



Take Charge! Tips & Tricks for Managing the Media

Public Health Nursing Webinar

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Session Topics

1. **Strategic Media Work:** Why it's important
2. **Building a Communication Program:** How?
3. **News Releases:** Writing and critiquing skills
4. **Media Calls:** Tips for managing the media

Learning Objectives

- 1. Use journalism style to write and critique a public health news release.**
- 2. Use principles of risk communication to communicate effectively to the media and the public.**

Making the Case for Public Health News

Public Health (News) Matters!

- 1. Essential Service:** Local public health has a responsibility to inform, educate, and empower people about health issues. It is one of the ten essential services of public health.
- 2. Credibility:** News releases and media interviews increase your department's visibility and credibility among residents, local leaders, funders, and other stakeholders.

Public Health (News) Matters!

- 1. One Voice:** The process of creating news content helps hone your message, resolves ambiguity, and allows the department to speak with one voice.
- 2. Economy:** Written content can be repackaged for reports, newsletters, and websites.



What is Public Health News

beach advisory

flu shots

data reports

measles outbreak

outdoor smoking

men's health

trans fat

lyme disease

West Nile

extreme heat



Q. Can Anybody Do it?



A. It Depends

Building a Communication Program

Do-It-Yourself

- **Get trained!** Join the *National Public Health Information Coalition*.
- Create a simple **communication plan**.
- **Befriend local journalists.** Ask them to write about your programs and issues.
- **Get an intern to do it!** Hire an intern to write stories about your department.



Building a Communication Program

Build a Team



- 1. College communication programs:** Discuss developing a formal internship program.
- 1. Staff Roles.** Can you build communication skills a responsibilities into job descriptions for nurses, health promotion, and environmental health staff?

Building a Communication Program

Build a Team



- 1. Health communication position** (aka Public Information Officer). Can you fund this with federal emergency preparedness dollars or through other grants?
- 1. Regional partnerships.** Can you pool funds with other municipalities or health districts to fund a position or hire a consultant?

Tips for Writing a News Release

Big Picture Questions

- What public health problem am I addressing?
- How will I translate this message to my audience?
- Who is the audience?
- What action do I want my target audience to take?
- What is the “news hook”? What’s happening?
- Other stakeholders ?
- Where do I want to publish or post?

important stuff



fluff







Quick Tips: Writing a Release

- Write your news release like a real news article with a **public health spin**.
- Use your quotes as a “**bully pulpit**” to convey an action step, assess risk, or advocate for an issue.

Quick Tips: Writing a Release

- **Don't reinvent the wheel!** Use similar news releases from other health departments as templates.
- **Avoid jargon** and spell out acronyms.
- Use **simple sentence** structures.
- **Use Google** to “test” phrases and grammar.

Media Interviews: Prepare for the Unexpected



What You Should Know About the Media

Good News!

- Most journalists want to do the right thing; strong ethos of civic journalism.
- Public health has high credibility among journalists (*anecdotal*).

What You Should Know About the Media

Then why was I misquoted?

- Most reporters lack knowledge about public health or medical issues.
- Most reporters can't type or write as fast as you can talk.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is the right of an individual to have personal, identifiable medical information kept private; such information should be available only to public health authorities, the physician of record, and other health care and insurance personnel as necessary.

Confidentiality

MA Public Health Regulations:

300.120: Confidentiality

Excerpt: "...Except when necessary for the Commonwealth's disease investigation, control, treatment and prevention purposes, the Department and local boards of health **shall not disclose any personally identifying information without the individual's written consent....**"

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Confidentiality

How it works in practice in Cambridge...

1. Public statements about people involved in a disease outbreak. This is handled on a case-by-case basis, but generally the Cambridge Public Health Department (CPHD) gives gender, age, and describe the person's relationship to Cambridge (e.g., visitor, resident, student, worker, parent of a Cambridge student). CPHD never gives out names or addresses. Staff often follow the state's lead in how they describe the case in public statements.

When a Reporter Calls...

- Stick to your protocol!
- Try not to answer questions “on the spot.”
- Find out the reporter’s questions and take some time to prepare your response.
- Consult with subject matter experts, either on your staff or at the state.

Message Considerations

- Express empathy and caring (if crisis).
- Keep your key message short (12 to 15 words).
- Keep your key message simple. Avoid negativity.
- Illustrate key message with several main points.
- Support your main points with two or three facts.
- Explain what's next, where people can get more information, and what actions people should take.
- Repeat your key message several times, especially at the conclusion of the interview.

Other Considerations

- Recognize that **trust and credibility** of the communicator is important.
- Your role as spokesperson is to provide information to the public that is **clear and credible**.
- **Understand your audience(s)** and listen to their concerns. Validate their feelings and express empathy, if appropriate.
- **Develop key messages** that address audience concerns and support decision-making.
- **Key questions to answer in a crisis:** What is the risk? How big or small? Who is at risk? What actions should people take or not take? How sure are you?

Source: Public Health Risk Communication Training, Massachusetts Dept. of Public Health, 2005.

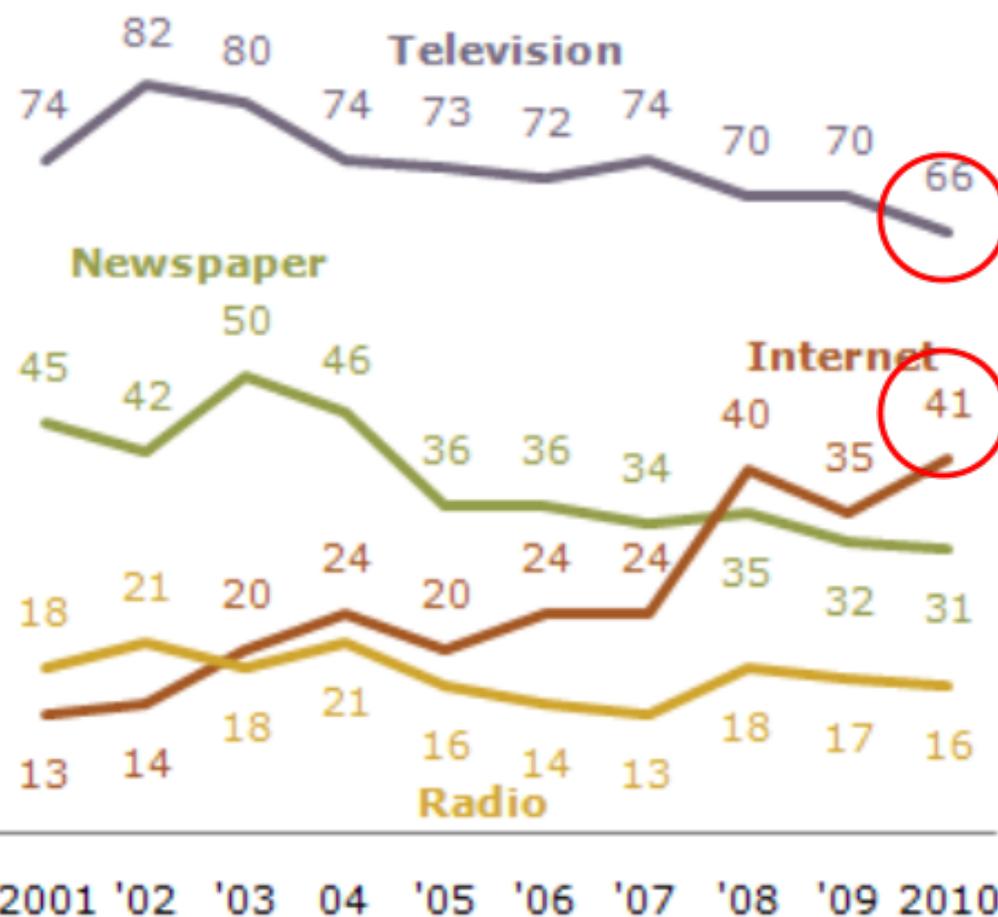
Interview Tips

- Speak slowly.
- Repeat key message(s).
- Don't speculate about the facts.
- Defer to subject matter experts.
- Do not speak for another person or organization.
- Reframe leading questions.
- Ask the reporter to read back quotes for accuracy.
- Ask the reporter if he/she needs more clarification about anything you've

Sharing the News:

Traditional Media, Websites, Twitter, Facebook

Where Do You Get Most of your News About National and International Issues?



PEW RESEARCH CENTER Dec 1-5, 2010. Figures add to more than 100% because respondents could volunteer up to two main sources. If asked more than once in a calendar year, trend shows final datapoint from each year.

New Technology Trends

- **57%** of Americans regularly get news from at least one internet or digital source.
- To find news online, **33%** of Americans use search engines (e.g., Google) to find subjects of interest.
- Other technologies are used less often to get news: email (**12%**), blogs (**9%**), cell phones (**8%**), social networking sites (**7%**), and Twitter (**2%**).

Source: Pew Research Center, 2010

Internet Now Rivals TV as Main News Source for College Grads

	Tele- vision %	Inter- net %	News- paper %	Radio %	Maga- zines %
Total	66	41	31	16	3
Men	61	43	29	17	3
Women	70	39	33	15	3
Men 18-49	55	56	21	19	3
Women 18-49	62	53	23	16	3
Men 50+	69	28	39	14	3
Women 50+	78	24	45	14	3
White	64	41	32	18	3
Black	86	35	30	9	3
Hispanic	66	45	28	12	3
College grad+	54	51	35	20	5
Some college	63	51	30	15	2
HS or less	75	29	29	14	2
\$75k or more	57	54	29	22	4
\$30k-\$74,999	67	42	29	17	3
Less than \$30k	72	34	33	12	2
Northeast	63	40	38	15	5

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Dec 1-5, 2010. Figures read across and add to more than 100% because respondents could volunteer up to two main sources. Whites and blacks include only those who are not Hispanic; Hispanics are of any race.



Thank You !

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