



# Lessons Learned Report: National Environmental Scan

NOVEMBER 2023



Association of  
Immunization  
Managers

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# Introduction

## Background and Purpose

Over the past three years, slowing and preventing the spread of COVID-19 and flu required a herculean effort by public health and immunization program managers. Across the country, private and public sector organizations approached the task of encouraging vaccination in many ways, often specific to the needs and unique circumstances of their communities. While immunization program outreach is a mainstay in public health, the global COVID-19 pandemic and flu immunization efforts amid the global COVID-19 pandemic often necessitated a unique take on outreach and messaging and a concerted campaign strategy to reach communities and individuals most at-risk for severe illness. This report is a compilation of those efforts—on a national level—and documents COVID-19 and flu vaccine campaigns and messaging efforts, lessons learned over the past three years, and best practices to apply in the future. The intent of compiling these national examples is for stakeholders and those working in public health and immunization program management to learn from the successes and challenges of these efforts, to have an arsenal of best practices that may be applied in the future.

This report has been commissioned by the Association of Immunization Managers (AIM) and completed as part of the project REACH (Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health) Lessons Learned and Promising Practices in the Field of Immunization from the COVID-19 Pandemic and is funded by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

## Methodology

An ‘environmental scan’ consisting of a review of peer-reviewed journal articles and internet searches was conducted to identify research, media, and resources from national efforts about successes and challenges with COVID-19 and flu vaccine campaigns and messaging. National research, media, and resources were reviewed and catalogued by 1) the communities of focus, 2) issues that were identified as considerations informing the approach, and 3) successes and challenges.

This report contains a comprehensive national review of publicly available information on COVID-19 and flu vaccine campaigns and messaging from March 2020–June 2023. Limitations of the methodology include that it encompasses materials available for this defined period and considered relevant for inclusion under the parameters of this review, and it should not be considered exhaustive.

## Contents

<b>National COVID-19 Campaigns and Messaging</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>National Flu Campaigns and Messaging</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>Recommendations and Future Focus</b> .....	<b>17</b>

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## National COVID-19 Campaigns and Messaging

The section below features summaries of scholarly journal articles, reports, media, and resources that explore COVID-19 campaign and messaging successes and challenges. Preceding the summaries is an analysis of the strategies and major themes of the identified approaches.

Several core strategies for COVID-19 campaigns and messaging were effective at solving the myriad of challenges faced throughout the pandemic. Pandemic challenges experienced by individuals and organizations responsible for vaccine communications are well-documented and include resource constraints, public distrust of the COVID-19 vaccine, vaccine hesitancy, misinformation, vaccine logistical and distribution challenges, changing dosage guidance, and mutating virus variants. Strategies such as 1) centering equity, 2) understanding and addressing vaccine uptake, 3) messaging to motivation, and 4) knowledge sharing and application were activated along with various tactics. These strategies aimed to meet the needs of specific populations within communities across the country and to address these challenges through messaging and campaigns.

### Strategy: Centering Equity

Equity requires an acknowledgement that individuals do not all start from the same place and adjustments are needed to correct imbalances. Organizations that approach COVID-19 campaigns and messaging with an equity lens are more likely to:

1. Identify specific communities in need of interventions
2. Attempt outreach using a variety of modes and channels
3. Be intentional about the messages and messengers communicating about vaccines
4. Bring a range of perspectives and partners to the table to ensure solutions meet needs
5. Leverage data to identify equity needs



The U.S. Veterans Health Administration’s case study “Best Practices for an Equitable COVID-19 Vaccination Program” detailed its efforts to increase COVID-19 vaccination rates among military veterans—particularly those from racial or ethnic groups at risk of vaccine disparities and those with co-morbidities (Beste et al., 2021). This program assembled an interdisciplinary team to develop a facility-level framework for an equitable vaccine delivery strategy that included 1) allocation, 2) outreach, 3) delivery, and 4) monitoring. For purposes of this report, outreach successes and challenges are described below.

#### Successes

- Tailored, personalized outreach to facilitate uptake (e.g., individual telephone calls)
- Utilized multiple communication channels and different formats (e.g., text messages)

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- Worked with trusted frontline personnel, community stakeholders, the Social Work service, and local nonprofit veteran advocacy groups with a focus on veterans experiencing homelessness and rural and minority veterans
  - Collaborated with trusted community stakeholders from outside the medical establishment to enhance vaccine outreach and acceptance
  - Reached out across departmental lines to expand vaccine delivery outside of the hospital or clinic (e.g., in-home vaccination, pop-up mobile clinics)
  - Employed learning health system methods, including using data to identify vaccine candidates, monitoring equity at prespecified intervals, and adjusting operations accordingly

## Challenges

- Flexible outreach strategy was needed that could be rapidly adjusted depending on the quantity of available vaccines
- Large staffing resources needed to support personalized telephone outreach
- Fluctuating vaccine dose allocation required methodical and repeated communication to patients and community partners to apprise them of the availability of doses and locations for vaccination offerings
  - This communication was accomplished through public town hall–style meetings, direct patient email outreach, a recorded vaccine information hotline, and regular social media updates
- Challenges communicating the rationale for phased eligibility to veterans who initially flooded telephone lines seeking vaccination
- Delivered frequent internal communications to staff members—which required script writing and resource support that was difficult to sustain—so that they were able to provide accurate information to veterans

Research was conducted among the Californian *Hispanic* community at the United States-Mexico border to understand how to achieve equitable vaccine delivery (Martinez et al., 2022). This revealed that promoting vaccination through Spanish language and culturally tailored health education and promotion campaigns and social media created trust within that community. Equitable COVID-19 vaccination for *Hispanic* communities in the U.S. was of particular concern in United States-Mexico border communities and among the agricultural or farmworker populations. Concerns about documentation requirements and proof of citizenship made community members reluctant to seek vaccines and distrustful of officials, and these often remote, hard-to-reach agricultural communities were an afterthought when it came to vaccine distribution allocation and site planning. Like the veterans example, when program managers centered equity in communications and outreach, vaccine outcomes for members of this community were improved.





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A qualitative study was conducted by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute on ethnic minorities' perceptions of COVID-19 vaccines and challenges in the pandemic to explore the barriers and facilitators to COVID-19 vaccination (Zhou et al., 2022). *Latino* participants indicated they would like to know more information about the vaccine and evidence of its effectiveness. *African American* participants identified seeing others, especially government officials, get the vaccine first as a facilitator; low trust in the government and healthcare system were barriers to getting the COVID-19 vaccine. *American Indian* and *Alaska Native* participants emphasized the importance of equitable access to the vaccine. Participants preferred messages with the following features:

1. Informative and evidence-based messages about COVID-19 and vaccination
2. Encouraging and motivational messages that focused on the hope to end the pandemic and return to normal
3. Prosocial messages
4. Clear instructions for COVID-19 prevention strategies

Participants also suggested that messages should include different cultural practices, be translated into their native languages, and emphasize care for family members.

The Next Gen Hawai'i social media project was launched to address the specific concerns around COVID-19 of *Native Hawaiian*, *Pacific Islander*, and *Filipino* communities across the Hawaiian islands (Tolentino et al., 2022). Their strategy was to empower youth as ambassadors and set up five social media platforms that delivered over 250 messages in the native languages of the islands, Chuukese, Chamorro, Marshallese, Samoan, Hawaiian, Ilocano, Tagalog, and other Pacific-basin languages.



### Successes

Next Gen Hawai'i was described as an example of how to conduct multi-linguistic youth outreach in a recent academic article and their posts generated over 75,000 impressions. There were also multiple additional events and engagements that came from the posts which showed ongoing enthusiasm for the work.

### Challenges

- It takes time and expertise to develop multiple social posts for multiple platforms in multiple languages. Ensuring you have the right visuals and making sure the formatting and sizing is correct are time consuming for a small staff. You must plan for the time required to complete a multilingual social media campaign.
- Social media posts draw misinformation that can spread easily to the communities you are trying to reach. Negative or misleading comments were generally deleted to stop their spread in the public health posts.

- Timing and perspective are important to keep in mind while you work with any community, as they are on their own timeline to understanding and acting on public health messages. The goal is to provide them with the tools and support to make decisions, but action may not happen immediately.

## Strategy: Understanding and Addressing Vaccine Uptake

Addressing vaccine uptake first requires understanding the drivers of vaccine inequity. Listening with empathy to first-hand accounts and the myriad of personal histories and experiences that inform attitudes and beliefs, as well as considering social and structural barriers and access challenges, is essential. From there, messages that address these concerns can be crafted. Organizations that seek to understand and address vaccine uptake in messaging and campaigns are able to:

1. Identify the source of distrust and misinformation
2. Recognize trust-building as a goal of effective messaging
3. Earn trust by following through on what is said in messaging
4. Embed trust and education as a core tenet of messaging and campaign strategy
5. Evaluate trust as an indicator of messenger, messaging, and outreach effectiveness
6. Offer alternative, equally aspirational emotions to trust in messaging (e.g., control, hope)



Qualitative research among *Black Americans* examined the reasons for low vaccination intentions and mistrust, as well as preferred strategies to promote COVID-19 vaccination (Dong et al., 2022). Recommendations for vaccine dissemination and uptake included:

- Acknowledging systemic racism as the root cause for mistrust
- Including transparent messages about side effects
- Addressing equity in vaccine access points (e.g., medical and non-medical sites)
- Incorporating trusted information sources (e.g., trusted leaders, *Black* doctors, and researchers)

Additional qualitative research exploring COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy among *African American* and *Latinx* communities in the rural South similarly found that mistrust, fear, and lack of information were all drivers of COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy (Bateman et al., 2021).

Recommendations for interventions to decrease vaccine hesitancy were focused on:

- Community engagement
- Consistent, comprehensive messages delivered by trusted sources

Researchers also examined the effects of communicating a health message in the form of a fictional or nonfictional story on reducing vaccine hesitancy among *African Americans* linked to mistrust of science and medical systems (Huang & Green, 2023). These stories can be self-persuasive narratives, that

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acknowledge an individual's initial concerns about COVID-19 vaccination and narrate the process of that individual persuading themselves and rationalizing the benefits of the vaccine. The messaging narrates the decrease in the perceived threat to freedom or loss of control of the individual going through the self-persuasion and is particularly resonant among vaccine-hesitant individuals. The study findings suggest that:

- Reading about or seeing an illustration or visual of an individual's self-persuasion may allow people to vicariously experience the conversion process and facilitate change in their own beliefs and behavioral intentions
- Using communication strategies that contain self-persuasion messaging that describes an individual's process of changing their opinion is effective among vaccine hesitant individuals
- Illustrating self-persuasion within a story narrative increases perceived relatability or similarity, and empathy toward the individual portrayed in the story—particularly among those with low trust in science



Further national research (Jensen et al., 2022) found that willingness to get vaccinated is driven by messages that:

- Increase confidence in COVID-19 vaccines by addressing vaccine efficacy in changing the pandemic's social, economic, and public health outcomes
- Increase individuals' perceived control, choice, and self-confidence to get vaccinated

The National Academies Press published “Strategies for Building Confidence in the COVID-19 Vaccines” to help national, state, and local level health communicators and practitioners address vaccine hesitancy and build trust (Brunson et al., 2021). Communication strategy recommendations include:

- Meeting people where they are, and not trying to persuade everyone
- Avoiding repeating false claims
- Determining the core messages, and tailoring them to resonate with specific audiences
- Adapting messaging as circumstances change
- Responding to adverse events in a transparent, timely manner
- Identifying trusted messengers to deliver messages
- Emphasizing support for vaccination instead of focusing on naysayers
- Leveraging trusted vaccine endorsers
- Paying attention to delivery details that also convey information

A field guide published by the CDC (2021) contains strategies for communities and an addendum guide specifically for rural communities to increase vaccine confidence and uptake. Each strategy addressed common barriers to getting a COVID-19 vaccine—structural, informational, or behavioral.

In a Multifaceted Campaign to Combat COVID-19 Misinformation in the *Hispanic* Community, the Public Good Projects, *Hispanic* Communications Network, and World Voices Media joined forces to launch a nationwide campaign which aimed to increase vaccine confidence and decrease misinformation on social media within *Hispanic* communities (Silesky et al., 2023). The team tracked Spanish language misinformation and combatted it with social media influencers, volunteers, and celebrities spreading pro-vaccination messages. They also developed misinformation-responsive social media assets, newsletters, and talking points. In the first year, they developed over 35 million Spanish language social media posts and recruited nearly 500 influencers and 1000 digital volunteers. They also sent out 70 newsletters and had radio PSAs that reached over 26 million people.

This campaign was found to be effective because it was able to deliver COVID-19 health information that either prebunked or debunked COVID-19 misinformation that was targeting the *Hispanic* community. It is considered to be a model that can be used for reaching *Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC)* communities with positive health messages beyond the COVID-19 pandemic.



National Academies Press, “Strategies for Building Confidence in the COVID-19 Vaccines”

## Strategy: Messaging to Motivation

Tapping into shared values and motivations are tenets of an effective messaging strategy meant to drive behavioral change. This involves taking a more generalized approach to communications by focusing on those emotions, values, and motivators that are part of the shared human experience, regardless of those demographic and regional identifiers that influence how we experience life. Campaigns and messages that seek to take this generalized approach often:

1. Have broad awareness and education goals
2. Keep it simple by focusing on basic emotions and why we have them (e.g., love for our family)
3. Leverage emotions and values to get people to act

The HHS “We Can Do This” campaign provides campaign resources (e.g., multiple audience toolkits, shareable resources and outreach tools, research, lists of national outreach partners, public service announcements, and ads) aimed to increase confidence in COVID-19 vaccines through education, and motivate people to get the COVID-19 vaccine with general audience messaging (HHS, 2022a).



The HHS campaign also provides a specific response for the *Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI)* communities (HHS, 2022b). The *Asian American* community has been hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic, and information regarding the vaccines must be delivered by trusted sources in native languages. For *Native Hawaiians* and *Pacific Islanders*, hesitancy is a challenge. To reach these culturally and geographically diverse populations, the campaign deployed a hyperlocal approach to get language-specific, culturally motivating ads and outreach materials to AANHPI audiences. This approach serves as a complement to national advertising that is being pushed into these communities and engagement with community-based partners to reinforce campaign messages with local trusted messengers.

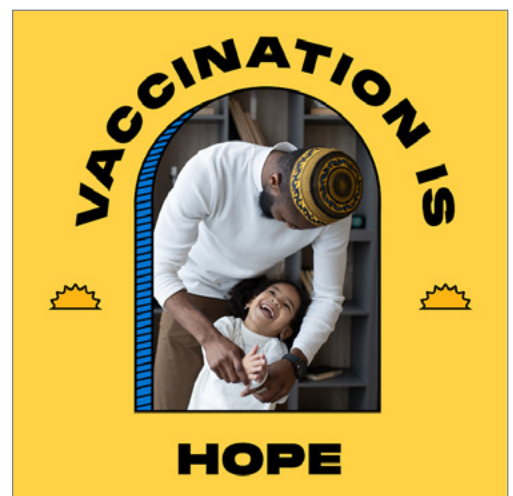
The American Hospital Association COVID-19 Vaccine Communications Toolkit was developed to provide guidance to its hospital and health systems members responsible for healthcare marketing and communications (American Hospital Association, 2020). It highlighted case studies from around the country of best practices with many examples utilizing messaging that addressed motivations for getting vaccinated.

The National Resource Center for Refugees, Immigrants, and Migrants (NRCRIM) “Vaccination Is” campaign was designed to increase awareness of and confidence in COVID-19 vaccines for refugee, immigrant, and migrant communities and their families (National Resource Center for Refugees, Immigrants, and Migrants, n.d.). Posters, social media, comics, and various videos produced in Spanish, Creole, Arabic, Swahili, Kinyarwanda, Dari, Nepali, Somali, Ukrainian, and Russian were developed with community members to ensure that messages were meaningful and effective. The campaign featured messages such as:

- Vaccination is Hope
- Vaccination is Strength
- Vaccination is Love
- The Vaccine is a New Life
- The Vaccine is Protection
- Vaccination is Power



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services “We Can Do This” campaign materials



The National Resource Center for Refugees, Immigrants, and Migrants (NRCRIM) “Vaccination Is” campaign materials

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## Strategy: Knowledge Sharing and Application

Sharing knowledge from different disciplines and applying lessons learned from previous historical events and contexts is another COVID-19 messaging and campaigns strategy. Employing this approach is:

- Situation- and context-specific
- Challenging if institutional knowledge is lost or not documented and shared

Virologists assessed flu vaccine uptake and campaign successes in New York City to inform COVID-19 vaccine campaigns and found that ads placed on social media and on public transportation (e.g., buses) in neighborhoods with residents at higher risk of severe flu complications experienced higher flu vaccine uptake (Moreland et al., 2022). Researchers recommended applying these approaches to ad placements for similar populations vulnerable to severe COVID-19 illness.

The National Governors Association developed a series of recommendations to help states and territories deal with false information spreading about the COVID-19 pandemic by looking to lessons learned from the 2020 presidential elections (National Governors Association, 2021). Recommendations include:

- Leveraging governors' offices in elevating official guidance
- Building public resilience to misinformation, disinformation, malformation (MDM) through public education campaigns
- Elevating trusted voices in the community
- Engaging the media as a partner on counter-MDM messaging
- Validating and securing official sources of information



## National Flu Campaigns and Messaging

The section below features summaries of scholarly journal articles, reports, media, and resources that explore flu campaign and messaging successes and challenges. Preceding the summaries is an analysis of the strategies and major themes of the campaigns and messages.

Strategies activated in flu campaign and messaging efforts over the past three years include:

1. Avoiding scare tactics and leading with positive, fact-based messaging
2. Timing campaigns so that they launch as a lead-up to flu season
3. Targeting specific populations less likely to get vaccinated and most at risk of severe illness from flu
4. Engaging trusted messengers and influencers
5. Leveraging the power of physicians, member networks, and partners for outreach and scale
6. Having measurable campaign goals
7. Leaning on data and reporting to guide strategy

Flu messaging and campaigns have been a part of public health outreach and communications much longer than those aimed at COVID-19. As a result, messaging and campaigns for flu often combine multiple strategies in a single effort and less peer reviewed research has been conducted over the past few years on the topic.

This section is organized by campaign and discusses messaging and campaign strategies for each. Where possible, successes and challenges are identified.

### Get My Flu Shot

The Get My Flu Shot campaign, featuring ads titled #FluFOMO and “No Time for Flu,” launched in 2022 (Ad Council et al., n.d.). This annual campaign by the Ad Council, American Medical Association (AMA), the CDC, and CDC Foundation commences early fall and is a national initiative targeting general audiences, with emphasis on reaching *Black* and *Hispanic* communities.

Last year, the Get My Flu Shot campaign launched new FAQ videos featuring medical professionals and other trusted messengers to help address questions and concerns about flu shots and provide fact-based messaging and resources. The campaign ads direct audiences to [GetMyFluShot.org](https://www.getmyflushot.org) for more information, including where to get a flu vaccine in their area.

The Get My Flu Shot ads appeared in print, TV, radio, social media, out-of-home, and digital formats nationwide. The campaign leveraged insights that people are motivated by caring for their loved ones, and that many are juggling more responsibilities because of the pandemic. The campaign illustrates how getting sick with flu doesn't just mean feeling ill—it could significantly disrupt the lives of individuals and their families.



The Ad Council “Get My Flu Shot” campaign

## Rise to Immunize™

Rise to Immunize™ (RIZE) is a four-year national campaign aimed at improving routine adult vaccination rates (AMGA, 2021). It launched in 2021 by the American Medical Group Association (AMGA) Foundation, the nonprofit arm of AMGA. This initiative engages AMGA's 81 participating medical groups and health systems, nonprofit partners, and sponsors across the country to work together to achieve the goal of documenting or administering 25 million immunizations by 2025.

The campaign offers its network of participating members care processes called “campaign planks” which embed various communications and outreach tactics to help participants increase adult vaccination rates among their patient populations. These include:

- Provider & Staff Education
- Clinical Support
- IT/Documentation
- Patient Education
- Financial Management

### Successes

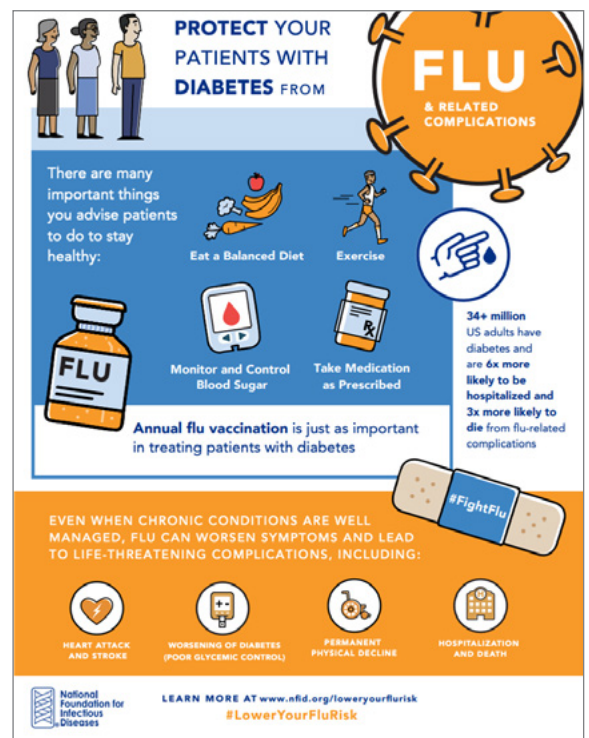
- In year 1 alone, medical groups and health systems in the campaign administered and/or documented more than five million vaccinations—including 3,799,935 influenza vaccines (ages 19+)—and provided comprehensive immunization care to an additional 60,000 adults.
- The RIZE Campaign won the National Adult and Influenza Immunization Summit 2023 “Influenza Season” Immunization Champion Award that celebrates innovative activities that improve influenza vaccination rates.

## National Association of City and County Health Officials (NACCHO)

NACCHO's mission is to improve the health of communities by strengthening and advocating for the nation's nearly 3,000 local health departments (LHDs).

Inspired to focus on lagging influenza vaccination rates after the uptick in COVID-19 vaccination rates among the same age group of adults, they hosted a series of convenings and made recommendations about influenza vaccination of older adults. The goal of the convenings was to increase older adult flu vaccination from 74% (in 2021) to 80%.

The convenings resulted in two reports, Collaboration to Address Influenza Vaccination Among Older Adults, featuring numerous best practices and lessons learned for communicating to specific audiences responsible for flu vaccination (NACCHO, 2021 & 2022).



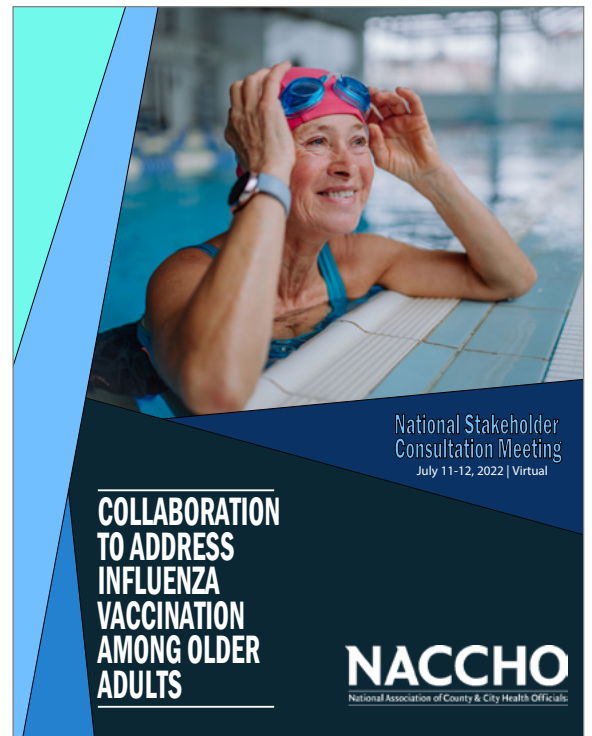
American Medical Group Association Foundation's Rise to Immunize Campaign flyer



## Best Practices

Best practices for messaging and outreach from the NACCHO reports are organized by each audience: 1) the general public, 2) primary care providers, and 3) legislators.

- General Public
  - Reinforce the risks of getting the flu and improve knowledge about the benefits of flu vaccination, especially for those with pre-existing conditions.
  - Be positive about prevention. For instance, “Preventing loss of function for those 65 years of age and older is so important, yet there is always loss of function when you go into the hospital. But the flu vaccine can reduce the likelihood of serious flu that results in hospitalization!”
  - Publicize the positive statistics from flu vaccine while making sure the public understands the potential for preventative outcomes for those with diabetes as well as cardiac, pulmonary, and other chronic diseases.
- Primary Care Providers
  - Focus heavily on educating primary care providers about the importance of their influence on patients and keeping messaging to their patients very clear.
  - Recommend that patients get both influenza and COVID-19 vaccinations while they are still in the office, regardless of the reason for the visit.
  - Learn which vaccines can be co-administered and keep clear guidance at hand as to which vaccines are compatible among older adults.
  - Acknowledge the evidence that shows that even when physicians think they are communicating about vaccines clearly, patients still don’t understand the benefits.
  - Be straightforward, clear, and strong in your recommendation for vaccination.
- Legislators
  - Develop evergreen messaging for legislators that will outlast funding and grants.
  - Build relationships with internal and external key partners that already engage with legislators.
  - Educate policymakers through newsletters and fact sheets. Do not overwhelm them with data but do provide enough data that is relevant to their constituents.
  - Invite policymakers to visit local immunization programs.



Ad for NACCHO National Stakeholder Consultation Meeting on Flu Vaccination Among Older Adults

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## Successes

- Multi-venue approaches, including social media, radio, TV, print ads, direct mailings, and person-to-person activities
- Facebook ads drove increases in attendance at some vaccination events for one community
- Partnerships with farmers' markets, local health departments (LHDs), school nurses, and many community-based organizations
- Health Advocates In-Reach and Research (HAIR) program, which trains stylists and barbers to provide scientifically sound and culturally tailored communications to help communities of color make informed decisions about vaccination



## Challenges

- The public does not perceive influenza to be as urgent as COVID-19, and often fails to understand the seriousness of illness from the flu.
- The public is wary of scare tactics.
- Because of COVID-19, the public is now more educated about vaccine efficacy (VE). The public is correctly hearing that the flu vaccine has a low VE relative to the COVID-19 vaccine, compelling patients to question the benefit of flu vaccination.
- There is research showing a disconnect between what providers think they have recommended about vaccination and how the patient interprets what their doctors are saying.
- There is a lack of funding for influenza. These funds are needed for message development and delivery, and to sustain ongoing partnerships with community organizers who are trusted messengers.
- It is getting harder to find “fresh” trusted messengers, but the public stops listening if the messages don’t continually evolve.
- There is a lack of funding for ongoing communication campaigns.
- New vaccine recommendations for older adults will need to be publicized and implemented before medical providers order vaccines for the next season.

## American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists published its Flu Season Sample Messaging and Resources for 2022-2023 targeted to help physicians (American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, n.d.). These sample messages are crafted to help physicians address common scenarios and encourage physicians to lead by example by educating and vaccinating themselves, their staff, and their patients against influenza.



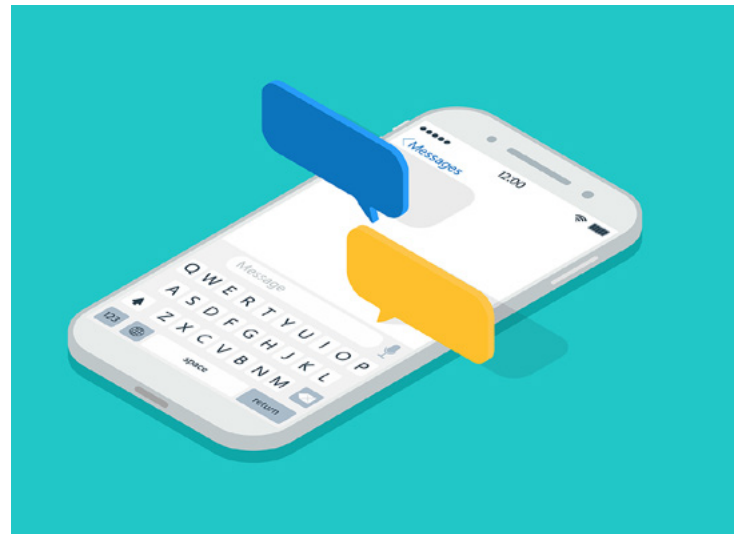
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Messaging strategies include:

- Address patients' questions and concerns in the context of co-circulation of influenza and COVID-19 in plain and understandable language.
- Educate all patients, including pregnant patients, about the safety and benefits of vaccination and the severity of influenza and COVID-19 disease.
- Strongly recommend and offer flu shots to all patients, particularly pregnant patients.
- Strongly recommend COVID-19 vaccination for all patients, including pregnant patients, to prevent illness.
- Encourage flu vaccine administration before flu activity begins in your community, ideally before the end of October.
- Inform your patients that flu and COVID-19 vaccines reduce the burden of illness on our communities and also reduce the burden on the healthcare system.
- Encourage all patients to follow preventative measures.

## American Academy of Pediatrics

The American Academy of Pediatrics conducted a pediatric office setting study on perceptions of text message communication with families using the Flu2Text program to remind parents of their second dose (Nekrasova et al., 2021). There are many studies around text communications in health practices but few in pediatric practices and those practices are less likely to have text infrastructure in place. Across the multiple geographic regions and pediatric offices, the study found text messages were the preferred communication method for pediatric caregivers. Respondents shared that text messages were particularly effective when communicating vaccine appointments for a second dose. One challenge that was pointed out by medical providers who did not currently have a text system in place is that they would need to acquire an additional system for their office, which takes time, training, and money.



## Yale Institute for Global Health and UNICEF

The Yale Institute for Global Health and UNICEF Vaccine Messaging Guide was developed for public health professionals, communicators, and advocates (UNICEF & Yale Institute for Global Health, 2020). It detailed several recommendations for messaging and design best practices as well as identified several communications and messaging challenges.

## Best Practices

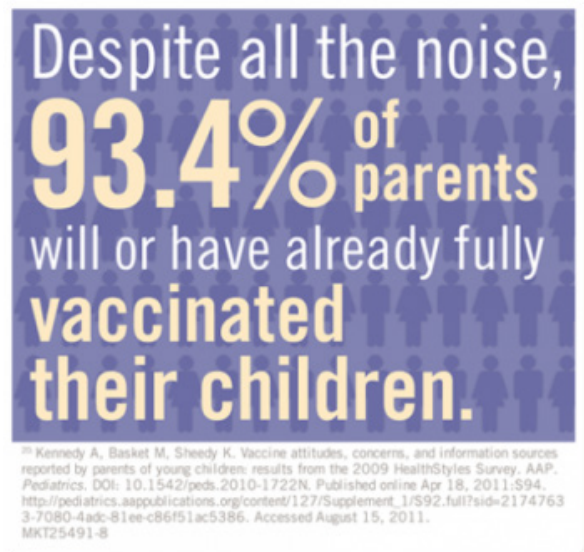
- Don't assume that the audience for communications is vaccine hesitant
- Anticipate cognitive shortcuts
- Tell stories
- Build trust and use credible communicators
- Connect with people's values
- Remind people why we vaccinate
- Reinforce social norms
- Avoid myth busting, it can backfire
- Consider communicating the emotional benefits of vaccination as motivation
- Recognize vocal vaccine deniers
- Understand what resonates with your audience
- Optimize your content for searches
- Design to capture attention (e.g., visuals, emotion, personalize, headlines)
- Keep it clear

## Challenges

- COVID-19 is impacting immunization
- Acknowledging the complexity of vaccine hesitancy
- Pro-vaccine communications are often ineffective and may backfire
- Pro-vaccine communications should be evidence-based, context-specific, and culturally appropriate

## Research

Researchers assessed the effectiveness of using social media influencers to increase positive attitudes toward the flu vaccine in online influencer-based campaigns (Bonnie et al., 2020). Results revealed that among *African Americans* and *Hispanics*, there was greater improvement in knowledge and positive perceptions of the flu vaccine post-campaign. Digital metrics demonstrated high levels of engagement, indicating that this type of campaign can reach large numbers of people with relatively limited resources and may be considered a successful practice for future implementation.



Social Graphic from The Yale Institute of Global Health and UNICEF Vaccine Messaging Guide



Example of social media post for local influencers to encourage flu vaccination.



## Co-Created Messaging for Influenza Vaccination in High-Risk Hispanic Community Provides Groundwork for COVID-19 Vaccine

The Dallas County Health Department worked directly with youth ambassadors to develop a successful flu vaccination campaign (Long et al., 2021). Health messaging was developed in English and Spanish for print and radio working directly with high school student health ambassadors. The information was shared through the radio and at local food banks, grocery stores, local churches, and the Mexican Consulate. The Health Department provided free flu vaccines to the community. Three events driven by the co-created messaging had 394 participant vaccinations while three other events with no co-created messaging only had 27 vaccinations. The message and delivery, partnered with community engagement were crucial to the success of local vaccination efforts.

## Influenza Hospitalizations and Vaccination Coverage by Race and Ethnicity

Flu hospitalization rates among, *Black, American Indian, Alaskan Native, and Hispanic* populations continue to be higher than *Whites and Asian Americans* (Black et al., 2022). The disparity in vaccination coverage by race and ethnicity was present among those who reported having medical insurance, a personal healthcare provider, and a routine medical check-up in the past year. Healthcare providers should assess patient vaccination status at all medical visits and offer (or provide a referral for) all recommended vaccines. Tailored programmatic efforts to provide influenza vaccination through nontraditional settings, along with national and community-level efforts to improve awareness of the importance of influenza vaccination in preventing illness, hospitalization, and death among racial and ethnic minority communities, might help address healthcare access barriers and improve vaccine confidence, leading to decreases in disparities in influenza vaccination coverage and disease severity.

## Recommendations and Future Focus

The national scan provides a compelling overview of approaches and recommendations for COVID-19 and flu campaigns and messaging strategies. Looking more closely at the experiences of REACH recipients, who consist of community-based organizations, LHDs, and health practitioners and partners on the ground, will provide further assessment of best practices and lessons learned for individuals impacted by health disparities across the nation.



Simple flyer for Dallas County Health Department flu vaccination event in *Hispanic* community

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The logo for iREACH features a lowercase 'i' in yellow, followed by 'REACH' in blue. A thin horizontal line is positioned below the text.

resource. engage. connect.

The logo for AIM consists of the letters 'AIM' in a bold, teal font. Below the letters is a horizontal bar divided into four colored segments: blue, yellow, green, and light blue.

Association of  
Immunization  
Managers

*This project [Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH) Lessons Learned and Promising Practices in the Field of Immunization from the COVID-19 Pandemic] was supported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of a financial assistance award totaling \$3,250,000 with 100 percent funded by CDC. The contents of this [Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH) Lessons Learned and Promising Practices in the Field of Immunization from the COVID-19 Pandemic] report reflect the views of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement by, CDC, or the U.S. Government.*