

# UMD-PRC and Horowitz Center for Health Literacy

## COVID-19 Vaccine Confidence Resources: Dissemination Plan for LHICs

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## Overview

The University of Maryland (UMD) Horowitz Center for Health Literacy has launched an initiative to build COVID-19 vaccine confidence with clear and empathetic communication. This initiative will serve Maryland Local Health Improvement Coalitions (LHICs). This work aligns with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) broader Vaccinate with Confidence Network goals to:

- Protect communities by supporting states, cities, and counties to find under-vaccinated communities and take steps to protect them
- Stop myths through work with local partners and trusted messengers to provide clear information and improve confidence in vaccines among at-risk groups

We've created a suite of materials to help you continue to promote COVID-19 vaccination through the end of 2022. Our team crafted these materials to help you build vaccine confidence in the communities you serve. Resources include animated videos, audio recordings, and social media content (graphics and text posts). In this document, you'll find guidance to help you make the most of these vaccine confidence resources throughout the rest of the year.

## Vaccine Confidence Resources

### Animated Videos

Taking an empathetic approach, we've created animated videos that highlight personal reasons for getting vaccinated. Animated videos can be shared on YouTube, social media, or websites or used in presentations. The videos are available in English and Spanish.

### Audio Clips

Similar to the animated videos, our audio clips focus on personal reasons for getting vaccinated. These clips can be used as radio ads, shared on YouTube, social media, or websites, or used in presentations. Audio clips are available in English and Spanish. Note: one of the audios in Spanish designed for CenterLink uses the novel Spanish word "todes", which offers gender neutrality instead of "todas" (feminine plural) and "todos" (masculine plural, that traditionally is used to represent all genders). That word still is in process of cultural acceptance and dissemination and not used by general audiences, but it represents an important step on gender inclusion.

### Social Media Content

We've created social media graphics and text posts for Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. You can use non-paid social media or an ad buy to help your messages reach further. All social media resources are available in English and Spanish. Some posts are also available in Haitian Creole, Mandarin, and Vietnamese.

Keep these social media best practices in mind:

- Know your objective for each priority audience
- Pick the platform that is most popular with each priority audience
- Include images and videos to your content to increase views

Not sure how often to post on social media? Here's what we recommend:

- Facebook: 1 post per day
- Instagram: 3 to 5 posts per week
- Twitter: 3 to 5 posts per day

You can edit the text of the social media posts and graphics to meet your audience's needs. For more information on how to edit the graphics, see "Using the Social Media Graphics" below.

## Considerations for Spanish Content

As you share the Spanish content, please keep in mind:

- When possible, we've chosen gender inclusive language. For example, we used "hijos" (kids, or children) instead of "hijo" (son). The plural is still masculine, but it includes female and male children based on formal Spanish rules. We also used "amistades" (gender neutral) instead of "amigos" (plural but still masculine).
- Instead of directly translating word for word, we've *transcreated*, or rephrased some messages so they'll sound better in Spanish and fit within Twitter's character limits. For example, the Spanish word "reunión" is a direct translation of "gathering." But because "reunión" has a more formal connotation, we chose to use "fiesta" (party) instead.

## Before You Post on Social Media

### Update Social Media Text Posts

Throughout the social media text posts, you'll see highlighted phrases in brackets [like this].

**Please be sure to make these updates before you post:**

- It's important to direct your audience to a reliable source where they can learn more about COVID-19 vaccines. At the end of each post, we've left a space for you to add a link. We've suggested some websites under "Add a Trustworthy Source" below.
- In some of the posts, we've suggested emojis (e.g., [dancing emoji]). Before you share, be sure to replace those highlighted phrases with emojis, or delete them if you prefer not to use emojis.
- For Topic E ("Why I chose to get vaccinated" testimonial messages), we've included a place to add the name of a nearby town. Don't forget to fill in a location or delete [name]

of nearby town] if you prefer not to include one.

Please note: In the Spanish messages, we have included these highlighted instructions in English, just in case the person who's posting the content doesn't speak Spanish.

## Add a Trustworthy Source

Below are some local websites you can link to in your social media posts:

Maryland Department of Health (MDH) Vaccine FAQ	<a href="https://go.umd.edu/vaccine">https://go.umd.edu/vaccine</a>
Cecil	<a href="http://www.cecilcountyhealth.org">www.cecilcountyhealth.org</a>
Charles	<a href="http://www.charlescountycovid.org">www.charlescountycovid.org</a>
Mid-Shore	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Caroline: <a href="http://www.carolinecovid19.org">www.carolinecovid19.org</a></li> <li>• Dorchester: <a href="http://www.dorchesterhealth.org">www.dorchesterhealth.org</a></li> <li>• Kent: <a href="http://www.kenthd.org">www.kenthd.org</a></li> <li>• Queen Anne's: <a href="http://www.qac.org">www.qac.org</a></li> <li>• Talbot: <a href="http://www.talbothealth.org">www.talbothealth.org</a></li> </ul>
Washington	<a href="http://www.washcohealth.org">www.washcohealth.org</a>
COVID-19 Vaccine Information in Spanish	<a href="https://go.umd.edu/vacuna">https://go.umd.edu/vacuna</a>
COVID-19 Vaccine Information in Haitian Creole	<a href="https://go.umd.edu/vaksen">https://go.umd.edu/vaksen</a>
COVID-19 Vaccine Information in Vietnamese	<a href="https://go.umd.edu/vacxin">https://go.umd.edu/vacxin</a>

## Customize Social Media Graphics

We created the social media graphics to reflect the diversity of Marylanders and our local community. Graphics feature a calming color palette with relatable imagery and vibrant accents. This look will help to meet audiences where they are with accessible information they can trust.

We've provided several ready-to-share graphics to go with our social media text posts. You can customize the graphics by following the steps below or use the templates provided to create new graphics:

### 1. Make a copy

Right-click the template, and either click **Make a copy** to save on your Google Drive or click **Download** and then open the file to edit in PowerPoint.

### 2. Customize the graphic

- Click the photo button to add your logo. If you need to resize or crop your image, double-click it.
  - To add text, either type directly in the text box or paste in text by going to **Edit** in the top navigation and then choosing **Paste without formatting** (or **Paste and match formatting** in PowerPoint).
  - If anything on the graphic got messed up, don't worry! You can reset the layout either by right-clicking in a blank space and selecting **Apply layout** or by going to **Slide** in the top navigation and then choosing **Apply layout** (or **Reset** in PowerPoint).
3. **Download your completed graphic**  
Go to **File** in the top navigation and choose **Download** and then **JPEG image (current slide)**. (Or, in PowerPoint, go to **File**, then choose **Export** and make sure your file format is set to **JPEG**.)
  4. **Share your graphic on social media!**

**Note:** There are graphic templates sized for Facebook/Twitter and Instagram.

## Make the Most of These Resources

Try these tips to make the most of our vaccine confidence resources:

### Consider Timing and Necessary Content Updates

Please keep in mind that UMD created these materials in April 2022. In crafting our messages, we chose themes and language that will stay relevant as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to evolve. Our goal was to create materials you can use until the end of the calendar year.

However, we all know the pandemic and public health guidelines can shift quickly — so we'd still recommend confirming key details before you share. For example, one of our social media messages says COVID-19 vaccines are free, so you might want to make sure that's still the case before you post. COVID-19 updates from the federal government can be found at [covid.gov](https://www.covid.gov).

Mentioning upcoming holidays or local events is another way to keep content feeling fresh. For example, you could update messages that mention getting together with family and friends to mention Independence Day, Thanksgiving, or winter holidays.

### Expand Your Reach

Amplify your message by asking organizations or community leaders to share content on their own social media pages. For example, religious leaders, health care providers, and barbers or hairdressers all reach different members of the community and are personally trusted by the people they serve.

Consider hosting a Facebook or Instagram Live event or Twitter chat. You can have members of the local community join and share why they chose to get vaccinated. During the event, you can

also highlight the resources available for community members to promote on their personal social media pages.

You could also incorporate these materials into existing public health campaigns or initiatives. For example, one of our social media messages frames COVID-19 vaccines as a part of preventive care, so you could pair this message with a campaign about back-to-school checkups or staying up to date on vaccines.

## Communication Techniques for Creating or Editing Content

Clear communication is essential to reach your priority audience. When communicating about COVID-19 vaccines, it's important to be transparent about what you do and don't know, understand the many reasons for vaccine hesitancy, and give your audience the tools they need to make informed decisions. You can use the techniques outlined below to create additional COVID-19 communication materials or edit the social media content provided.

### Voice and tone

Voice and tone are important to make your content accessible and personal to your reader. When you're communicating about COVID-19 vaccines, aim for a voice that is:

- **Empathetic** but not patronizing
- **Encouraging** but not pushy
- **Conversational** but not too chatty
- **Credible and evidence-based** but not too jargony

The overall tone of content should be **direct and straightforward**. The tone of each message may vary based on context — including the specific topic you're addressing and the likely emotional state of the audience. For example, a message about getting vaccinated to protect the people you care about may have a more positive tone than a message about the risks of getting COVID-19 while unvaccinated.

### COVID-19 Vaccine Clear Communication Tips:

- **Focus on a few key messages.** Consider what is “need to know” vs. “nice to know”.
- **Use words your audience understands.** Use plain language that people hear in everyday conversation. Avoid terms like “adverse vaccine events” and stick to more familiar language like “side effects.”
- **Write actionable content.** Focus on the behavioral steps you want your audience to take — what do you want people to do?
- **Emphasize community.** Tell your audience that even if they aren't worried about themselves or their families getting sick, they can help protect others by staying up to

date on COVID-19 vaccines. Help your audience feel helpful in uncertain times.

- **Validate readers' feelings.** Changing public health guidance and distrust in the scientific process has led many to doubt vaccine safety. Acknowledge those feelings in messages and direct readers to accurate sources to learn more.
- **Be honest about what you don't know.** Our understanding of COVID-19 is always evolving — and so is public health guidance. Be upfront with your audience about what we know and what scientists are still working to find out. Transparency is key!
- **Be consistent:** It's great to talk about COVID-19 vaccines through multiple channels — but it's important to make sure you're presenting consistent messaging across the board. If you work with local organizations on COVID-19 communication, encourage them to use consistent language in their messaging.
- **Encourage engagement and shared decision-making:** Communicating about vaccines isn't a one-way street. Invite your audience to ask questions and talk to their doctors. They will feel more invested in the process and more confident about getting vaccinated.
- **Focus on the benefits.** Trying to scare or shame people into health decisions can backfire. Use positive framing to highlight the benefits of vaccination.

For more communication guidance, visit [Health Literacy Online](#) and check out the [CDC Clear Communication Index](#).

The [Public Health Communications Collaborative](#) also includes up-to-date sample messages and resources for communicating about COVID-19 and vaccines.

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