

Community Health Literature/Promotion Materials

OVERVIEW

Professionals working in community health focus on the health needs of people who live in or who are otherwise members of a particular community of people. For example, a community develops health outreach programs, conducts health studies, or creates health educational literature that addresses a specific health problem among members of a particular subset of people in the urban setting.

This nurse, for example, may detect a sharp rise in diabetes among members of a particular district in the urban setting or among people from a particular social class and then develop a plan to learn more about the problem and work toward a solution that may be as simple as brief informative posters displayed in key places within the community or as complex as a formal study followed by a formal findings report including an action plan.

Other possible communication products might include health education brochures or pamphlets, web-based resources, slide-based presentations, or even multi-media presentations. The form and genre of the communication will depend on several factors, including the nature of the identified health problem, the target audience, and the availability of funding to cover development and distribution costs.

CONTENT

The content for community health literature varies widely from one situation to another. For example, a simple poster advertising a community health promotion class will have different content than would a formal study report containing a full-fledged health improvement action plan. Because there is such a variety of genres that community health practitioners have at their disposal, they must begin any project by focusing on the basic rhetorical elements of the situation. Here are some basic questions to ask at the outset of a project to help determine what kind of document to create for a given purpose and a given audience:

PURPOSE

- What health problem do I need to address?
- What would I like to accomplish with this project overall?
- What role does this particular document play in the overall project?

On Audience

While audience is always an important factor in the creation of any written communication, it's especially important for community health documents. Thus, it's absolutely essential that you develop a deep and careful understanding of the community you intend to serve with the document you create. In fact, it may be that the first document you create is a report outlining the findings of your study of the health and wellness details of a particular community. Based upon what you learn about your community from that study, you could then proceed to develop subsequent documents aimed directly at the community to educate them about their health needs.

On Language and Formatting

It's essential that you write in a style that would be easily understood among members of the community you intend to serve with the document. Avoid medical jargon and use the active voice whenever possible. Additionally, if appropriate for the type of document you plan to create, break up the content into small paragraphs and use appropriate headings to make the document easy to scan. Consider the abilities of your audience as well. For example, if you plan to address a community of people who have a hard time seeing, you may need to use larger fonts. If you plan to address a community of people who are not highly educated, you may need to adjust your style and word choice to meet your audience at a level of reading that they are comfortable with. Again, this all comes back to having a careful understanding of your audience and their specific needs.

Additional OWL Resources

- Paragraphing
- Tense
- Active Voice

The three questions above should help you zero in a precise sense of purpose for the document you are about to create. You need to specify what you want to happen as a consequence of your chosen audience (see below) reading the document you produce. Commencing your document with a clear sense of its purpose is essential.

Audience

- Who is my target audience?
- What are the specific needs of my audience?

Along with a clear sense of purpose, you must also have precise understanding of who your target audience will be for the document. As a community health professional, you should have a deep understanding of the community members you serve, including a clear understanding of their particular health problems, their abilities to cope with their health problems, their ability to effectively use the information you develop for them, and their willingness to work with you to solve their health problems. All of these factors and many more should inform the decisions you make when deciding what kind of document you need to create and how best to convey information within that type of document.

Context

- How much time can I devote to this project?
- How much of a budget do I have for this project?
- What other professional priorities do I have to deal with right now?

It's also essential to understand the context surrounding your creation of the document. How much time and expense can you afford to devote to this project? What will the scope of work be given the resources you have available to work on the project? Decisions you make about the purpose of your document, the type of document, and the distribution of the document should be tempered by your knowledge of available financial, time, and personnel resources you'll need to complete the project.

Community Health Literature: Poster Example

Handwashing: A Family Activity Keeping Kids & Adults Healthy



Handwashing is an easy, inexpensive, and effective way to prevent the spread of germs and keep people healthy.

For kids, washing hands can be a fun and entertaining activity. It is simple enough for even very young children to understand. Handwashing gives children and adults a chance to take an active role in their own health. Once kids learn how to properly wash their hands, they can—and often do—show their parents and siblings and encourage them to wash hands, too.

Parents can help keep their families healthy by:

- Teaching them good handwashing technique
- Reminding their kids to wash their hands
- Washing their own hands with their kids



Improving Health

- Handwashing education in the community:
 - » Reduces the number of people who get sick with diarrhea by 31%
 - » Reduces diarrheal illness in people with weakened immune systems by 58%
 - » Reduces respiratory illnesses, like colds, in the general population by 21%

Saving Time and Money

- Handwashing is one of the best ways to avoid getting sick and spreading illness to others.
- Reducing illness increases productivity due to:
 - » Less time spent at the doctor's office
 - » More time spent at work or school



Helping Families Thrive

Children who have been taught handwashing at school bring that knowledge home to parents and siblings. This can help family members get sick less often and miss less work and school.

Despite widespread knowledge of the importance of handwashing, there is still room for improvement. A recent study showed that only 31% of men and 65% of women washed their hands after using a public restroom.

For more details, visit www.cdc.gov/handwashing.



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