

# Raising Awareness of Immunization Events

If there is one thing an immunization event needs most, it's people who want to be vaccinated! Raising awareness about your event is one of the keys to success.

One of the most important questions to consider is: who are you trying to reach? Think about where your target immunization event participants are most likely to see your promotional efforts and what message is most likely to attract them to the event. If you are partnering with other organizations in your community for your immunization event, be sure to enlist their help in spreading the word.

The purpose of this guide is to introduce you to a few simple options for promoting your immunization event. However, these are far from the only approaches; don't let these examples limit your thinking! As a general rule, plan to begin working on promotion approximately 3 months before an immunization event.

## Raising Awareness of Immunization Events

### Posters, Flyers, and Pamphlets

Printed posters, flyers, and pamphlets can serve as the foundation of a cost-effective promotion strategy. Flyers typically are a single, one-sided page with key details about the event. Pamphlets may have multiple pages stapled together, or they may be printed on both sides and folded; they contain more information than flyers.

Posters and flyers should be created to communicate the what, why, where, and when (including start and end times) of the immunization event. Because they are easy and inexpensive to produce, posters and flyers can be used early on to get the word out about your event. Consider the need to translate these materials into other languages for the target population.

If possible, create or identify a logo or graphic for the event and incorporate it into the design of the posters and flyers. The logo or graphic could be used for all event promotional materials, signage on the day of the event, special shirts for event workers, etc. to build recognition and awareness.

Event pamphlets could be created to communicate event details as well as to:

- Explain why vaccination is a good idea.
- Identify who should and should not get vaccinated.
- Address any myths about vaccinations (e.g., a flu shot can give you the flu) and provide information about safety.

However, before you create your own pamphlet, check to see what materials are available from the government and other credible public sources. For example, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provides numerous free resources related to seasonal flu, targeted to different audiences and available in multiple languages.<sup>1</sup>



**CDC Seasonal Influenza Free Resources**

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Plan to display and distribute printed posters, flyers, and pamphlets in your practice site as well as in and around the event venue. Local churches, schools, libraries, businesses, and public health departments are examples of other entities that could be approached about displaying event materials. Be sure to think about:

- How will you distribute the posters, flyers, and pamphlets?
- Who will distribute them?

### Working With News Media

For some immunization events—especially smaller events targeted to specific community groups—local promotion through posters, flyers, and pamphlets may be sufficient. For larger events aimed at a broad audience, you may need to enlist local newspapers, radio stations, and television stations as promotional partners.

#### Basic Media Tools

A number of tools can be used to communicate potentially newsworthy events to the news media.

A *pitch letter* is used to introduce yourself to a reporter, editor, or producer; suggest story ideas; or obtain coverage for special events and news conferences.

A *press release*—also known as a news release or media release—is a brief (no more than 400 to 500 words) document in a specific format that provides details about an upcoming event or key points about an issue of public interest. Press releases include the who, what, when, why, and how of the event or issue.

A *media advisory* (or media alert) is used to generate media interest in attending a press conference or event. In contrast with press releases, media advisories do not provide all of the details about the event—only enough information to serve as a “hook” to entice the reporter.

The National Influenza Vaccination Disparities Partnership (NIVDP) Resource Kit—an online resource from the CDC and NIVDP—includes a section titled “Use Media to Promote Flu Vaccination” with templates for media advisories and press releases.<sup>2</sup> (The Resource Kit provides a number of useful tips for working with media.)



**National Influenza Vaccination Disparities Partnership Resource Kit**

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#### Getting Noticed

Reporters are always looking for good stories! But it’s important to target the *right* reporters (or editors or producers) if you want your event to be considered. At least 2 months before the immunization event, contact local newspapers, radio stations, and television stations and ask who is responsible for covering health-related community events. Create a list with the names, titles, telephone numbers, fax numbers, and email addresses of these individuals. You may be able to locate this information on the company websites; some facilitate contacting reporters directly.

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Identify who will be authorized to speak to the media and ensure that they have the appropriate talking points and messages you would like conveyed.

Send a pitch letter to your contacts 6 to 8 weeks before the immunization event, requesting to be interviewed for a story. Follow up with a telephone call if you do not get a response. If you are interviewed, be sure to invite the reporter to attend the event as well.

Approximately 3 to 4 weeks before the immunization event, draft a press release describing the event and send it to your media contacts. If the local newspapers, radio stations, or television stations have “community calendar” features, submit the event information to that section as well.

At least 1 to 3 days before the immunization event, send a media advisory to your contacts or call to invite them to your event. Be sure to have someone assigned to serve as the media contact on event day.

After any interviews, ask the reporter when the piece will be released.

After the immunization event, consider sending a photo and follow-up news release detailing your success.

After the event, collect all media coverage obtained and share with the event team and supporters as part of your post-event “thank you”.

## Public Service Announcements

Public service announcements are brief messages that provide helpful information to the public, solicit support for a particular cause, or offer an organization’s free services. Unlike paid advertising, public service announcements are carried free of charge by publications and broadcast media (radio, television) stations in an effort to educate audiences and encourage people to take a very specific action.

It is increasingly easy to find prerecorded public service announcements on a variety of immunization-related topics. For example, the CDC offers a complete series of video and radio public service announcements on flu prevention and the flu season on its website; some of the files are available in Spanish.<sup>3</sup> Although it is fine to use these resources to help promote your immunization event, you also could use them as templates for creating your own public service announcements.



**CDC Seasonal Influenza Resource  
Center Public Service Announcements**

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## Raising Awareness of Immunization Events

### Employing Social Media

More and more, social media platforms enable you to be your *own* reporter. If you think your target immunization event participants are likely to use Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or other platforms, don't neglect spreading your message on these social media channels.

One simple approach is to create an Event on Facebook. For example, the El Rio Community Health Center in Tucson, Arizona, took this approach to promote a free Back-to-School Immunization Event. The Facebook Help Center provides extensive step-by-step instructions in a section titled "Create and Manage an Event."

**El Rio Community Health Center Back-to-School Immunization Event Facebook Page**

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Twitter is particularly suited to sending out reminders about your event in the weeks and days running up to it. You could alternate specific information about your event with more general information about the importance of immunization.

As with public service announcements, it is increasingly easy to find sample Tweets and Facebook posts on a variety of immunization-related topics. For example, the CDC provides a number of "cut and paste" flu vaccination messages formatted for Twitter and Facebook.<sup>4</sup> The National Foundation for Infectious Diseases offers sample Twitter and Facebook posts related to meningococcal disease.<sup>5</sup> The National Immunization Awareness Month Communication Toolkit includes a number of more general sample messages for Twitter and Facebook, along with many helpful web links and resources.<sup>6</sup>



**CDC Seasonal Influenza Resource Center Sample Social Media Content**

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**National Foundation for Infectious Diseases Meningococcal Disease College Toolkit Sample Social Media Posts**

[Learn More](#) →

**National Immunization Awareness Month Communication Toolkit**

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