

# A Playbook for Addressing Health Misinformation: Applications for Immunization Programs and Partners

APRIL 30, 2024

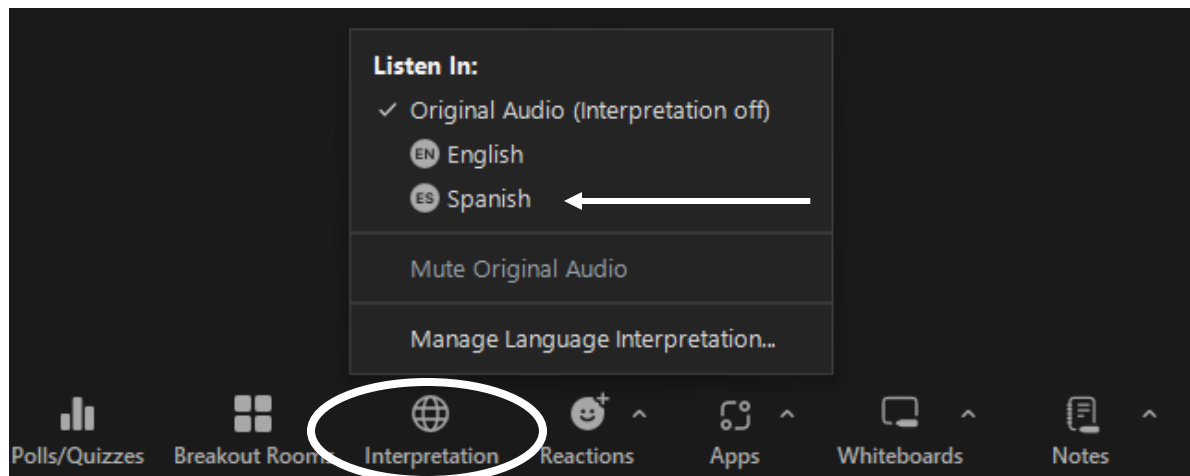


Association of  
Immunization  
Managers

# Language Interpretation Instructions

## To Enable Spanish Language Interpretation:

- Click **Interpretation** in the navigation panel
- Under the **Listen In** section shown on the screen, choose (ES) Spanish for live Spanish interpretation
- Click **Mute Original Audio** to hear Spanish interpretation only



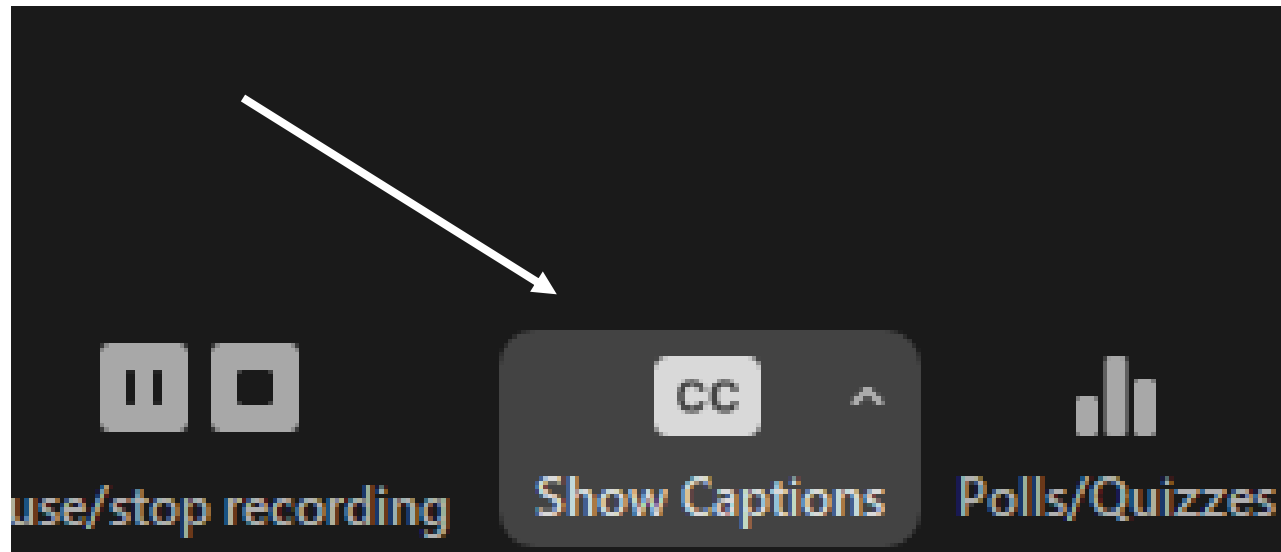
## Para activar interpretación en español:

- Hacer clic en **Interpretation** (Interpretación) en el panel de navegación
- En la sección **Listen In** (Escuchar en) en la pantalla, elegir Spanish (español) para escuchar la interpretación al español en tiempo real
- Hacer clic en **Mute Original Audio** (Silenciar audio original) para escuchar solamente la interpretación en español

# Closed Caption Instructions

## To Enable Closed Captions:

- Click the “CC” button at the bottom of your screen
- Select “Show Subtitle”



# Housekeeping

- This webinar is being recorded and will be posted to the [AIM Vaccine Confidence Toolkit](#) in the coming weeks.
- A PDF copy of the webinar slides is available in the chat and will be emailed to all attendees after the webinar.
- Please add any questions you have for our speakers to the Q&A box, and they will be addressed at the end.

A woman with long dark hair is shown in profile, holding a young child. The child is smiling and looking towards the camera. The woman is wearing a green sleeveless top. The child is wearing a light-colored shirt with a pattern of animals and plants. The background is a bright, slightly blurred window with white curtains. A purple banner is overlaid on the image, containing the text "Staying on schedule helps protect your little one".

**Staying on schedule helps  
protect your little one**



National Infant  
Immunization Week



# Speakers Introductions



**Tara Kirk Sell, PhD, MA**  
Senior Scholar at Johns Hopkins  
Center for Health Security;  
Associate Professor at Johns  
Hopkins Bloomberg School of  
Public Health, Department of  
Environmental Health and  
Engineering



**Aishwarya Nagar, MPH**  
Senior Analyst at the Johns  
Hopkins Center for Health  
Security



**Tad Sooter**  
Public Information Officer at  
the Kitsap Public Health  
District



# Speaker Presentations



**Tara Kirk Sell, PhD, MA**  
Senior Scholar at Johns Hopkins  
Center for Health Security;  
Associate Professor at Johns  
Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public  
Health, Department of  
Environmental Health and  
Engineering



**Aishwarya Nagar, MPH**  
Senior Analyst at the Johns  
Hopkins Center for Health  
Security

# Practical playbook for addressing health misinformation

AIM Vaccine Confidence Webinar

Tara Kirk Sell, Associate Professor, Department of Environmental Health and Engineering, BSPH  
Senior Scholar, Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security

Aishwarya Nagar, Senior Analyst, Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security

30 April 2024

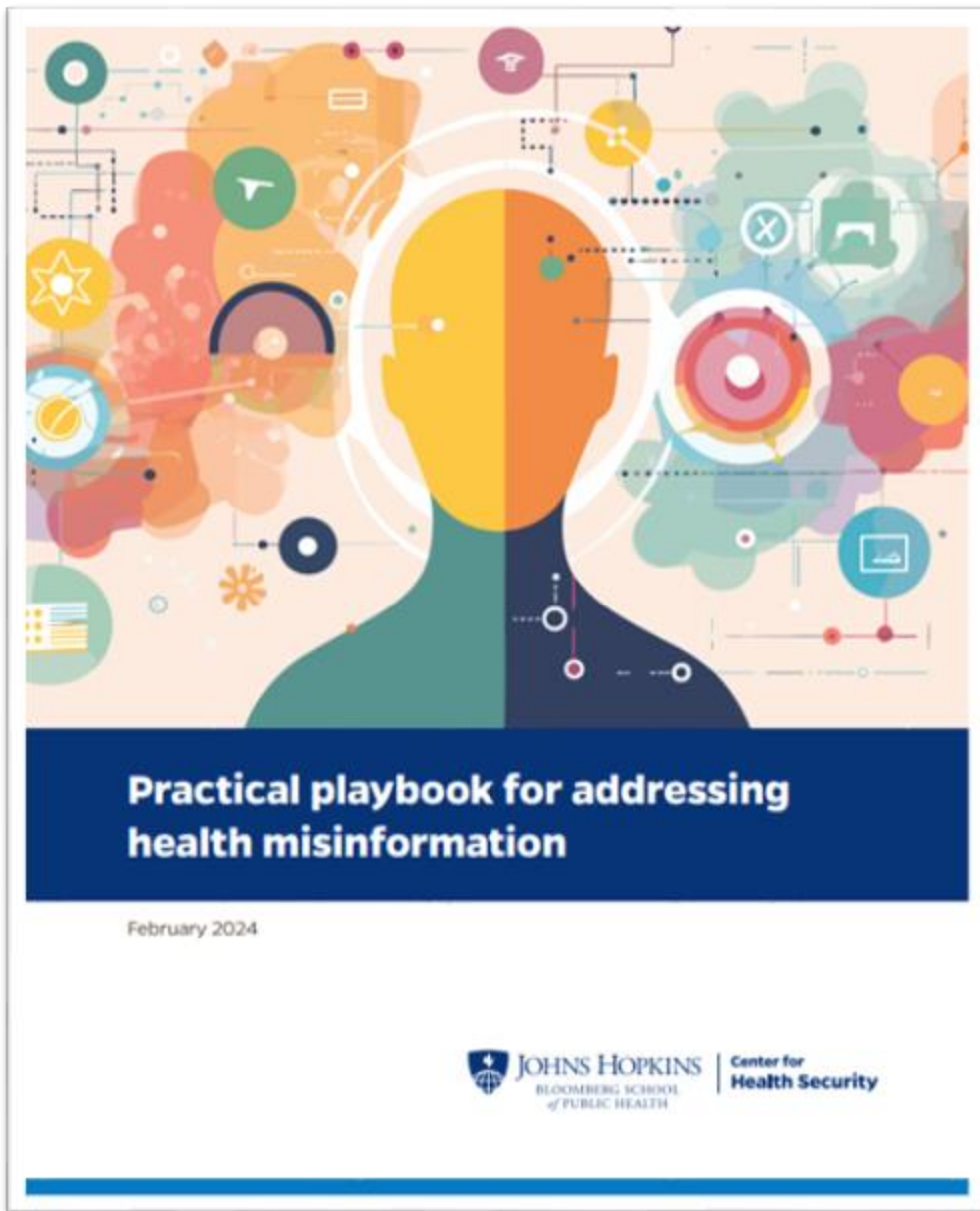


Center for  
**Health Security**

Link to playbook







The playbook provides guidance on ways public health and medical professionals can:



Prepare for health-related rumors



Decide when to act to address misinformation



Determine which actions to take to address misinformation



Develop messages to address misinformation



Gather feedback on messages

# CDC's Action Plan:

## Health Information Management and Alert System (HIMAS)

### PHASE 1

#### Pre-Planning



- **Assess** risk in rollout topics/editorial calendars, historical experiences with topic
- **Use** data from ecosystem (social media, survey data, CDC-INFO, behavioral science)
- **Determine** monitoring and alerting strategy, advance message testing
- **Affirm** response roles/actions and engage partners and influencers

### PHASE 2

#### Monitoring, Analysis, Insights



- **Analyze** and disseminate monitoring digests
- **Refine** monitoring strategy and revise messages (social media, talking points, etc.)
- **Conduct** audience research
- **Brief** internal partners and discuss response

### PHASE 4

#### Evaluation and Refinement



- **Assess** narrative(s), metrics, refine monitoring
- **Assess** emerging message needs
- **Assess** audience and partner inputs and refine strategy
- **Convene** internal partners and determine next steps

### PHASE 3

#### Actions



- **Convene** internal partners (social media, program, spokesperson)
- **Affirm** action steps and best practice by channel for current situation
- **Engage** partners in response
- **Monitor** data inputs (CDC-INFO, partner feedback, survey findings)



# Set yourself up for success before rumors spread



Identify 'prework' or things you can do before rumors arise



Put together a team for when you need to address a rumor



Connect with communities and build partnerships



Get to know your audience

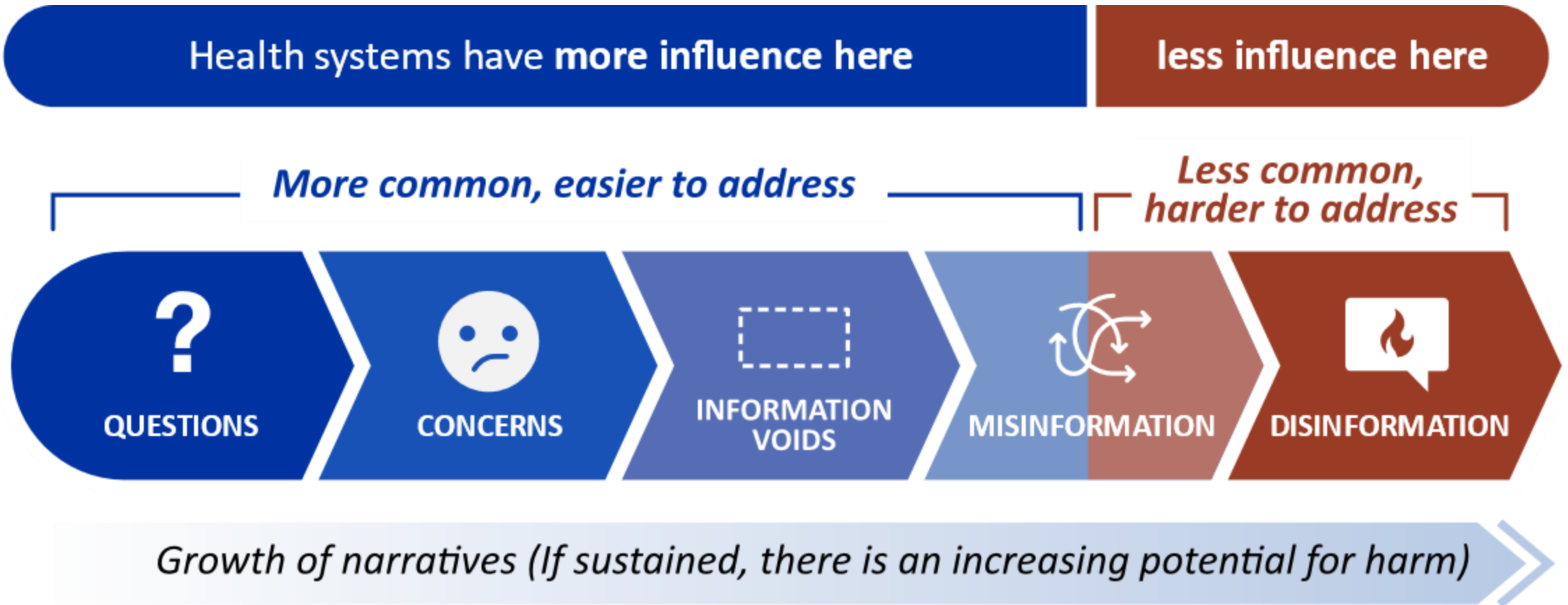


Set up a way to identify misinformation



Answer audience questions and concerns quickly

# It's about more than mis/disinformation.



Adapted from WHO Infodemic Management, Unit for High Impact Events Preparedness and Prevention



# RUMOR DETECTED



Name a health-related rumor you've encountered in your work

# Decide whether to address the rumor

Identify your goal for responding to a rumor

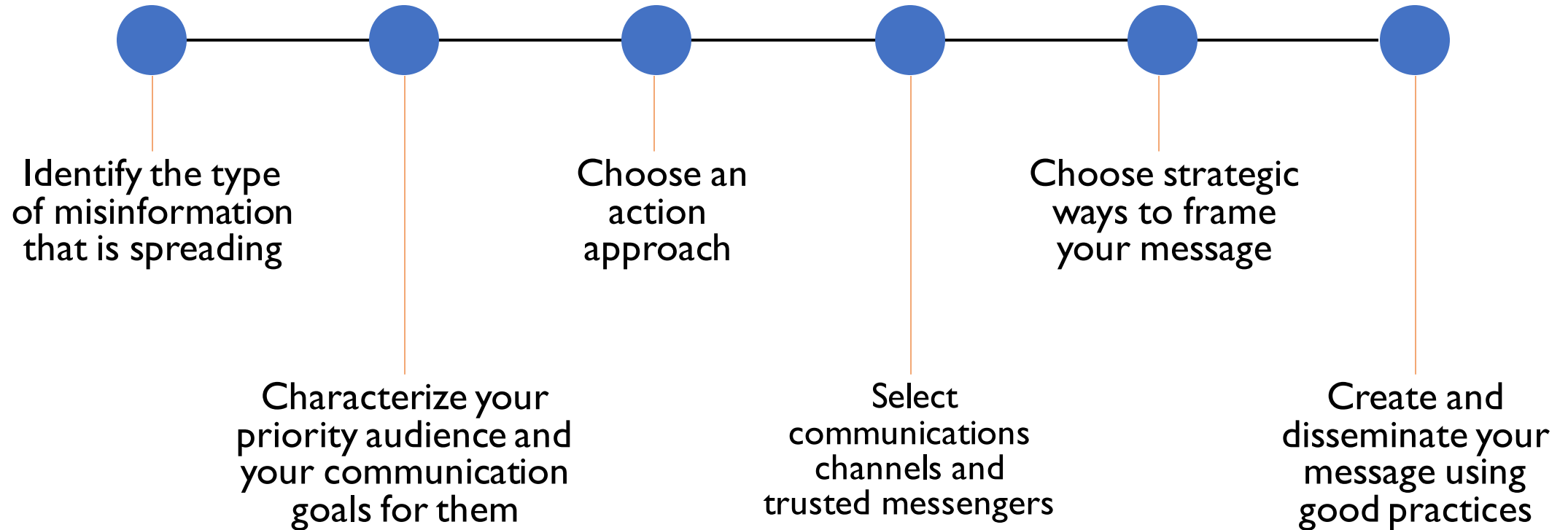
Identify what influences your decision to respond

Decide whether you will address the rumor

Decision criteria	Criteria definition	Benchmark	Benchmark met?	Importance	Composite score
Seriousness					
Spread of misinformation					
Impact on public trust					
Population affected					
Where the rumor is circulating					
Impact on institutional reputation					
Type of actor spreading misinformation					
Believability of the rumor					
Impact on health					
Add additional criteria here					
Capacity to act					
Workload of responders					
Value generated by acting					
Funding available for acting					
Availability of evidence needed to act					
Access to trusted communicators					
Amount of time available to act					
Availability of expertise in current team					
Knowledge level of audience					
Support from leadership					
Whether clearance is needed to act					
Level of cultural competency					
Add additional criteria here					
Potential consequences					
Amplifying misinformation					
Alienating audiences					
Making inequalities worse					
Becoming a target of harassment					
Being unable to address uncertainty					
Political ramifications					
Being wrong about the facts					
Add additional criteria here					
Other					
Add additional criteria here					
Total composite score					



# Take action to address misinformation



# Take action to address misinformation

Identify the type of misinformation that is spreading



Safety of approved, authorized, or unapproved interventions



Efficacy of approved, authorized, or unapproved interventions



Changing guidance



Risk or severity of a health condition



Cause of a health condition



Trustworthiness of health agency or organization



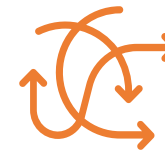
Trustworthiness of implementers



How people understand the world around them



Blaming or stigmatizing a population as the cause or spreader of a health condition



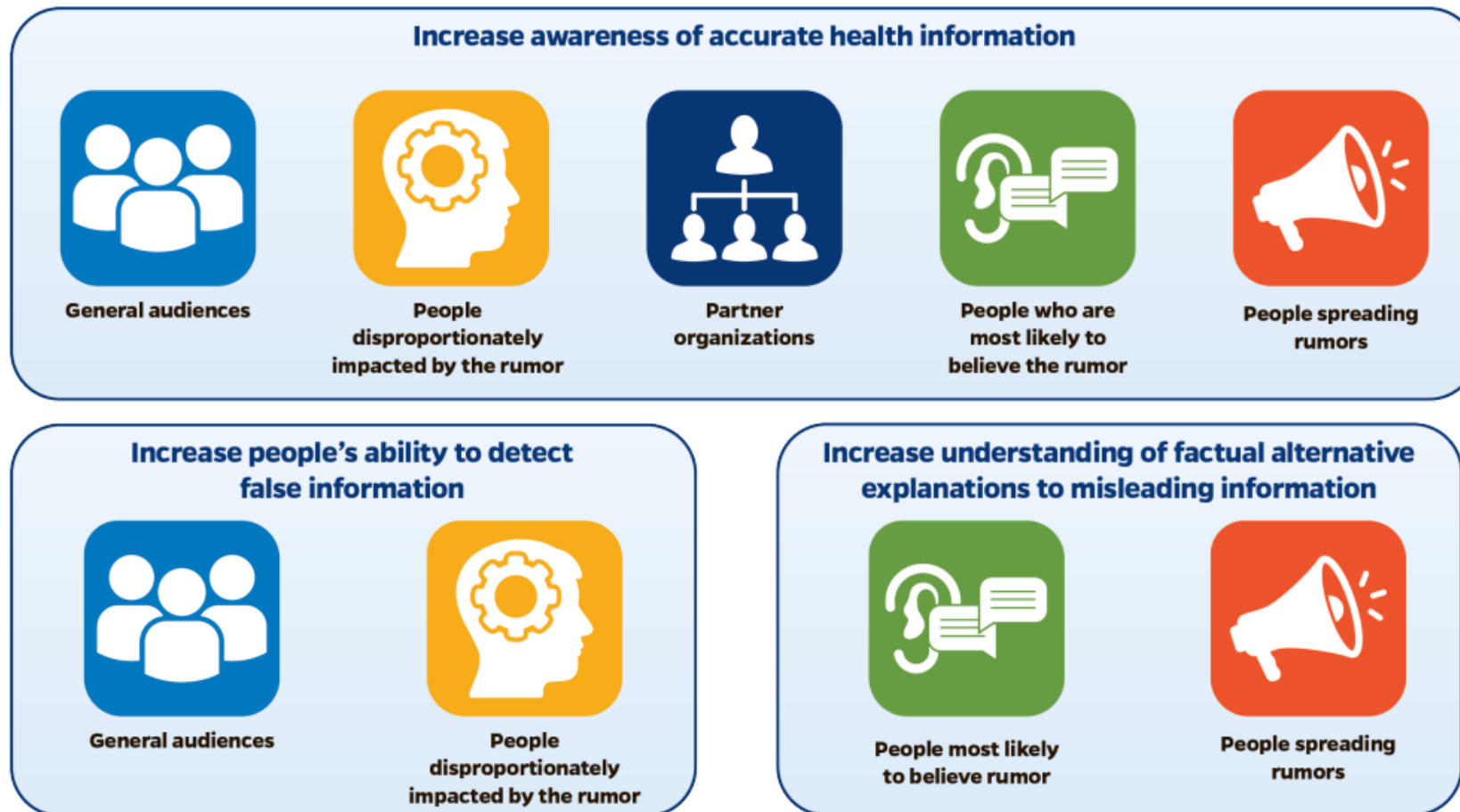
Confusion around previous messaging



Desire for certainty when the situation is uncertain

# Take action to address misinformation

Characterize your priority audience and your communication goals for them



# Take action to address misinformation

Choose an action approach



Amplify accurate information



Fill information voids



Leverage trusted messengers  
and engage communities



Refute, fact-check, or debunk



Prebunk and inoculate



Improve health and  
science literacy

# Take action to address misinformation

## Select communications channels and trusted messengers

The best communications channels for a message that addresses misinformation are the platforms on which the rumor is spreading.



In-person activities



Social media



Traditional & digital media



How accessible is the message for target audiences?



Which channel will maximize message reach?



Which channels are popular, user friendly, and trustworthy?



How time-consuming and costly is this for you?



Do you have the right relationships in place?



Could you accidentally spread misinformation?

# Take action to address misinformation

Choose strategic ways to frame your messages



## Moral reframing

Align messages with your target audiences' motivations and moral values.



## Promotion framing

Appeal to improving a positive outcome during crisis.



## Gain framing

Focus on desirable outcomes or benefits to the audience.



## Prevention framing

Appeal to preventing a negative outcome during non-crisis times



## Self-oriented framing

Appeal to self-serving benefits.



## Health consequences framing

Appeal to health-related consequences of changing behavior.



# Take action to address misinformation

Create and disseminate your messages using good practices

## STRUCTURE

Use a channel-specific template

Create a communication format to use during public presentations of information

Succinctly provide action items and key takeaways

## LANGUAGE

Use plain language, short sentences, active voice, and second person POV

Say the most important things first

Provide information in accessible and alternative formats

## STONE & VISUALS

Address claims directly, empathetically, and contextually

Use a casual tone to be more approachable or a professional one for more authority

Use culturally sensitive humor

Select impactful design elements

# Take action to address misinformation

Even if you can't act, address misinformation in other ways



## Leverage strategic partnerships

Collaborate with internal and external partners who can address rumors as a part of their work.



## Amplify (trusted) influential voices

Help local or national influencers to amplify anti-misinformation messages shared by other trusted organizations



## Attend community outreach events

Show up at community events and be available to your community as a resource for addressing rumors in a more casual setting.



## Track consequences of not taking action

Watch for negative impacts via social listening/reporting from community partners. Some negative impacts warrant response.

# Evaluate anti-misinformation messages



Conduct user testing and test whether your messages are appropriate



Track how well you distributed your message and who it reached



Ask partners about their thoughts on your messaging and its impact on the target audience

# The playbook also provides the following:



A checklist for improving trust and communication during escalating public health issues



Tool for characterizing your audience and building personas



A worksheet to help you develop anti-misinformation messages



Strategies and templates to guide message framing



Guidance on developing messages using LLMs



Additional things to do for each step if you have more time and resources





JOHNS HOPKINS  
BLOOMBERG SCHOOL  
*of* PUBLIC HEALTH

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**Center for Health Security**





# Speaker Presentation



**Tad Sooter**

Public Information Officer at the Kitsap Public Health District



# Navigating Misinformation: One Health District's Journey

**Tad Sooter**  
Public Information Officer

# About Kitsap County, WA

- Located on a peninsula west of Seattle
- Population: 275k
- Suburban community with a large Navy presence







# About Kitsap Public Health

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- We prevent disease and protect and promote the health of all people in Kitsap County
- Local government agency with 120 employees
- Communication team of three



# Navigating misinformation

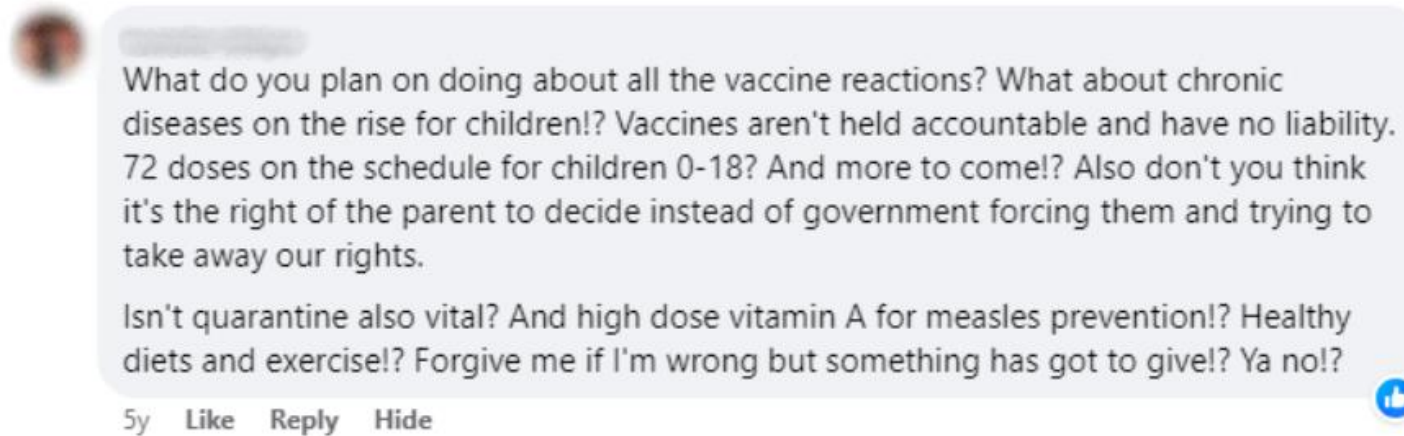
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It's not always  
smooth sailing!



KITSAP PUBLIC  
HEALTH DISTRICT

# Misinformation before COVID-19...



- Scattered misinformation shared by concerned parents and activist groups

- Misinformation focused on child safety and adverse vaccine reactions

- Local perceptions of public health were largely positive

# During COVID-19...

The collage features several social media posts and a news article snippet. The posts include:

- A post from Kitsap Public Health District with an abstract snippet: "Statistical support was obtained for an association between recent vaccination of cats and the presence of elevated background (i.e., anti-cell culture) reactivity in certain of their sera, as detected with a kinetics-based enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay for coronavirus antibodies, as a potential cause of false-positive antibody test" and a link to a PubMed article.
- A post stating: "Beware parents. These V's are dangerous to your children. VAERS reports now have over 3000 deaths."
- A post replying to the VAERS post: "Still out to poison our kids.. Your all a joke. Wheres the science at. You guys dont have none. Look at all the side affects trying to hide now. Now the SUN CAUSES STROKES. have allergies its all CHINA FAUCI PLAGUE.. disgrace!!"
- A post with a link to a Washington Post article: "https://www.washingtonpost.com/.../fauci-beagle-white.../" and the text "My children are not puppies!"
- A post stating: "It is criminal to give bioweapon injections to children."
- A post praising public health: "You all did a fabulous job making us safe!"
- A post with a hostile message: "Psychopathic murderers!"

Three yellow callout boxes on the left side of the collage contain the following bullet points:

- Misinformation became pervasive and crossed demographic groups
- Misinformation was increasingly politicized and driven by national narratives
- Perceptions of local public health became polarized...



# After COVID-19...



- Misinformation remains abundant but less widespread

- Misinformation is still politicized and linked to national narratives

- Individuals continuously work to undermine trust in public health



# How we respond

It is easy to be reactive...

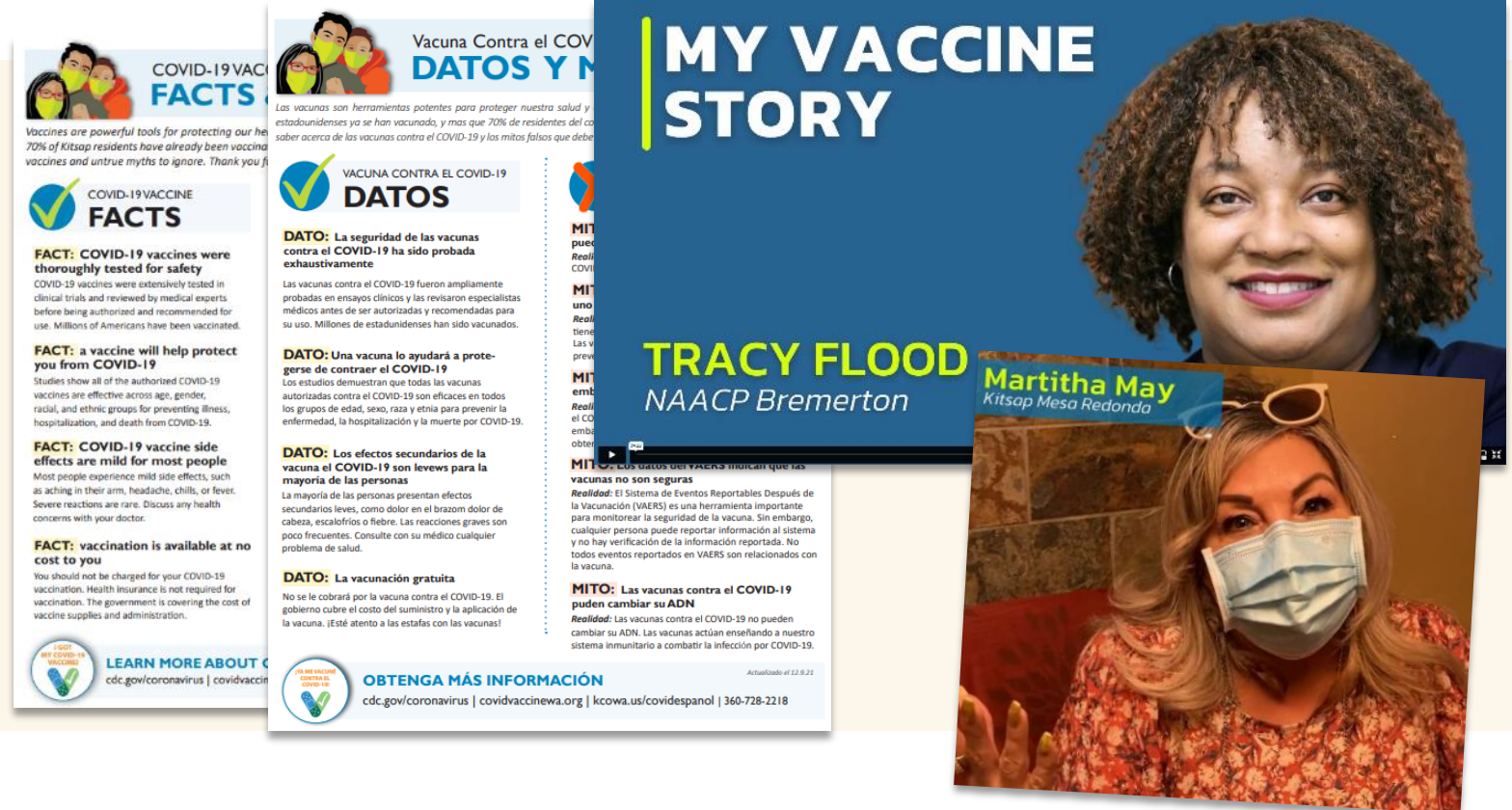




# How we respond

## We focus on populations most affected

- We convened a **Vaccine Equity Collaborative** during COVID-19
- We used **community feedback** to develop materials and collaborate with trusted messengers



The collage features several informational materials and photos of community members. On the left, there are two fact sheets: one in English titled 'COVID-19 VACCINE FACTS' and one in Spanish titled 'VACUNA CONTRA EL COVID-19 DATOS Y MITOS'. The English fact sheet includes sections for 'FACT: COVID-19 vaccines were thoroughly tested for safety', 'FACT: a vaccine will help protect you from COVID-19', 'FACT: COVID-19 vaccine side effects are mild for most people', and 'FACT: vaccination is available at no cost to you'. The Spanish fact sheet includes sections for 'DATO: La seguridad de las vacunas contra el COVID-19 ha sido probada exhaustivamente', 'DATO: Una vacuna lo ayudará a protegerse de contraer el COVID-19', 'DATO: Los efectos secundarios de la vacuna el COVID-19 son leves para la mayoría de las personas', and 'DATO: La vacunación gratuita'. Below these are links to 'LEARN MORE ABOUT COVID-19 VACCINE' and 'OBTENGA MÁS INFORMACIÓN'. On the right, there is a video player titled 'MY VACCINE STORY' featuring Tracy Flood, NAACP Bremerton, and Martitha May, Kitsap Mesa Redonda. The video player shows a woman wearing a face mask.



## We focus on populations most affected

- We bring **mobile clinics and information teams** into the community
- **Person-to-person interactions** allow meaningful engagement with people who may be hesitant about vaccination



## We are selective in responding to misinformation

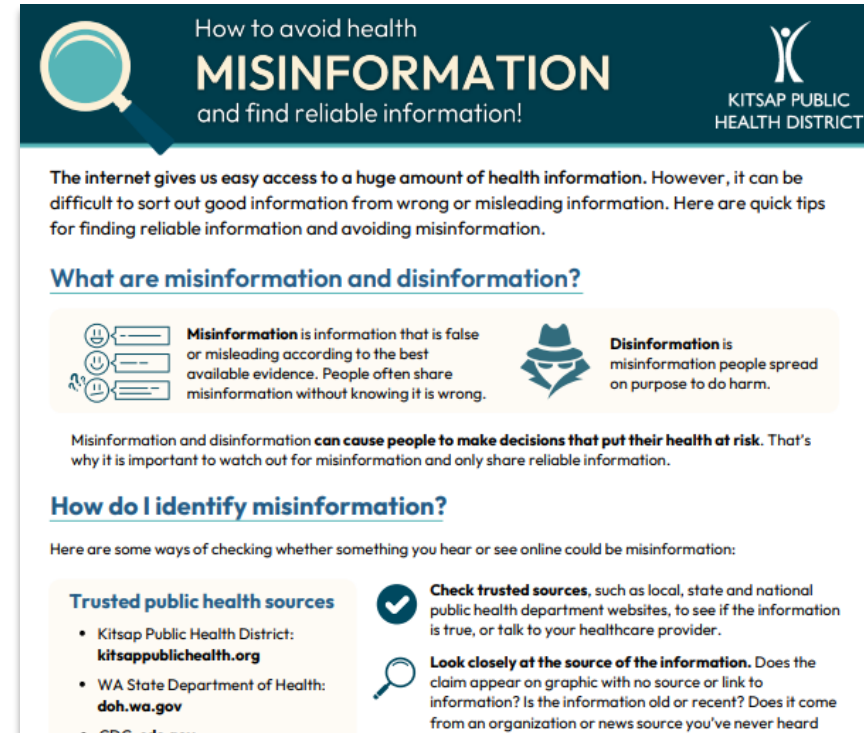


- We prioritize **local rumors** over national narratives.
- We prioritize misinformation shared through **local channels**, such as community meetings.
- We respond to social media misinformation when there is an **opportunity to educate** others.

# How we respond

## We continue to focus on

- Disseminating proactive and **consistent public health messaging**
- Emphasizing **direct community outreach** and engagement to deliver good information and build trust
- Creating **policies and plans** that allow us to more effectively counter misinformation



How to avoid health  
**MISINFORMATION**  
and find reliable information!

KITSAP PUBLIC  
HEALTH DISTRICT

The internet gives us easy access to a huge amount of health information. However, it can be difficult to sort out good information from wrong or misleading information. Here are quick tips for finding reliable information and avoiding misinformation.

**What are misinformation and disinformation?**

**Misinformation** is information that is false or misleading according to the best available evidence. People often share misinformation without knowing it is wrong.

**Disinformation** is misinformation people spread on purpose to do harm.

Misinformation and disinformation **can cause people to make decisions that put their health at risk.** That's why it is important to watch out for misinformation and only share reliable information.

**How do I identify misinformation?**

Here are some ways of checking whether something you hear or see online could be misinformation:

**Trusted public health sources**

- Kitsap Public Health District:  
[kitsappublichealth.org](https://www.kitsappublichealth.org)
- WA State Department of Health:  
[doh.wa.gov](https://www.doh.wa.gov)
- CDC: [www.cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov)

**Check trusted sources**, such as local, state and national public health department websites, to see if the information is true, or talk to your healthcare provider.

**Look closely at the source of the information.** Does the claim appear on graphic with no source or link to information? Is the information old or recent? Does it come from an organization or news source you've never heard

- Promoting **health literacy** and creating tools to help our community identify and address misinformation

# Healthy Kitsap Campaign

Hitting reset on immunization messaging.

## TRUSTED VOICES

Local health professionals trust and support immunization as a vital tool for keeping us healthy. Scroll down to see stories from Kitsap healthcare providers and community leaders and find [materials you can share](#). Have questions or concerns about vaccines that you want to discuss? Reach out to your healthcare provider or give our team a call at [360-728-2007](tel:360-728-2007).

### Jared Moravec

*Fire Chief, Bainbridge Island*

#### Why is it important to you to stay up to date on immunizations?

Immunizations help my body to be better prepared to respond to certain illnesses. As a first responder, I want to make sure that I keep myself healthy and protect those around me.

#### Why are immunizations important to your work and our community?

Keeping first responders healthy helps to protect you and us during emergency responses. Immunizations also help to keep the community healthier.

#### What would you say to someone who was unsure about getting vaccinated?

Immunizations can save your life and the lives of others. If you are unsure about getting vaccinated, be sure to talk to your healthcare provider to get trusted information.



### Dr. Niran Al-Agba

*PEDIATRICIAN, SILVERDALE*

#### Why is it important to you to stay up to date on immunizations?

I work on the front line of medicine, seeing sick patients every day who suffer from many infections, whether viral or bacterial. I stay caught up on immunizations to protect myself, my family, and most importantly, my patients.

#### Why are immunizations important to your work and our community?

Vaccinations save lives. They are important because they are the single most important medical advance made during the last century which prolongs the lives of children.

#### What would you say to someone who was unsure about getting vaccinated?

Immunizations are safe and effective. The vaccines I am giving to your child are the exact same ones I have given to my own children.



## We reviewed lessons from COVID-19 response

- People generally **trust healthcare providers**, especially their own doctor.
- People are receptive to **personal stories** about vaccination.
- People want **access to health information** and space to make their own decisions.

	Already vaccinated	Vaccine-hesitant	Not planning on vaccinating
Health organizations (CDC, WHO, etc.)	😊	😐	😐
My doctor(s)	😊	😊	😊
Friends and relatives	😊	😐	😐
WA DOH and KPHD	😊	😊	😐
Schools or school staff	😊	😐	😐
Community service providers (library, food bank)	😊	😐	😐
Facebook, Twitter, Instagram	😐	😐	❌
Other social media	😐	😐	❌
Organizations I belong to	😊	😐	😊
Network TV stations or news articles	😊	😐	❌

**Figure 5.** Survey responses to: "How reliable do you think the information is that comes from the following sources?" by COVID-19 vaccine perception (6,119 respondents)

**Data source:** Kitsap Public Health District, Community Health and Wellbeing Survey, 2021



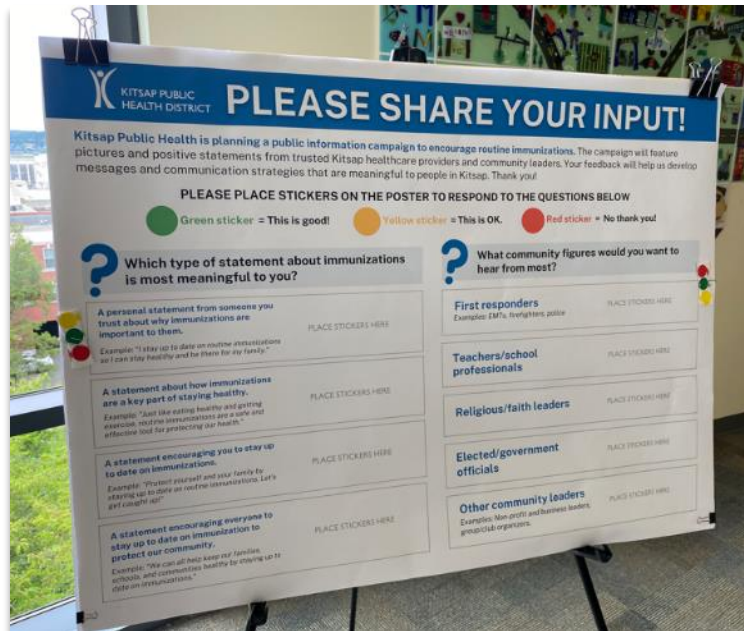
Community members really trust the **personal stories** they hear from friends, family, community leaders, and neighbors when it comes to vaccine side effects, reasons for being vaccinated, etc.

Personal stories and conversations can have a powerful influence on attitudes and beliefs towards vaccination, and ultimately increase or decrease vaccine hesitancy.



# Developing the campaign

## We gathered feedback on messages and messengers



## We applied that learning to a trust and awareness campaign



- We recruited **local health professionals** and community leaders to serve as immunization advocates
- These advocates shared positive **personal stories** about why they stay up to date on vaccines and why immunizations are important to their work and our community
- We created a webpage – [HealthyKitsap.org](https://www.healthykitsap.org) – with streamlined vaccination information <sup>a</sup>



# Campaign media



Washington State Ferries terminal LCD screens



Kitsap Mall floor displays



Digital/social ads



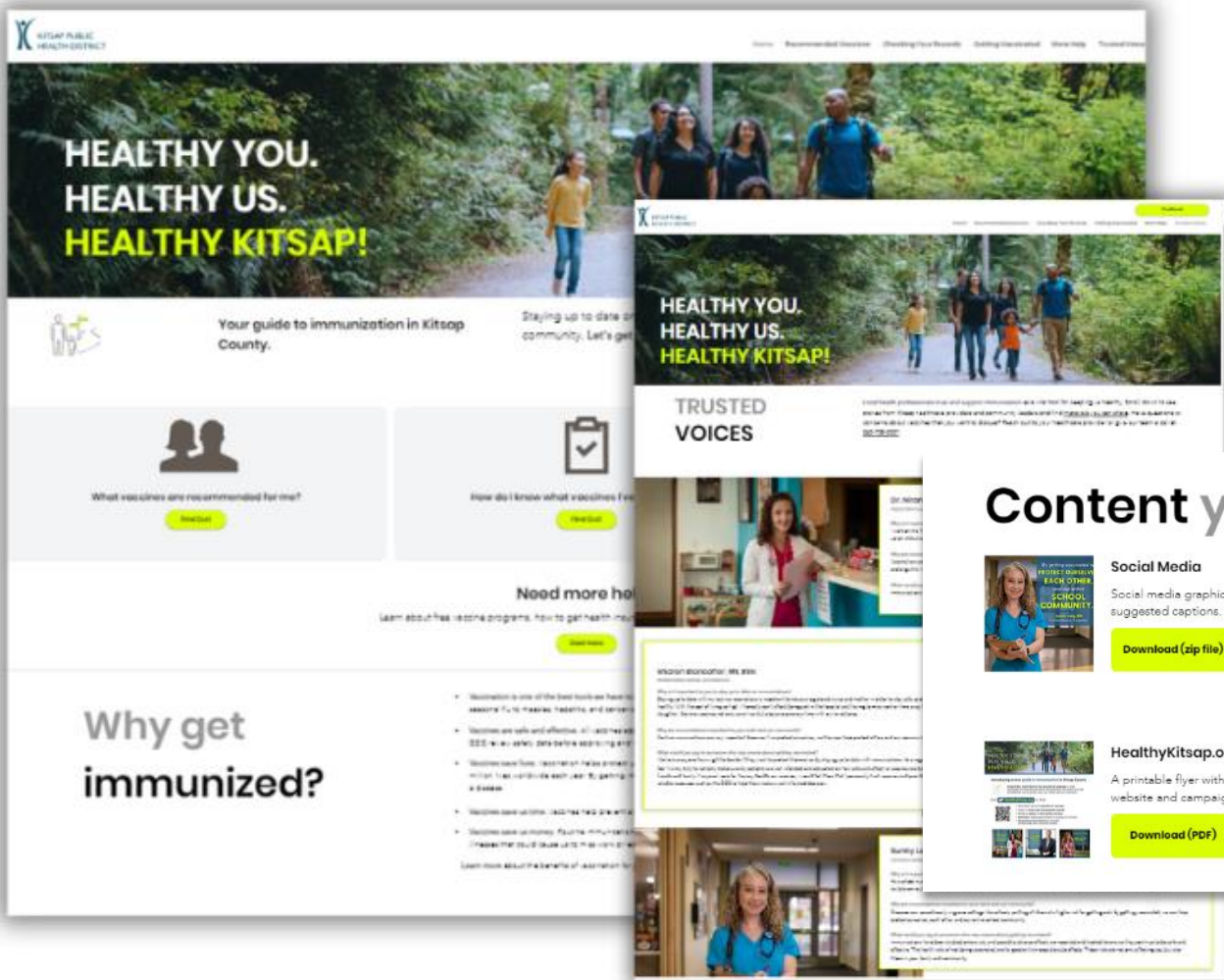
Safeway shopping carts



Roadside billboards



# Landing page & shareables



HealthyKitsap.org

## Content you can share



**Social Media**  
Social media graphics (square) and suggested captions.

[Download \(zip file\)](#)



**Posters**  
11x17 posters you can download and print. Interested in receiving printed posters for your organization? Contact [pic@kitsappublichealth.org](mailto:pic@kitsappublichealth.org)

[Download \(PDF\)](#)

**Have questions about vaccines?**

**Videos**  
Short video montages you can share.

[View & Download](#)



**HealthyKitsap.org flyer**  
A printable flyer with information about this website and campaign.

[Download \(PDF\)](#)



# Looking ahead

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- We've had successes and many learning opportunities
- Tools like JHU's misinformation playbook will help us create consistent plans and procedures for responding to misinformation in the future





# THANK YOU!

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[pio@kitsappublichealth.org](mailto:pio@kitsappublichealth.org)

Q&A



# Vaccine Confidence Toolkit

- AIM's Vaccine Confidence Toolkit is designed to equip members of the Association of Immunization Managers (AIM) and their staff with the tools and information necessary to promote vaccine confidence across the nation and its territories.
- Previous webinar topics include:
  - Using Qualitative Research to Increase Vaccination Access and Uptake in Under-Immunized Communities
  - Refreshing Our Conversations About Child and Adolescent Vaccinations
  - An Innovative Community Partnership to Increase Vaccine Confidence and Access

[Access the Toolkit Here](#)



# The State of Vaccine Coverage and Confidence: Insights for the Vaccine Conversation

[Register now](#) for AIM's next vaccine confidence webinar, The State of Vaccine Coverage and Confidence: Insights for the Vaccine Conversation, on May 31 from 2-3 pm ET.

## Objectives:

- Provide immunization program managers and partners with an update on the state of vaccine confidence and childhood immunization coverage in the United States.
- Highlight emerging research on the scope and impact of vaccine hesitancy, the facts surrounding common vaccination concerns, and the latest evidence regarding effective communication techniques for the vaccine conversation.

## Speakers:

- Tiffany Humbert-Rico, MPH, Health Communications Specialist, CDC
- Christina Voss, Health Communications Specialist, CDC Contractor from The Leading Niche
- Sean T. O'Leary, MD, MPH, Professor of Pediatrics, University of Colorado

Questions? Email [jdonavant@immunizationmanagers.org](mailto:jdonavant@immunizationmanagers.org)

# Closing

- Please take a few moments to answer the survey questions that pop up in your browser after the webinar. Your feedback helps us to improve future events!
- This webinar recording will be posted to the [AIM Vaccine Confidence Toolkit](#) in the coming weeks.
- A PDF copy of the webinar slides will be emailed to all attendees after the webinar.

# Thank you!



[immunizationmanagers.org](https://immunizationmanagers.org)



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Association of Immunization  
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Immunization  
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