

CDC Influenza Awareness Campaign Media Relations Toolkit

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Created by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

About the Campaign

Each year, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) invests in a national awareness campaign to educate the general population about the importance of influenza vaccination. As a critical public health issue, it is the CDC's mandate to inform at-risk populations about the importance of vaccination and provide them with useful information about where to get vaccinated.

The campaign, launched on September 24, 2008, continues through January 2009. Throughout the fall and winter months, the CDC will be promoting this campaign nationally through print and Internet ads, magazine articles, TV and radio public service announcements, a special video featuring families who have lost or nearly lost children to the flu, radio interviews, bites and b-roll packages, special events, and collaboration with partners. While the campaign itself extends over five months, one cornerstone of the campaign is National Influenza Vaccination Week (NIVW), December 8 through December 14, 2008. NIVW is intended to raise awareness of the importance of vaccination and that vaccination is available and effective in December, January and beyond, in most years. The CDC recommends that partners use this designated week to promote vaccination to their constituents, members, and employees through their various communications channels as well as host free flu clinics that will include the public as much as possible. The week includes theme days intended to reach specific audiences and promote influenza vaccination among those groups. During NIVW, Tuesday, Dec. 9 is Children's Influenza Vaccination Day; Thursday, Dec. 11 is Senior Vaccination Day; and Friday, Dec. 12 is Health Care Worker Vaccination Day.

Using Media to Support the Campaign

To achieve the goals of this campaign, the CDC relies heavily on its network of partner organizations to promote its messages and activate communities to get vaccinated. One way which partners can help support this effort is by working with their local media to help inform the public about the serious complications of the flu and importance of vaccination. We encourage partners to reach out to local media with powerful information and "pitch" them to cover the issue in newspapers, television and radio programs, Web sites, magazines, and other outlets.

This toolkit is intended to help CDC partners expand and enhance their abilities to educate their communities on this issue through media outreach. Designed as a resource for media novices and experts alike, this toolkit offers a variety of tools, proven resources, models, and templates to help you reach out to your local media.

Outlined within this document are the five critical steps to help you develop a media strategy and prepare for the "pitch."

Step 1: Developing Key Messages

Step 2: Developing Press Materials

Step 3: Preparing for Outreach

Step 4: Training your Spokespeople

Step 5: Pitching the Media

1 Developing Key Messages

Before reaching out to the media, it is important to articulate who your audiences are and what you want them to know or do. In every awareness campaign key messages are developed in the initial stages to ensure consistency and accuracy in communications throughout campaign activities.

Each year, the CDC develops key messages for its annual Influenza Vaccination Awareness Campaign. To ensure consistency across the United States, we encourage CDC partners to use the CDC's key messages to inform their materials (i.e., press releases, public service announcements, speeches, articles, locally produced PSAs, interviews with reporters, etc.).

Below is a sample of key messages from the CDC. A full list of key messages by target audience and/or topic can be found in Appendix A.

Sample CDC Key Messages

Key messages for the General Public

- Each year in the U.S., an average of 36,000 people die, and more than 200,000 are hospitalized from serious flu-related complications.
- Some people, such as older people, young children, pregnant women, and people with certain health conditions, are at higher risk for serious flu complications.
- The time to get a flu vaccine starts in September and continues into winter through January or later.
- Vaccination is the single best way to protect yourself and the people you love from influenza.

Key messages for Healthcare Providers

- All healthcare professionals, as well as those in training for healthcare professions, should be vaccinated annually against influenza.
- The annual supply of influenza vaccine and the timing of its distribution cannot be guaranteed in any year. It is expected that vaccine will become available beginning in September and continue to arrive on a rolling basis through December 2008. A record amount of vaccine is expected to be distributed during the 2008-2009 season.
- Providers should plan accordingly and have plans to continue vaccinating throughout the season as vaccine is distributed. Providers should routinely offer influenza vaccine throughout the influenza season, even after influenza activity has been documented in the community.
- To avoid missed opportunities for vaccination, providers should offer vaccination during routine healthcare visits or during hospitalizations whenever vaccine is available.

For more information on the CDC's key messages, please see Appendix A.