

5 Ways to Prepare for Vaccination Communication



Clear, timely messaging and content are essential to effective vaccine campaigns in your communities. With changing and unclear federal guidance, public health communicators may experience challenges developing communications plans for the 2025–26 respiratory illness season. Use this guide to navigate uncertainty and prepare your communications this season, and plan to return to it as vaccine information evolves.

1. Define Your Why

Every year, public health communicators plan vaccination communications ahead of respiratory virus season. The 2025–26 season is different. Spend time considering the special challenges surrounding vaccine communications, and define the outcomes you hope to see in your community. Consider:

- Do we want to change perceptions or attitudes about vaccinations?
- Do we want to improve vaccination rates in low-uptake areas?
- Do we want to decrease the number of respiratory illness hospitalizations?

Outlining your goals can help ensure your communications are advancing them and help build trust with your communities.

2. Identify Your Sources

- Keep a running list of regularly updated, science-based sources to check and cite, and share this list with your team to ensure consistency across content.
- Use a variety of sources to help you be more responsive to community concerns and questions.
- Track medical associations that publish evidence-based recommendations for vaccines on an annual basis. If you cannot directly cite information from a medical association, you should stay up to date on how their guidance compares to federal guidance.

A Note about Medical Associations and State Regulations

Check your state's regulations to see if there are opportunities for flexibility to reference medical associations, not just FDA-approved or CDC-recommended vaccines. As of September 2025, many states have announced that they will follow medical associations recommendations on who should be vaccinated against certain diseases.

3. Prepare and Adapt Your Messages

Adapt ready-made and regularly updated messages about seasonal vaccines from the Public Health Communications Collaborative for your audience and goals. This season, some vaccine recommendations may be evolving or unclear. Be prepared to change your priority messages and communications channels, and inform your team and leadership when you do. Circulating community questions may include:

- Who will qualify for flu/COVID-19/RSV vaccines?
- What vaccines will be covered by insurance or offered free or low-cost?
- Where will these vaccines be available?
- Why is getting vaccinated so important this season?

DO...	DON'T...
✓ Consider medical associations/societies for updated vaccination guidance.	✗ Emphasize the differences between the association's recommendations and federal guidance.
✓ Use data about respiratory illness vaccination rates and hospitalizations in your messaging. Consider developing stories for your community using the COVID-19 Scenario Modeling Hub , the RSV Scenario Modeling Hub , and the Flu Scenario Modeling Hub .	✗ Use words like “sadly” and “unfortunately” in your messages, particularly when you do not have a clear answer to your community’s question. Instead, try fact-based statements and bridging statements .
✓ Keep records of community questions and proactively share responses to any widely-shared concerns.	✗ Dismiss community concerns, frustrations, or questions.
✓ Actively share what you know with trusted partners, like community organizations and business groups who may communicate directly with your community.	✗ Share messages and information with a single channel or partner.
✓ Be prepared to update information once it becomes clearer or needs to be corrected.	✗ Revise information without providing context and adding the date when the content was last updated.

4. Be Ready to Respond

If you do not have a clear response to a community question, consider bridging statements. Bridging statements are phrases that can help you answer questions directly and with the most important fact-based messaging. Here are some examples of bridging statements:

- This is an evolving issue, but what is clear right now is...
- I know this has been challenging, but the bottom line is...
- We don’t have all the information right now, but what we do know is...
- While we wait for more details, here’s what we can share right now...

5. Set Reminders for Key Dates and Milestones

Stay up to date on approved vaccines, or vaccines licensed for use, and vaccine recommendations by setting alerts from the FDA and CDC, and medical associations like American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology (ACOG). Note when the next Advisory Community on Immunization Practices (ACIP) meeting is scheduled.

Additional Resources

- [Building Bridging Statements](#) (PHCC)
- [Plain Language Checklist for Public Health](#) (PHCC)
- [Fall 2025 Respiratory Season Vaccine Planning Toolkits](#) (Common Health Coalition)
- [2025-26 COVID-19 Messages](#) (PHCC)
- [2025-26 Flu Messages](#) (PHCC)
- [Developing Safe and Effective Vaccines](#) (PHCC)
- [Statement on Vaccine Coverage](#) (AHIP)