

Reaching People with Disabilities through Healthy Communities

Phase six- Communication and Dissemination

Disability Inclusive Communication

[Karma Harris] So, from the perspective of someone like me who doesn't have a background in communication, I really find that important and I want to spend a few minutes thinking about a few activities that we need to make sure we're doing in order to be inclusive with our healthy community messaging.

So, in other words, we talked about the messaging, but now I want to learn about how we can make these messages that we're implementing and these activities inclusive to persons with disabilities. And, so, in thinking along that lens if you both were to give us some must-do advice when it comes to communicating messages inclusively, whether that's various communication activities or social media social marketing, what would that must-do advice be to make sure that inclusivity is considered? Maggie, I am going to turn to you first.

[Maggie Ferguson] For me personally, I think the best advice that we give you is making sure that you're considering people with disabilities when you're developing your messaging campaign. So a way to do that would be making sure that you involve people who experience disability in the activities, or including somebody that represents people with disabilities, whether it's a disability expert or somebody from a disability serving organization, and just getting those folks involved in the development of the messages, determining how you're going to be implementing or pushing those out, and then evaluating the activities around communication and dissemination.

Another suggestion that I might provide is to make sure that you're using a variety of accessible methods and formats when you're communicating and disseminating information. So, some thoughts around that could be thinking about how the platform that you're using. Are you using print, or digital? Are you using social media, or videos? Have you used large print or easy-to-read fonts, including materials that are using Braille or pictograms? And then also, how are you disseminating information? Is it by using email, or snail mail for some of your marketing? So, using a variety of methods will help you reach a wide variety of groups of people, as well as people with disabilities and they should be included in your target audience.

[Karma Harris] That's great advice. I think all of us can benefit from that advice, Maggie, so thank you. Allison, in thinking about what we just heard from Maggie, do you have any other advice to build on with regard to inclusiveness?

[Allison Tubbs] Absolutely. So, we have to make sure that we are building accessibility into the messages that we're providing, and one way to do that is making sure that we are including descriptions when we're posting pictures for individuals who may be blind, or visually impaired. So the

different social media platforms of Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram that we've talked about in this podcast, they all have what's called an alternative text, or alt text feature that you can use, built within the platform to help you describe the photos that you're sharing and posting.

So, another tip is that when you're sharing and using videos, you always want to make sure that you're including closed captioning. And then another best practice is to consider adding an audio description for those who may be blind. Another thing is I would advise to avoid using a lot of acronyms, or jargon, in your post and videos and making sure that you're effectively communicating in layperson terminology, that's easy to understand.

So finally, I would say this is probably the most important advice, is making sure that we are successfully including and involving people with disabilities, is that we have to show inclusion in our messages and we can do this by incorporating inclusive language in our posts, so things, such as person first terminology, or identity first language, provide an inclusive landscape for imagery.

Another way is making sure that you are actually using images of people with disability in your communications material and posts, and that those images represent a wide range of disability type and disability conditions. So those are just some simple ways of letting your audience know that the disability community is welcomed and included in your work and is visible in your communication strategy.