



AMERICAN COLLEGE HEALTH ASSOCIATION
Campus COVID-19 Vaccination and Mitigation Initiative

Communication Plan

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Your Guide to Creating Your Own COVID-19 and Flu Materials

You can help your campus community stay healthy by educating students about COVID-19 and flu risk reduction. **Risk reduction** means taking steps to reduce the chances of people getting sick or hurt. For example, students can lower their risk of getting the flu and spreading it to others by getting a flu vaccine and staying home when they're sick.

One way to reach students is to **create educational materials**. Educational materials can include anything from social media posts to campus newspaper articles, posters, and more. This guide has tips to help you create your own materials.



This communication plan is part of the American College Health Association's (ACHA) [Student Ambassador Toolkit](#). The toolkit includes resources about health and media literacy, COVID-19 and flu risk reduction, and more. You can use the toolkit to start a student ambassador program on campus, or just use the materials provided to educate your campus community.

This plan was updated in August 2023. For the latest guidance on protecting yourself and others from COVID-19 and the flu, check out these resources from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

- [COVID-19](#)
- [The flu](#)

Step 1:

Know your audience

The first step is to decide **who** you want to develop educational materials for. You can choose to make your materials available to all students or partner with campus organizations to create educational materials that meet their needs.

Here are a few examples:

- Fraternities and sororities
- Cultural or religious organizations
- International student organizations
- Transfer or first-year student organizations
- Other organizations or clubs based on common interests
- Athletic teams
- Residence halls



Step 2:

Choose topics to focus on

Next, it's time to decide what topics you want to focus on in your materials.

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

Think about the people who are going to see to your materials. What do they want to know about COVID-19 and the flu? For example, maybe students have questions about vaccines or what to do when they're feeling sick.

If you're not sure what your audience wants to know, ask them! You can get input from other students by:



Posting a question or poll on your university's social media accounts



Asking student organizations to post on their social media accounts — or talk to members at their next meeting

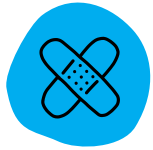


Talking to friends and acquaintances on campus

If you have several questions you'd like to ask, consider **creating a survey**. It's easy to make one using an online tool like SurveyMonkey. You can post a link to your survey on social media or ask campus organizations, academic departments, or professors to spread the word.

CHOOSE TOPICS THAT MEET STUDENTS' NEEDS

Then, consider how you can answer your audience's questions about COVID-19 and the flu. Here are a few example topics to consider:



COVID-19 and flu vaccines: Explain why it's important for students to stay up to date on vaccines and where to get vaccinated. Refer students to credible resources like [We Can Do This](#) or [Vaccinate Your Family](#) to learn more about vaccines.



How to make health care decisions: Provide tips to help students make their own health care decisions, like when to go to the doctor or where to go for emergency health care.



Taking care of yourself and others: Offer strategies to help students care for their mental health and their community.



Campus health guidelines: If your campus has health guidelines in place, explain the guidelines and how they help keep students safe.



Supporting students at risk of getting very sick. Discuss ways to support friends who are at risk of getting very sick from COVID-19 or the flu (e.g., students with disabilities or chronic health conditions).

You can choose to address one or more of these topics in your materials.

Step 3: Choose the right format

Once you've chosen topics to focus on, you'll need to choose a format for your educational materials. How will you share your message?

SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

Knowledge about COVID-19 and the flu is constantly evolving, and social media is the fastest way to share up-to-date information. There are many different ways to spread the word on social media, including:

- Text-only posts on Facebook and X (formerly Twitter)
- Graphics or GIFs to share on Facebook, X, and Instagram
- TikTok videos
- Instagram stories and reels

OTHER DIGITAL MATERIALS

Get creative with other types of digital communication, like:

- Posts or articles on campus media sites
- Ads on campus radio stations
- Announcements or videos to play during athletic events
- Digital signs for TV screens or campus shuttles



PRINT MATERIALS

Print materials may seem old school, but they're a great way to make your message stand out. Consider **creating posters or flyers** to draw students' attention in common areas like the student union or cafeteria. Or write an **article or ad for your campus newspaper**.

Have a link you'd like to share? Consider including **QR codes** in your materials. When students scan the code with their smartphone, they'll instantly land on your website.

GIVEAWAY ITEMS

Giving away **small freebies** can help students remember to follow campus health guidelines. Giveaway items could include hand sanitizer, tissues, or thermometers with your campus name or logo.



Step 4: Create your materials

Now that you've learned about your audience and decided on a format, the next step is to create your educational materials.

CHOOSE TRUSTWORTHY SOURCES

When you're communicating about COVID-19 and the flu, it's important to make sure you're sharing information from sources you can trust.

- Learn the basics about [COVID-19](#) and [the flu](#) from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).
- Learn more about vaccines for preventable illnesses like COVID-19 and the flu from [Vaccinate Your Family](#).
- Educate students about COVID-19 vaccines with resources from the [We Can Do This campaign](#).
- Check your state and county health department webpages for information about COVID-19 and the flu risk (like how many people are getting sick) in your area.



CHECK OUT MORE STUDENT AMBASSADOR RESOURCES FROM ACHA

Find inspiration for your materials in these helpful guides:

- **[Health and Media Literacy](#):** Learn how to identify trustworthy health resources and teach students to do the same.
- **[Building Trust](#):** Find out why building trust is so important for student ambassadors — and how to build trust with the students you want to reach.
- **[Storytelling for Health Communication](#):** Learn how to use powerful personal stories to educate students about health topics.

INCLUDE PEOPLE WHO ARE AT RISK OF GETTING VERY SICK

People are more likely to get very sick from COVID-19 or the flu if they:

- Have disabilities or chronic health conditions
- Are going through cancer treatment or taking medicine that affects their immune system
- Are pregnant
- Are age 65 or older

Chances are many people in your campus community fall into those categories — so it's important to include them in your COVID-19 or flu communication. For example, if you're communicating about changes to campus health guidelines, you can acknowledge that some people may still need to wear masks and take other steps to protect their health.

If your campus has a disability organization, a disability services office, or a diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) office, ask for their advice about how to make your communication materials inclusive. They may have some guidance to share, or they may be able to put you in touch with students who would be happy to share their opinion.



WRITING ABOUT DISABILITY

As people learn more about any topic, it's normal for language to grow and change. For example, when's the last time you saw a news article about "the novel coronavirus"? That phrase was common when the pandemic began, but now we all call it "COVID-19." The same goes for **disabilities and chronic health conditions**. The way we talk about disability is evolving as we learn more and social attitudes change. It's helpful to keep this context in mind when you're communicating about COVID-19 and the flu and people who are at risk of getting very sick.

Person-first language is often the go-to approach — think "people with disabilities." But over the past few years, more people have started using **identity-first language**, like "disabled people." And some disability communities have strong preferences. For example, many Deaf and autistic people prefer identity-first language.

As the way people think and talk about disability evolves, terms that were once accepted may become outdated and offensive. A common example is the "R-word," which is now considered a slur. But sometimes language choices aren't so clear-cut. For example, some disability advocates have criticized euphemisms like "special needs," which are still widely used.



Disability and identity are deeply personal, and people in your campus community may not agree about the most respectful words to use. When you can, it's best to **ask people with lived experience** — people who actually have disabilities and chronic health conditions — and use the language they prefer. Here are a few places to start:

- Check with your **campus disability organization**, disability services office, or diversity, equity, and inclusion office.
- If you're writing about a specific disability, you can also look for **resources created by and for people who have that disability**. For example, if you're creating materials for Deaf students, you could [visit the National Association of the Deaf website](#) to learn more.
- For **more guidance on writing about disability**, [check out this helpful page](#) from Syracuse University's Disability Cultural Center and [this style guide](#) from the National Center on Disability and Journalism.



CREATING SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT

Learn how to create engaging social media content with these resources from ACHA and Youth Marketing Connection (YMC), a marketing agency focused on reaching Gen Z and Millennial audiences:

- [Establishing a social media presence](#)
- [Social media campaigns 101](#)
- [Paid social media campaigns](#)
- [Social media best practices](#)



NEED SOCIAL MEDIA INSPIRATION?

Check out these health and wellness Instagram accounts from campuses across the country:

- [Columbia](#)
- [Salt Lake Community College](#)
- [New York University](#)
- [Auburn University](#)
- [Kent State University](#)
- [University of California, Davis](#)
- [Johns Hopkins University](#)

[Watch ACHA's interview with Nick Moran](#), director of audience development at Johns Hopkins.



STAY SAFE AND MANAGE CONFLICT ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media conversations about health topics can get heated. If you manage campus social media accounts, try these steps to turn down the temperature:

- Enforce your campus social media moderation or comment policy
- If your campus policy allows, use the moderation tools available on each social media platform (e.g., hiding comments or banning users)
- Share accurate information from trusted resources (like the examples on [page 9](#))
- Ask students or staff who work on campus social media accounts to post and upvote positive comments
- Report misinformation or false reviews to the social media platforms
- Report any threats to campus police or local law enforcement



DESIGN EYE-CATCHING MATERIALS

Once you've decided what you want to say and written your content, it's time to add some design elements. Not a graphic design major? No problem! Try these easy tips to make your materials visually appealing and easy to read:

- **Put the most important information first.** That way, if people don't read the whole thing, they'll still get the main idea.
- **Use visual cues to highlight key ideas.** Try a bigger font size, a different text color, or a callout box.
- **Leave room for white space.** White space is where there isn't any text or pictures, and it can make your material less overwhelming.
- **Use bulleted or numbered lists.** Lists are easier to read than blocks of text, and they help people remember key details.
- **Add some icons, photos, or illustrations.** Make sure your images are related to the topic at hand.
- **Try sans serif fonts.** Sans serif literally means fonts that don't have "feet," like Verdana or Calibri. These fonts are easier to read, especially online.
- **Make sure your text isn't too small.** Aim for 16 pixels (px) or larger for the web and 12 points (pts) for the body of a print document.



Step 5:

Get feedback from other students

So you've got a first draft ready. Now it's time to get feedback from other students. By sharing your materials with others, you can get suggestions to improve your materials and make sure they meet your audience's needs.

HOST A FOCUS GROUP

A focus group is a meeting where several people share their thoughts on a specific topic or material. You can host your own focus group by inviting 5 to 10 students to review your materials and give feedback. If you're creating materials for a specific organization, you can ask members to join your focus group.

If you're creating materials for all students on campus, be sure to invite students of different races and ethnicities, majors, age groups, and students with chronic illnesses or disabilities. Including a diverse group of students can help you make sure your materials are accessible to everyone.

Consider bringing snacks or offering incentives — like a gift card to the campus bookstore or a restaurant near campus — to encourage students to participate in your focus group.



OTHER WAYS TO GET FEEDBACK

You can send materials to student organizations and ask them to gather feedback from their members. And if you're short on time, you can always share your materials with friends to get their feedback.

WHAT TO ASK

Here are a few questions to get the conversation started:

- What's your first impression of this material?
- Is there anything specific you like or don't like about it?
- Is there anything that's confusing or hard to understand?
- Do you have any questions about [topic of the material]?
- Is there anything you would add to this material?



Step 6:

Revise your materials

Next, it's time to revise your materials. Take a look at all of the comments you've received from your focus group, student organizations, or friends on campus.

Are there any common themes that came up in your discussions? For example, maybe several people had the same question about campus guidelines. Or maybe a few were confused about the same sentence. Keep these themes in mind as you revise your materials.

You don't have to take every single suggestion that people provide. Your goal is not to make everyone happy — it's to make your materials easier to understand and use.

Once you're finished revising your materials, ask someone to proofread to make sure they're error free.



Step 7: Share your materials

So your materials are ready to go. Now it's time to choose the best way to share them with students. Here are a few ways to share:



Post print materials and hand out giveaway items in common areas — like the student union, cafeteria, academic buildings, or residence halls



Ask student organizations to share your materials with their members



Ask campus media organizations to share your materials



Ask public health, nursing, pre-med, or related academic departments to help spread the word



Amplify your social media posts by sharing them on your own personal account and asking friends to share

