

Community Testimonials for Health Messaging

The Challenge

The availability of accurate COVID-19 information that is culturally- and linguistically-relevant is essential to keeping communities safe. Messages change rapidly and some health departments may face challenges with developing health messaging that reaches all communities, particularly refugees, immigrants, and migrants (RIM).

Creating Testimonials

Testimonials are successful strategies that portray real stories from community members to communicate trusted information and make positive behavior changes. Partnerships between health departments, community-based organizations (CBOs), and local leaders can identify members and develop testimonials to reach community groups. Testimonials can be disseminated as print, audio, or video.

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Tips for Developing a Testimonial

- Decide which topic(s) you want to develop and the order in which to disseminate them
- Carefully select your audience: Young people? Adults? Men? Women? High school students? Church parishioners?
- Identify the venue you want to use to disseminate the stories (e.g., community outreach, church bulletin, community newspaper, social media, local newspaper)
- Identify community members to be interviewed for the testimonials. Consider which community members would be the most influential. Ask for consent, and make sure the individual you interview signs a release form.
- Select a day to launch your program
- Create one testimonial at a time

- Write clear, concise stories to feature in the testimonial
- Use motivating and straightforward images
- Create an easy to read/see appealing layout
- Test your testimonial with a small group of your target population to determine whether the testimonial sounds and feels real
- Provide additional links from reputable sources of information next to the stories
- Be creative!
- If you created a story without a direct interview, you could say: "Inspired by a real community story"

Successful Implementation in Green Bay, Wisconsin

The Green Bay (WI) Health Department met with community leaders and stakeholders to discuss barriers and opportunities for effective COVID-19 messaging in RIM communities. Collectively, they developed a plan to reach out to the community about COVID-19. The testimonials relied on volunteer's local opinion leaders who served as "peer networkers" by contacting friends, relatives, co-workers, and neighbors to share and model information. Videos contained recognizable faces from the community to help develop trust in their messaging.

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