org or contact Nancy LaRue Bonell, nbonell@ymcasouthcoast.org 508-996-9622, ext. 25, or Donna Querim querimd@southcoast.org 508-679-7187. We are always looking for more interested people to get actively involved in the coalition.

Thank you for continuing to bring this important topic to your readers.

Nancy LaRue Bonell

COO/VP Operations

YMCA Southcoast/Voices for a Healthy SouthCoast

http://m.southcoasttoday.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20110526/OPINION/105260305/-1/WAP03&template=wapart&m_section

SAMPLE LETTER TO THE EDITOR #2

Complete streets policies

April 7, 2011

The Daily News

EDITOR: With spring in the air and recent car/pedestrian accidents, automobile drivers should be more aware of non-motorized road users.

Last August, Michigan became the 14th state to adopt Complete Streets legislation which encourages road users of all ages and mobility the use of safe and convenient roadways.

More directly stated, future transportation projects or improvements to existing roadways should take into account all user groups, including pedestrians, cyclists, transit riders, people in wheelchairs, pedestrians, and motor vehicles.

Complete Streets have bicycle lanes, sidewalks, pedestrian crosswalks and attractive landscaping, which lead to a more active lifestyle. They offer the potential for improved public health, a cleaner environment and economic development.

Communities that employ the design are more vibrant and inviting while also reducing long-term transportation costs.

Examples of such projects would include:

- Expanded non-motorized pathway networks throughout the community already being worked on by the Dickinson County Bikepath Committee -- Lake Antoine trail connector
- Efforts by the Building Healthy Communities Coalition to support sidewalk replacement and improved non-motorized paths.
- Safe Routes to School programs, allowing local children to travel between home and school safely.
- Traffic calming efforts in local downtowns to improve pedestrian safety including potential road diet for Carpenter Avenue.

When is the last time you saw an elderly person or small child trying to cross a wide street with heavy traffic?

What about a bicyclist riding along the side of the road rather than the ability to use a path? What about a person in a wheelchair unable to wheel up onto a non-ADA compliant curb?

Or the last time you saw someone walking in the street or along the side of the road due to the lack of a sidewalk?

Encouraging Complete Streets policies locally would allow each of the above situations to be addressed, ensuring healthy, active and safe communities for future generations.

Jonathan Ringel
Iron Mountain
DDA/Main Street

<http://www.ironmountaindailynews.com/page/content.detail/id/527376/Complete-streets-policies.html?nav=5111>

HOW TO WRITE A RADIO PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT (PSA)

What is a radio PSA?

Public Service Announcements (PSA) are unpaid announcements that promote government agencies, voluntary organizations, or programs that serve the public interest. Although you can spend thousands of dollars recording and editing video or radio PSAs, an economical alternative is to create copy for radio announcers to read on-air.

The downside of PSAs is that they are often aired late at night when few people are listening. To counteract this possibility, some SOPHE Chapters have purchased air time to promote their events. Local radio stations will often match the number of purchased minutes or airtime or place the unpaid PSAs in more desirable time slots.

How to create a Radio PSA

Call the radio station(s) that you want to air your message to find out who handles PSAs. It is usually the promotions director or marketing director of the station. Introduce your SOPHE Chapter and the initiatives you are supporting. Ask if the station will produce a PSA on your behalf or read the copy live. Make your request at least four weeks ahead of when you want it to run to allow the station to schedule your PSA.

Write the PSA script in a conversational style. Use the active voice and simple sentences. Include a “call to action”-- something you want the listener to do (e.g., call for more information).

Read your PSA out loud and time it carefully. Media outlets typically provide 15-, 30-, or 60-second messages and your PSAs must conform to these formats.

- A 15-second PSA is about 30-35 words.
- A 30-second PSA is about 60-65 words.
- A 60-second PSA is about 120--125 words.

SAMPLE RADIO PSAs

:15 PSA

Radio PSA: 15 Tobacco-Free Parks Santa Barbara

The great outdoors just got greater. A new law now bans tobacco use on Santa Barbara beaches, parks, and trails. So go ahead—breathe easy. To find out more, call 805-681-5407.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DZ9H0QGJa3M&feature=related>

:30 PSA

Radio PSA: 30 Tobacco-Free Parks Santa Barbara

Santa Barbara County is truly a slice of paradise. But even paradise has its problems: cigarette smoke can ruin a beautiful day, whether you're enjoying sun at the beach, a family day at the park, or a leisurely hike. And cigarettes create toxic and unwanted litter. So go ahead. Breathe easy, because the great outdoors just got greater. A new law now bans tobacco use on Santa Barbara beaches, parks, and trails. To find out more, call 805-681-5407.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ntv8gkP8PPs>

:60 PSA

Radio PSA: 60 All into Clear Air (Orange County, FL)

Attention, Orange County residents! When going to our local parks, workplaces, and public spaces, there's something you need to bring along: a gas mask. You see, there are people out there smoking and their secondhand smoke contains over 7,000 chemicals, 70 of which can cause cancer. A recent Surgeon General's Report found there's no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke. So... you have a choice. You can wear a gas mask or you can visit [all into clear air.com](http://allinto.clearair.com) and learn how you can make Orange County's public spaces smoke-free. There you'll find startling facts about how dangerous secondhand smoke can actually be, as well as a place where you can start conversations to educate your friends and family. You'll also find a link to [Facebook.com/all into clear air](https://www.facebook.com/allinto.clearair) where you can share your thoughts. So... you can visit us online or you can buy a gas mask. Your call. Sponsored by the Department of Health and Human Services and All In.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?NR=1&v=bNqJS2yUJdA>

HOW TO USE SOCIAL MEDIA

What is social media?

Social media is a term that refers to Web-based and mobile technologies that allow people to interact with and engage one another. Such media includes:

- Blogs and micro-blogs, such as Twitter
- Social networking sites, such as Facebook and LinkedIn
- Image-sharing sites, such as Flickr
- Video-sharing sites, such as YouTube

The key characteristic of social media is that it's organized around user-generated content—people sharing messages with other people. And best of all, social media sites are generally free so the cost of setting up an account is non-existent or negligible.

How can I learn more about social media?

CDC's *Social Media Toolkit* (http://www.cdc.gov/healthcommunication/ToolsTemplates/SocialMediaToolkit_BM.PDF) contains detailed information about a wide range of social media. For each social medium profiled, links to more in-depth sources of information are provided.

How Can You Use Social Media to Convey Your SOPHE Chapter Message?

You can use social media to communicate directly with the public. But you can also use social media to communicate directly with policymakers and the media. Often, reporters will pick up a story based on what they've seen on Facebook or heard about via a Twitter feed.

If your SOPHE Chapter has a Web site, you can place links to your social media channels on your site. Some communities have found that having a SOPHE Chapter page is a good investment, particularly if one of the partners has an existing Web site and you can simply add an SOPHE Chapter page to that site. In such a case, you may also be able to minimize the amount of time that you spend updating your page by simply sending desired updates to the site's Webmaster who can do the updating for you.

Some points to keep in mind about using social media are:

1. It takes an investment of time to manage the sites, post new material, and monitor the conversation. Before you begin, make sure that someone on your coalition is responsible for any given social media channel with responsibility for maintenance, updating, and monitoring.
2. To keep your social media channels fresh and encourage people to keep coming back, you need to continually post new information. You may not have a great deal of news about your Chapter efforts on a regular basis. You may therefore wish to position your social media channel as an authoritative source of reliable health-related news and update it weekly with new stories on health topics related to your initiative.
3. Social media is defined by the presence of user-generated content. That means that people will be having a conversation with you by posting questions or comments on your Facebook page; giving your site a thumbs up or thumbs down, depending on whether or not they like it; and responding to entries on blogs or to videos with written comments. You need to invest time in monitoring these comments, listening to what people are saying to and about you, and participating in the conversation.
4. Although social media sites are generally not difficult to use, it helps to have a tech-savvy partner to back you up if you do run into technical difficulties.

HOW TO USE SOCIAL MEDIA CONT'D



What is blogging and how can I do it?

A blog is an online journal that is regularly updated. Blogs may focus on a specific topic (e.g., your Chapter initiative's work) or on a broader topic (e.g., health news in your community). Most blogs are formatted so that their entries are posted in reverse chronological order (the most recent at the top) and readers are invited to post comments in response to blog entries.

Here are some tips from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on blogging best practices:

1. **Observe the blogosphere** by reading other people's blogs before starting your own. You can find blogs through a blog search engine such as Technorati (www.technorati.com).
2. **Provide links to other reliable Web pages** that support the content in your blog.
3. **Keep your posts relatively short**, providing enough information to support main points but not a lot of detail. Web readers are more likely to read shorter posts.
4. **Make headlines attention grabbing.**
5. **Include numbered or bulleted lists** to allow more white space on the page
6. **Use sub-heads and keep your headings and sentences short** so that your posts are easy to scan quickly.
7. **Keep a consistent style** and conversational tone.
8. **Use keywords strategically**; think about the terms that people are likely to search for.

HOW TO USE SOCIAL MEDIA CONT'D

Sample blog

Here is a sample blog entry from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's New Public Health blog (<http://blog.rwjf.org/publichealth/>).

NewPublicHealth

Home Smart Growth News Roundups Q&As Faces of Public Health Idea Gallery County Health Rankings About

MAR 9
— 2012 —

Video: What is Walkability?

Got five minutes? Spend it viewing a recent [video on walkability](#) from Dan Burden, a reigning expert, who took *NewPublicHealth* on a [walkability audit of San Diego](#) during the recent [New Partners for Smart Growth Conference](#). Burden is executive director of the [Walkable and Livable Communities Institute](#).

The video is a veritable travelogue for walking as the best possible way to get around locally. Burden discusses metrics, safety features and fixes to current streets while video scenes, including happy walkers of all shapes and sizes, flash on screen. Burden makes some pivotal points about walkability, including creating destinations for walkers, adding landscaping to enhance the enjoyment of the walk, and making changes to traffic technology such as replacing some lights with traffic circles to improve safety for drivers, walkers and bikers.

Walkable 101:

Walkable 101: The Basics from Martin County CRA on Vimeo.

COMMENTS

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Organizations are coming together across the sectors to make their communities healthier places to live.

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[Matthew Myers](#)

HOW TO USE SOCIAL MEDIA CONT'D



What is Twitter and how can I use it?

Twitter (www.twitter.com) is an information network made up of 140-character messages called tweets. Tweets are sometimes called “micro-blogs” because they are so short.

Twitter users subscribe to receive tweets by following an account. Followers receive messages in their timeline that includes a feed of all the accounts they have subscribed to. Tweets can be read as text messages, mobile Web sites, or on the Twitter Web site at Twitter.com.

Twitter users share information, links, videos, photos, and re-tweeting material posted by others. In addition, you can engage in Twitter events, including:

- **Twitter Chat:** Scheduled events in which your SOPHE Chapter can communicate with its followers through discussion, questions and answer sessions, and the dissemination of information.
- **Twitterview:** This scheduled event is a type of interview in which the interviewer and the interviewee are limited to conversations made of 140-character messages.
- **Twitter Town Hall:** A scheduled forum that allows followers to submit questions on a specific topic. Responses can be delivered through live tweets, video, or live stream.
- **Live Tweeting:** Tweeting live from an event to highlight key points of a presentation and play-by-play moments.

CDC offers the following tips on Twitter best practices:

1. **Set up a profile name, image, and biography** when you establish your free account. Your profile name should be short (15 characters maximum) and reflect the nature of your organization. Your 160-character biography or organizational description should be the first post from your new profile. Include a logo or graphic that represents your SOPHE Chapter.
2. **Keep content short and simple.** CDC recommends tweets of 120 characters so that messages can be easily retweeted by others without editing.
3. **Provide more information with a shortened URL of your main Web site.** There are Web sites (e.g., <http://tinyurl.com> or <http://is.gd>) that can help you shorten your URL.
4. **Promote your Twitter profile** in other communication materials.
5. **Engage your followers** by posting on a regular schedule.
6. **Post other relevant content** from partners and followers.

HOW TO USE SOCIAL MEDIA CONT'D

Sample Twitter

A sample Twitter Web page from George SOPHE Chapter (<https://twitter.com/gasophe>) appears below.



HOW TO USE SOCIAL MEDIA CONT'D

What is social networking and how can I use it?

Social networking sites, like Facebook (www.facebook.com) and LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com), are online communities where people can interact with friends, family, coworkers, acquaintances, and others with similar interests. Most social networking sites provide multiple ways for people to interact, such as chat, e-mail, video, voice chat, file-sharing, blogging, and discussion groups.

Facebook is the most popular site and has over 500 million users. LinkedIn is a business-related social networking site.

CDC suggests the following best practices for using Facebook to communicate:

- **Become familiar with other public health-related social network sites.** These are generally Facebook pages used by organizations and businesses, which are distinct from Facebook profiles created by individuals.
- **Ensure that there are adequate time and staff resources available to support ongoing maintenance** of the page in order to keep content fresh and fans engaged.
- **Provide engaging posts and communication material** (e.g., videos, quizzes, games, images, etc.) to actively and repeatedly engage users.
- **Create a comment policy** about how you will respond to inappropriate comments.
- **Collect and store comments** in order to document the conversations you sparked. This documentation can help you evaluate your efforts.
- **Promote your Facebook page** on all your communication materials.



Community Commons (www.communitycommons.org) is a site that seeks to link multi-sector local, state and regional initiatives working towards a vision of healthy people in healthy places with one another. You can post a profile of your community on the Commons and network with other initiatives to discuss areas of common interest.

HOW TO USE SOCIAL MEDIA CONT'D

Sample social networking pages

Sample Facebook and LinkedIn pages from Northern California and Pacific Northwest SOPHE Chapters may be found below.

Northern California SOPHE Facebook Page

(<http://www.facebook.com/pages/NC-SOPHE-Society-of-Public-Health-Education-Northern-California-Chapter/31533937737?ref=pb>)

The screenshot shows the Facebook profile of the NC-SOPHE Society of Public Health Education--Northern California Chapter. The profile picture is the NC-SOPHE logo, which includes the year 1950. The cover photo is a collage of images related to the organization. The 'Wall' section displays a post from February 24 at 7:13pm about the San Francisco Foundation 2012 Community Leadership Awards. The right sidebar contains sponsored posts, including one for 'Masters in Public Health' and another for 'Maryland Day!'.

Pacific Northwest (PNW) SOPHE LinkedIn Page

(<http://www.linkedin.com/company/993619>)

The screenshot displays the LinkedIn page for the PNW SOPHE (Pacific Northwest Chapter of the Society for Public Health Education). The page header shows the LinkedIn logo and account type. The main content area features a description of the group, a 'Join Group' button, and a 'People Also Explored' section with several related groups. The right sidebar contains an 'About this Group' section with details like 'Created: October 15, 2008' and 'Members: 5', and a 'Group Statistics' section showing a bar chart of member counts and a large number '3,759'.

HOW TO USE SOCIAL MEDIA CONT'D

What is online image sharing and how can I do it?



Online image sharing involves posting images (photos, artwork, etc.) to public Web sites where they can be viewed, tagged, categorized, and used by others. For example, you might want to post photographs of your community to document a problem that your coalition is targeting. If you sponsor a poster contest, you could share the winning entries on line. Popular image-sharing Web sites include Flickr (www.flickr.com) and Shutterfly (www.shutterfly.com).

Here are some tips from CDC to enhance image sharing success:

- Use a name that will resonate with users when you establish your account. Include information on your profile page about your agency or coalition, along with a link to your Web site, if you have one.
- Think about the audience when choosing images. What images will best help you achieve your communication objectives?
- Select, name, describe, and tag images carefully. Choose a few well-selected pictures as you don't want to overwhelm the users with too many pictures.
- Encourage viewers to add tags, notes, and comments to engage their interest.

What is online video sharing and how I can I use it?

Online video sites, such as YouTube (www.youtube.com), MSN (www.msn.com), and Yahoo (www.yahoo.com), allow people to share their videos with others who can comment on what they see. Videos can be produced inexpensively with a webcam or camcorder and editing software and then uploaded to the site.



CDC offers the following best practices for online video productions:

1. **Prepare content that is appropriate for your target audience.** Try to avoid technical information, jargon, and complicated charts and graphs. Focus instead on producing simple, easy-to-follow "stories" with human interest and a "call to action."
2. **Keep videos short.** Most sites have limits on how long videos can be. Many users start to drop off after three minutes, according to CDC data.
3. **Promote your videos** on all your communication materials.
4. **Create high-quality video** by using a tripod to stabilize the camera, appropriate lighting, and a plug-in microphone.
5. **Choose appropriate music** that suits the mood of the video and is copyright free (unless you are paying to use it).
6. **Include a URL** at the end of the video where people can find more information.

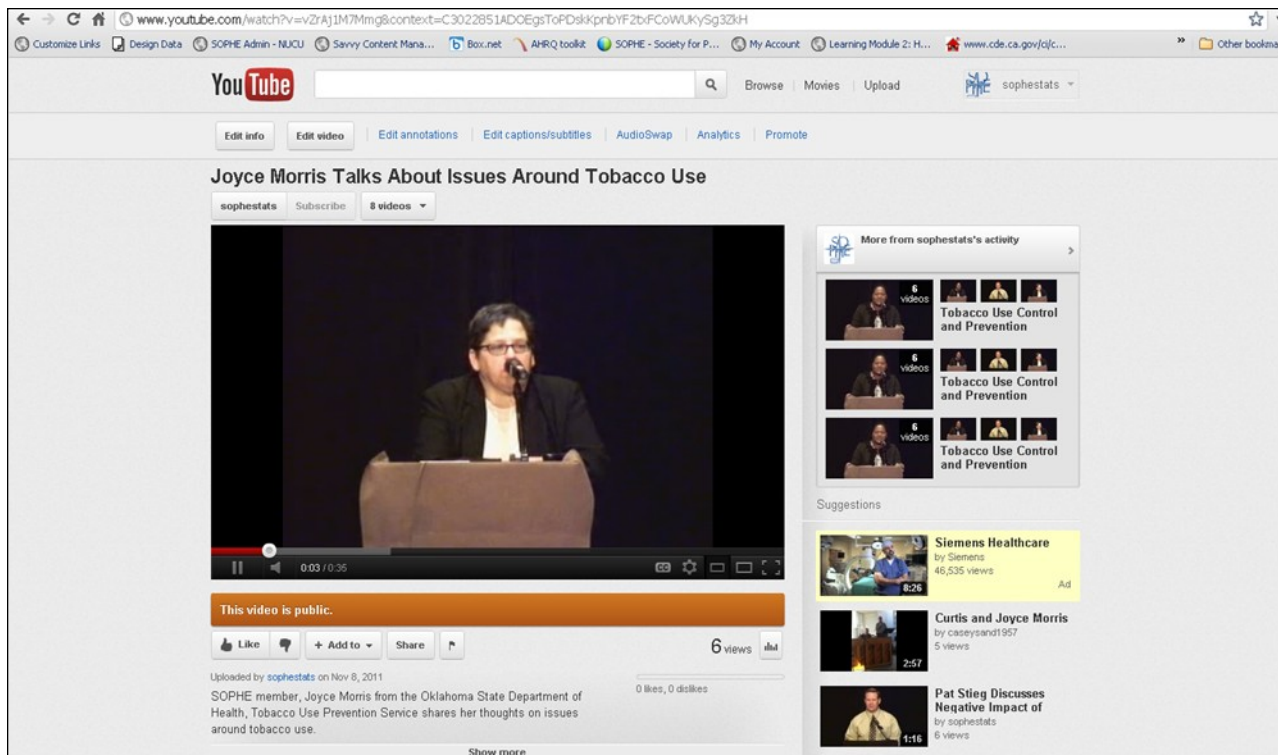
HOW TO USE SOCIAL MEDIA CONT'D

Sample YouTube Page

A sample YouTube Web page from National SOPHE appears below.

National SOPHE YouTube Channel

(<http://www.youtube.com/user/sophestats>)



SOME SOPHE CHAPTERS USING SOCIAL MEDIA



Facebook

Arkansas SOPHE

<http://www.facebook.com/people/Arkansas-Sophe/100000459766485>

Colorado SOPHE

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Colorado-Society-for-Public-Health-Education/197802800276224>

Greater Lakes Chapter (GLC) SOPHE

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/GLC-SOPHE/169028430557?ref=pb>

Greater New York SOPHE

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Greater-New-York-Chapter-of-the-Society-for-Public-Health-Education/236193863101561>

Iowa SOPHE

<http://www.iowapha.org/Default.aspx?pageId=43872>

Indiana SOPHE

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Indiana-Society-for-Public-Health-Education/177028309026640>

National SOPHE

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Society-for-Public-Health-Education/217171689055>

New Jersey SOPHE

<http://www.facebook.com/NJSOPHE>

Northern California SOPHE

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/NC-SOPHE-Society-of-Public-Health-Education-Northern-California-Chapter/315333937737?ref=pb>

North Carolina SOPHE

<http://www.facebook.com/#!/groups/264950586900/>

Ohio SOPHE

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Ohio-Society-for-Public-Health-Education/106294056066239>

Pacific Northwest (PNW) SOPHE

<http://www.facebook.com/PNWSOPHE?sk=wall>

Pennsylvania SOPHE

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Pennsylvania-Society-for-Public-Health-Education/279033785455642>

Southern California SOPHE

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Southern-California-Society-for-Public-Health-Education/145806398823542>

SOME SOPHE CHAPTERS USING SOCIAL MEDIA CONT'D



LinkedIn

Georgia SOPHE

<http://www.linkedin.com/groups?gid=2805298&mostPopular=&trk=tyah>

Pennsylvania SOPHE

<http://www.linkedin.com/groups/Pennsylvania-Society-Public-Health-Education-4079172?gid=4079172&mostPopular=&trk=tyah>

Pacific Northwest Chapter (PNW) SOPHE

<http://www.linkedin.com/groups?gid=1045077&mostPopular=&trk=tyah>

Texas SOPHE

<http://www.linkedin.com/groups/Texas-Society-Public-Health-Education-3973766?gid=3973766&mostPopular=&trk=tyah>



Twitter

Colorado SOPHE

<https://twitter.com/#!/COSOPHE>

Georgia SOPHE

<https://twitter.com/#!/gasophe>

Northern California SOPHE

<https://twitter.com/#!/ncsophe>

RESOURCES

You can learn more about how to work with the media effectively by consulting the following publications and sources:

APHA Media Advocacy Manual.

http://www.apha.org/NR/rdonlyres/A5A9C4ED-1C0C-4D0C-A56C-C33DEC7F5A49/0/Media_Advocacy_Manual.pdf

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Social Media Toolkit.

http://www.cdc.gov/socialmedia/Tools/guidelines/pdf/SocialMediaToolkit_BM.pdf

Media Access Guide: A Resource for Community Health Promotion, CDC's Healthy Communities Program (2009). <http://www.cdc.gov/healthycommunitiesprogram/tools/pdf/mediaaccessguide.pdf>

APPENDIX A: SOCIAL MEDIA COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY WORKSHEET¹

Use this worksheet to help you strategize about your audience, and the potential social media tools and channels you may want to use for your campaign or communication activity.

1. Target Audience

Describe the person(s) you want to reach with your communication; be as specific as possible. More than one audience may be listed. Include a primary and secondary (influencers) audience if appropriate. (Examples: Mothers of children younger than two years old living in Atlanta, Pediatricians practicing in Nevada.)

I.

II.

III.

2. Determine your objective

a) What do you want to achieve through your social media outreach and communication? This could include something you want your target audience to do as a direct result of experiencing the communication. (Example: Increase awareness of immunization campaign.)

I.

II.

III.

Objectives may include (but are not limited to) the following:

- Provide information
- Highlight a campaign
- Encourage a health behavior
- Reinforce health messages
- Encourage interaction
- Obtain feedback/exchange ideas
- Collaborate with partners

b) Restate your objectives in SMART terms:

Specific – state in concrete, detailed and well-defined terms – What exactly are we going to do for whom?

Measurable – should be quantifiable and the source of measurement has been identified.

Attainable/Achievable – can the objective be achieved in the proposed time frame with the resources available?

Relevant/Realistic – is the objective directly related to the overarching communication goal from your communication plan?

Time-bound – have deadlines been set? 47 (Example: By December 2012 (time-bound), there will be a 5% increase (measurable) in recognition of the immunization campaign name (specific), as measured through surveying, by moms of children under two in the Metro Atlanta area (specific).)

I.

II.

III.

¹ Adapted from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2011). The Health Communicator's Social Media Toolkit. Retrieved from: http://www.cdc.gov/socialmedia/Tools/guidelines/pdf/SocialMediaToolkit_BM.pdf

APPENDIX A: SOCIAL MEDIA COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY WORKSHEET CONT'D

3. Define Audience Communication Needs :

People access information in various ways, at different times of the day, and for different reasons. If possible, define your audience needs by using market research and other data. You can use the following resources:

- "Knowing Your Audience & Doing Market Research" from Webcontent.gov: <http://www.usa.gov/webcontent/improving/evaluating/audience.shtml>
- Pew Internet and American Life Project: <http://www.pewinternet.org/>
- CDC eHealth Data Briefs: <http://www.cdc.gov/HealthMarketing/ehm/databriefs/>

Describe your audiences and their health information needs.

4. Goal Integration:

Describe how your social media objectives support your organization's mission and/or overall communications plan.

How does it support other online or offline components – what events (either national/state/local) present communication opportunities?

5. Message Development:

Develop the key messages based on the target audience and objectives identified. (Example: for moms of young children to encourage late season flu vaccination, "It's not too late to vaccinate.")

I.

II.

III.

6. Resources and Capacity:

Determine who in your organization will be responsible for implementation and the number of hours they can allocate for content creation and maintenance.

APPENDIX B: SOCIAL MEDIA EVALUATION WORKSHEET²

7. Identify Social Media Tools:

Determine what tools will effectively reach your target audience. Match the needs of the target audience with the tools that best support your objectives and resources. (Example: Because Facebook has a large population of young women who have children, is free, and requires minimal technical expertise, it may be a good tool for a mom-centered program while only requiring a small amount of funding for social media activities.)

I.

II.

III.

8. Define Activities:

Based on all of the elements above, list the specific activities you will undertake to reach your communication goals and objectives. (Example: Develop and promote Facebook fan page for diabetes education program.)

I.

II.

III.

9. Identify your key partners and their roles and responsibilities

10. Define Success for Evaluation:

What are your measures of success? Your measures of success may be different depending on your goals and objectives.

11. Evaluate:

Create an evaluation plan; see the Social Media Evaluation Plan for more information.

² Adapted from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2011). The Health Communicator's Social Media Toolkit. Retrieved from: http://www.cdc.gov/socialmedia/Tools/guidelines/pdf/SocialMediaToolkit_BM.pdf

APPENDIX: SOCIAL MEDIA EVALUATION WORKSHEET CONT'D

This document focuses on developing a basic structure for evaluating social media activities. For more in-depth evaluation planning, please refer to the resources in this document.

Step 1: Developing the Model

Using the activities and objectives determined in the social media communications strategy document, consider the following for each activity in your program. Note that there may be multiple inputs, outputs, and outcomes for each activity.

1. What are the inputs, or resources (both tangible and intangible), that need to be in place for the activities to happen?
2. What are the outputs of each of those activities? In other words, what will be the resulting products (usually tangible)?
3. What are the expected outcomes of the activities and outputs (usually intangible)? That is, what are the results you hope to see? (Example: Increased awareness of vaccination campaign.) If possible, break outcomes into short-term and long-term. The outcomes may be very similar to (or the same as) the objectives you developed in the Social Media Communication Strategy Worksheet.

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	
			Short-term	Long-term
Example: Messages developed by communication specialists; personnel; internet access	Example: Using Twitter to promote vaccination campaign to moms of young children	Example: Tweets posted; tweets retweeted by others; followers of Twitter profile	Example: Increased awareness of vaccination campaign	Example: Increased likelihood of vaccinating children

APPENDIX: SOCIAL MEDIA EVALUATION WORKSHEET CONT'D

Step 2: Developing the Questions Considering the inputs, outputs, and outcomes identified above, think about how these can be measured and what data can be collected.

Inputs: How can each of your inputs be measured, counted, or otherwise evaluated? For example, if one of the inputs is “messages developed by communication specialists,” what elements of this input can and should be measured?

Example evaluation question: How many audience-tested messages have been developed?

Evaluation question 1:

Evaluation question 2:

Evaluation question 3:

Outputs:

How can the products of your activities be measured? For social media activities, these questions may utilize web analytics, such as click-throughs and page views, or they could include numbers of friends, followers, or messages posted.

Example evaluation questions: To evaluate outputs of a Twitter account: How many messages did we post (during a set timeframe)? How many of these messages were retweeted? How many followers did we acquire?

Evaluation question 1:

Evaluation question 2:

Evaluation question 3:

Outcomes:

Outcomes can often be harder to measure than outputs, but offer great value. The evaluation questions for your outcomes will likely come from the *SMART* objectives you developed earlier. For example, if your objective was to increase by 5% the number of target audience members who were aware of your campaign, your evaluation question would reflect this objective.

Example evaluation question: What percentage of moms of children under the age of two in the Metro Atlanta area have heard of the vaccination campaign?

Evaluation question 1:

Evaluation question 2:

Evaluation question 3: