

# Social Media Guidelines and Best Practices

## You Tube and Other Online Video

This document has been designed to assist Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) employees and contractors in the process of preparing videos for uploading to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) YouTube channel. Please note that all CDC videos should be placed on CDC's official YouTube channel and should not be placed on individual accounts. The recommendations in this document are primarily for YouTube and may differ for other Web sites.

For guidance on creation of videos for use on external video sites like MSN, Google, AOL, Yahoo or another video sharing site, please contact [socialmedia@cdc.gov](mailto:socialmedia@cdc.gov) before you post. Video on other sites such as this still must comply with Section 508 and other federal requirements. For assistance with video production and information to be placed on CDC-TV, an online video delivery service available through CDC.gov, contact the Division of Communication Services (DCS).

### Background

Online video sharing sites, such as YouTube, MSN, Google, AOL and Yahoo are emerging as popular and powerful media for exchanging information. Using these sites, anyone with Internet access can upload, share, view and comment on video footage. Sometimes the process of sharing videos among individuals and groups is called "viral video sharing."

YouTube, which launched in 2005, has emerged as one of the Internet's most popular websites. According to a YouTube fact sheet, more than 20 hours of video files are uploaded to the site every minute and 50 percent of users view videos online weekly or more often ([http://www.youtube.com/t/fact\\_sheet](http://www.youtube.com/t/fact_sheet)). According to comScore and reported in the New York Times, "82 million people in the United States watched 4.1 billion clips there in April 2008", and "some experts say virtually every Internet user has visited YouTube" (<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/04/technology/04youtube.html>). The power of YouTube to disseminate tailored health education and health communication messages can not be underestimated. With people watching over 100 million clips a day on YouTube alone, online video sources can be a powerful mechanism to assist CDC programs in distributing current and accurate science and health messages.

All CDC videos must be placed on CDC's official YouTube channel (<http://www.youtube.com/CDCStreamingHealth/>), and not solely be placed on individual accounts.

For more information on the data supporting the use of this medium, please view the CDC Online Video Data Brief: <http://www.cdc.gov/healthmarketing/ehm/databriefs/onlinevideo.pdf>

### Communications Strategy

Online video and other social media are intended to be part of a larger integrated health communications program or project developed under the leadership of the Associate Director of Communication Science (ADCS) in the Health Communication Science Office (HCSO) of CDC's National Centers. HCSOs are responsible for the coordination and guidance of health marketing

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and communication activities of their respective centers which includes communications science clearance, strategic planning, and research and evaluation.

## Clearance and Approval

**Content:** All video content and images must be cleared through the clearance channels determined by your center's HCSO office and may only be posted to CDC's official YouTube channel (see process below). Embedded YouTube videos can be cleared and placed on the CDC Facebook page, blogs, or partner sites, as discussed below in the promotion section.

**YouTube Accounts:** Per the GSA Terms of Service agreement with YouTube, **CDC as an agency is only permitted one official account.** This account is maintained by the Electronic Media Branch (EMB) within the Office of the Associate Director of Communication. No new YouTube accounts can be created.

## Consultation

The Electronic Media Branch (EMB) is able to provide assistance and consultation on the planning and development of social media tools. Please refer to process section below for additional information, or you can contact [socialmedia@cdc.gov](mailto:socialmedia@cdc.gov).

## Best Practices and Recommendations

When developing videos specifically for dissemination on YouTube, consider the following:

1. Clearly Define Your Objectives:  
It is important to have clearly defined objectives before beginning to develop your video. Do you want to highlight content, spark action, or encourage awareness of an issue? Clarify the objectives first and determine if a video on YouTube or other video-sharing site is the ideal channel for your message. A common objective for online video is the viral sharing through peer-to-peer networks.
2. Know Your Target Audience(s)  
As with any communications activity, it is important to define your intended target audience(s) in order to develop and communicate messages and graphics that resonate with your audience and prompt them to take action. Tailoring messages and video content to match the desired target audience will aid the marketing and dissemination process.
3. Content:
  - a. All CDC.gov videos ready for posting online should not only contain cleared content, but should be engaging, visually pleasing, and presented at a level appropriate for the target audience. Use of jargon, technical information, or detailed charts and graphs should be avoided. Simple, easy-to-follow "stories" work best, with a single message or call to action.

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- b. Online video should feature simple, easy-to-understand content that has the potential to go “viral,” a term used to describe the voluntary sharing or embedding of information by users on their own Web sites, blogs and social networking profiles.
  - c. Online videos should be short and engaging. EMB recommends that most CDC videos should be three minutes or shorter.
  - d. Include a specific URL at the end of the video to guide the user to additional information on the topic. In most cases, this should be a CDC URL.
  - e. All videos will be branded with the CDC.gov, CDC and HHS logos. Co-branding and the use of additional logos may also be incorporated. Please refer to <http://brandidentitystandards.cdc.gov/> for more information about co-branding.
  - f. While you can create an online video for a specific event, videos posted to YouTube should generally be created for campaigns or to highlight content with a longer shelf life.
4. **Promotion:** Encourage viral spread of online videos is strongly recommended. Promotional tips include the following:
- Embed the YouTube URL in your CDC homepage and secondary features.
  - Embed the video, including a thumbnail and link on high-profile topic-specific pages, campaign materials or blogs.
  - Send content-specific GovDelivery email updates.
  - Send emails with the URL link to partners, grantees and friends.
  - Cross-post on official CDC MySpace, CDC Facebook and other social networking profile pages.
  - EMB can also work with you to notify the CDC eHealth Twitter followers of your video. There may be other relevant Twitter profiles to promote your video on as well.

If the video is placed on the official CDC YouTube channel, EMB will also promote to channel subscribers. Please contact [socialmedia@cdc.gov](mailto:socialmedia@cdc.gov) with any additional questions about the promotion of online video.

- 5, **Evaluation:** Social media activities should be evaluated and may include reviewing metrics, identifying lessons learned, and determining whether the efforts successfully met project goals. Basic metrics include monitoring the number of times each video has been viewed, reviewing viewer posted comments and referral links. YouTube Insights is an analytics and reporting product that provides additional metrics about uploaded videos. To request this information, contact EMB at [socialmedia@cdc.gov](mailto:socialmedia@cdc.gov). Metrics available include video views over time and by geographic region, viewer demographics, search terms utilized, viral shared activity, and external link posting.

## Process – Preparing video for posting to YouTube

1. Develop and clear video for online posting through the pre-determined HCSO channels, keeping in mind the requirements and “best practices” described in this document.

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2. Create video information required for posting on YouTube. Refer to Video Information in the Appendix of this document for complete details.
3. Coordinate the video captioning process to meet Section 508 compliance. Refer to [http://intranet.cdc.gov/cdcweb/usability/508/docs/CDC\\_Video\\_Captioning\\_Final.doc](http://intranet.cdc.gov/cdcweb/usability/508/docs/CDC_Video_Captioning_Final.doc)  
This page is only accessible on the CDC network.
4. Send EMB ([socialmedia@cdc.gov](mailto:socialmedia@cdc.gov) ) your cleared captioned video file and required posting information described in the Appendix.
5. Promote the video through the activities recommended earlier in this document.
6. Conduct Evaluation.

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## Appendix

### Technical and Other Requirements

#### 1. File Type

YouTube accepts video files in the .WMV, .AVI, .FLV, .MOV,MPG and .MP4 file formats. File size cannot exceed 1 GB.

#### 2. Video Information. The following needs to be identified prior to posting:

- **Title** – A descriptive heading describing the content of the video that allows users to understand the purpose and content. (For example, *Break the Silence: Stop the Violence.*)
- **Description** – A brief explanation of the video. For promotion purposes, develop a description that is accurate and interesting and allows potential viewers to distinguish from other videos. Example: “It may shock you to know that one of every eleven teens reports being hit or physically hurt by a boyfriend or girlfriend in the past 12 months. Why is that and how can we change it?” In *Break the Silence: Stop the Violence*, parents talk with teens about developing healthy, respectful relationships before they start dating.
- **Tags** – Keywords used by viewers to easily locate your video. Example: A cooking video may be tagged “Food”, “Nutrition,” and “Healthy Eating.” Multiple tags can be used and are separated by spaces. Tags are also used by search engines, such as Google, to determine the search results ranking. Videos placed on the CDC YouTube channel will automatically list the following tags: CDCStreamingHealth; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and eHealthCDC.
- **Category** – The group classification of videos by common characteristics. The full list of YouTube video categories can be found in the Example section at the end of the Appendix.
- **Thumbnail picture** – The picture used to identify the video on YouTube and within search results. The image can either be an uploaded file or chosen at random from the video footage. It is recommended that you use a representative image which includes the title. File should be jpg format at a resolution of 640x840.
- **Map Location** – The location for CDC videos placed on You Tube is set at listed as Atlanta, Georgia. If another location is needed, please provide the location.
- **Playlists** – A playlist is a grouping of related videos based on topical categories. Current playlists include Novel H1N1 Influenza, HIV AIDs and STDs, Immunizations, Cancer, Emergency Preparedness and Response, PSAs and CDC\_TV. New playlists may be created. Contact [socialmedia@cdc.gov](mailto:socialmedia@cdc.gov) for specific details.

#### 3. 508 Compliance and Captions

All CDC YouTube videos must be captioned in order to meet 508 compliance to make information accessible to persons with disabilities. For complete details on technical requirements, Frequently Asked Questions and recommended vendors, refer to [http://intranet.cdc.gov/cdcweb/usability/508/docs/CDC\\_Video\\_Captioning\\_Final.doc](http://intranet.cdc.gov/cdcweb/usability/508/docs/CDC_Video_Captioning_Final.doc)  
This page is only accessible on the CDC network.

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## Examples

The CDC YouTube Channel (<http://www.youtube.com/CDCStreamingHealth>)



The following are examples of additional viral health-related videos with thought provoking ideas:

- [Symptoms of H1N1 \(Swine Flu\)](#) by CDC
- [Escalator Temporarily Stairs](#), by Becel
- [Awareness Test](#) by Transport for London.

Available Categories for YouTube Videos:

