

As a healthcare system/provider your safety messages can have a profound impact on your patients and the public. This guide will assist you in crafting a message that resonates and is effective to your social media audiences.

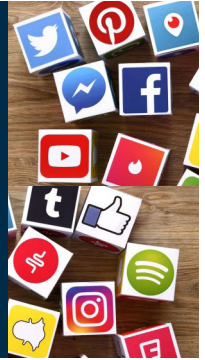
A variety of social media tools exist, this guide will focus on Facebook, Twitter, and SMS/text messages.

SOCIAL MEDIA & COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

Your social media is just one item in your communication toolkit, Therefore, keep your overarching communication goals in mind as you develop your social media content.

Before you start your media outreach, here are a few questions you should answer:

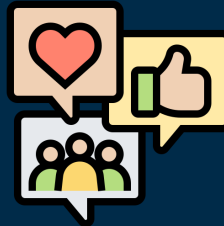
- Identify your target audience.
- Determine your objective.
- Select the appropriate channel for your message.
- Decide upfront how much time and effort you can invest.



TARGET AUDIENCES, HEALTH LITERACY AND PLAIN LANGUAGE, AND SOCIAL MARKETING

Keep it simple. Remember that people are overwhelmed online. You have a couple of seconds to get your message across. Now is the time to be short, simple and to the point. To ensure that you are engaging readers, follow the following general rules:

- Understand the audience you are trying to reach.
- Apply health literacy principles.
- Use plain language best practices.



Social media can feel like the “pick me” communication outlet. The desire to showcase our latest and greatest tools. However, you reach more people with good content. Your social media content should be:

- Relevant, useful, and interesting
- Easy to understand and share
- Friendly, conversational, and engaging
- Action-oriented

CREATING CONTENT FOR FACEBOOK



Facebook is one of the largest social networking platforms where you can reach a variety of people in one place. It allows you to add text, images and tag companies who may support your message or amplify your impact.

Length:

Facebook offers more space to create content than Twitter or text messages. Each Facebook post can be a maximum of 420 characters plus a link. However, a shorter length is recommended. A Facebook posts that has 250 characters (or shorter) will allow your post to be viewed completely in the newsfeed.

Content:

Remember to keep your post user friendly. Post should be interesting and include a call to action. Now is the perfect opportunity to add links to web pages or other agencies that may support your post.

Tone:

While you want to be professional, the tone of Facebook is casual. Remember that people use Facebook to update followers/viewers about their lives. Ensure that your message is simple and clear.

Tagging:

You can tag partners to your message by using the @ symbol. Tagging is a great opportunity to engage partnerships, use outside agency and offer additional resources to your reader.



CREATING CONTENT FOR TWITTER

One of the largest “micro-blogging” platform, with over 200 million registered users, Twitter is another great platform to add your messaging. If you are fearful that you won’t be able to express your message in 140 characters or less, this guide will show you that it is possible.

Twitter Syntax:

The Twitter community is unique because it has its own form of syntax. When you communicate on Twitter, here are some of the terms you need to know:

Tweet: A “tweet” is your message, and it can compose of 140 characters of text or links.

Handle: This is your username or how a user identify themselves. An example of a handle is: @PrimaryCareDev

Retweet: This is a great opportunity for you to share (retweet) a message from another Twitter user or to have other users retweet your message

Mention: By using the @ symbol, you can automatically link another user to your post. An example would be: @PrimaryCareDev provided our site with this helpful social media toolkit.

Hashtag: Hashtags work like mentions because you use the # symbol before a work. Using a hashtag is a great way to link your post to a larger conversation. Examples of hashtags are #health #COVID and #healthcare

Best Practices for Writing Tweets:

Length: You have up to 240 characters, however, try to keep your tweet to 200. This will allow others to add text if they decide to re-tweet your post.

Abbreviations: Because we only have 240 characters, abbreviations are necessary and appropriate. Keep in mind that you should use standard abbreviations when needed. Some examples are:

- NY for New York
- Info for information
- & for and
- 1PM for 1 p.m.

Hyperlinks: Twitter will shorten your link before posting. Remember to only link trusted partners and sources to any of your post. Never add a hyperlink if you are unsure of the content or information.

Tone: Twitter should be reader-friendly and action-oriented. It is the perfect platform to ask a question, highlight some key information about your site or provide a call to action.

BEST PRACTICES FOR WRITING TEXT MESSAGES

MESSAGE COMPONENTS

Length:

With text, you are limited to 160 characters, including spaces and punctuation. Because of opt-out information, you want to write your messages around 140 characters.

Abbreviations:

Because we are limited to 160 characters, abbreviations are necessary and appropriate for texts as well. They should be easily understood and shouldn’t change the meaning of the word. Some appropriate abbreviations include:

- Rply for reply
- IMPT for important
- Msg for message
- EMG for emergency



Action-oriented: Your message should be actionable. “Call us to schedule your appointment today.” Messages with a call to action are most effective.

Customized content: Tailor text messages based on the patient. Create text list based on age, gender, health conditions or zip code for example.

Timely: Develop seasonal messages. Reminders for flu shots and other annual screenings help patients remember important dates to schedule appointments.

Strong start: You only have 140 characters. Therefore, you want to gain the interest of the reader from the start. Have an interesting or catchy beginning to gain the reader’s attention.

Branded: Patients will receive a message from your short code (i.e., 80000), therefore, the first few words of your message needs to identify your site as the sender. sender.

Access to more information: When sending a message, ensure that there is information for patients to follow-up with you. Format phone number to allow users to click-to-call and/or add the URL for your website.

Opt-out and help instructions: Provide the option for patients to opt out of your message campaign by having the option to text STOP or QUIT. Also include a help option by allowing users to text HELP to receive a call back from a provider.