

COMMUNICATION PLAN

OVERVIEW

The Communication Plan is a key document in a program's arsenal of planning tools. Planning is a way to organize actions that will lead to the fulfillment of a goal. Developing a plan for communication is one application of planning principles. A plan will make it possible to target your communication accurately. By spending some time thinking about your message, your intended audience and how you will deliver your message, you will become more effective and efficient in communicating a lasting message which can result in improved health behavior and health outcomes.

Health communication can take many forms, both written and verbal. Essential to the strategic planning for effective health communication (and social marketing) is some variation on these steps:

- Review background information to define the problem (What's out there?)
- Set communication objectives (What do we want to accomplish?)
- Analyze and segment target audiences (Who do we want to reach?)
- Develop and pretest message concepts (What do we want to say?)
- Select communication channels (Where do we want to say it?)
- Determine what is the most effective time of the year to deliver a specific message (When do we want to say it?)
- Select, create and pretest messages and products (How do we want to say it?)
- Determine the frequency and duration of message delivery (How often do we want to say it and for how long?)
- Develop promotion plan/production (How do we get it used?)
- Implement communication strategies and conduct process evaluation (Getting it out there)
- Conduct outcome and impact evaluation (How well did we do?)

This template is designed to support the communication efforts of field staff and coalitions. It will guide you in thinking through the necessary components of a communication plan in a systematic way. Using this tool, you will describe the audience you are trying to reach, how you will reach that audience, when you will reach the audience and with what message. In addition, you will describe how the effort will be evaluated. The plan will provide the foundation for your entire health communication program. It will enable your program to produce meaningful results instead of just boxes of materials.