

Making the case for public health:

BMSG resources for public health practitioners

Berkeley Media Studies Group works with community groups, journalists, and public health professionals to use the power of the media to advance healthy public policy. We help people make their voices heard and increase their participation in the democratic process. Our many free resources can help catalyze team or coalition discussions, build capacity, and shift the systems surrounding us to support health and justice for all.

Getting started — the Layers of Strategy

These are the core tools that we turn to regularly, even in complex campaigns for racial and health equity:

- Our [Layers of Strategy](#) is the foundation of our approach. This one-page handout will help you refine your overall goals and specify how strategic communication can support them. If you want your message strategy to include equity, you must have an overall strategy that includes equity. ([versión en español](#))
- [Overall strategy worksheet](#): Before trying to get media attention for the issue you are working on — or creating your messages — you and your coalition need to have clarity in your advocacy goals, as well as the steps you will take to achieve them. Answering the questions in this worksheet will help you clarify the solutions you are seeking and what immediate steps you need to take. Think of this sheet as your primary guiding tool: Your media strategy and message strategy should derive from your overall strategy so that all your actions are in alignment with your advocacy goals. ([versión en español](#))
- [Message development worksheet](#). To advance public health policy goals, advocates must communicate strategically about three things: the issue they want to address, why it matters, and what should be done about it. Together, these elements form the basis of any message and can be incorporated into a variety of campaign communications, from blogs to op-eds to websites. They can also be tailored to answer most of the questions that a reporter or decision-maker might ask. ([versión en español](#)) Visit [here](#) for other resources for developing messages, such as: [Crafting effective op-eds](#), [Using social math to support your policy issue](#), [Tips for writing effective letters to the editor](#), and [Blogging tips for media advocates](#).
- [Delivering your message tools](#). Even seasoned practitioners can feel nervous during media interviews, public speeches, or even posting on social media. To make sure the delivery goes smoothly, plan your messages and practice them in advance. Resources include: [Activity: Delivering effective messages](#), [Worksheet: Answering hard questions](#), and [Are you reinforcing your opposition's arguments?](#)

Turning the big picture into actionable steps

These resources walk through some of the big ideas of narrative change, media advocacy, and strategic communications while also turning them into actionable steps. They can be great conversation-starters for teams and coalitions.

- [Overcoming common communication challenges: A 3-part series for advocates](#). In this blog series, we address a range of strategic communication challenges that both novice and seasoned advocates often face. We also offer tips that advocates can use across multiple issue areas and provide examples of how various groups have applied those recommendations. This blog series focuses on many of the aforementioned tools, but uses a case study to show how they can come together for positive change.
- What is framing? Check out our [Framing 101](#) page and other resources on framing, a key concept in developing effective messages.
- What is media advocacy? This [page](#) gives a brief overview and these [additional resources](#) will help you get started.

Putting it into practice

Ready to take all of these tools and go deeper? These resources will help you.

- [What surrounds us shapes us](#) is a brief resource that shows how to create frames that can help people see that environments affect health. If you are looking for concrete examples, this resource also includes an interview-gone-wrong, and how to correct it using best practices in framing.
- [7 things advocates should know when communicating about health equity](#). Making the case for a society that supports health for everyone is easier said than done, even for the most seasoned public health advocates. Here are some tips to help ensure that the messages we use strengthen, rather than stymie, our social change efforts.
- [Video: Engaging communications to create healthy environments](#). BMSG Director Lori Dorfman discusses why health education and data don't go far enough toward improving health at the population-level, and how communication, particularly [media advocacy](#), can be used to change policy and create environments that better support health for everyone. This video pulls together many of the ideas from the resources listed.

Championing public health amid legal and legislative threats: Framing and language recommendations

As some politicians and their allies try to shrink public health officials' and agencies' authority, it's critical that practitioners and advocates are equipped to speak about why we need public health to keep our communities safe and healthy. To help the field make an effective case for public health, BMSG and Real Language, with support from ChangeLab Solutions and the Act for Public Health group, assessed narratives around attacks on public health's authority to identify problematic language and opportunities for improvement. In this report, we offer 5 key recommendations for change. Check out the sidebar for links to a [recorded webinar](#) that walks you through the guide and many more resources!

Going deeper!

- [Public health and media advocacy](#). In this article, published in the Annual Review of Public Health, BMSG's Lori Dorfman and Ingrid Daffner Krasnow discuss key components of media advocacy and offer tips for advocates, including framing pitfalls to avoid, ways to make data meaningful to broad audiences, and how to use compelling visuals to get a reporter's attention. This is a great overview of many of the above concepts, citing research that supports this approach.
- [Using proactive and reactive media strategies](#). If you have gone through the Layers of Strategy and have a handle on developing messages, you can start planning both proactive and reactive media strategies to advance your cause. This includes: [Worksheet: Elements of newsworthiness](#), [How advocates can make their issue more newsworthy: Tips from a veteran reporter](#), and [Worksheet: Creating a media advocacy calendar](#).
- [Communicating for Change training modules](#). If you are ready for a deeper dive with case studies, worksheets, and activities to walk you through every part of successful media advocacy, the Communicating for Change training curriculum teaches public health leaders how to engage the news media strategically to advance community health. Each of the seven modules focuses on core skills, such as developing a strategic media plan, crafting an effective frame and message, gaining attention in the news, and successfully working with journalists. The curriculum is illustrated with examples of media advocacy work from advocates pursuing public health improvements on issues such as childhood nutrition, asthma, violence prevention, health equity, and increasing health care access. Participants practice what they learn through role-playing, small-group exercises, and, in advanced trainings, on-camera interviews.

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