

Public Health is ROI

SAVE LIVES, SAVE MONEY



MEDIA TOOLKIT

NATIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH WEEK

April 1-7, 2013 :: www.nphw.org



American
Public Health
Association

3 :: Media and Social Media Outreach



Tips for working with local media

There are few better times to draw attention to the work of public health professionals — as well as to the public health system’s critical role in creating a healthier America for all — than during National Public Health Week. This year’s NPHW observance takes place April 1–7, and its theme is “**Public Health is ROI: Save Lives, Save Money.**” This yearly celebration is the perfect opportunity to get your public health message heard and to raise awareness of public health’s role in your community’s well-being. As you reach out to media to raise awareness about the value of investing in public health systems and approaches, the following tips will help you focus your efforts and craft a meaningful story.

But first, consider this: National opinion polls show that Americans strongly support prevention, believe it should be a higher national priority and support making resources available to assist community prevention efforts.¹ In other words, the public believes in prevention, even if it’s not entirely sure how public health fits into the equation. NPHW is your chance to rally that public support around local prevention efforts and help people connect the dots between effective community prevention and strong public health systems. And engaging local media is key to this effort.

Be passionate about public health! Your voice and stories can be just the inspiration others need to make prevention a part of their lives.

Who should I talk to?

When reaching out to a local newspaper or television station, you’ll need to determine which journalists can best help share your story with the largest group of people possible, or which journalists are read, watched or listened to by key decision-makers and target audiences.

To identify the right reporter to contact, review the past few months of news coverage from TV outlets, magazines, newspapers and online publications. Use Google News, Factiva, LexisNexis or another preferred search engine to search recent news published in your area to create a list of reporters for outreach. Choose reporters who cover public health, health care, feature and lifestyle beats, and especially those who write for the local section of your daily newspaper. Media directories often include a reporter’s beat, but you can also determine a reporter’s beat by reviewing several weeks of coverage. This review will help you determine if a reporter covers city hall, the state legislature, health and science, or education. You’ll note that at smaller newspapers, a reporter will cover a variety of issues, so you can always confirm by calling the newspaper directly. If you already have a relationship with a reporter, make sure to reference that when pitching your story.

When should I pitch my story?

The following steps are basic rules of thumb for when and how to first contact journalists.

Fast tip: Pitching

You need to be prepared for your pitch. Reporters don’t have a lot of time and they receive a lot of pitches every day. Your pitch should start out by providing the important information first and should be short and to the point. Be clear about why

¹ Lake Research Partners. Community prevention and the public: Full findings from focus groups and survey. 2010. Available at: www.naccho.org/advocacy/marketing/preventionmessaging.cfm

your story is relevant to the outlet's readership — review the talking points provided in Section 1 of this toolkit to help you draft your pitch. Also, make sure you have spokespeople briefed and ready to speak about your NPHW event on the record.

Put your pitch in the body of an email along with an official press release pasted below it. Follow up with the editor or reporter with a phone call in one or two days.

Print

- Send a pitch email with your press release or media advisory at least a week before your event so reporters can carve out time in their busy schedules to attend as well as do any advance research or interviews. Remember: Many journalists are on tight deadlines and may have to file a story about your event the same day it takes place. Giving plenty of advance notice is a professional courtesy. Also, follow up with an event reminder a couple of days before the event.
- After you send your pitch, follow up with a phone call. Offer to answer any questions or to connect reporters to sources they can interview. Call during the middle of the day, between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. Reporters are usually on deadline from the middle of the afternoon until the end of the day.
- If you get an editor or reporter on the phone, explain what makes your story newsworthy, interesting and relevant to the readership. Why should the reporter care about NPHW in your community? What sets your event or program apart from the rest of what is going on in your community? How does your event offer solutions to pressing health problems in your community?

Online media

- More and more outlets are publishing exclusively online and fortunately, many of the same rules apply when working with online journalists. It's definitely worth your while to search for local news outlets that are online-only. For example, Patch (www.patch.com), an online news service that focuses on hyper-localized news, serves communities around the nation.
- As with traditional journalists, be sure to read their recent stories. This will give you a frame of reference when pitching to them as well as a sense of what kinds of stories they tend to cover. Journalists appreciate it when you have done your homework.
- Follow the same suggestions from the print section when reaching out to online reporters. Because they publish online, they may post stories even more frequently than their traditional counterparts, so your story could appear within hours if they are interested. Make sure to supply them with all the pertinent information (background information, photos, links, research, sources to interview, etc.) when you contact them.

Television

- Make contact with the beat reporter or the assignment desk of your local television station about a week before your NPHW event and follow up a few days later. Follow up again with the assignment desk early in the morning the day of your NPHW event. Make sure you call before 8:30 a.m. to allow the station time to send a camera crew or reporter to your event if they choose to cover it.
- When pitching to the assignment desk or beat reporter, make sure to explain the main purpose of your event to the community, whether well-known community figures will be participating, and what visuals you can offer them for B-roll, which is the extra footage they will use during your story.

Radio

- The earlier in the day you contact radio stations, the better. In addition to more advance notification, pitch to radio stations the day before the event between 7:30 a.m. and 8:30 a.m. and then after 10 a.m. to reach reporters before and after their morning drive-time shows.
- Let the reporter know if your event will include any distinctive sounds. This will make for a more appealing radio story.

If a story about your NPHW event is published or broadcast, please let us know. Send an email or link to mediarelations@apha.org or call (202) 777-2509. If possible, send a clipping to us at Communications, American Public Health Association, 800 I Street, NW, Washington, DC 20001.

Interviewing: Why are we here?

Reporters sit down with you because they want to tell a good story that their readers care about. They want something that will interest their readers or viewers and convince them there is a problem that requires their attention and input. Your role in the interview is to explain why there is a problem, how individuals and communities can contribute to making changes, what benefit those changes can provide — such as money and lives saved — how public health systems play a part and what, if any, progress has already been made. Localize and personalize the talking points provided in this toolkit.

Tips for a good interview

- Talk in everyday language that anyone can understand and relate to — use as little professional or technical jargon as possible. Tell stories and anecdotes from your community that illustrate your point and offer plenty of examples.
- Keep your answers short and use simple statements, but speak in complete thoughts. Do not simply answer “yes” or “no” to questions. The reporter’s question may be edited out and your response should stand on its own. This is especially important for television interviews.
- Before you speak, think about what you might say. Define two or three main points you would like to make about your subject. Anticipate questions the reporter might ask and have responses ready. Do not simply repeat information already available in the press release — reporters are looking for unique quotes and insights.
- Never say anything you do not want to read in print, hear on the radio, or see on television or online.
- Journalists are professional communicators and know how to craft a story that resonates with their readers. Let them lead the interview process.
- Be helpful: Offer to be available for follow-up questions, email additional information or source contacts, and thank reporters for covering your event. Remember: NPHW is also a chance to introduce yourself and your organization to local health reporters, who will hopefully keep you in mind as a source for all kinds of stories throughout the year.
- Be confident! You are the public health expert and community health is an important topic.

Before your interview, be prepared

- Before your interview, familiarize yourself with the NPHW 2013 messages and pertinent local statistics and activities you will be discussing.

- Prepare simple and solid key points, including statistics and examples of interest. Use the sample talking points in this toolkit and make your own list of important localized messages. If you will be talking about local public health efforts, have outcome data or success stories available and try to find a community source who is also willing to be interviewed about why a particular public health activity is important. Offer to connect the reporter with additional sources to interview.
- Anticipate the reporter's questions, especially the hard ones, and weave your key messages into your responses. While you may want to gloss over a reporter's more difficult questions, try your best not to avoid a direct question. Remember: Reporters are not obliged to keep their interviews to you and your recommended sources — they can easily find other sources who will address difficult questions. If your answers do not appear forthcoming or authentic, readers and viewers will know.
- If you can provide the reporter with a written summary of information, main points or statistics in advance of your interview, do so. Reporters always need perspective, so anticipate and prepare to answer the following questions: How many people are affected? When did the issue arise? What's its financial impact? Is this part of a national trend? Don't hesitate to put the issue into perspective, even if the reporter doesn't ask. In fact, email the reporter relevant fact sheets and links to resources before the interview or follow up with such information after the interview.

At the interview

Should you secure an interview, localize the NPHW story by telling the reporter how your campus or local community is working to help make America healthier through preventive measures, how those measures save health care dollars and how public health systems play a crucial role.

- Use local statistics to help illustrate facts and to prove that public health and prevention can save lives, save money and improve health. Repeat your message again and again until you feel it has been effective; but use different language and examples. Try to keep your responses brief and succinct, but long enough to give the reporter substantive quotes.
- Stick to your main points and do not allow yourself to get drawn too far off on tangents. Many people make the mistake of talking too much.
- Make eye contact with the reporter.
- Don't overestimate a reporter's knowledge of your subject. If a reporter bases questions on information you believe is incorrect, do not hesitate to set the record straight. Offer background information when necessary or offer to follow up via email with additional information.
- If you do not understand a question, ask for clarification rather than talking around it. If you do not have the answer or are unable to comment on a topic, say so. Tell the reporter where to find the information, if possible.
- Use phrases people will understand. Avoid or explain acronyms and don't use complicated scientific jargon.
- Make your final comment clear and concise, re-emphasizing your main point and leaving with a call to action. If you feel that you failed to get your message out, repeat it at the end of the interview.
- At the end of the interview, offer to follow up with more information and resources to help the reporter write the story. Let them know how they can contact you with follow-up questions or who else in the community they should reach out to.

Fast tip: The first question rule

Your message needs to be included in the first answer you give during interviews, no matter what the question is. Come up with a variety of different answers you think will apply to an opening question.

Overview: *Interviewing for television*

Your television interview attire should reflect who you are and what you do to protect your community's health. It's important to be genuine in a television interview, so if a white lab coat or any other prop is part of your everyday attire, by all means bring it along. At the same time, there are certain things that don't work on television, such as clothing or accessories that look too bright on camera or otherwise distract viewers from what you have to say.

What not to wear

- Patterns on ties and clothing tend to appear to move on camera. Try to stick to solid colors if possible.
- Other distractions include heavy jewelry and other accessories. If these items take attention away from your face, the audience will have more trouble listening to you.
- Don't wear more make-up than usual. Whatever you already wear works fine.
- Unless you have a full beard or a well-grown mustache, shave. A five o'clock shadow doesn't show well on camera.
- Don't wear a scowl. A smile invites the viewer to connect with you.

Remember...

- As you wait for the interview, don't say anything that you wouldn't want quoted. Assume your microphone is always on.
- When the interviewer asks you a question, wait for that person to finish before you speak.
- Once you finish your answer, wait for your next question. Don't try to fill empty space — you'll look silly or say something you will regret.
- Stay still, eyes locked in place and answer the question in a short, simple way.
- Relax!

Tips for writing a successful news release

Good news releases provide the foundation for good news stories — they provide the who, what, where, when, why and how of an issue. The following tips cover what to include and how to format a news release.

A news release is written in the third person and generally includes the following:

- Quotes from a public health leader.
- Compelling statistics — not too many, but enough to make your point and help sell your story pitch.
- Information about who is involved, how this is a problem, what can be done about it, where the problem or solution is occurring and most importantly, why we should take action.
- Type your news release and double space between lines. Don't forget to use your spell-check and then proofread.

RELEASE INSTRUCTIONS: Try to keep your news release to one to two pages in length. In addition to telling the story in the body of your press release, include the following to inform reporters and editors about all necessary particulars:

TIMING: Include directions about when the information can be released (e.g. ‘For immediate release’).

CONTACT INFORMATION: Include a contact person, organization name, web address, phone and fax number, and email address. If possible, include a cell phone number too, as it can make it easier for reporters on a tight deadline to reach someone.

HEADLINE: Start with a concise, catchy, understandable title that captures what the news release is about.

SUMMARY: Continue with a concise body of text, generally a few sentences long, summarizing what the news release is about.

BODY: Always start the first sentence in the following format: city, state (or country), month, day, year. Then you can launch into the story itself. Keep your sentences short and to the point. The purpose of the body is a continuation of the summary portion of the press release. This is where you give in-depth details regarding your announcement. Include a quote from your organization’s leader too — this will be helpful to reporters who write about NPHW, but can’t attend the event in person.

ABOUT: Include a sentence or two about your organization with a link to your website and additional resources, including social media sites.

Sample news release

[For Immediate Release]

[Please adapt as needed for your event, including modifying the type of event, date, etc.]

Contact: _____
[Name — Must be a person who is available to answer questions from the media or can direct reporters to the appropriate source to interview.]

Phone number: _____
[Include cell phone number if the person is not always available at the office.]

Email address: _____

Family walk/bike event and free child bike helmet check promotes ‘Public Health is ROI: Save Lives, Save Money’

[Name of organization here] recognizes National Public Health Week 2013 by hosting _____ event and promoting this year’s theme, “Public Health is ROI: Save Lives, Save Money.”

[City, State], April ____, 2013: Every year in the United States, seven out of 10 deaths are due to preventable chronic diseases such as diabetes and heart disease.² In fact, chronic diseases account for a whopping 75 percent of national health care spending, yet only 3 percent of our health care dollars go toward prevention.³ Here in [name of community or state] [percent number] percent of our residents are living with a costly and potentially life-threatening chronic illness. But there are steps we can take to help turn these statistics around.

² Kung HC, Hoyert DL, Xu JQ, Murphy SL. Deaths: final data for 2005. National Vital Statistics Reports 2008;56(10). Available from: www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr56/nvsr56_10.pdf

³ APHA. The Prevention and Public Health Fund: A critical investment in our nation’s physical and fiscal health. June 2012. Available at: www.apha.org/advocacy/reports/reports

Today, [name of organization] held an event to show people the fun, easy and small steps they can take to make prevention a part of their lives. The event also showcased the value of investing in prevention: Research shows that investing just \$10 per person each year in proven, community-based public health efforts can save the nation more than \$16 billion within five years. That's a \$5.60 return for every \$1 invested.⁴ The event, which is one of hundreds of National Public Health Week events happening in communities nationwide, was attended by public health leaders and other community members, including [name of city official here] and [name of local legislator/special guest or expert]. The participants came together to issue a call to action about the value of prevention to our lives, pocketbooks and futures.

"I am so proud of [city] residents, who came out today to celebrate prevention and be healthy role models for their communities and loved ones," said [name of city health official here]. "We all have a role to play in making our communities healthier places and [name of local, city, county, tribal or state public health department] is excited to help lead the way. Many small preventive steps can add up to make a big difference in transforming a health care system focused on treatment to one that equally values prevention."

[Event] participants endorsed [name of organization here]'s efforts to make prevention a priority by signing a pledge to eat healthier, be more physically active and say no to tobacco. More than [number] signed the pledge.

"Our nation and community simply cannot sustain the current trajectory of health care spending and chronic disease rates," said [Name of organization's spokesperson]. "Fortunately, we know that investing in prevention and public health can make an enormous difference."

[Name of city official] emphasized that supporting public health approaches to better health does reap life-saving returns. For example, research shows that each 10 percent increase in local public health spending contributes to a nearly 7 percent decrease in infant deaths, a 3.2 percent decrease in cardiovascular deaths and a 1.4 percent decrease in diabetes-related deaths.⁵ Public health and prevention are critical pieces in creating a healthier nation.

Today's [event] was part of the American Public Health Association's annual celebration of the role of public health and prevention in our communities. Since 1995, communities nationwide have celebrated NPHW each April to draw attention to the need to help protect and improve the nation's health.

"National Public Health Week helps educate and engage Americans in the movement to create a healthier America for ourselves and the generations to come. The hundreds of events that take place this week help showcase the value of supporting prevention and the role that public health agencies, organizations and practitioners play in making prevention possible," said Georges C. Benjamin, MD, FACP, FACEP (E), executive director of the American Public Health Association. "We all have a role to play in making America the healthiest nation in one generation. And it starts with each of us taking the simple preventive steps that lead to better health."

For more information about National Public Health Week, visit www.nphw.org. To learn more about public health efforts in your community, visit [web address for local, city, county, tribal or state public health agency.]

⁴ Levi, J. et al, Prevention for a Healthier America: Investments in Disease Prevention Yield Significant Savings, Stronger Communities. Trust for America's Health. Feb. 2009.

⁵ APHA Infographic available at: action.apha.org/site/PageNavigator/Infographic_Page_2012_10_04_Round_2.html.

Tips for writing and placing an op-ed

The op-ed, a short opinion piece published opposite the editorial page in the local newspaper, is a prized communications tool. Securing an op-ed placement allows you to deliver your unfiltered message to influencers, policymakers and leaders in your community. Your op-ed commentary should be thought-provoking, pose questions for the community to consider, offer a challenge or provide a solution to a problem. The following tips will help you customize and place an op-ed in your local community:

1. **LENGTH.** Op-eds are generally required to be between 500 and 800 words in length. Confirm the guidelines with the local newspaper prior to submission. Guidelines usually can be found on the individual publication's website and may provide other tips for submitting an op-ed.
2. **LOCALIZE YOUR OP-ED.** Use your op-ed to make a strong point supported with compelling local facts and figures. Build on your own experiences, highlighting how your public health efforts bolster the national NPHW theme. Think through the specific actions you want your community to take, highlight local health and wellness issues, and remember to propose the NPHW 2013 call to action at the end of the op-ed. Having a story to tell that the audience can relate to will help get the op-ed placed.
3. **FIND A NEWS HOOK.** Successful op-eds will have a local or national news story to tie into NPHW. If a successful public health program shown to improve health and save health care dollars is struggling under funding cuts, use this in your op-ed.
4. **START EARLY.** Many papers receive up to 500 op-ed submissions a week. Call the paper about two months before NPHW and ask for the name of the editorial page editor so you know who to contact. Submit an op-ed to only one paper at a time; papers do not like to print the same op-ed as a rival paper and often have official policies about publishing op-eds that have already been published elsewhere.
5. **REACH OUT.** Introduce yourself to the appropriate person at the paper. Tell them you are interested in submitting an op-ed for placement during NPHW and ask about any specific guidelines (such as word counts or submission deadlines). Also ask for guidance that would help ensure placement, such as topics that would be of interest to their readers. Make sure to be ready with your own suggestions ahead of time based on reading the paper's latest articles and its recent op-eds, editorials and letters to the editor.
6. **FOLLOW THE SUBMISSION GUIDELINES.** Most newspapers now accept op-ed submissions via email or an online form on their websites, though some may still ask you to send it via U.S. mail. Following their preferences will increase the chances of getting your op-ed placed. When you send your submission, include a cover letter reminding the editor who you are and reference any previous contact you may have had. Highlight why the subject is important to the newspaper's readers. Include your full name and a brief description of who you are and what you do, illustrating what makes you an expert on the subject. Make sure to include your contact information with the submission. Most newspapers have a policy against submitting the same op-ed to multiple publications. Prioritize which publications you want to submit to and then submit each op-ed one at a time. If the first-choice publication declines, submit the op-ed to the next choice, continuing until your op-ed is published.
7. **CHECK YOUR SPELLING AND PROOF!** Type your op-ed and double space between lines. Don't forget to use your spell-check and then proofread.
8. **BE PERSISTENT.** Make a follow-up call about a week after submitting your op-ed to give time for the editor to review it. Confirm that the op-ed was received and answer any questions the editor may have. Offer to modify the op-ed if needed.

Sample op-ed topics

- Use a local news hook. Highlight a recent incident, disease outbreak or preventable injury or death to show how investing in public health and prevention could make a difference. For example, an op-ed could tie into a recent whooping cough outbreak to illustrate how investments in public health education and services keep our communities safe from vaccine-preventable diseases.

- Use a local event that is being planned in conjunction with NPHW to show the importance of creating healthier communities and supporting public health and prevention. Using the talking points and statistics provided in this toolkit will show the importance of NPHW. For example, each year, chronic diseases such as heart disease, cancer and diabetes are responsible for millions of premature deaths and cause Americans to miss 2.5 billion days of work, resulting in lost productivity totaling more than \$1 trillion.⁶
- Since NPHW happens in the spring, use a simple message of teaching children to live active and healthy lives, explaining how local public health systems can help make that happen. Plus, polling research shows that Americans especially support prevention when it comes to children's health.⁷
- Focus on the importance of creating the opportunities and conditions that put prevention within reach and highlight public health's role in making that happen. For example, connect the dots between smart transportation planning, reducing pedestrian/bicycle injuries, and creating more opportunities for residents to be active and safe outdoors. Use key statistics such as these: Up to \$11.80 in benefits can be gained for every \$1 invested in bicycling and walking opportunities. States with the highest levels of biking and walking also tend to have the lowest levels of costly chronic disease, such as high blood pressure, obesity and diabetes.⁸
- Ask local members of Congress to support adequate funding for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and to stop diverting monies from the landmark Prevention and Public Health Fund, the nation's first mandatory funding stream dedicated to prevention.
- Highlight success stories from local public health systems to illustrate why it's important to invest in public health and prevention. For example, write about a local asthma education program that's helping families reduce the risk of asthma attacks and is resulting in fewer emergency room visits. Remind readers of a recent food-borne illness outbreak and how the quick response of public health workers in tracing the outbreak prevented additional illness.
- Correlate the amount spent each year on health care with the current local and national budget deficits and explain how investments in public health and prevention can help lower health care spending.
- Discuss cuts to local, state and federal public health budgets and how they put your community's health in jeopardy and threaten hard-fought health gains, such as declines in tobacco use.
- Use a local legislator's campaign or advocacy effort to drive home the local importance of NPHW.
- Focus on simple changes that can be made to help prevent disease and death and save health care dollars.
- Ask a local legislator to sign or write an op-ed to increase the chances of having the op-ed published.

Email mediarelations@apha.org for sample op-eds and assistance with submitting an op-ed. If you get published, please let us know. Send an email to mediarelations@apha.org or call (202) 777-2509. If possible, send a clipping to us at Communications, American Public Health Association, 800 I Street, NW, Washington, DC 20001.

Tips for writing a letter to the editor

Writing a letter to the editor of your local newspaper is another way to share your opinion about issues related to NPHW 2013 and explain its theme. Letters to the editor are usually submitted to a publication in response to a recently published article about an issue. The letters also include your main messages about your issue and approach to a problem or suggestions for change. A well-written, timely letter can help shift public opinion and influence policy.

⁶ Kessler RC, Greenberg PE, Mickelson KD, Meneades LM, Wang PS. The effects of chronic medical conditions on work loss and work cutback. *J Occup Environ Med.* 2001;43: 218–225.; DeVol R, Bedroussian A, Charuworn A, Chatterjee A, Kim I, Kim S, Klowden K. *An Unhealthy America: The Economic Burden of Chronic Disease.* Santa Monica, Calif.: Milken Institute. 2007.

⁷ Lake Research Partners. *Community prevention and the public: Full findings from focus groups and survey.* 2010. Available at: www.naccho.org/advocacy/marketing/preventionmessaging.cfm

⁸ Alliance for Biking and Walking. *Bicycling and Walking in the United States: 2012 Benchmarking Report.* January 2012.

Additionally, letters to the editor are a great advocacy tool because they:

- reach a large audience;
- are monitored by elected officials;
- bring up information not addressed in a news article; and
- create an impression of widespread support or opposition to an issue.

Because many newspapers receive up to 500 op-ed submissions a week, we encourage you to write a letter to the editor, as letters are more likely to be published. Following are tips to remember when you draft your letter:

- Keep your letter short and to the point. Letters should state your point simply and briefly, while reflecting your commitment and passion. Many newspapers have strict limits on the length of letters and have limited space to publish them. Keeping your letter brief will help assure that editors do not cut out your important points. Word limits are usually between 150-250 words. Check your local newspaper's submission guidelines, usually found online on the editorial page or letters-to-the-editor page.
- Make references to the newspaper. While some papers print general commentary, many will only print letters that refer to a specific article. When drafting your letter, open with a specific reference to a recent news story, editorial or previous letter. Make sure the news story is no older than a few days, and for national papers, no further back than 48 hours. Here are some examples of easy ways to refer to articles in your opening sentence:
 - I was disappointed to see that the Herald's March 30 editorial, "New school meal nutrition standards go too far," neglected to highlight the fact that more and more children are being diagnosed with adult-onset diabetes.
 - I strongly disagree with (author's name) narrow view on funds for tobacco quitlines. ("Name of op-ed," date)
 - I am deeply saddened to read that Congressman [name] is supporting deep funding cuts to the nation's public health system. ("Title of article," date)
- In order to draw the reader's attention, make sure your lead sentence is compelling. Think of new ways to discuss the topic and make sure you present unique public health solutions to the problem.
- Be accurate. Support your letter with facts, statistics, citations or other evidence.
- Optimize the chances for your letter to be published. Elected officials carefully monitor newspapers to gauge local opinion.
- Mentioning your senators or representatives by name, and stating the specific legislative action you would like them to take, can guarantee that your letter will catch the attention of your members of Congress.
- Share clear and to-the-point thoughts. Write clearly and directly about the central point you want readers to understand. Close with a thought for readers to remember.
- Demonstrate your reach. If you know that your opinion also represents that of others, be sure to mention it. However, if you want to submit a letter signed from representatives of more than one group, be aware that most newspapers limit signatures to two or three names.
- Consider your options. Submit letters to your local paper for the best chance of publication, though you may certainly submit to national publications as well. Other options include suburban or neighborhood papers, specialized magazines, ethnic press, religious publications, trade and alternative publications, and college alumni magazines.

In addition, remember to:

- Type your letter and double space between lines. Don't forget to use your spell-check and then proofread.
- Include your contact information, including your name, organization (if applicable), address, telephone number(s) and email address. Newspapers will typically only publish a letter if they are able to contact the signer to make sure he/she is the author.
- Mail, fax or email your letter to the address listed for the publication.
- Send letters to weekly community newspapers too. The smaller the newspaper's circulation, the easier it may be to get your letter printed.

Email mediarelations@apha.org for sample letters to the editor and assistance with submitting Letters to the Editor.

If you get published, please let us know. Send an email to mediarelations@apha.org or call (202) 777-2509. If possible, send a clipping to us at Communications, American Public Health Association, 800 I Street, NW, Washington, DC 20001.

Tips for writing a successful public service announcement

A public service announcement is a message serving the public interest that airs on television or radio, but can be modified for print and for the Internet. PSAs are brief and educational and are generally prepared as scripts to be read by on-air radio or TV talent.

- Keep it short. As a general guide, the word count for typical PSAs' on-air time is about 25 words for 10 seconds; 40 words for 20 seconds; and 80 words for 30 seconds.
- PSAs are written using a conversational tone and simple, accessible language. Avoid complicated sentences or difficult-to-pronounce words.
- Keep it simple! For example, a 30-second PSA should fit on one page. Copy (body text) should be double-spaced using an easy-to-read font. Avoid using different colors and do not include pictures, images or other graphics.
- Title your PSA and make sure it is clear to the reader which part is to be read on-air and which part is simply background information.
- The PSA begins with the title, centered on the page. It is followed by body copy and ends with "--0--". These last characters are traditionally used in media circles to indicate the end of the on-air message.
- Your PSA should follow the "inverted pyramid" principle commonly used for media communication. To capture the listener's attention, begin with a strong opening sentence that focuses on the most important information. Then follow with the who, what, where, when and why — leaving the least important last.
- Test your PSA by reading it aloud, using normal conversation to make sure it flows smoothly and comes under your time limit.
- Include your name, phone number and email at the bottom of the PSA.

Sample public service announcement

:45 NATIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH WEEK EVENT, RADIO PSA

Did you know that diseases such as heart disease, cancer and diabetes are responsible for millions of premature deaths each year? Many of these deaths could have been prevented through small changes.

During National Public Health Week, April 1-7, the American Public Health Association will be talking about how supporting public health and prevention can create a healthier nation for all. Join us to find out how you can take preventive measures — in ways big and small — in your families, neighborhoods, workplaces and schools to live longer and healthier lives. A healthier America begins today!

For more information on local events this week, please contact [organization] at [location] or call [phone number] or visit [website].

:30 RADIO PSA

Did you know that diseases such as heart disease, cancer and diabetes are responsible for millions of premature deaths each year? Join National Public Health Week, April 1-7, to help make America the healthiest nation in one generation and find out how you can take preventive measures — in ways big and small — in your families, neighborhoods, workplaces and schools to live longer and healthier lives. For more information, please visit www.nphw.org. A healthier America begins today!

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Working with citizen journalists/bloggers

How to contribute to existing blogs

Now more than ever, people are blogging about topics relevant to the public health community. This provides a new outlet for conveying the message that well-supported public health systems must play a critical role as we focus our efforts on improving our nation's health and curbing health care spending.

But before you contact an existing blogger, remember that there are key differences between pitching a media story to traditional journalists and trying to interest bloggers in your topic. Bloggers expect to be treated as individuals. While journalists are writing for an audience, bloggers are engaged with their audience. Further, while journalists work according to an understood code of professional conduct, bloggers do not. With bloggers, the rules are still being defined and differ from person to person.

Journalists are supposed to write objectively and report based on fact. Bloggers employ significantly more freedom in voicing their individual opinions and perspectives, even though many consider themselves to be journalists. This makes it much more important to proactively reach out to bloggers to provide them with your perspective. Normal practices in media relations are not always acceptable in blogger relations. Below are a few key points to ensure successful blogger outreach:

The importance of blogs

By the numbers:

- 95 percent of journalists use search engines to research a story. (PR Week/PR Newswire)
- 89 percent of journalists source stories from blogs. (Cision/GSPM)
- 59 percent of Capitol Hill staffers prefer to use online resources such as Google when advising their members on how to vote. (National Journal)
- 39 percent of journalists are now required to blog. (PR Week/PR Newswire)

When you are working with bloggers, every message should be personal. Forwarding a message from someone else is seen as bad form in blogger relations — bloggers interpret it as you not taking the time to write a message yourself. It's better to start a fresh message, even if you just cut and paste the information from the message you would have forwarded.

Avoid sending press releases; but if necessary, always include a personal note in the body of the email. With bloggers, you're always "on the record." Be aware that anything you send a blogger could show up in a blog post. As a rule, consider whether you're comfortable with having what you send ending up on the front page of your local newspaper when deciding what to include in your correspondence with a blogger. That said, be especially careful with facts and grammar because a blogger could very easily publish your mistake.

Always be upfront and transparent and encourage the blogger to be transparent as well. Clearly identify who you are and who you work for, as well as your association with the American Public Health Association and National Public Health Week.

Use a comfortable, conversational tone. Avoid technical terms and jargon. While a professional tone is good, especially when first initiating contact, a message that is too rigid is a turn-off to bloggers who are used to a more conversational tone.

Bloggers run on much more rapid deadlines than traditional media. Respond to a blogger's email as quickly as possible. Chances are he or she is going to publish the post within a matter of hours after corresponding with you about a topic, so a rapid response is crucial. If full information for a response is not available, still reply within a few hours to indicate you've received the message and are working on it. A quick response conveys that you value your relationship with them.

Do not add bloggers to a media list unless they specifically request it. Like everyone, bloggers get a lot of spam email, so they may not want to be added to another email list. Many bloggers don't see themselves as reporters; they expect to be treated differently and dealt with on an individual basis. Treat them as you would a reporter you have a close relationship with. You would not blast a press release to them without making a personal call or personalizing your note.

Approach bloggers first, post a commentary second. If a blogger has misquoted you or used factually inaccurate information, you should first give him or her a chance to correct it. Reach out via email or phone and point out the discrepancy. Ninety-four percent of bloggers say that they would correct misinformation. Only 2 percent would leave an inaccurate post as is. But remember, bloggers have their own unique perspective. You must make your case in terms of what you think is inaccurate.

Guidance for posting comments

Blog comments can range from the insightful to the offensive. If you post a comment, be conversational and clearly identify who you are representing. Read through previous comments on a blog so that you don't simply repeat points that others are making.

Do not get into a personal argument with someone who is commenting or take comments personally. Be professional and high-minded. Your goal should be to add your voice and perspective to the conversation, not to win the finer points of a debate — particularly if, in the process, you alienate yourself from the online community.

13 rules for managing your own blog

1. Don't pitch, participate. To build your own legitimacy and credibility as a blogger, participate in other conversations within the blogosphere, not just the ones you generate.
2. Pay attention. Know the bloggers and online news sources that write about public health-related topics and link to them when appropriate. Use resources such as Technorati, Yahoo Blog Directory and Google Blog Search to search for them.
3. Honesty is the best policy. Make sure not to plagiarize, infringe on copyrights or behave inappropriately online. This ruins your reputation online and will make bloggers unlikely to want to work with you. It will also turn off readers. Be mindful of the online world's long memory. Remember that everything you say online is likely to be indexed and stored forever, either via search engines or through bloggers that reference your posts.
4. Write well and be timely. Write clever, relatable posts, spell check and proofread. Link to the websites of insightful, engaging writers.
5. Be authentic and candid. Your identity, affiliation and interests are a large part of who you are. When you post, you have no reason to hide your personal connection to the world of public health.
6. Be thoughtful. Don't just funnel raw information to a community. Add value by sharing your personal experiences as a public health professional.
7. Be accurate. Respect the facts and link to the trusted sources that form your opinions.
8. Respect the record. Only delete someone's comments on your blog if they are offensive.
9. Be honest about where you are posting from and when.
10. Respect privacy. Don't make a private person a public one.
11. Debate is fine. Quarrelling is not. You won't agree with everyone in the blogosphere. Feel free to voice disagreements, but don't pick fights.
12. Forget about "control." Bloggers aren't bound by regulations and "messaging." Instead, they engage in conversation.
13. Be yourself. It's OK to have a personality. People — not organizations or their messages — make blogs work. Use your own voice.

How to integrate social media in your NPHW 2013 activities

The American Public Health Association (APHA) has issued a call for Americans to take preventive measures to create healthier communities and support investments in public health and prevention. Sound impossible? It's not. During NPHW, in addition to traditional outreach methods, APHA will once again ask you to leverage your social media resources to help spread the word. The best way to engage the public is through a personalized message that others can view and share. The following tips can help you to engage your online network.

How to make social media work for you

Social media, such as Twitter and Facebook, allows you to enhance your offline activities and should be integrated into the other work you do. Below is additional explanation on social media tools and how you can use them to bring attention to your NPHW activities.

And don't forget to check the privacy settings on your social media accounts before you begin — you might consider making your NPHW posts available for anyone to see.

- **TWITTER (WWW.TWITTER.COM):** Twitter, a real-time, short-messaging service, allows you to spread the word about your activities in several ways. Using your organization's Twitter handle (easy and free to create if you don't already have one), you can send messages about your event in short bursts (140 characters or less), link to resources and post images that can be easily "retweeted" by other users who would like to share your tweets with others. This is a great way to announce your event or provide updates. Follow NPHW 2013 www.twitter.com/nphw and use the official NPHW 2013 hashtag, #NPHW, in your tweets so that users can easily search for what you and others are saying about NPHW. It's also best to tweet multiple times leading up to NPHW 2013 to build anticipation. You can also use Twitter to link to NPHW press releases, published op-eds and letters to the editor, and proclamations. Please answer any questions about NPHW 2013 that you receive through Twitter. This is just another way to keep your followers informed and excited about your work. Follow other appropriate Twitter feeds, as this may prompt other Twitter users to follow you as well. Worldwide, hundreds of millions of people use Twitter, so it can be a helpful tool in reaching people you wouldn't necessarily reach using traditional media.
- **FACEBOOK (WWW.FACEBOOK.COM):** You can use the social networking site Facebook in numerous ways. "Like" the NPHW.org Facebook fan page to receive updates and share NPHW online activities with your friends and family. If you or your organization already has a Facebook page, make sure to post information about your event on your wall or status and continue to update your page as NPHW 2013 gets closer. You should also make an event page that can allow you to invite others to attend your NPHW activities. The event page can include information on your event and relevant websites and photos, and will allow people to easily RSVP and see who is also attending. You also have the option of allowing your invitees to invite other people, which will expand your reach of potential participants. You can use Facebook to highlight NPHW press releases, published op-eds and letters to the editor, and proclamations. To spark conversation and engagement, you may consider posting links to relevant news stories and asking your followers to comment on how this year's NPHW activities can make a difference. Also, recent surveys show that twice as many digital news consumers follow news recommendations from Facebook rather than from Twitter (Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism).
- **FLICKR (WWW.FLICKR.COM):** Flickr allows you to share your photos easily with others and allows users to search for images. Create a Flickr account so you can post photos of what you did last year to pique interest in this year's activities. Add photos from this year after each activity. Link to your Flickr photos from your website, blog and Facebook page and tweet the link when you upload new photos. Make sure to tag your photos with NPHW so everyone can easily find and see them! Flickr is also a great way to let news reporters browse through available NPHW photos that they may want to publish alongside their coverage.
- **YOUTUBE (WWW.YOUTUBE.COM):** A short (no more than one minute) video is a creative way to promote your event or activity online. Film your NPHW 2013 activities or get testimonials from health experts that will entice viewers to learn more about public health, your organization and NPHW. One note of caution: Be very careful when using copyrighted materials, including music and images. Many songs, photos and movie clips require gaining the rights to use them, and you could face legal action if you use them without permission. When in doubt, stick to original material! Also, be sure to tag your videos with NPHW so they are easily searchable to maximize possible views.
- **INSTAGRAM (WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM):** Instagram is another online venue to share photos taken with mobile phones and requires downloading an Instagram app to your smartphone. Instagram allows users to instantly share images on their social networking accounts. As with Flickr, you can share photos of your NPHW activities to generate interest.

- **BLOGS:** If you or your organization has a blog, use it to promote your NPHW activities. Post all the essential information (location, date, time, etc.) and provide frequent updates to build people's interest in attending. This can also be a forum for readers to post questions in the comments section, which you will be able to answer and potentially address in future posts. As with the other social networking tools, be sure to tag your posts with NPHW so it will appear more easily in search engines.
- **EMAIL:** Email is still a powerful tool to spread your message. Make sure to keep an up-to-date distribution list of people to receive your information; this includes deleting old contacts and removing contacts who have asked not to receive information anymore. It is imperative to keep the list updated. Be sure to include links to all your social media site pages (Twitter, Facebook, Flickr, YouTube, etc.) to drive more people to those sites. You can always include a quick line and link under your signature if you don't want to seem obtrusive.
- **WEBSITE:** Your organization's website is likely the first place visitors will go to find information about your group. Make sure all the information about NPHW 2013 activities is listed and also include links to all of your social media pages. If possible, update your site frequently with the latest information so site visitors will know they can rely on your organization's site for the most up-to-date information. Don't make information hard to find — if NPHW is a top priority for your organization, then feature a prominent link to your NPHW activities on your home page.
- **TWIBBON IMAGE (WWW.TWIBBON.COM):** Twibbon allows you to show your support for a cause by overlaying an image on your Twitter icon. For example, users who support breast cancer awareness can have a little pink ribbon appear on their image icon. To find the NPHW 2013 Twibbon, visit www.twibbon.com and search for "National Public Health Week." This should bring up our icon. You can then hit "support" to log in through your Twitter account and finalize the upload of the Twibbon icon. When you want to remove the image, upload a new photo.

Using social media to promote NPHW 2013 theme days

Nationwide, individuals and organizations will unite to follow the five themed days to help celebrate and promote NPHW 2013. You can integrate social media into your activities every day of NPHW and help increase awareness of public health issues as well as potentially increase participation in your own scheduled events. Start by changing your Facebook, Twitter or any other social media icon photo to the NPHW logo (found on the tools section of www.nphw.org). Change your icon and show your support! Also, make sure to properly tag every action you take with NPHW so that all your posts can be easily found in searches. Be sure to encourage your employer or employees to take part. Here are some ways to show your support every day:

Five sample Facebook and Twitter posts:

MONDAY

FACEBOOK: This week, in celebration of National Public Health Week, we will offer tips on the value of making public health and prevention a part of our everyday lives. Today's tip: Prevention begins at home. Take small, simple steps to make your home a safer place, such as regularly testing smoke alarms and keeping dangerous chemicals locked away from little hands. Learn more and participate in National Public Health Week at www.nphw.org.

TWITTER: A safe home is a happy home. Keep prescription meds out of kids' reach. Learn more at www.nphw.org. #NPHW

TUESDAY

FACEBOOK: Get involved today in making our schools safe and healthy places for our children. In fact, research shows that healthy children learn better. Advocate for tobacco-free policies at schools, support healthy school meal standards, learn how to address bullying, and speak up for evidence-based sexual health education. Our children's health is worth it. Learn more and participate in National Public Health Week at www.nphw.org.

TWITTER: Child obesity has tripled since 1980. School policies that teach healthy habits can make a difference. Learn more at www.nphw.org. #NPHW

WEDNESDAY

FACEBOOK: Did you know that for \$1 invested in workplace wellness programs, medical costs drop by more than \$3? Whether you're an employer or an employee, there are easy steps you can take to promote prevention at work. Follow workplace safety rules, promote hand-washing to prevent the spread of disease, or organize a lunchtime walking group. Learn more and participate in National Public Health Week at www.nphw.org.

TWITTER: Thousands of workers die each year at work, many more are injured. Do your part to promote prevention. Learn more at www.nphw.org. #NPHW

THURSDAY

FACEBOOK: Dramatic rises in seat belt use are one of public health's greatest accomplishments. But there's still much work to be done to keep us safe on the road. You can help by always buckling up, never driving impaired and waiting to answer that text message. Also, join the growing movement to create transportation systems that all travelers can safely use to be physically active. Learn more and participate in National Public Health Week at www.nphw.org.

TWITTER: More biking and walking equals less disease. Join local efforts to make our streets safer for all users. Learn more at www.nphw.org. #NPHW

FRIDAY

FACEBOOK: Did you know that investing just \$10 per person each year in proven, community-based public health efforts could save the nation more than \$16 billion within five years? That's a \$5.60 return for every \$1 invested. Join us in standing up for the value of public health and prevention by learning about how strong public health systems make all of our lives healthier, safer and better. Learn more and participate in National Public Health Week at www.nphw.org.

TWITTER: Learn how your local public health department empowers your community to stay healthy and live longer. Learn more at www.nphw.org. #NPHW