SHARED PSA SOLVES PROBLEM AND SAVES TIME

Ann Wright had a problem. As Communications Director of the Arkansas Department of Health, she had the budget and the go-ahead to develop a PSA campaign urging Arkansas residents to get vaccinated against H1N1 and seasonal flu. A contractor completed placement for a schedule of TV, radio and newspaper pitching vaccination, vaccination, vaccination.

Problem was, there was no vaccine.

Then, in the nick of time, Seattle-King County offered their PSA via NPHIC. “It was exactly what we were looking for, and the fact that they offered it for free…well, that sold the deal! They probably saved us between $10,000 and $20,000 in production costs,” Wright said.

The Seattle-King County PSA – “Stay Home If You’re Sick” – fit perfectly with Arkansas’s campaign, which had been quickly reconfigured to a prevention message.

The spot was produced by NPHIC member Nicole Sadow-Hasenberg, who says her communications team at Public Health – Seattle-King County has a sharing philosophy.

“We recognize the amount of work that goes into producing health education materials, and in this era of lean resources, we especially recognize the importance of sharing our resources,” she says.

So, she took to heart NPHIC’s pleas last summer and fall for members to share H1N1 materials on the organization’s Pan Flu Web site. “I just confirmed it was okay with my boss, and he completely supported it.” Her boss is NPHIC member James Apa.

Back in Arkansas, Wright had one internal hurdle to clear before moving ahead. “I had our H1N1 Influenza Communication Committee review the spot and approve the use of it. The committee loved the PSA. As a matter of fact, I’ve gotten emails from ADH employees complimenting me on how wonderful the spot is and how it’s better than some of the CDC spots. Of course, I had to say that the kudos belonged to King County!”
NPHIC CONFERENCES HAVE ALWAYS BEEN GREAT
“The NPHIC conferences have always been great. I help plan several conferences in New Jersey, and one year thanks to the NPHIC conference I was able to help bring Larry Hill here to speak at two different conferences. At the NPHIC conference in 2007, Larry gave a presentation on his communication experience during the tragic shootings at Virginia Tech. Larry is a NPHIC member. I approached him about making the same presentation to New Jersey’s annual STATEWIDE COMMUNICATION CONFERENCE and the annual EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE. His participation helped make both conferences a success. This would not have been possible without NPHIC.

The next year, Tom Slater got NPHIC member Kerry Shearer from Sacramento to present at the statewide communication conference.”

Holly Funkhouser Cucuzzella, MPH, CHES
Director of Health Education
Burlington County (NJ) Health Department
Westampton, NJ

NPHIC: IT’S WHERE WE RECEIVED SOME OF OUR MOST VALUABLE INFORMATION
“We regard NPHIC as the best $75.00 for a membership that we spend within our Department. The advance notice of information being developed or released is invaluable. We will always remember the NPHIC call last spring that was scheduled to discuss flooding and swine flu. Being located on the Mississippi River, we gathered to listen to stories of flooding in an effort to always learn more and gather ideas. What that call became was “swine flu”. As a management team, we looked at each other and realized the potential problem that we had developing before our eyes. NPHIC was the first place that we heard about what would become H1N1, and it was also where we received some of our most valuable information. We took advantage of the opportunity to listen to federal press briefings and to take part in the conference calls with various national organizations. Our link to these resources was NPHIC. This link was invaluable. I could go on and on about how timely the information was distributed to us. We knew about new guidance, etc being posted on various sites earlier than others because NPHIC’s information came out in advance of information from our state. This was extremely helpful when we dealt with the various H1N1 recalls. In fact, in December, we were the ones that contacted our state health department’s immunization bureau because of information on an upcoming recall we had received from NPHIC.”

Amy Thoreson, MPH
Deputy Director
Scott County Health Department
Davenport, IA

COMMUNICATION ASSISTANCE FROM NPHIC SAVED ME TIME AND KEPT ME UP TO DATE
“The talking points I received throughout the H1N1 response were invaluable. At a time when our department of ONE was doing up to five media interviews a day (while answering phone calls from the public, maintaining the website, sending press releases and promoting our Fight the Flu campaign), the communication assistance provided by NPHIC not only saved me time, but I was confident that those talking points were the most up-to-date available. Thank you!”

Genalee Alexander
Regional Public Information Officer
Columbia/Boone County Department of Public Health and Human Services
Columbia, MO
NPHIC IS INSTRUMENTAL IN HELPING LOCAL DEPARTMENTS PREPARE FOR MEDIA ONSLAUGHT

“Very briefly, NPHIC’s assistance with providing us embargoed reports, news releases and talking points from the CDC, HHS and other national and regional public health organizations has been immensely helpful over the years, and has been instrumental in helping those of us at the local health department level prepare for the media onslaught that sometimes ensues.

Often, in the larger metropolitan areas, the local health departments take the brunt of the media attention, and if the information only goes to the state health departments as was often the case before NPHIC, the locals may appear unprepared or uninformed, hurting the credibility of public health across the board. NPHIC has become a terrific resource in coordinated messages and opening lines of communication that were previously very limited.”

Jeff Hershberger
Public Information Officer
Health Ed. And Health Communication
Kansas City, MO

NPHIC CALLS ON H1N1 PACKED THE ROOM AT BURLINGTON COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

During H1N1 the NPHIC conference calls were invaluable in obtaining accurate and timely information. At times the room was filled with our response team since they knew they would get top notch info. In addition the talking points sent out during H1N1 were great in helping me keep staff informed.

Holly Funkhouser Cucuzzella, MPH, CHES
Director of Health Education
Burlington County (NJ) Health Department
Westampton, NJ

BENEFITS OF NPHIC MEMBERSHIP IMPRESSED MY BOSS AND CO-WORKERS

“The greatest advantage that NPHIC has provided me with, specifically during H1N1, is access to the CDC Media Briefings. The briefings allowed me to QUICKLY share the most current and accurate information on the outbreak, often before other listserves, etc were pushing information out. While it is true that I often received the information from multiple sources, almost ALWAYS the information came first from the briefings, followed by key messages from NPHIC shortly thereafter. My co-workers and boss were very impressed with the rapidity of the messages received by and through my affiliation with NPHIC.”

Monique C. Davis, MPH, CHES
Health Educator/Risk Communicator
LINCS Bioterrorism Team
Secaucus, NJ

NPHIC: IT’S LIKE HAVING A FULL STAFF OF CREATORS AND DESIGNERS ON BOARD

“The materials shared on the NPHIC website are always a great resource. Many times when preparing a press release I look to the website to see what has been written by my colleagues across the country to get a good idea how to frame something or a clever way of explaining something. A lot of times, I have used the same or at least a lot of the same language used by other states in their news releases. The brochures, posters etc. also are always a great resource, too. I work for a small county health department with very limited resources. So, access to these is like having a full staff of creators and designers on board.”

Holly Funkhouser Cucuzzella, MPH, CHES
Director of Health Education
Burlington County (NJ) Health Department
Westampton, NJ
H1N1 CDC/NPHIC CALLS: IT ISN’T JUST THE FACTS BUT ALSO THE HOW THAT HELPS

During the pandemic flu outbreak last year, I found the opportunity to listen to the media briefings the CDC experts and leaders were offering to be very helpful. Listening to how they answered questions helped me decide how to answer the inquiries I was getting here. It wasn’t just about the facts they offered; it was hearing their approach for myself that was valuable … listening in “real time” instead of reading about it later was immensely helpful. The chance to hear these calls was made possible through NPHIC’s partnership with CDC.

Kim Deti
Public Information Officer
WY Department of Health

The NPHIC-CDC partnership is a phenomenal success. Data from a variety of recent Harvard H1N1 polling projects underscore the shared interest between our two organizations. The data also indicate the public relies on both organizations equally.

• The December, 2009 poll of travelers, 16% of respondents said they accessed state and local health departments – those organizations that employ NPHIC’s members –communicators – to get information about how to avoid the flu while traveling. The same percentage said they went to the CDC site for that information.

• Another poll delving into the topic of school closures asked parents where they turned to for general information about preventing their children getting sick with H1N1 since the start of the school year. More than 50% said they went to their pediatrician or personal doctor, far and away the most common response. But 20% said they turned to their state or local health department, roughly equal to the 18% who said they turned to the CDC.

• Respondents to the recent anthrax poll were asked where they would go in order to get information about dispensing sites or the process of getting the antibiotic pills. The top response: state and local health departments (88%).

Over and over, the first-hand comments from NPHIC members demonstrate the importance of an ongoing, positive working relationship between CDC and NPHIC.

• The NPHIC listserv used to distribute weekly CDC H1N1 updates …

• The weekly CDC-NPHIC H1N1 calls …

• NPHIC’s website discussion board …

• NPHIC members developing and sharing communication tools and strategies …

• The weekly calls with CDC experts helped the hand-in-glove relationship between NPHIC and CDC.

All of these kept NPHIC’s public health communicators in the loop, on top of their game and in sync with CDC.

During a recent conference call with CDC and Harvard, one participant expressed frustration that respondents to a particular poll could not distinguish CDC’s public health messaging on H1N1 from messages coming from state and local health departments. The conversation turned somewhat with the observation that the inability to distinguish who delivered the message could be seen more positively, i.e. CDC and its NPHIC partners are delivering the same messages. That’s the way it should be!
**NPHIC: IT’S LIKE HAVING ANOTHER PERSON IN THE FIELD**

**COLLECTING/SHARING INFORMATION**

I cannot stress enough how important NPHIC was to a small health district in Idaho during the H1N1 outbreak. Those daily updates from the CDC and talking points Laura provided us were invaluable. I was up to speed on all the issues whenever the media called from 7:00 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. Because Laura included the talking points inside the body of the e-mail as well as an attachment, I was able to quickly access the material. We recently had a TAR review from a representative of the CDC and I expressed to him how valuable this communication was for us. I wouldn’t have had this without the help of NPHIC. He encourages us to coordinate our messages on a district-to-district basis. I told him, in this instance we were coordinating our messages on a national basis. As we are all short staffed, I felt I had another person working in the field to collect information. It is like the cell phone network ad, it gives you great comfort to know all those people are there to support you if you need it!

Laurie Boston
Public Information Officer
Southwest District Health
Caldwell, ID

DISTRIBUTING KEY MESSAGES ASSURES LOCAL SPOKESPERSONS ARE UP TO DATE

NPHIC’s continued distribution of the CDC Current and Recent Key Messages was very helpful at the local level. We have maintained and updated talking points for our director and other community agency spokespeople 20 times since the start of the pandemic. There were absolutely times we referenced the Current and Recent Key Messages to make sure our message was consistent with the CDC. Also, it helped us make sure we were preparing our local spokespeople for as many topics as possible.

Jennifer McCausland
Communications Coordinator - Health Communications and Community Initiatives
Sedgwick County Government
Wichita, KS

LONGTIME MEMBER CAROL SCRIBER FROM NORTH CAROLINA MAY HAVE SAID IT BEST

NPHIC is one of the best things to ever happen to public health and to all of us PIOs struggling out in the field… not to mention all the people across the US whom we serve. We are all now so much more effective than we could ever have been otherwise!

NPHIC and CDC: A 20 year partnership that has gotten better year after year.

Carol Schribner
Public Information Officer
NC Department of Health & Human Services

SHARING INFO ON NPHIC WEBSITE DISCUSSION BOARD HELPS A GREAT DEAL

The discussion board on the NPHIC website is helpful to refer to as guidance for what other agencies are doing/how they are handling similar issues. For example we recently have been discussing whether or not to continue to put money into H1N1 ad campaigns. It was really helpful for me to see other states and local health departments are feeling the same way; basically until a 3rd wave hits, the public has lost interest in the message.

Jennifer McCausland
Communications Coordinator - Health Communications and Community Initiatives
Sedgwick County Government
Wichita, KS

NETWORKING WITH NPHIC MEMBERS PROVIDES STRENGTH AND COMFORT

I look to NPHIC as a type of a Joint Information System. It may not fit the textbook definition, but It gives you access to years of experience and vast resources with just an e-mail! I also look to NPHIC as an anchor to give me strength. Realize that we were working 6+ days a week, tired, and stressed. Being able to hear others give suggestions or show their frustrations provided strength and comfort so that I knew that I was not alone.

Laurie Boston
Public Information Officer
Southwest District Health
Caldwell, ID
NPHIC has assembled a wealth of helpful and sharable pandemic flu materials for local, state and federal communicators, and pandemic flu communication partners. Exchanging information and learning from each other’s efforts builds consistent, effective messages which are the keys to preparedness, and preparedness is our best weapon against pandemic flu.

Search and download any of these resources and tailor them for your audience.

If you would like to add your own resources to the site and you’re already registered to the site, just enter your USERNAME and PASSWORD above to log in, then click on the POST RESOURCES button to the right. If you’re new to the site, click on the REGISTER HERE link at the top, you’ll be prompted to complete a one-time only registration to create a username and password.