Developing a Public Health Press Release

Tips and a Template for Communicating New Information

An effective public health press release does more than announce the news. It can help your audience understand what has changed, why this new information matters, and what steps they can take to stay safe and healthy.

This resource provides a list of tips to help public health communicators develop elements of an effective press release and a template to help write a first draft.

1. **Plan ahead, when possible.** While some news stories are unpredictable, certain public health updates occur on a similar schedule each year. When possible, anticipate when you may need a press release and start to gather information for a draft ahead of the breaking news.
2. **Determine your audience.** Your audience may be different for each press release. Oftentimes, press releases share information with journalists who can help amplify it to more people. Other times, your press release might be modified for your email list or posted on your social media. Defining your audience early will help you tailor your content and release strategy.
3. **Use clear, effective, and accessible communications.** Plain language and cultural competence are critical across all of your communications. Ideally, your audience will read each press release in-depth, but that might not always be realistic. Organize the content into short, skimmable paragraphs that consider their preferences for receiving information. Format content with clear headings and bullet points, when possible, and always put your bottom line up front (BLUF).
4. **Anticipate questions.** When planning your content, be sure to include information that directly addresses the tough questions your audience might ask. If there is information you don't know or that you anticipate receiving at a later time, share that in your release. You can also include a quote from an expert or a leader from your organization that addresses a question you expect to receive.
5. **Plan your channels.** Determine how you want to release your press release. Consider your priority audiences and where they gather information. Common channels include an email and a link on your website, but also consider posting a link on social media channels or sharing major news as part of a press conference. To reach journalists who will help share your information, consider paid wire services or pitching directly to media outlets.
6. **Outline a clear call to action.** Beyond using your press release to highlight a news update, include what steps you want your audience to take. Make your content actionable, not just informative.
7. **Include where to find more information.** Always include additional resources for more information and a point of contact for questions. Your press release can be a one-time broadcast of information, but it can also be the starting point for deeper engagement with a curious reader or journalist.



Press Release Template

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
(Date, Time, and Location)

Include a contact name, email address, or phone number for any questions.

Place a Main Message as your Headline at the Top
Consider a one-sentence subheading to summarize your most important message.

Release Date: Goes Here

Your opening sentence should include the most important message you want your audience to know. Continue on to outline who this update affects, when the update took place, and the scope of any changes. If you have any recommended actions you want your audience to take, prioritize this information early in your press release.

You can also use a spokesperson to help explain or reinforce the information. Their explanation can go in quotation marks and elaborate on your main message. Be sure the quote is something you are comfortable with journalist or other news outlets reprinting.

Then, move on to the details. If possible, break them down into an easy to understand bulleted list:

- Like this
- And this
- And this

Add a Subtitle that Highlights Secondary Messaging
The information in this section is relevant to the update, but less important than anything described above. This section might include more depth of research, a recap of previous updates on the topic, or background information.

Where to Find More Information
At the bottom of your press release, consider linking additional information or primary sources.

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About Our Organization
Below the additional information section, you can add boilerplate language about your organization. This is a short description about what you do and who you serve.