

Building Your Public Health Comms Toolkit: Communications Planning on a Budget

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 25

3:30 – 5pm EST / 12:30 – 2pm PST

This event will be recorded. The recording and slides will be available on publichealthcollaborative.org later this week.

All attendees are automatically muted upon entry.

Join Our Newsletter

The latest public health...

- Messaging
- Resources
- Communication tools
- Trending topics
- Trainings

All delivered directly to your inbox!



Closed Captioning and ASL Interpretation

If you'd like to use closed captions or ASL interpretation: Hover over the “More” button or the “Interpretation” button on the bottom of your Zoom screen.

- Live closed captioning is being provided by AI Media.
- ASL interpretation is being provided by Keystone Interpreting Solutions.

Meet Today's Experts



Beth Hess

Senior Communications Specialist
National Association of County and City Health
Officials



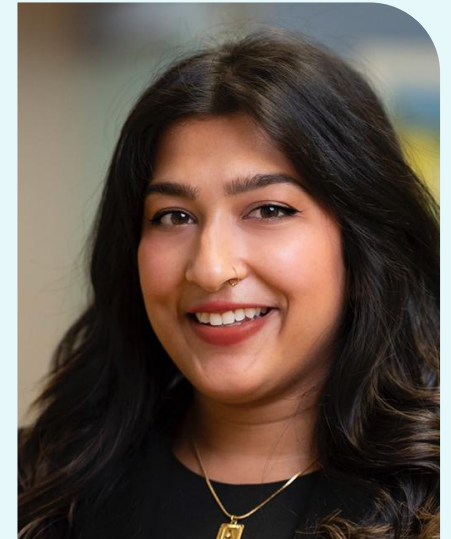
Dorian Johnson

Public Health Educator
The PHuncle



Vanessa Grégoire

Analyst
Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security



Aishwarya Nagar

Senior Analyst
Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security

Don't Forget to Use the Chat!

Add your questions to the chat throughout the webinar.

We'll do our best to get to all of them, but if we don't get to yours, we will repurpose your pressing questions for future webinars, resources, and PHCC Academy courses.



Working with a Limited Budget?

The Value of Communications Planning

Beth Hess, Senior Communications Specialist, NACCHO



Communications Role at Local Health Departments

FIGURE 5.12

Occupations employed at LHDs, by size of population served

	All LHDs	Size of population served						
		<25,000	25,000– 49,999	50,000– 99,999	100,000– 249,999	250,000– 499,999	500,000– 999,999	1,000,000+
Public information professional	32%	16%	21%	34%	55%	76%	93%	83%

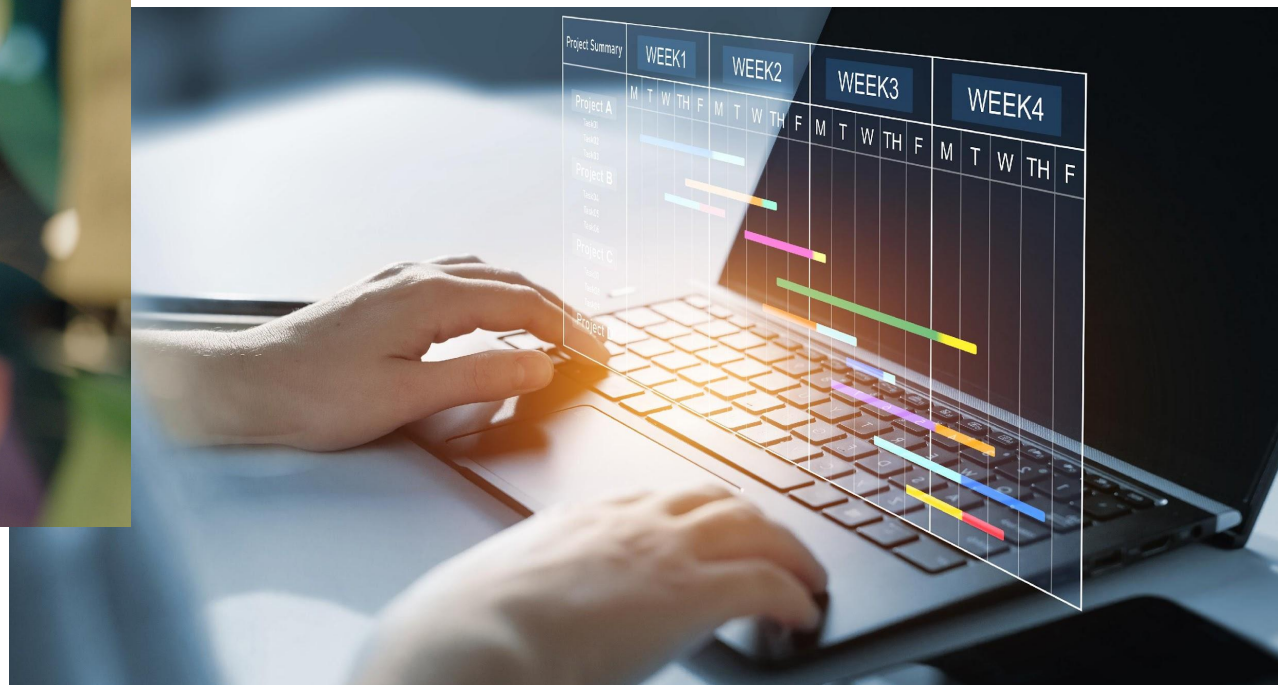
From the 2022 National Profile of Local Health Departments

FIGURE 5.13**Estimated number of full-time equivalents (FTEs) in select occupations**

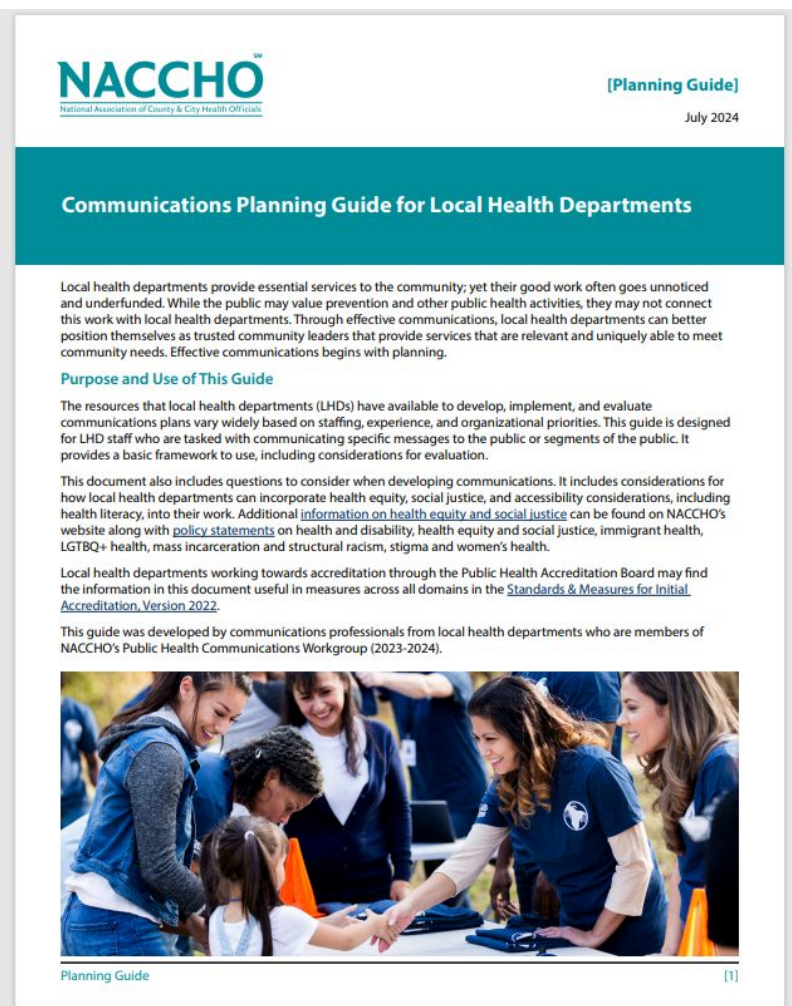
Occupation	Number of FTEs	95% Confidence intervals	
Agency leadership	6,900	6,400	7,500
Animal control worker	700	400	900
Behavioral health staff	7,200	3,800	10,600
Business and financial operations staff	6,400	5,800	7,000
Community health worker	5,900	5,000	6,800
Environmental health worker	12,800	11,700	13,900
Epidemiologist/statistician	4,200	3,200	5,200
Health educator	6,100	5,400	6,800
Information systems specialist	1,800	1,400	2,200
Laboratory worker	1,600	1,300	1,800
Licensed practical or vocational nurse	2,200	1,800	2,500
Nursing aide and home health aide	1,100	900	1,400
Nutritionist	4,400	4,000	4,900
Office and administrative support staff	20,800	18,800	22,800
Oral health care professional	1,200	900	1,400
Preparedness staff	4,000	2,300	5,800
Public health physician	1,100	900	1,400
Public information professional	1,100	1,000	1,200
Registered nurse	20,700	18,900	22,400

n=721-898

Taking the Time to Plan



Communications Planning Guide for Local Health Departments



Communications Planning: Step One

Establish goals and objectives.

- Key question:
 - What do you want people to know or do?



Example Goals: Heat

- Know the risks
- Know what steps to take to protect themselves
- Know the warning signs and when/how to take action



Communications Planning: Step Two

Define audience and stakeholders.

- Key questions:
 - Who are you communicating with?
 - Who are you trying to reach?



Example Audience: Heat

- Older adults
- Those working outdoors



Identify communications tactics that will reach and engage your audience and stakeholders.

-

Example Tactics: Heat

Potential Outlets

- Flyers
- Events
- Media
- Newsletters
- Email
- Trusted messengers
- Partners
- Social media

#VenceElCalor



**Permanezca en lugares bajo
techo durante el calor extremo**

Example Tactics: Heat

Look for resources to use and/or adapt

- CDC
- Ready.gov
- OSHA
- Red Cross
- NACCHO

<https://www.naccho.org/blog/articles/heat-action-day-2025>

#VenceElCalor



**Permanezca en lugares bajo
techo durante el calor extremo**

Communications Planning: Step Four

Determine what success looks like and how you will measure it.

- Key questions:
 - How do you know you've met your goals?
 - Did it work?



Example Measurement: Heat

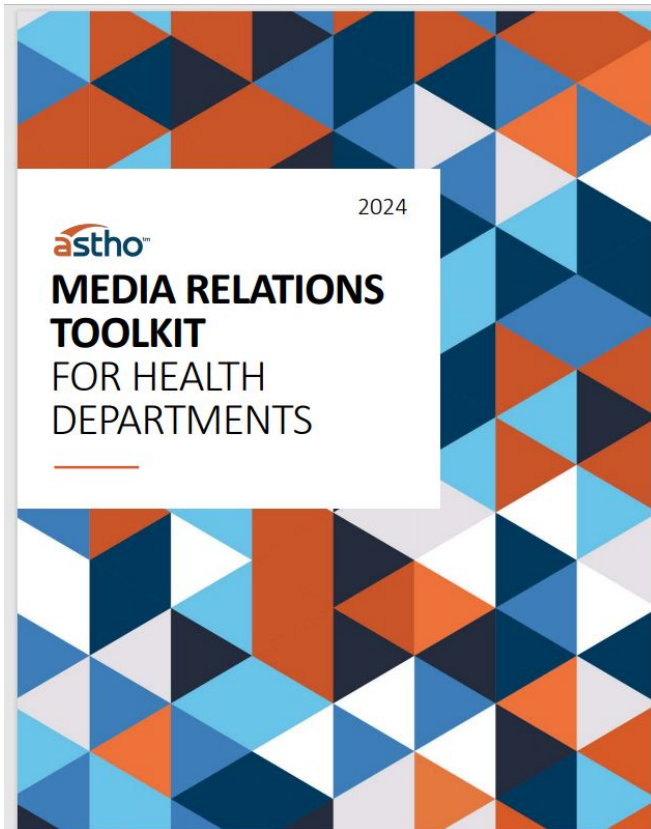
- Follow up with partners
- Number of flyers distributed
- Number of visits to cooling center
- Email analytics
- Web analytics
- Social media analytics



Communications Planning Guide



Media Relations Tips and Resources



- Additional media relations resource for local health departments coming later this summer.

<https://www.astho.org/topic/resource/media-relations-toolkit-for-health-departments/>

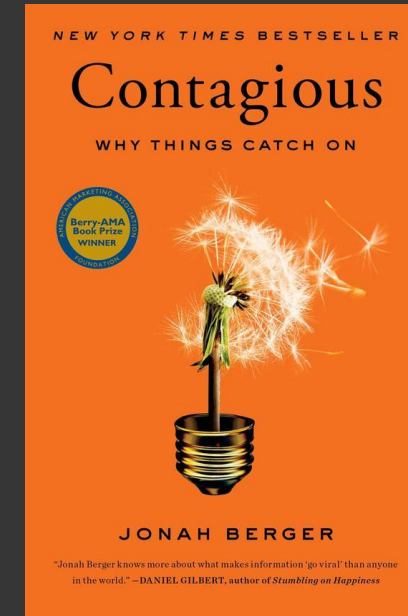
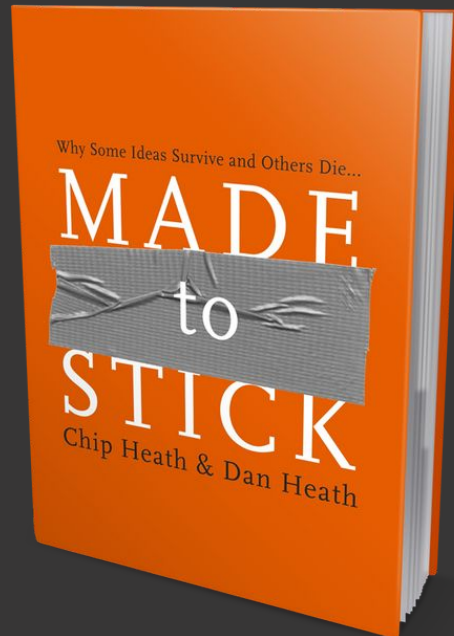
Cheap(or Free 99): Formats and Ideas That Actually Work

Because low budget doesn't need to mean low impact.



Please grab these books(they on Libby, support your local libraries!)

They will build and challenge your creativity and communicator muscles, and help you focus on your core messages



01

SHORT-FORM VIDEO

02

01

Talking head

02

Green Screen



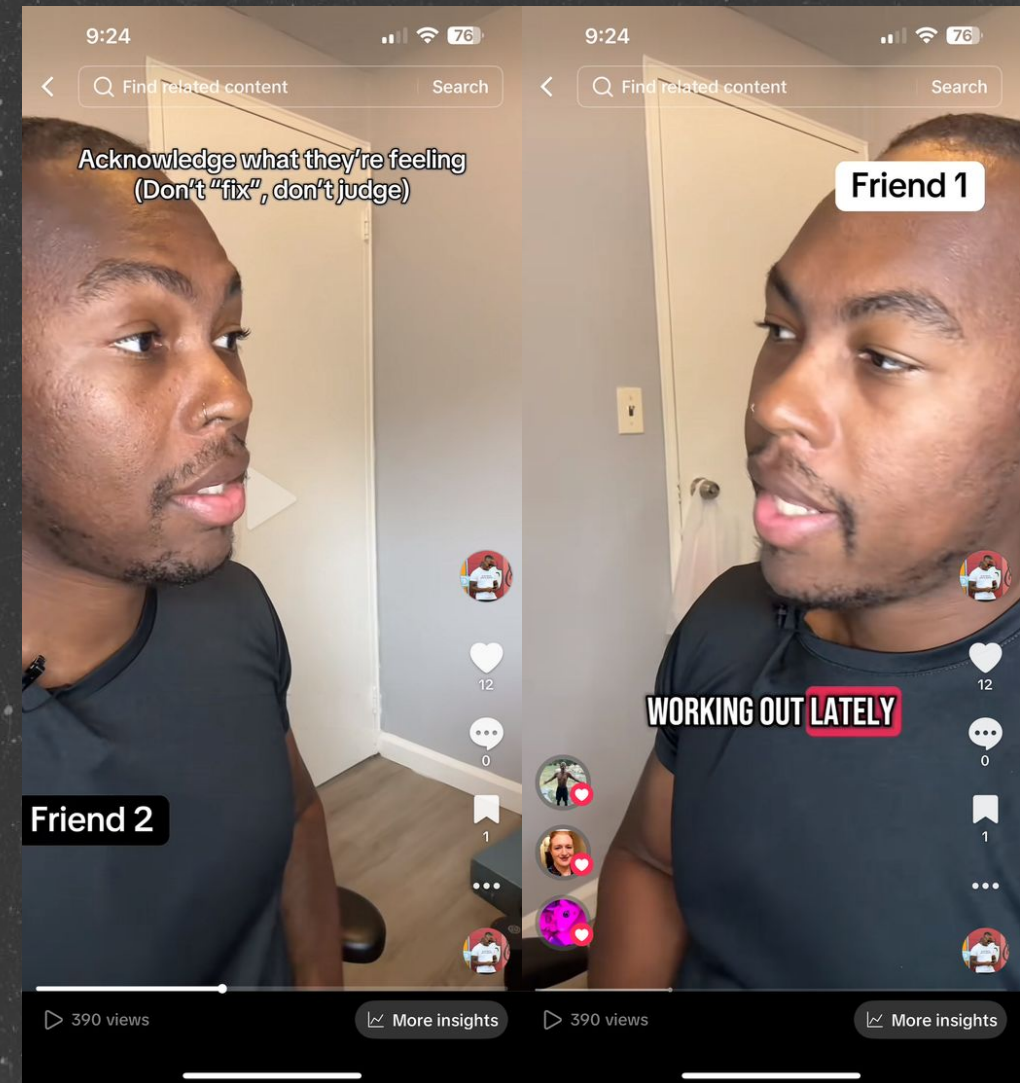
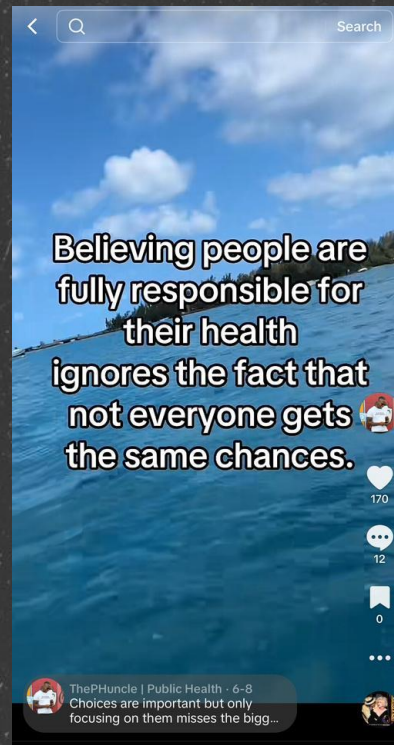
SHORT-FORM VIDEO

04

03 Voice Over

03

04 Skits



CANVA TEMPLATES

Carousels

Add



If you were (and still are)
a Blockhead...



It's time to check
your colon



If you flipped to Jet's
Beauty of the Week first...



It's time to check
your colon



If you remember
Launchpad McQuack's 4
Rules for Flight...



It's time to check
your colon



If you ever made a
mixtape off the radio...



It's time to check
your colon



If you ever blew into a
Nintendo cartridge to
make it work...



It's time to check
your colon

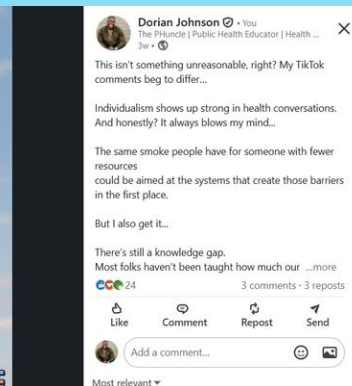


Who's at risk?

- Age 45+ (even if you feel fine)
- 1 in 3 with a family history
- Higher risk in Black, American Indian, and Alaska Native communities
- Rates are rising in people under 55



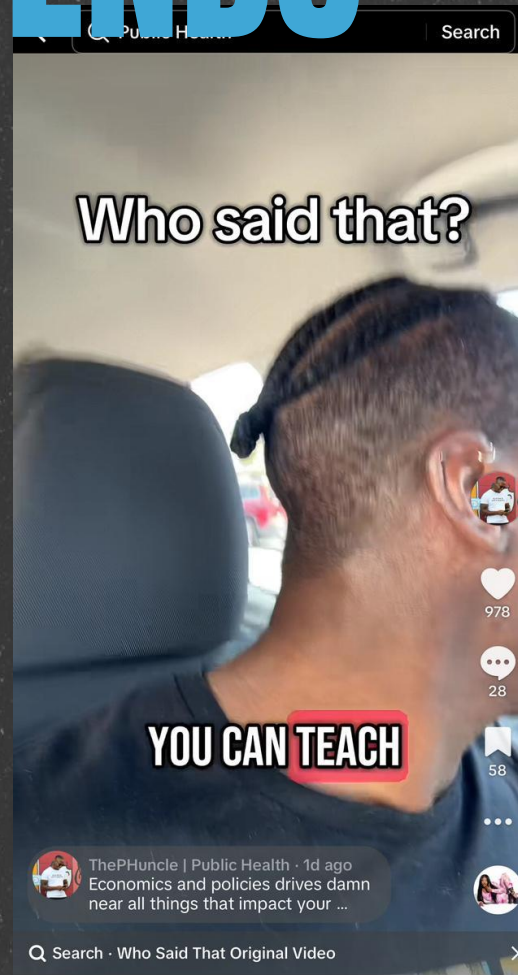
Text Based Posts



WANT EXTRA SAUCE? LEVERAGE TRENDS

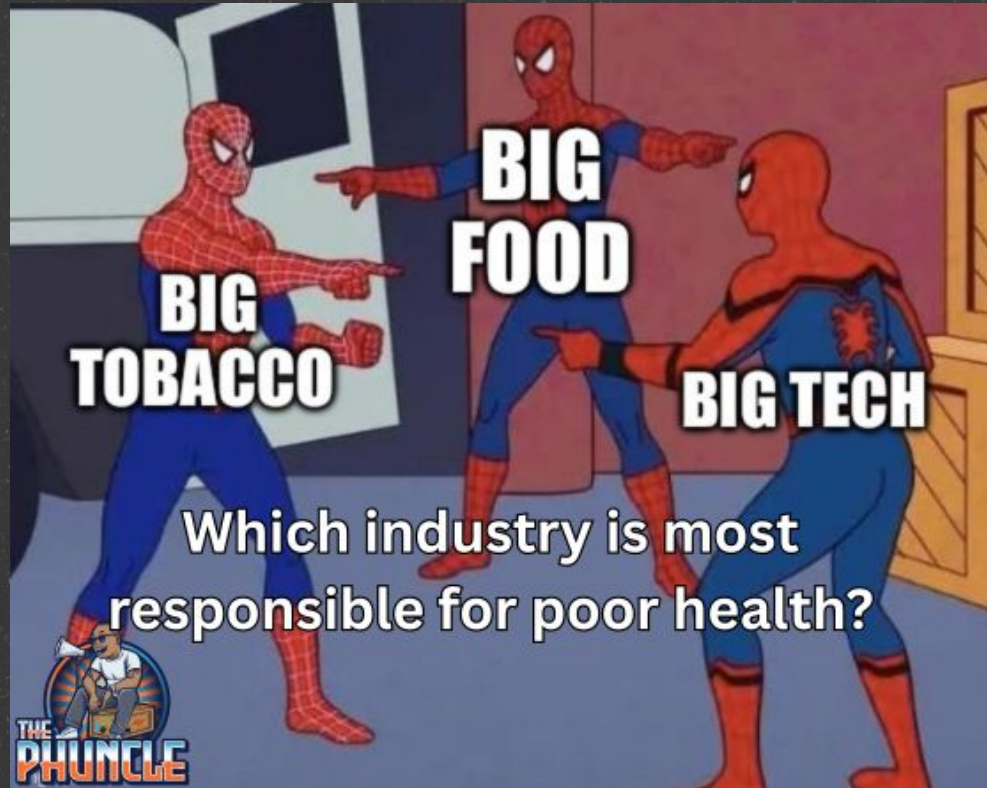
Total costs?

Creativity and time



WANT EXTRA SAUCE?

LEVERAGE MEMES



Scheduled post

🕒 Posting Wed, Jun 25 at 8:15 AM

"Don't look at me... it was them!"

Just your classic trio of industries that profit off keeping people sick, hooked, or distracted...

They all play a role.

But they're quick to deny it, shift the blame, and build narratives that erase accountability.

Here's the playbook:

🚬 Big Tobacco (and now vape):
"They can quit anytime."
Meanwhile, they're engineering nicotine hits and chemical additives to hook you faster.

🍔 Big Food:
"Just eat in moderation."
Meanwhile, they're designing bliss points to override your body and engineer cravings.

💻 Big Tech:
"Just log off!"
Meanwhile, they're exploiting human psychology to keep you scrolling at 2 AM.

HOW TO GET STARTED WITH MEMES

IMGFLIP.COM/MEMEGENERATOR

Meme Generator
The Fastest Meme Generator on the Planet. Easily add text to images or memes.

Spacing Add Image Draw Upload new template Search all memes

Distracted Boyfriend My Popular

Text #1 Text #2 Text #3

More Options AI Effects Add Text

Tip: If you [log in](#), your memes will be saved in your account

These are also free, and you can
get inspo from existing memes



Tackling rumors and understanding & strengthening trust in public health

Building Your Public Health Comms Toolkit: Communications Planning on a Budget

Presenters: Vanessa Grégoire and Aishwarya Nagar

June 25, 2025



JOHNS HOPKINS
BLOOMBERG SCHOOL
of PUBLIC HEALTH

Center for
Health Security

Misleading health rumors and information manipulation



Reduce trust in public health authorities



Hinder public health preparedness and response



Influence health behavior

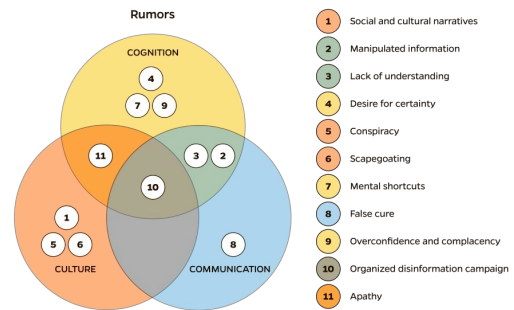


Impact health outcomes

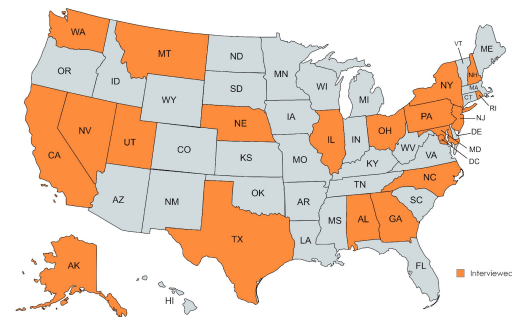
We can strategically prepare for and counter misleading and harmful health rumors in a way that is both budget-conscious and contextual

Tackling Rumors and Understanding & Strengthening Trust (TRUST) in Public Health

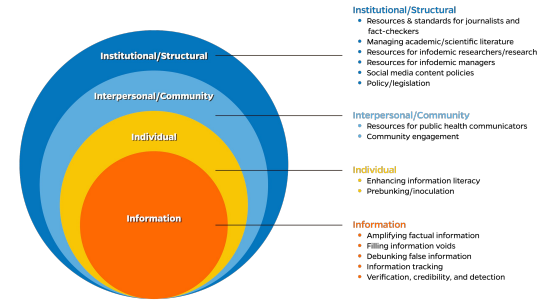
The screenshot displays the website for the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security's TRUST project. The header includes the center's name and navigation links. The main banner reads "Tackling Rumors and Understanding & Strengthening Trust (TRUST) in Public Health". Below this, there are four icons representing "About the Project", "Tackling Rumors", "Building Trust", and "Tools & Resources". A section titled "TRUST in Public Health" explains the importance of trust in public health and the project's goals. At the bottom, three small illustrations show how the project addresses misinformation, provides tools for practitioners, and improves risk communication.



PAST (AND FUTURE?) RUMORS



PRACTITIONER & EXPERT INSIGHT



WAYS TO MANAGE/COUNTER THEM

A checklist titled "Checklist to Build Trust, Improve Public Health Communication, and Anticipate Rumors During Public Health Emergencies". It includes a date of "Jul 2018" and a version of "Revised May 2020". The checklist is organized into sections corresponding to the levels of trust: Institutional/Structural, Interpersonal/Community, Individual, and Information. It features a "TRUST" logo and the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security logo.

CHECKLIST FOR BUILDING TRUST



The Checklist provides public health communicators with tools, resources, and internal advocacy opportunities organized across 5 priority sections:

- 1 Focusing on internal operations
- 2 Building connections with the community
- 3 Establishing opportunities with “secondary messengers”
- 4 Anticipating rumors and loss of trust during a public health emergency
- 5 Creating meaningful and accessible messages



Example guidance:

Priority 1:

- Partner with secondary messengers and partners that may be able to provide cost-effective comms assistance
- Alternative ways to expand budget e.g., emergency or pooled funding

Priority 2:

- Be present and immersed in the community
- Build proactive relationships

Priority 3:

- Amplify messages from trusted messengers
- Collaborate with partners on tailored message development & distribution
- Develop modifiable and shareable virtual content

Priority 4:

- Pre-emergency outreach about the benefits and roles of public health
- Explain the goals and thought processes behind public health operations
- Proactively characterize target audiences' values, beliefs, and needs
- Develop prebunking messages

Priority 5:

- Use basic content formats and free tools e.g. Canva, LLMs, PHCC alerts
- Use preferred channels and trusted voices to disseminate messages
- Use engaging graphics, plain language, and current trends
- Game the algorithm for communication via social media
- Leverage partnerships for feedback on messages

Examples in practice: Baltimore City, MD

- Used memes and culturally relevant humor in graphics
- Turned troll content into helpful science-backed messages
- Used a standard message at the root of all messages (“we want to keep you safe”)
- Proactively established rapid response communication channels with experts for answering social media questions accurately
- Kept up with current discourse, trends, and rumors to inform campaigns
- Stayed honest about the unknowns
- In-house communications expertise



Examples in practice: Cameron County, TX



- Created a communication “brand”
- Included visuals of individuals providing information behind-the-scenes (e.g., service provider, public health expert, etc.)
- Regularly updated graphics and messaging
- Communicated messages in multiple languages
- Engaged trusted messengers and community members for input and collaboration
- Monitored trends and launched new communication channels (e.g., podcast)
- Combined expertise in graphic design, health education, and public health
- Prioritized building trust through transparency, consistency, and proactive messaging



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



Prepare for health-related rumors



Decide when to act to address misleading rumors



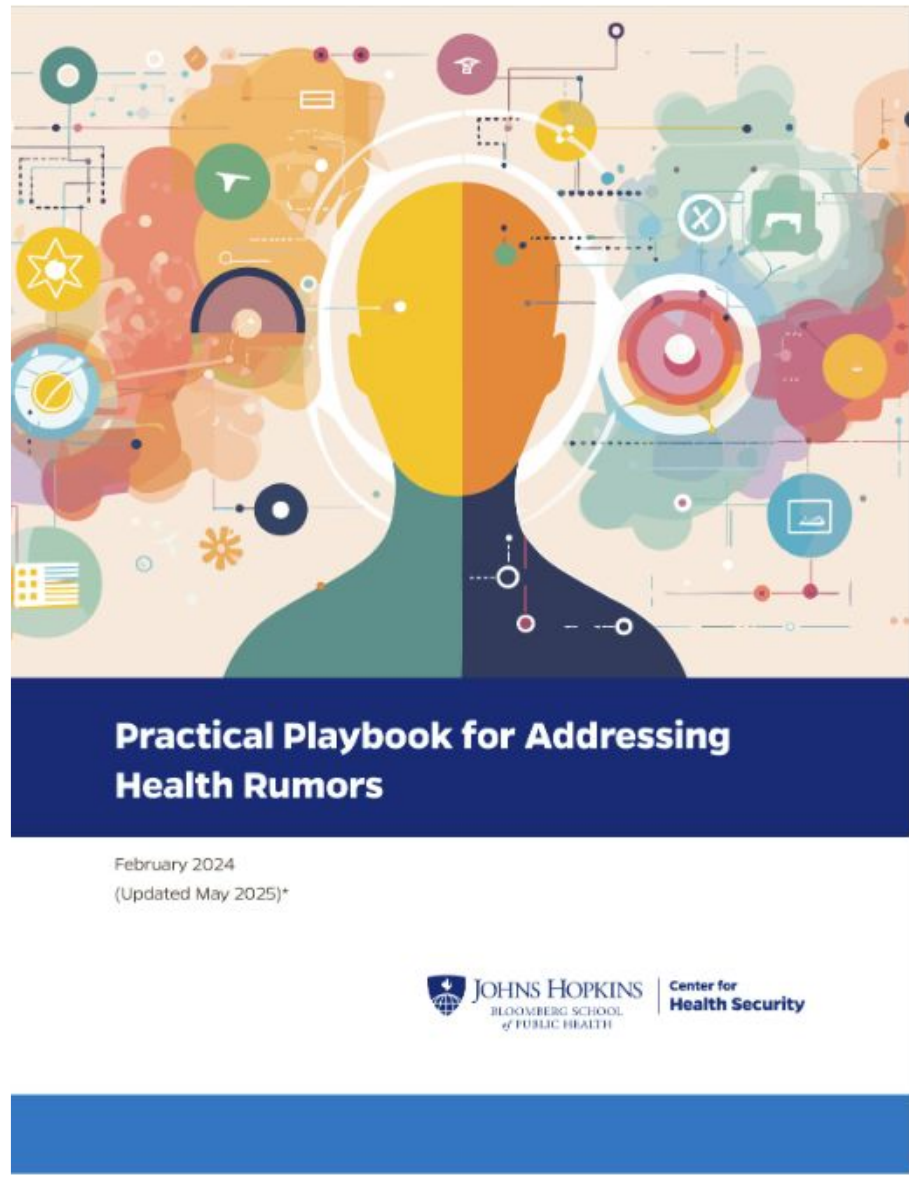
Determine which actions to take to address misleading rumors



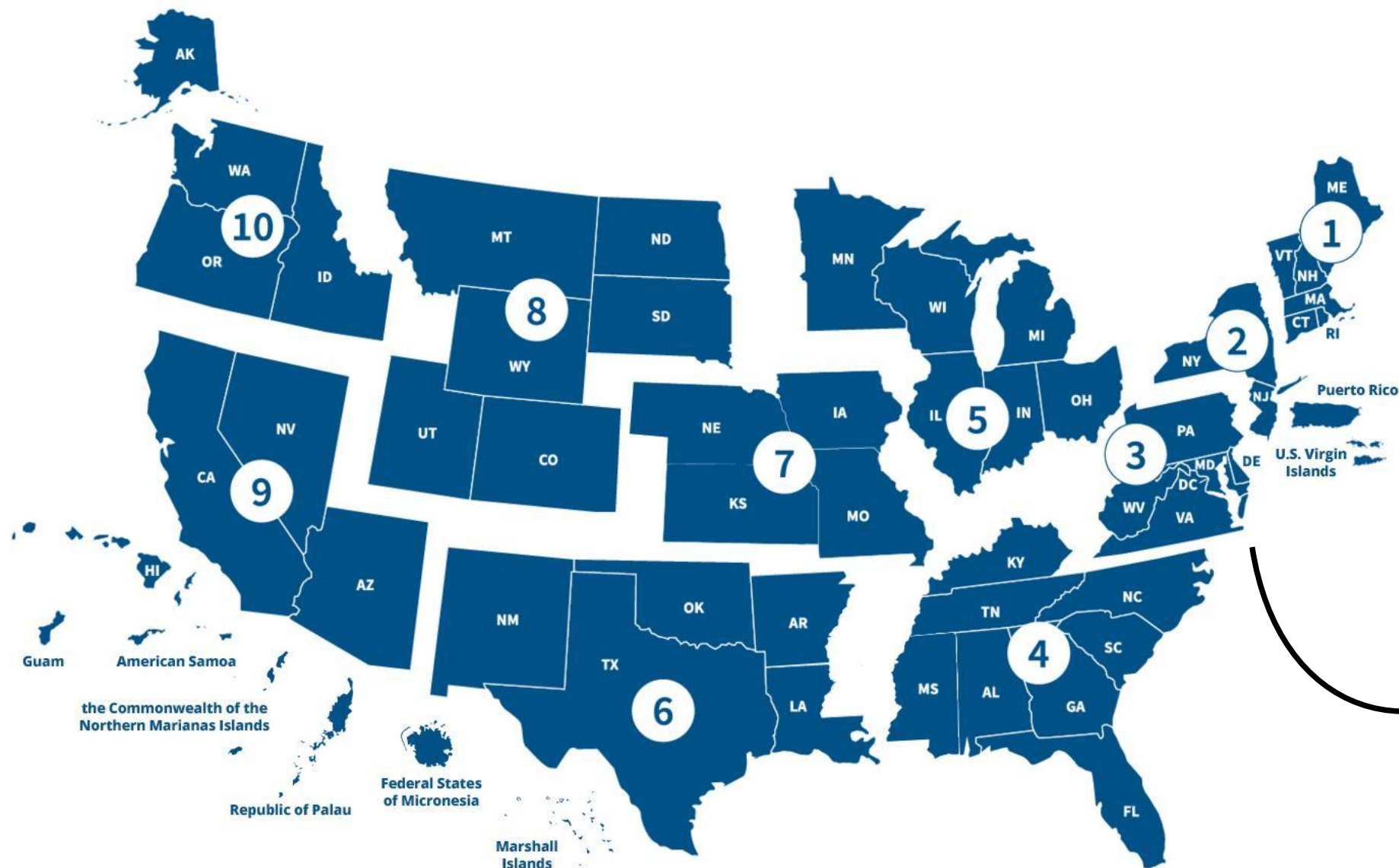
Develop messages to address misleading rumors



Gather feedback on messages



CDC Region 3 PHPR Center



West Texas children treated for vitamin A toxicity as medical disinformation spreads alongside measles outbreak

Texas Public Radio | By [David Martin Davies](#)

Published March 27, 2025 at 10:16 PM CDT



 LISTEN • 3:12



Systematic Review Why Parents Say No to Having Their Children Vaccinated against Measles: A Systematic Review of the Social Determinants of Parental Perceptions on MMR Vaccine Hesitancy

M. Lelinneth B. Novilla ¹, Michael C. Goates ^{2,*}, Alisha H. Redelfs ¹, Mallory Quenzer ¹, Lynneht Kirsten B. Novilla ¹, Tyler Leffler ¹, Christian A. Holt ¹, Russell B. Doria ³, Michael T. Dang ³, Melissa Hewitt ¹, Emma Lind ¹, Elizabeth Prickett ¹ and Katelyn Aldridge ¹

¹ Department of Public Health, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT 84602, USA

² Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT 84602, USA

³ School of Osteopathic Medicine, Campbell University, Lillington, NC 27546, USA

* Correspondence: michael_goates@byu.edu; Tel.: +1-(801)-422-6012

California reports more illnesses in people who drank raw milk. Here are the risks, according to health experts

By Sam Tupper, CNN

10 minute read · Updated 8:03 PM EST, Thu December 12, 2024





COMMUNITY

ICE fears drive older Latino Detroiters from vital health, social services

In Southwest Detroit, heightened ICE activity has sown fear and isolation among older Latinos, who depend on family and community for essential needs. This has spurred LA SED Senior Center to adapt, focusing on emotional support and wellness checks.

Another Hurdle in Recovery From Helene: Misinformation Is Getting in the Way

In North Carolina and other states, a barrage of conspiracy theories and false claims over efforts to bring relief after Hurricane Helene is alarming and disheartening officials and workers.

 Listen to this article · 8:40 min [Learn more](#)

 Share full article    857



U.S. News & World Report: N... / News / Health News / COVID, Bleach and Dubious D...

Did Americans Actually Drink Bleach During the COVID-19 Pandemic?

Bad survey respondents could be skewing results and fueling misinformation.

 By Cecelia Smith-Schoenwalder | July 13, 2023

 Save  Comment    



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

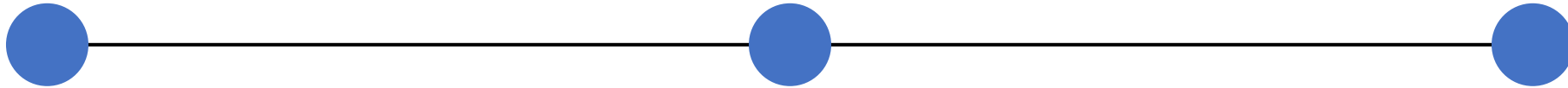


Set up a way to identify rumors



Answer audience questions and concerns quickly

Decide whether to address the rumor



Identify your goal for responding to a rumor

What is the intended outcome of your message?

What are your larger goals and specific objectives?

Are your goals SMART and tailored to audiences?

Identify what influences your decision to respond

How serious is the rumor?

What is your capacity to act?

How will you account for negative consequences?

Decide whether you will address the rumor

What minimum conditions do you need to act?

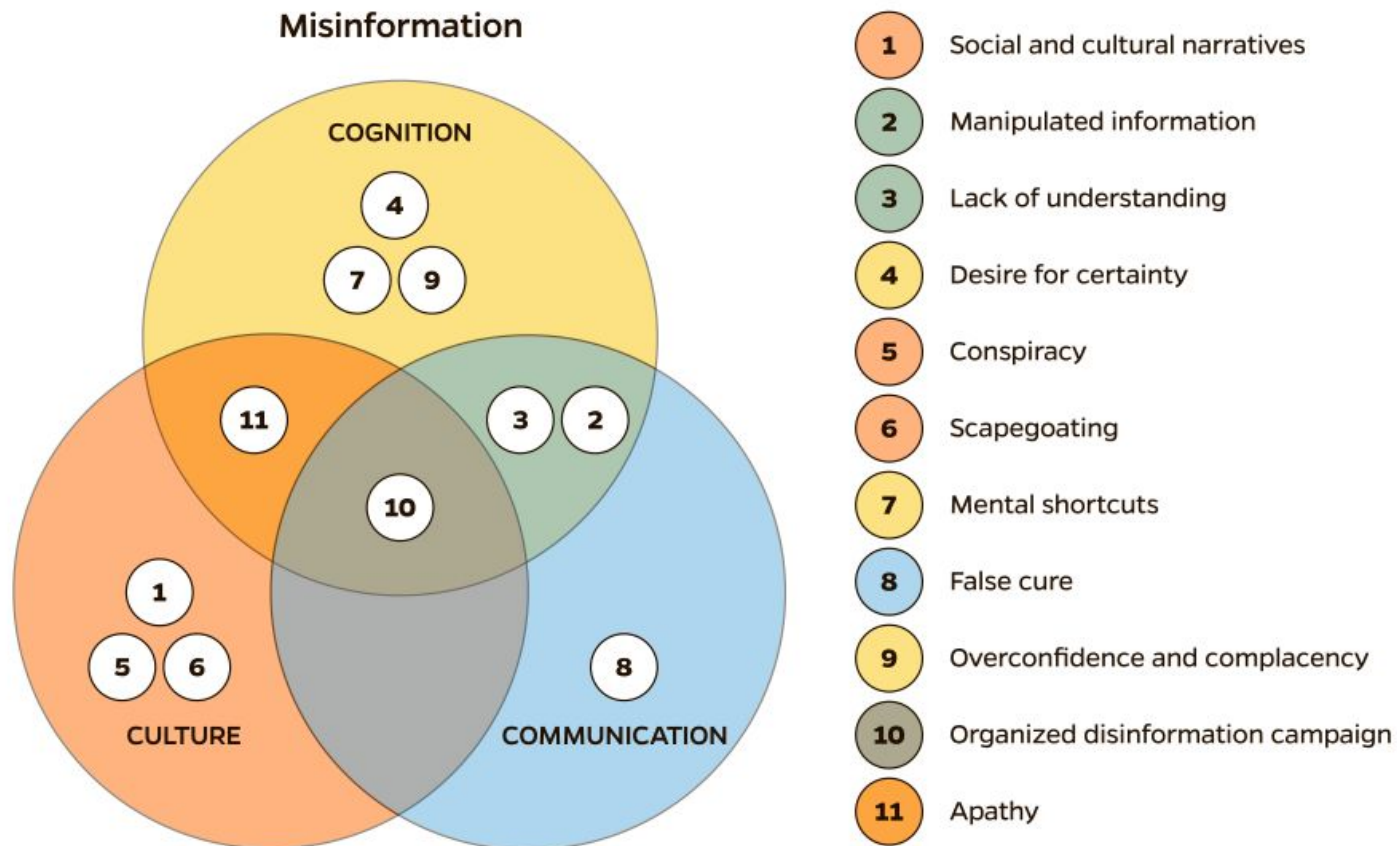
Which conditions immediately trigger action?

Which conditions prevent you from acting?

STEP 2

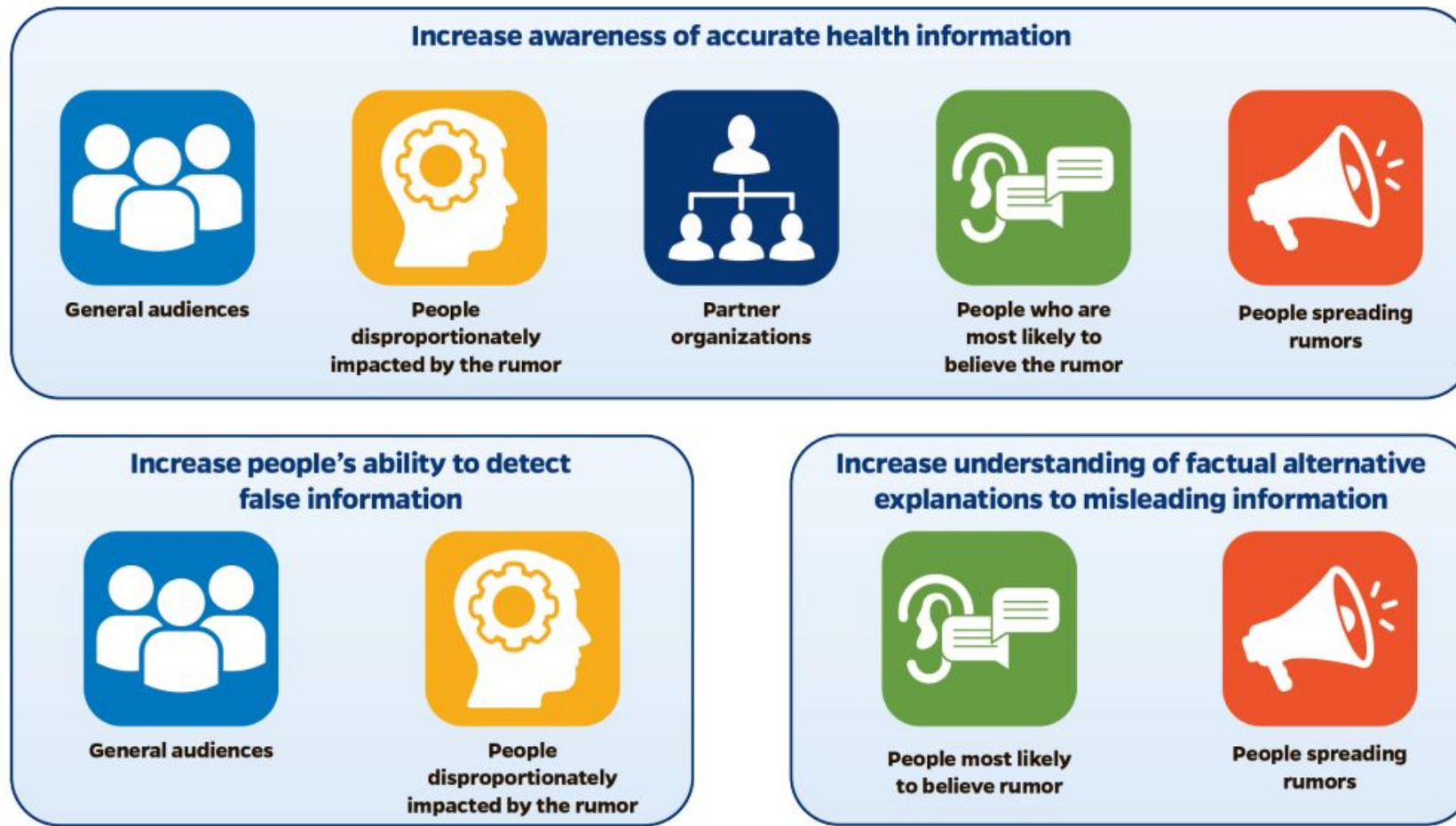
Take action to address rumors

Identify the type of rumor that is spreading



Take action to address rumors

Characterize your priority audience and your communication goals for them



STEP 2

Take action to address rumors

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

Choose an action approach: general

DO	DON'T
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Be empathic. People may feel confusion or fear during uncertain times.✓ Be consistent. Have communicators and spokespeople coordinate messaging strategies.✓ Be credible. Rely on sources with relevant expertise.✓ Customize content for specific target audiences.✓ Plan ahead. Have a strategy in place to respond if bad actors seize messages and use them to further their own agendas.✓ Have a plan to swiftly address and fill information voids in case a message accidentally amplifies misinformation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✗ Use scare tactics to change people's beliefs.✗ Repeat false information unnecessarily.✗ Ignore behavioral and social evidence when designing messages, especially for vaccine hesitant groups who care about efficacy, safety, and disproportionate risks to vulnerable communities.✗ Refuse to acknowledge when the public received incorrect guidance from official or reputable sources✗ Ignore potential consequences from being too slow/fast to correct misinformation, rushing to fill information gaps even though scientific evidence is still evolving, and looking like you're out of the loop.

Take action to address rumors

Select communications channels and trusted messengers

The best communications channels for a message that addresses rumors 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 rumors

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 rumors

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

Evaluate 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



Q&A

Explore More from PHCC

publichealthcollaborative.org

- Sign up for the PHCC newsletter
- Download resources to share with your community
- Review new messaging on emergent public health issues
- Get the latest trending health alerts
- Take a PHCC Academy training



Thank You

More Resources

www.publichealthcollaborative.org

Contact

info@publichealthcollaborative.org

Follow PHCC

LinkedIn: Public Health
Communications Collaborative

