

Immunization Communication Collaboration:

Best Practices for Program Managers and Public Information Officers



Program Manager Tips

- Create a dedicated position/role for immunization communications within your public affairs team if possible, such as a Vaccine Information Officer.
- Public information officers (PIOs) cannot dispel myths and rumors and create key information if they aren't aware of what's going on. Create an internal topic-specific (i.e. COVID-19, measles) email group for the full immunization and communications teams, such as a daily email brief. Contact tracing and nursing teams can share key information and insights with PIOs and others on the team.
- CC PIOs on emails and establish other routes of communication to determine how much PIOs would like to be copied on. Don't be afraid to include them on emails!
- Embed PIOs in immunization program meetings so they can have a comprehensive understanding of key vaccination information in addition to weekly check-in meetings.
- PIOs don't want to be the last to know. Sending "FYI" emails or calls can help them anticipate/prepare for upcoming communication and saves them time when having to figure out info when asked questions.

- Don't hesitate to bring all ideas—you never know what may turn into a good media event or strategy. Bring ideas that you may hear from other programs. Communicators are often doing many things at once and don't get to hear about great strategies being employed in other immunization programs.
- Provide PIOs with information on the cost of vaccines/what health insurance is expected.
- Encourage your immunization information system (IIS) manager to educate PIOs on the limitations of the IIS and the data your jurisdiction has available. Making the PIO aware of the capabilities and really setting the stage of what can and cannot be done can help to manage expectations.
- Consider using a shared Google sheet to track all vaccine orders and deliveries, by county, so that the PIO always has access to the information without needing to reach out and ask as the information requests came in. It makes it easier on both parties to be able to have the data in one location and available as needed but updated on a set schedule.

Public Information Officer Tips

- Work with program managers to learn more about local immunization efforts/policies, and collaborate to help PIOs adapt national information to be state-specific/local.
- Be proactive and ask program managers and staff about the ins and outs of vaccines and details of topics. Details matter, and double checking with program managers is key. Learn who on the team you can ask about different topics and who is an expert in what area.

Be clear, be concise, be collaborative, be creative.

- Nevada PIO

A Two-Team Approach

- Create a strategy that everyone agrees to use.
- Bring creative ideas, which are important in chipping away at vaccine hesitancy. Be willing to present creative ideas to the other team, and be receptive to creative ideas as well.
- “Stay in your lane!” You are each experts in your field so let them be the expert! Let the communications team be creative and spread the message and let program managers collect information and serve as immunization experts.
- Acknowledge each team's contributions to your jurisdiction’s efforts. Burnout in public health is happening at high rates, and we must acknowledge the well-being of each team and offer grace. Maintain an open door policy so people have the chance to be honest about workload, burnout, and their mental health.

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