



PUBLIC HEALTH MODERNIZATION COMMUNICATION TOOLKIT



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Coalition of Local Health Officials
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THIS TOOLKIT IS SPONSORED BY THE COALITION OF LOCAL HEALTH OFFICIALS AND WAS CREATED WITH THE HELP OF COMMUNICATION EXPERTS FROM PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY AND A SMALL GROUP OF REPRESENTATIVES FROM OREGON'S LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENTS.

TOOLKIT PURPOSE

The purpose of this toolkit is for it to be used by local public health officials to help build support and understanding of public health and public health modernization in communities across Oregon. The toolkit offers the opportunity for public health officials to combine and adapt messages to meet their individual needs.

AUDIENCES

This toolkit was created with the following audiences in mind:

- **County Commissioners**
- **Local public health advisory boards**
- **Community partners**
- **Other public health officials**

A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE TOOLKIT

The toolkit contains four individual tools that can be used on their own or in combination with one another.

- **PUBLIC HEALTH MODERNIZATION STORY**

This tool is intended to help build an understanding of past and present public health work, while also building an understanding and support for public health modernization.

- **PUBLIC HEALTH MODERNIZATION ASK**

This tool defines a collective vision and identifies public health modernization as a means to achieve that vision. The messages embedded in this tool also help to build support for public health modernization.

- **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

This tool helps to address questions or concerns about public health modernization from County Commissioners, community partners, and other local health officials.

- **THE DOS & DON'TS**

This tool serves as a helpful reminder when developing and adapting messages.

USING THE DOCUMENTS

These documents have been crafted with multiple uses in mind. They can be used:

- **Individually**
- **Paired with other messages**
- **To create locally relevant communications by adapting select messages from any of the tools**
- **As talking points while at meetings, or in presentations**

HELPFUL REMINDERS

- **Know your audience**
- **Practice your messaging to make sure it is logical and cohesive**
- **Use local examples (and remember to keep them direct and simple)**
- **Be consistent**
- **Some redundancy is okay, it helps to reinforce the message**

COMMUNICATIONS SAMPLE

This sample was created using example 1 from the Public Health Modernization Ask tool as the base and the FAQ tool to create the bullets.

A VISION FOR A HEALTHY OREGON

We all envision Oregon as a place where all people can thrive and prosper in healthy and safe communities, living long, productive lives free of preventable disease and disability. We have long appreciated living in a state that is known for its health, vitality and beauty. These are values that we share with previous generations, and that we want to pass down to our children's children.

Our public health system is essential for community health, but our system was designed for a previous age, making it difficult to meet new challenges. We are seeing increases in diabetes, cancer, and heart disease, and new infectious diseases and outbreaks of older ones. For example, this past year in Benton County we experienced an outbreak of pertussis (whooping cough), with 37 confirmed cases.

ACHIEVING OUR VISION

To address our current challenges and create a healthy Oregon we must modernize and restructure our public health system. Public health modernization will:

- **Create a more efficient and effective public health system**
- **Strive for greater accountability**
- **Increase our ability to respond to the needs of our communities and threats like Ebola**
- **Allow us to be a stronger partner in helping to create vibrant communities**
- **Lead to better health outcomes, improving the lives of all Oregonians**

Supporting and investing in public health modernization now will save money in the future and save lives by allowing us to better protect and care for what we love most, our children, families, and communities.

OREGON'S PUBLIC HEALTH SYSTEM HAS A LONG HISTORY OF WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH HEALTH CARE, PUBLIC SAFETY, EDUCATION, AND OTHER COMMUNITY PARTNERS TO KEEP KIDS HEALTHY AND COMMUNITIES STRONG.

Our public health system, helps keep people safe and living longer. Public health programs and activities ensure all Oregonians have clean water, protection from disease and disease outbreaks, and access to safe and healthy food. The work that public health does saves money; every \$1 spent on prevention saves \$5.60 in health care spending.¹

In the past, Oregonians worried about their children contracting diseases, such as polio and measles, diseases that many of today's pediatricians have never seen. Oregonians worried if their food and water was safe. And they worried about injuries and illness from unsafe work places. Public health worked to address those challenges and prevent people from getting sick or injured, helping to increase the life expectancy in Oregon. While we have conquered many challenges, there are others ahead of us. Public health is now planning and working to prepare for our next set of health challenges.

Today we must update and invest in a public health system that combats the diseases and conditions that impact our communities, and could keep all Oregonians from being healthy. Public health needs to work together with partners safeguard our communities from diseases like measles, while at the same time being a strong community partner ensuring our neighborhoods have parks for children to play, sidewalks for people to walk and bike, and places to buy healthy food. We need to create communities where families are protected and can thrive and prosper.

¹ Trust for America's Health, *Prevention for a Healthier America: Investments in Disease Prevention Yield Significant Savings, Stronger Communities*, 2008

We have triumphed over major diseases and implemented safety and protection laws. It is important that we build on these successes, adapt, and plan for new challenges and old threats that might reemerge, like Ebola and measles. We are working to find ways to prevent diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and cancers so that families can enjoy the benefits of a longer, healthier life. Our public health system needs to be updated so that we can be a strong, flexible, and more efficient partner that continues to protect people from diseases in our global world, prepares for emergencies, and supports the healthiest possible future. Updating our public health system means we are investing in our communities, our children, and the health of Oregon.

HOW TO USE

PURPOSE

- Build understanding of public health work
- Build understanding of public health modernization
- Build support for public health modernization

AUDIENCE

- Community partners
- Local public health advisory boards
- County Commissioners

USEFUL FORMATS

- It can be used in its entirety
- Select pieces of the document can be developed into talking points or used in a one-pager
- Select pieces of the document can also be paired with the “modernization asks”

WHEN PROVIDING AN ASK TO A COMMUNITY PARTNER OR A COUNTY COMMISSIONER YOU WANT TO MAKE SURE IT HAS SEVERAL COMPONENTS. THIS INCLUDES A COMMON GOAL, WHAT IS AT STAKE AND WHY EVERYONE SHOULD CARE, A STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM, AND LASTLY A CLEAR AND SPECIFIC STATEMENT OF THE SOLUTION. HERE ARE TWO EXAMPLES:

Example 1

Oregon is a place where all people can thrive and prosper in healthy and safe communities, living long, productive lives free of preventable disease and disability. We have long appreciated living in a state that is known for its health, vitality and beauty. These are values that we share with previous generations, and that we want to pass down to our children's children. Our public health system is essential for community health, but our system was designed for a previous age, making it difficult to meet new challenges. There are increases in many chronic diseases, some new infectious diseases, and outbreaks of older ones. [INSERT EXAMPLE] To address these challenges we must update and restructure our public health system to be a stronger, more flexible and efficient partner. Public health is working with schools, early learning, public safety, health care, and other community partners to help solve our health challenges. Our quality of life now and into the future depends on these collaborations. Supporting and investing in public health modernization now will save money in the future and save lives by allowing us to better protect and care for what we love most, our children, families and communities.

INSERT AN EXAMPLE OF AN OUTBREAK, RATE OF CHRONIC DISEASE, OR INFECTIOUS DISEASE EXPERIENCED IN YOUR COUNTY. "FOR EXAMPLE, THIS PAST YEAR, CLATSOP COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH RECEIVED OVER 1,000 REPORTS OF INFECTIOUS DISEASES INCLUDING, HEPATITIS, TUBERCULOSIS, AND SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS. MANY OF THESE REPORTS REQUIRED FULL INVESTIGATIVE RESPONSES OFTEN PULLING AWAY STAFF FROM OTHER DUTIES, LIKE MEETING WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS."

Example 2

All Oregonians have an interest in the health, safety and prosperity of the communities we live in. Public health has been protecting and supporting communities so that people can thrive and prosper. It is now time to plan and prepare to protect all Oregonians from emerging diseases and changing conditions that threaten our communities, for example, [INSERT EXAMPLE] At the same time, public health must also be a strong partner to help build communities where children have parks to play in, sidewalks for people to walk, and grocery stores for people to buy healthy foods. Oregonians flourish when communities are safe and protected, and everyone can be healthy. Public health allows us to live longer and better, but to maintain and build on this success and to be ready for emerging threats we must update our public health system. Imagine a computer that is still using a 20-year-old operating system. Our world is changing and we need to be responsive by bringing our existing public health system into alignment with the challenges of today and tomorrow. This will heighten our efficiency through strengthened partnerships across our agencies and communities. Just as we update our computers, now is the time to update and invest in our public health system so that public health is better able to serve our communities. Support local and state efforts to modernize our public health system.

INSERT AN EXAMPLE
OF AN OUTBREAK,
RATE OF CHRONIC
DISEASE, OR INFECTIOUS
DISEASE EXPERIENCED
IN YOUR COUNTY.
“FOR EXAMPLE, THIS
PAST YEAR IN BENTON
COUNTY WE
EXPERIENCED AN
OUTBREAK OF
PERTUSSIS (WHOOPING
COUGH) WITH 37
CONFIRMED CASES”

HOW TO USE

PURPOSE

- Define a collective vision
- Identify modernization as means to help achieve vision
- Build support for public health modernization

AUDIENCE

- County Commissioners
- Community partners
- Local public health advisory boards
- Local public health officials

USEFUL FORMATS

- Chosen example “ask” can be coupled with the public health story
- Chosen example “ask” can be used with other messaging for a one-pager or other documents

HOW TO USE

Use the FAQs to help address questions or concerns about modernization from County Commissioners, community partners, and health department staff.

FAQs can also be used as talking points, or select answers can be integrated into a one-pager or other documents.

Q: WHAT IS PUBLIC HEALTH MODERNIZATION?

A: Public health modernization is bringing our existing public health system into alignment with the current challenges to good health in our communities. And just as we have updated our health care system it is now time to update our public health system to support and strengthen the advancements we have made.

A: Public health modernization is a strategy for building the support systems we want and need in our state. We have changed our national and state health care systems to treat people when they become ill, now it is time to update our public health system to help prevent people from becoming ill in the first place.

Q: WHAT DOES PUBLIC HEALTH MODERNIZATION LOOK LIKE?

A: Public health modernization will update our public health system to be more efficient and effective and to strive for greater accountability and better health for all of us. It will allow us to have greater access to data so that we are better able to understand and respond to the unique needs of each of our communities. Updating our public health system means we will be better able to meet our current needs in a global world by responding to threats like Ebola, and will allow us to be a strong partner in helping to create vibrant communities that provide all Oregonians with the opportunity to be healthy. Public health modernization will ultimately lead to better health outcomes, which will improve the lives of all Oregonians.

Q: WHY CAN'T THE PUBLIC HEALTH SYSTEM BE MORE EFFICIENT WITH WHAT IT ALREADY HAS?

- A:** Oregon's public health system has been extraordinarily efficient with its current resources. However, our communities have new and different needs; we are seeing rising rates of expensive chronic diseases like obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and cases of infectious diseases like measles and pertussis. Investments are needed to update the public health system, align programs more closely with current needs, and enhance the responsiveness of the public health system. These investments will pay off in the long-run through healthier communities and lower health care costs.
- A:** Oregon's public health system has been efficient and continues to look for efficiencies with the resources available to us, however, we also need to make sure we have the right prevention strategies and programs in place to address our most pressing community needs. As history and research tells us, prevention is the most efficient approach to disease control; every \$1 spent on prevention saves \$5.60 in health care costs.¹

Q: WHY IS THIS PUBLIC HEALTH'S RESPONSIBILITY AND NOT THE COORDINATED CARE ORGANIZATIONS?

- A:** Oregon's Coordinated Care Organizations are only responsible for Oregonians covered through the Oregon Health Plan/Medicaid, whereas public health has a responsibility to the entire community, regardless of whether individuals have health insurance or not. Public health and CCOs, along with many other partners, work in concert to ensure that our communities are well cared for.
- A:** Only an estimated 10 to 15 percent of preventable deaths could be avoided by better availability of quality health care.² Health primarily happens outside of the medical office and ensuring that Oregonians are healthy beyond their doctor visits is public health's responsibility.

¹ Trust for America's Health, *Prevention for a Healthier America: Investments in Disease Prevention Yield Significant Savings, Stronger Communities*, 2008

² McGinnis J, Williams-Russo P, Knickman J. 2002. *The Case For More Active Policy Attention To Health Promotion*. Health Affairs. 21, 2. 78-93.

Q: WHAT WILL IT COST TO MODERNIZE THE PUBLIC HEALTH SYSTEM?

A: We are just at the beginning of modernizing our public health system, and in 2016 public health departments will be working to assess their current capacity to carry out the activities outlined in “The Public Health Modernization Manual”. The results of the assessment will help to identify gaps across our public health system and begin to quantify the financial costs of fully implementing the activities in “The Public Health Modernization Manual”.

Q: WILL WE (COUNTY BOARDS OF COMMISSIONS) LOSE LOCAL CONTROL OF PUBLIC HEALTH?

A: No, House Bill 3100 outlined a range of options for county governments to decide how to best structure and provide services to meet the needs of their communities. Decisions on which option is best for each community will be made at the local level.

Q: HOW MUCH WILL PUBLIC HEALTH MODERNIZATION SAVE?

A: A robust public health system provides big health benefits in a very efficient way; an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Investing now in public health will be a bargain in the long-term.

Q: WHY MODERNIZE PUBLIC HEALTH NOW?

A: We have seen the work being done to update our health care system, both in Oregon and nationally, and if our goal is healthy individuals and communities, we also need to update our public health system. Many people have been working on this over the past several years and HB 3100 was passed by the 2015 Oregon Legislature and signed by Gov. Brown. This legislation provides the framework for updating our public health system.

A: Public health has been creatively working within an older, outdated system to address emerging diseases, like measles; we are now at a tipping point where our current system is holding us back from properly addressing those diseases. Just as we updated our health care system now is the time to update our public health system to ensure that public health is better able to protect all Oregonians and be a stronger partner to support the health of our communities.

Q: ISN'T HEALTH A PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY?

A: People do have a personal responsibility to take care of themselves and their health, but sometimes individuals face barriers that they cannot overcome on their own. All Oregonians should have an equal opportunity to live in a community that is supportive of the decisions that allow them to live a long, healthy life, regardless of their level of income, education, or ethnicity.

Q: WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO MY PROGRAM?

A: Public health will continue to protect community health and make sure that necessary services and programs are offered, even if we are structured differently. Public health modernization does require that we update our skills as public health professionals and we will work with staff to continue professional training to ensure that our skills match what we are required to do.

Q: HOW DOES THIS FIT WITH ALL THE OTHER CHANGES HAPPENING WITH COORDINATED CARE ORGANIZATIONS AND EARLY LEARNING COUNCILS?

A: Public health modernization compliments the work of the Coordinated Care Organizations (CCOs) and Early Learning Councils (ELCs). It will allow us to be a stronger and more equal partner as we continue to work closely with both the CCOs and ELCs. By updating our public health system we are better able to impact the cost of health care in our community, and help to ensure that children are entering school at a healthy weight and ready to learn, bolstering the charge of both the CCOs and ELCs.

THESE DOS AND DON'TS ARE INTENDED TO BE HELPFUL REMINDERS WHEN ARE YOU DEVELOPING MATERIALS USING THE COMMUNICATIONS TOOLKIT.

- Be brief and direct!
- Avoid jargon as much as possible
- Keep data simple and if possible convert existing data into readily identifiable, easily intelligible equivalents
- Be positive and hopeful, not negative and defeated
- Help the listener see this as something that impacts them and avoid invoking us/them polarities
- Avoid complex arguments; keep it logical and simple
- Use metaphors, analogies and narratives (i.e. imagine using a computer with a 20 year old operating system)
- Invoke shared responsibility for the solution
- Carefully choose representations of populations involved

PUBLIC HEALTH MODERNIZATION JARGON

Jargon is professional shorthand that can be difficult for those outside of the field to understand. Although some jargon may be unavoidable (i.e. modernization), here are a few examples of jargon and possible alternatives.

TRANSFORMATION	→	Changing, updating
SOCIAL DETERMINANT OF HEALTH	→	Conditions outside of one's control
EQUITY	→	Fairness, justice
MANDATES/STATUTES	→	Laws
COUNTY, REGION, DISTRICT, LOCAL	→	Community
GENERAL FUND	→	Investment
CHRONIC DISEASE	→	Diabetes, heart disease, cancer, stroke
INFECTIOUS DISEASE	→	Measles, pertussis, meningitis, MERS, etc.

Source: Liana Winett. *Values, Vision, Voice*. 2015

COALITION OF LOCAL HEALTH OFFICIALS

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