

Community Engagement Toolkit

A resource to assist pharmacists in creating and
maintaining relationships with their communities



For Pharmacists

*"I promise to devote myself to a **lifetime of service** to others through the profession of pharmacy."*

– Oath of a Pharmacist

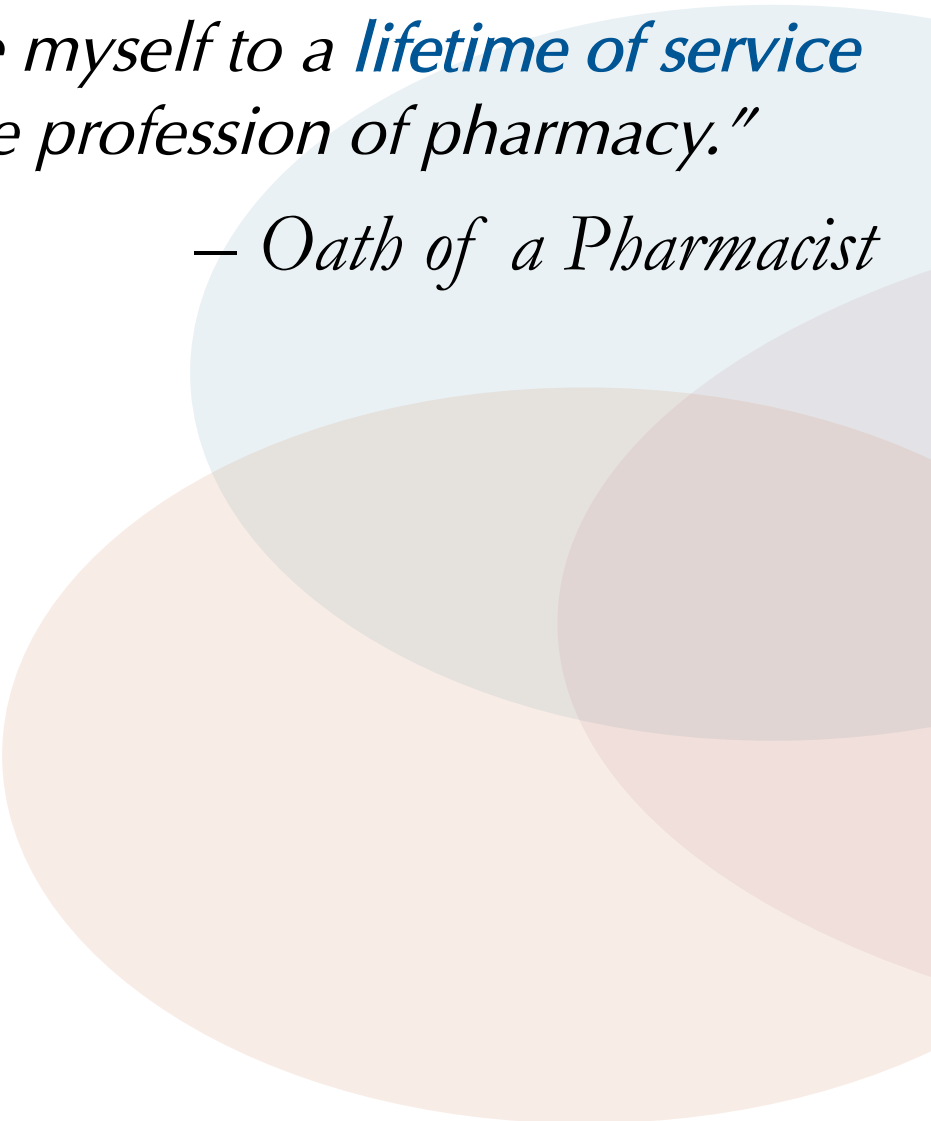


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Introduction

Why is it important for pharmacy professionals to be engaged in the community?

Community engagement is a critical component of the health and wellness of a community. Engagement in the community involves individual people, special interest groups, partnerships and coalitions working together to address issues that affect those who are living in a geographic location. Together, the groups can influence change by using resources to affect policy and to ensure the safety and health of the overall community. Each community has its own specific issues, and it is through engagement that leaders mobilize resources to make a difference in their local area.

Community engagement is important because it brings people together for a united cause. It helps to advance the community by improving programs through education and awareness and ultimately creates sustainability amongst programs and policies that help others.

Michigan Pharmacists Association (MPA) has put together some tools and resources that you can use to get involved in your community as a pharmacist and advocate. There are resources provided in this toolkit to help you navigate community engagement in many ways. For instance, you will find information that will help you interact with media outlets, write a press release and engage in social media. There are also tools to guide you through local association involvement as an MPA member, emergency preparedness and disaster response and other public health efforts. As a pharmacy professional, there is so much you have to offer your community!

Opportunities for Community Engagement

Local Association Involvement

Get Involved with Your Local Association

In addition to the long list of benefits provided directly by the Michigan Pharmacists Association (MPA), many members also have a local association with which they engage. Locals could be described as mini-MPA chapters; they have a governing Board, organize programs for members and seek to advance pharmacy. Local membership is also included as part of your MPA membership (i.e., it is free!) One key difference when it comes to locals is that all activities are done in your own backyard. You don't have to travel to Lansing or other areas of the state to take advantage of some of the benefits of MPA membership.

Involvement in the community is one of the ways in which locals advance the profession and give members a meaningful way to engage. Some examples of community engagement may be closer to pharmacy practice than others. Many locals routinely provide volunteers for free medical clinics in the area, who usually staff the pharmacy. Providing medication experts at brown bag programs and medication take-back events are also common among the locals. But all community engagement doesn't have to involve medications. Participating in fundraisers for local charities, sponsoring educational videos, staffing a pharmacy table at a career fair or doing some manual labor such as construction, cleaning or painting are all ways in which Michigan locals are helping their communities.

What if you haven't had a chance to get involved with your local? No problem! Start by reaching out to a few members of your local's Board. You can find their names and contact information on the MPA website at www.MichiganPharmacists.org/locals. Is your local not active enough? Perhaps it needs your help. With more members taking on just one small task, the local is bound to be more effective in the community.

New Local Representation

What happens if you don't have a local association? It's not unheard of for MPA members in non-local areas to reactivate a local, start up a new local or work with an existing local to become part of its footprint (i.e., annexation). In any case, the result is newly-active local territories. There are some differences, however, in how one might go about each process. Some suggested steps are described next.

Opportunities for Community Engagement

Annexation:

1. Reach out to the active local to determine if there is interest in annexing a nearby inactive territory. If there is no interest, or it is deemed impractical, consider starting a new local association.
2. If there is interest, contact MPA at (517) 484-1466 to obtain contact information for MPA members in the inactive territory.
3. Survey these members to determine their interest in becoming part of the existing local.
4. Document feedback from the existing local and the potential members and share with the Local Association Development Committee (LADC) to determine next steps. LADC can be contacted at LADC@MichiganPharmacists.org.

Starting a New or Reactivating an Existing Local Association:

1. Contact MPA at (517) 484-1466 to obtain contact information for MPA members in the inactive territory.
2. Survey these members to determine their interest in engaging in a new local, including willingness to serve on the new local's Board.
3. Convene a meeting of interested individuals to obtain commitment to the success of the local, including participation in local activities (and on the Board, if applicable). Also, agree to bylaws (LADC can provide a template if you contact them at LADC@MichiganPharmacists.org) and determine the amount of start-up funds to be requested from LADC.
4. Share a formal request to become a new local or reactivate with LADC, including request for start-up funds. Include documented commitment from members.

Be sure to use LADC for guidance throughout your endeavor.



Opportunities for Community Engagement

Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness

Pharmacy professionals play an important role in responding to emergency events such as a natural disaster or infectious disease outbreak. They can be called upon to urgently dispense medications from the Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) to protect the public and save lives.

- **Pharmacists are highly-visible and accessible members of the health care community, and involvement in emergency preparedness begins at a local, community level.** Unlike some other emergencies, pandemics are not localized to a single region of the country. Due to the widespread nature of pandemic emergencies, it is likely that all communities will be affected at some level. Because of this, careful and considerate local and community planning is essential to a successful response.
- **Pharmacies are an important part of any local response and pharmacy professionals are adequately equipped to assist the public during response efforts.** Michigan pharmacists have been actively engaged in community and statewide emergency preparedness efforts, including the first deployment of Michigan's mobile field hospital in 2011, to prepare for the potential need for their assistance in disaster response.
- **Pharmacists also protect their patients and staff by encouraging them to have a personal and family emergency plan in place,** including an organized record of medical information, supplies and communication mechanisms.
- **In their role as vaccination providers, pharmacists can help protect patients from the complications of seasonal influenza and prepare for the potential of pandemic influenza.** During the H1N1 outbreak in 2009, pharmacists were instrumental in vaccinating patients and providing them with pertinent information to make informed choices about their immunizations.

MPA has a dedicated Emergency Preparedness Coordinator who consults with other health personnel in the state to plan pharmacy response efforts and promotes pharmacist involvement in activities that allow them to become more knowledgeable, competent and better prepared to play a contributory role when called upon in an emergency situation. You are welcome to contact MPA Emergency Preparedness Coordinator, Greg Pratt, at GPratt@MichiganPharmacists.org or (517) 420-0789 for more information about community efforts and involvement in public safety and planning.

Opportunities for Community Engagement

In addition, pharmacy professionals are encouraged to utilize the following resources to get involved in emergency response and preparedness efforts:

- **Community Pharmacy All Hazards Dispensing Program Toolkit:** The information contained in this toolkit describes an important collaboration between community pharmacies and public health disaster response partners in the state of Michigan. Please take some time to review the links and information provided to learn more about this opportunity for your community pharmacy site(s).
- **Emergency Preparedness Resources for Pharmacists Guide:** This guide provides resources for pharmacy professionals who are interested in exploring opportunities in emergency preparedness. It includes a compilation of websites, articles, online training and general recommendations to assist the committed pharmacist in independently navigating the variety of resources that are available.
- **Local Health Department Emergency Preparedness Coordinators:** A good point of contact for any pharmacist who has questions regarding emergency preparedness activities in their community, or who would like to get involved, is their Local Health Department Emergency Preparedness Coordinator. This person is charged with building the plan to receive Strategic National Stockpile assets and to then mass dispense them to the community. They may be very happy to have a pharmacist contact in their community who agrees to serve as a resource to them on this or other projects. Getting to know one another pre-event is always good practice! To find out who your Local Health Department Emergency Preparedness Coordinator is, or to get in touch with them, contact your local health department.
- **Michigan Volunteer Registry:** The MI Volunteer Registry was launched in January 2006 by the Michigan Department of Community Health Office of Public Health Preparedness. This is a growing list of willing volunteers from the state of Michigan and out-of-state border counties/ The purpose of this system is to provide a secure, electronic environment for volunteers to indicate their volunteer interests and contact information. In the event of an accidental, natural or intentional public health emergency, or other public or healthcare disaster, the registry functions as the central location for volunteer information. The information can be queried and appropriate volunteers contacted by e-mail or text pager (if appropriate). Individuals interested in volunteering can indicate their interests and contact information in a secure, electronic environment. Using that information, volunteers will be contacted by authorized personnel. Doctors, nurses, pharmacists, behavioral health professionals, emergency medical services personnel, ancillary support staff and other individuals interested in helping are encouraged to register. Volunteers will also have access to current information regarding events, exercises and drills, or general knowledge and training.

Opportunities for Community Engagement

Immunizations

In 2013, the National Vaccine Advisory Committee (NVAC) revised the Standards for Adult Immunization Practice. The new standards call on all healthcare professionals, whether they provide vaccinations or not, to take steps to help ensure that their adult patients are fully immunized. Pharmacists have an important role and opportunity to impact adult immunization rates in their community. The standards were revised because:

- Adult vaccination rates are extremely low.
- Most adults are not aware that they need vaccines.
- Recommendation from their healthcare professional is the strongest predictor of whether patients get vaccinated.
- There are many missed opportunities for vaccination because many healthcare professionals are not routinely assessing vaccination status.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has developed guidance and tools, available online, for you to use in implementing activities around the standards.

In addition, pharmacy professionals are encouraged to utilize the resources below to track patient immunizations, to receive training to expand their practice and provide immunizations and to educate patients on importance of staying up-to-date on their vaccines.

Educating Your Patients

- **HealthMap Vaccine Finder**: The HealthMap Vaccine Finder promotes the availability of many forms and types of vaccines to the public. It was designed to help individuals locate practices that administer a wide spectrum of adult vaccines. All providers have the opportunity to enter information on their vaccine services into the database. If you already have a Vaccine Finder account, now is the time to enter your data! If you're not registered, visit the HealthMap website to sign up today. If you have any questions or need assistance, please contact Vaccine@HealthMap.org.
- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Vaccines and Immunizations**: Immunization schedules, recommendations, basic questions, education and training resources, and more.
- **Immunization Action Coalition**: Handouts for patients and staff, clinic resources, vaccine information statements, diseases and vaccines, talking about vaccines and other topics.

Opportunities for Community Engagement

- **MPA Pharmacist-provided Immunizations:** MPA offers a variety of immunization resources, including those specific to pertussis and seasonal flu as well as state-specific vaccine information statements that include details about the Michigan Care Improvement Registry and Michigan seasonal flu updates.
- **Vaccines.gov:** Basics, disease states, information by age group, getting vaccinated and travel information.

Immunization Training

- **Pharmacy-based Immunization Delivery Program:** The American Pharmacists Association (APhA) Pharmacy-based Immunization Delivery certificate training program (13th Edition) is an innovative, intensive and practice-based continuing pharmacy education activity, based on national educational standards for immunization training from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The purpose of this certificate training program is to prepare pharmacists with comprehensive knowledge, skills and resources necessary to provide immunization services to patients across the life span.
- The goals of this program are to:
 - **Educate pharmacists about:** the impact of vaccines on public health; pharmacists' roles in immunization; immunologic principles of vaccine development and immunizations; vaccine-preventable diseases and the vaccines used to prevent them; strategies for improving immunization rates and requirements for pharmacists who provide immunization services.
 - **Prepare pharmacists to:** read an immunization schedule and identify appropriate vaccines for individuals across the life span and with special needs; educate patients about the benefits of vaccines and dispel myths about vaccines; safely administer vaccines to patients via subcutaneous, intramuscular, intra-nasal and intradermal routes; operate an immunization service in compliance with legal and regulatory standards and partner with immunization stakeholders to promote immunizations and the immunization neighborhood.
 - **Direct pharmacists to resources necessary to:** promote public health through immunizations; access regularly updated information about vaccines and their use; effectively communicate with patients and other stakeholders about resources and operate an immunization service in compliance with legal and regulatory standards.

Opportunities for Community Engagement

Successful completion of the self-study component of the program involves passing the self-study assessment with a grade of 70 percent or higher and will result in 12.0 contact hours of continuing pharmacy education credits (1.2 CEUs). Successful completion of the live seminar component involves attending the full live seminar, passing the final assessment with a grade of 70 percent or higher and demonstrating competency in two intramuscular and one subcutaneous injection. Successful completion of this component will result in 8.0 contact hours of continuing pharmacy education credit (0.80 CEUs). For a complete list of learning objectives, and for all APhA accreditation information and policies, please visit the APhA website. For information about upcoming programs hosted by MPA, please contact MPA Office Operations and Building Manager, Cynthia Rowe, at (517) 377-0222 or Cynthia@MichiganPharmacists.org, or visit our online events calendar.

- **MPA Partnership for Immunization Training:** MPA will extend per person discounted registration rates for companies, retail chains and/or health-systems interested in implementing pharmacist immunization training within their organization. By assuming specific responsibilities associated with implementation of an APhA Pharmacy-based Immunization Delivery Program, and fulfilling minimum attendance requirements, discounted amounts may be applied to registration fees.

Immunization Clinics or Events

If you are interested in holding your own immunization clinic or event, consider the following opportunity to request funding from Michigan Pharmacy Foundation. In addition, MPA has developed a health fair toolkit that would assist you with this process.

- **Michigan Pharmacy Foundation (MPF) Grant Program:** MPF was established in 1992 with the mission of advancing pharmacy, pharmacy education and research, and promoting pharmacy practice to the highest level of patient care. In an effort to achieve this mission, the MPF Board of Trustees established a grant program and has awarded more than \$250,000 in grants since the program began. Grant funding has ranged from \$500 to \$40,000, with the annual amount determined each year based upon the success of the Foundation's fundraising efforts.

Opportunities for Community Engagement

- On average, the Foundation annually reserves \$5,000-\$10,000 to support worthy projects or activities in addition to the monies allocated for scholarship programs, student initiatives and its Leadership Academy. Projects funded in the past have covered a diverse group of applicants as well as a wide range of pharmacy initiatives. The Foundation has provided grant funding to students, pharmacy owners, individual pharmacists, college faculty, pharmacy organizations (both student and pharmacist) community pharmacies, hospital pharmacies and other pharmacy-related businesses.
- Projects have involved management of diabetes, asthma, kidney disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and anticoagulation therapy. They have addressed medication therapy management, medication compliance, emergency preparedness and immunizations; and have created leadership development opportunities, political advocacy networking and public relations awareness about the value of the pharmacist. One such immunization project was a Wayne State University American Pharmacists Association-Academy of Student Pharmacists chapter immunization program. For more information, please visit the MPF website.

Tracking Immunizations

- **Michigan Care Improvement Registry (MCIR):** The MCIR was created in 1998 to collect reliable immunization information and make it accessible to certain people online. MCIR benefits healthcare organizations, schools, licensed childcare programs and Michigan's citizens by consolidating immunization information from multiple providers. This reduces vaccine-preventable diseases, over-vaccination and allows providers to see up-to-date patient immunization history. MCIR also has the ability to assist with pandemic flu preparedness and can track vaccines and medications during a public health emergency. Pharmacies are strongly encouraged to report vaccine administration information to MCIR. This information assists MCIR in collecting reliable immunization information and making it accessible to healthcare providers online. For information on how to register your pharmacy/site and administrator, visit the MCIR website.

Opportunities for Community Engagement

Free Clinic Volunteer Efforts

Free clinics are another opportunity for pharmacy professionals to get involved in their community. Volunteer pharmacy professionals have an opportunity to interact with other healthcare professionals in an environment that differs from the traditional pharmacy setting that they're accustomed to. Volunteering can provide a rewarding experience, as you may interact with patients who will express their sincere gratitude for your professionalism and service.

Read the information below to find out more about the Free Clinics of Michigan and how you can get in contact with a location near you.

- **Free Clinics of Michigan (FCOM):** FCOM is a network of volunteer-staffed free clinics that provide healthcare services to the uninsured or medically underserved within the state of Michigan. In 1996, free clinic directors from Michigan and Illinois met to discuss how they might support each other in providing healthcare to the uninsured. Out of this meeting evolved the Free Clinics of the Great Lake Region (FCGLR), now a seven-state network of 250 clinics. Later in 2000, the Michigan clinics organized a subset of FCGLR, the Free Clinics of Michigan. FCOM is an organization that:
 - Supports the development of new clinics across the state
 - Acts as a resource to free clinics, offering assistance with policies, resources, programs and issues
 - Meets at least twice annually to address topics of common interest
 - Works with state officials and legislators to educate them regarding the needs of the uninsured and influence public policy
 - Seeks funding to support activities of FCOM and its members
 - Participates in and supports the activities of FCGLR, including the annual conference

Clinics around the state may be in need of pharmacist volunteers for various services. To view an up-to-date listing of free clinics by county, please visit the FCOM website.

Opportunities for Community Engagement

Health Fairs and Public Education

- **Health Fair Toolkit:** MPA has finalized a health fair toolkit to help providers host a health fair in their community. The tips in this toolkit are also valuable to setting up individual tables for public education as part of a larger health fair or outreach. Please utilize this resource for tips, timelines and suggestions! For more information and an update on the status of this resource, please contact MPA Manager of Advocacy, Governmental and Regulatory Affairs at (517) 377-0254 or Amanda@MichiganPharmacists.org.
- **Collaborating with Other Individuals and Organizations:** When you are looking to get engaged in your community, be sure to think outside the box! There are many community organizations and individuals who are either engaged in events already or are looking to become engaged. Many of these groups have the same goals: to keep communities safe and healthy. Working together in a community only builds the community up and helps most groups or individuals meet their goals and/or intentions. It is important to identify other community partners to share resources and social capital. Doing this in the community will only show other health professionals and nonhealth professionals the important role of pharmacists and pharmacy technicians in improving the health and wellness of all.



Engaging through Communication

Engaging Your Community through Communication

The following resources will assist you with communicating important messages, sharing event information and effectively impacting your community with a common voice.

Introduction

There are many ways to promote what you, your pharmacy or partner(s) are doing in the community. Do not be afraid to promote, market or inform others about your efforts. Promoting your community activities is important because it helps other community members who are not involved with the event, project or opportunity learn about it and encourages them to become engaged. Also, communication is key in making sure that the information about an event reaches the intended population. We cannot assume others know about the role of pharmacy in the community and all that it does to continually improve health and wellness; therefore, it is up to us to spread the word. Here you will find some tips on how to effectively communicate with the public about the pharmacist's and pharmacy's role in healthcare and ways to interact with the media and general public.



Engaging through Communication

Communication Tips: The 10 C's of Communication

No matter who you want to reach, make sure you review this checklist before you start your communication strategy.

- **Credibility** – Is your messenger credible? Is he or she a trusted and respected source of information with your audience?
 - Depending on the event or service being offered to the public, it may be helpful to alter the source of information or to collaborate. You may reach out to these other credible individuals such as respected local citizens, nonmanagement employees, educators, activist groups, industry officials, government officials or paid consultants.
- **Context** – Is the event a service you are providing to the community and does it relate to the audience attending the event?
 - This is important because if the message doesn't fit with the event you are hosting or participating in, the whole message will either be completely missed or misunderstood.
- **Content** – Is your message relevant to your audience?
 - Make sure that the message you create is relatable to the audience you are trying to reach.
- **Clarity** – Is your message simple and straightforward?
 - It is important to make sure that your messages and marketing are clear, simple and concise. Do not complicate the message with medical jargon and abbreviations. Make sure that the marketing or messaging does not complicate information and create confusion.
- **Consistency** – Is your message the same?
 - Make sure that the messages you create are consistent. As a general rule, people need to hear a message three times before they remember it.
- **Channels** – Use the channels of media that best reach your target audience.
 - For instance, if communicating to an elderly group, you may want to put messaging in the local newspaper or community calendar. For a technologically savvy audience, try using Facebook or Twitter. Consider fliers posted in locations targeted toward your audience (e.g., restaurants, churches, grocery stores, health clubs).
- **Customer Benefits** – In your messaging, address what the public will gain from your event or service.
 - Remind the public of the benefits of coming to your event.

Engaging through Communication

- **Compassion** – Does your audience know that you care?
 - This a perfect opportunity to build trust in the community by telling the public just how much you and other pharmacists and healthcare professionals care about their safety and wellbeing.
- **Captivating** – Does your message grab others' attention?
 - We live in a busy world, so it is more important than ever to create a message that will grab the public's attention and not get lost in the shuffle.
- **Cue to Act** – What is your audience supposed to do now?
 - Give your audience a call or duty to act. That action will typically be to engage in the event you are holding or the service being provided. Make sure they know what to do next.

Engaging through Communication

General Media Tips

- Sometimes a press release is not always the best method for getting out your message. For a more personal message, consider writing a letter to the editor or opinion editorial for your local newspaper. Include specific patient examples, or even better, enlist a patient to write a column/testimonial to support your message. For example, perhaps they could share how their pharmacist had an impact on their health and wellbeing (or that of a friend or family member). Do you have any examples of pharmacists in your area or the state who are practicing community engagement, providing a service, or going above and beyond for their patients? Gather patient success stories and pitch an article idea to a local media outlet.
- Post a public resource on your website or Facebook page listing dates or resources of interest. For example, list flu clinics at pharmacies or those pharmacies offering immunizations, and refer the media to this community tool. If a local pharmacy is having a special immunization event, promote the event to the press and invite TV stations. Be on hand to help coordinate.
- Promote services and activities to news outlets such as commercial and public radio/television stations and newspapers as topics for stories/interviews or items on community calendars. Many news outlets have phone numbers to call or forms on their websites for submitting content.
- Use the most recent or relevant data to support your message. Try to make the content specific to the audience. For example, including a quote from an association pharmacist or local pharmacist in that media distribution area.
- Coordinate your message with timely topics. For example, January is notorious for New Year's resolutions. Pitch a top 10 healthcare resolutions story, with thoughtful medication and lifestyle tips from a pharmacy perspective and include details about the community engagement of pharmacists or upcoming events.
- Use a monthly theme with a focus on a particular disease state as an angle to highlight how pharmacists are integral in treating that disease. For example, May is Allergy and Asthma Awareness Month. Use the press release to give helpful tips on treating allergy symptoms with over-the-counter medicines and what questions to ask a pharmacist about those treatments in order to avoid medication interactions. Or, during Michigan Pharmacy Week in October, utilize That's My Pharmacist campaign materials at www.ThatsMyPharmacist.com to help engage your patients, provide them with a personal medication card and encourage them to use you as their go-to resource for medication questions.
- Promote services such as blood pressure monitoring provided by health plans that patients may not know about. Encourage the public to participate in those services at the event you are holding.

Engaging through Communication

Key Messages Worksheet

To help develop the messages that you would like to share, it may be helpful to use the template provided. As stated in the 10 C's of Communication and General Media Tips sections in this toolkit, it is important to make sure that your message is clear and concise. This key message worksheet can help organize and support your thoughts specifically related to the event or service that you are promoting.

Worksheet

Key Message #1

The single most important statement I'd like people to remember is:

Talking Points

Here is why this is so important:

Key Message #2

The second most important statement I'd like people to remember is:

Talking Points

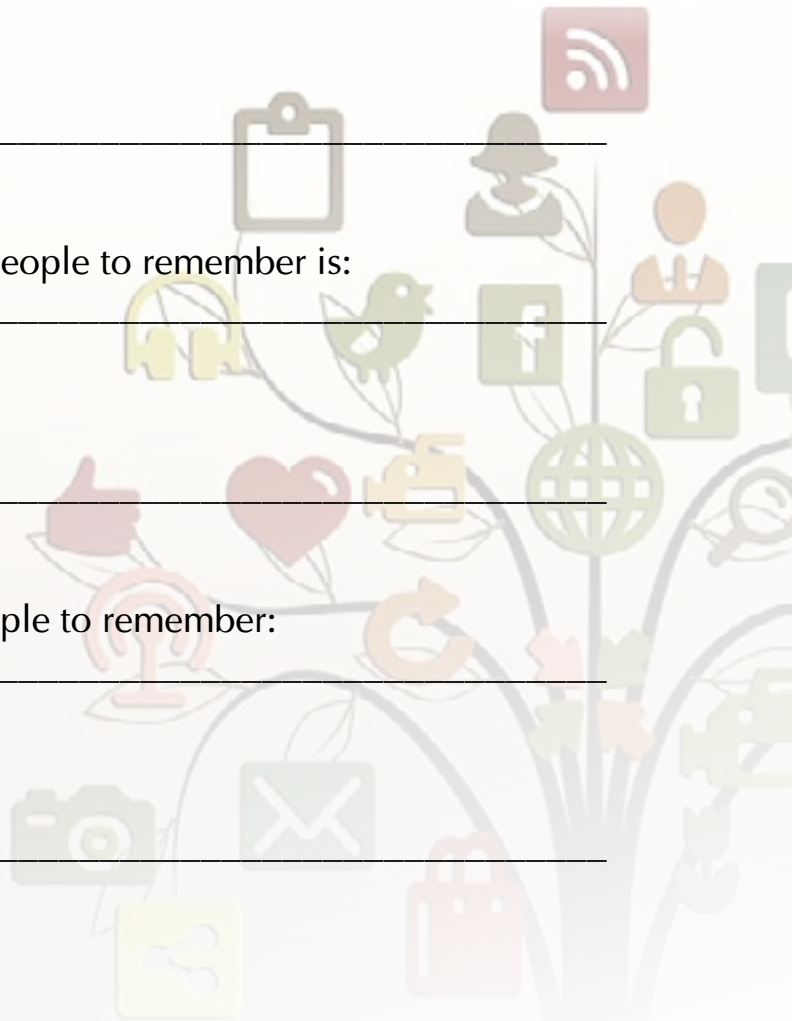
Here is why this is so important:

Key Message #3

The third most important statement I'd like people to remember:

Talking Points

Here is why this is so important:



Engaging through Communication

Establishing a Media Presence

The type of event you are holding, or the service you are offering, will be the determining factor of how or what you communicate to the public. The most important component is that you chose a method and communicate. It may also be advantageous to choose many methods or channels to communicate to make sure you are reaching the largest number of people in your target audience. Below you will find some examples of media types, sample messages and more!

Tips for Establishing and Maintaining Relationships in Print or News Media

- Discover who the key healthcare reporters are in your area.
- Hold one-on-one meetings with those key reporters and leave behind materials about the event you are promoting.
- When sending a press release, it helps to personalize it to the reporter or news service that you have made contact with.
- Avoid images and attachments if possible in e-mail press releases. It can kick e-mails to spam or cause them to be deleted altogether.
- Follow up with reporters to show appreciation for attention to the issue/event.
- Follow the media news outlets and reporters that you have talked to. When you see information about the event that you are holding, let them know! They like to know what a good job they are doing!
- E-mail correspondence to a reporter. You can call the news outlet to get an updated e-mail.
- If you have time, record your interactions with reporters, so you can follow up and be familiar with how they have been contacted or what issues they have already been educated on.

Ways to Communicate Through Media to Promote Your Event

It is important to establish a communication plan for your event. It can be as simple as making and printing flyers to be distributed or it can be as complex as developing strategies for print, social and other media, including days and times to post messages and write editorials. The event and your experience will determine what kind of media channels you chose to market the event or service. There are several ways to promote an event or service in the media. What follows are a few examples.

Engaging through Communication

Social Media - Facebook

Setting up a Page and/or Group on Facebook

- In general, a Facebook page to promote your event or service is the best way to go. Anyone can view it, post to it and you can invite people to like the page. They will see updates from the page in their news feed. To create a page, go to www.Facebook.com and click on “Create a Page” under the individual sign-up fields.
- A group can be useful for inviting a smaller number of participants. Group members are alerted when new information is in the group, and group members can be messaged directly. A group can be created when you are logged into your personal/individual Facebook account. Typically this option is located in the left sidebar when you are logged into Facebook.
 - Groups may be useful for getting information out to volunteers or teams of people.
 - Updates tend to show up as notifications rather than in individual news feeds.

Basics of Posting Information to Facebook

- Try to keep the post shorter because Facebook will cut off after approximately five lines of text and readers will have to click on “Show more” to see your full message. Post a URL link to a website that provides more information or that allows people to register for the event (if registration is required). This will help condense content.
- Example:

Interested in learning more about (INSERT DISEASE STATE)? Come to our (INSERT NAME OF EVENT) on (INSERT DATE AND TIME OF EVENT) (INSERT LOCATION) and get all your questions answered. For more information or to register, visit (INSERT URL)

(INSERT GROUP NAME HERE) will be hosting (NAME OF EVENT) on (INSERT DATE AND TIME OF EVENT) at (INSERT LOCATION). This event will focus on (INSERT PATIENT CARE STATIONS OR THEME). Please visit us online at (INSERT URL) for more information.

- Use pictures; they are engaging for the audience and can help preserve your message if you save a copy of the event flyer as a JPEG.
- Try posting at different times of the day to figure out when your audience is the most engaged.
 - **Recommendation:** depending on what you’re promoting, try to post once or twice a day during the week, and then only once a day around 10 a.m. on the weekends.
- The more people “like” a post and share it, the more likely Facebook is to put it in the news feed.
 - Facebook uses an automated program to filter content each person sees in their news feed, which means that when you post something, not everyone (not even all your friends) will see it.
- You can embed content into a post, which means essentially posting a link to another page you want the person to go to.
- Visit the following website for more information about embedding content: <https://developers.facebook.com/docs/plugins/embedded-posts>

Engaging through Communication

Creating an Event on Facebook

- Create an event and promote it. Promote it through your group or personal account, have your employees and coworkers share the event and invite the appropriate people to it. Word of mouth is one of the most effective methods of recruitment, so take advantage of free “word of mouth” promotions by having people you know like and share the event.
- You can create an event when logged into your individual Facebook account or when you are logged in as a page/organization. Click on “Events” in the left sidebar, and then “+ Create” on the next screen to begin the process.
- Make sure to have the event time, date, location and description filled out in the appropriate boxes of the event.
- Add a picture to the event cover. Make sure it’s relevant and that you have permission to use it.
- Make sure the event is marked as “Public” so that everyone (on and off Facebook) can see it when you promote it.

Engaging through Communication

Social Media - Twitter

Setting up a Twitter Account

- To create a Twitter account, go to www.Twitter.com and fill out the information in the “New to Twitter? Sign up” section.
- When you post content to Twitter, you are limited to 140 characters because Twitter is designed to provide real-time, short updates and help users gain insights into the latest news and happenings.
- The ideal length of a Tweet is 100 characters so people can retweet and add a comment of their own to yours.
- Example:

“We’re hosting a (INSERT TYPE OF EVENT) in the (INSERT NAME OF COMMUNITY) area on (INSERT DATE AND TIME) at (INSERT LOCATION). Go here for more info! (INSERT SHORTENED URL).”

“Happening tomorrow (OR OTHER FUTURE TIME, i.e., next week): (INSERT NAME OF EVENT) on (INSERT DATE AND TIME OF EVENT) (INSERT LOCATION). Go here for more info (INSERT URL).”

- Check Twitter for the most up-to-date size recommendations for picture dimensions.
- Make sure to use a shortened URL in these posts to save on character limits (see the section on URLs).

Other Social Media

LinkedIn

- LinkedIn is a great platform for social networking, but there is not currently any functionality to create events. You may consider promoting your event through LinkedIn, but you will need to have a page to link to in the post by URL.
- For the highest readership of posts, target a post once a week during the weekdays around 10 a.m. This is when the most users are on LinkedIn.

Pinterest, Instagram, Vine or YouTube

- These social media outlets are not as easy to use or useful for promoting events or services specifically. A considerable amount of time and thought will need to go into a marketing campaign for these more visual sites. Posting direct links is more complicated, and these sites are not the most effective way to get the word out to the most people about your event or services. These sites could be used, however, during or after your event to share photos, video footage and other media content, which could prove useful for promoting annual events.

Engaging through Communication

URLS

- One of the best things to do when sharing a URL as a link where people can access more information is to shrink it down, especially when you are Tweeting about an event or activity on Twitter where you have a character limitation. There are a few websites that can help you accomplish this.
 - **Tiny URL:** Allows you to customize your shortened URL (for example, you could use the name of the event and the year if it's a recurring annual event).
 - **Bit.ly:** Once you create an account (or sign in with your Facebook or Twitter account), this site will allow you to shorten links and track engagement.



Engaging through Communication

Press Releases

A press release is a document that is created to be sent to media outlets to communicate an event that is taking place or to communicate the details and success of an event that already occurred. Please see the sample below and use it to create a press release of your own.

Sample News Release/Template

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Month Day, Year

Contact: Name, Title

Phone Number

Title

Press release description in two sentences.

Include paragraphs that describe the event and give informative details such as where, why and who. Discuss the importance of the event and provide details that describe the event last year and the success it had. Write about why these kinds of events are important and what they do for the community. If you can provide quotes, that is great too!

Background information about organizations/professionals involved.

Engaging through Communication

Letter to the Editor/Opinion Editorial

The letter to the editor and/or op-ed columns are similar in that they are both written as opinion pieces. Typically, one of the main differences is that the op-ed is printed opposite of the editorial page because it may provide a perspective that is different from the editorial opinion of the media.

Sample Letter to the Editor

It's more important than ever to be proactive in your healthcare, and that includes vaccinations. Along with managing your medication therapies and educating you on staying healthy, trained pharmacists can also administer critical immunizations. As one of the most accessible healthcare providers, consider receiving your immunizations through your pharmacist.

This allows you to receive vaccines from the convenience of your local pharmacy with more accessible hours, often without an appointment or a long line in the waiting room. Shots are not just for young children, and there are many critical vaccines such as those for pneumonia and shingles that adults should receive.

Pharmacists can also make sure that any treatment or immunizations you receive will not interfere with other medication therapies. In addition, your pharmacist can help you make sure you are up-to-date on all of your immunizations.

Go into your local pharmacy and have a conversation with your pharmacist today!

For more information, visit www.ThatsMyPharmacist.com.

Engaging through Communication

Sample Opinion Editorial

When you think about substance abuse, most likely you think about the abuse of alcohol and illicit street drugs like cocaine, marijuana and heroin. But there is another form of drug abuse that poses a real danger to our loved ones. The abuse of prescription medications is quickly becoming a serious public health problem. Here are some sobering facts.

Every day, more than 2,500 teenagers abuse prescription medication for the first time.¹ Surveys conducted by the federal government show that 12 to 17 year olds abuse prescription drugs more than they abuse ecstasy, crack/cocaine, heroin and methamphetamine combined. Prescription drug abuse by teens is exceeded only by marijuana use.² Sixty percent (60%) of teens who have abused prescription painkillers did so before age 15.

The prescription drugs most commonly abused by teens are painkillers, prescribed to treat pain, depressants such as sleeping pills or anti-anxiety drugs and stimulants, mainly prescribed to treat attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).³

Sadly, teens often experiment with medications they find right at home. More than half of teens report that they obtained the medications they abused from a friend, family member or a medicine cabinet.

Many young people think that it is safer to misuse prescription medications than illegal street drugs. But that simply is not true. The misuse of these medications can lead to addiction, overdose and even death, and parents often are unaware that young people are abusing prescription and over-the-counter medications. Even when they do know, they don't know how to talk to their children about the dangers. Fortunately, there are steps we can take to help protect our children. The first place to begin is right at home. Keep track of medications in your home and make sure they are monitored. Encourage friends and relatives to safeguard medications in their homes. And you should also consult a pharmacist about how to properly dispose of medications that are no longer needed.

It very important to remember that prescription medications have a legitimate medical purpose and can be very beneficial when used properly under the doctor's supervision. Unfortunately, the illegal trafficking and abuse of prescription medications can interfere with the care of people suffering from debilitating pain from serious illness and injury by making it difficult for them to get the medications they need. We need to make sure that people who are under a doctor's care continue to get the treatment they deserve. It is time for officials at the federal, state and local level to call attention to this problem and help parents and families curb the abuse of prescription medications.

References:

- 1. Partnership for a Drug Free America/ ONDCP, "Teens and Prescription Drugs," February 2014.*
- 2. National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2014.*
- 3. Office of National Drug Control Policy, Prescription for Danger, January 2015.*

Engaging through Communication

Radio

If the community engagement activity you are involved in has enough funds to acquire radio spots, the following are some messages that you can use in conjunction with your event to promote the role of the pharmacist in the community and on the healthcare team.

Examples:

- 1. My pharmacist is always there for me, helping me to understand my conditions and how to get well. When I go to pick up a prescription, I get more than just my medication. My pharmacist makes sure I am armed with information about my therapy and that I will get the most from my medicine, even the over-the-counter drugs and herbal supplements I take. He helps protect me from any drug interactions or duplications and answers all my questions about how to get well. I depend on my pharmacist because he knows me, he knows my medication and he knows how to help me become healthy and stay healthy.*
- 2. As a person living with several medical conditions, I have to juggle many prescriptions during the day and week. But I don't have to do that on my own. My pharmacist has partnered with me to help me manage my therapy so that I get the most from each medication and maintain my health. Armed with their medication expertise and education, I can be in charge again and I am moving toward meeting my health goals through my pharmacist providing medication therapy management. Besides maintaining and even improving my conditions, my overall healthcare costs are actually decreasing because my pharmacist is helping me stay on track. My pharmacist is my central link to better health, and I am thrilled with the results.*
- 3. I thought that vaccines were just for children. But with the flu season we went through last year, I knew I needed to make sure to get my yearly influenza vaccine this fall. Instead of making an appointment at my doctor's office, I decided to go to my local pharmacy because of the convenience factor. My pharmacist answered all of my questions and gave me the vaccine protection I needed to stay healthy this winter. Plus, she recommended a few vaccines I didn't even know I needed as an adult, like those for pneumonia and shingles. I'm glad I can depend on my pharmacist to look out for my best interest and provide me the care I need.*
- 4. I didn't know how integral pharmacists were in healthcare until my mom ended up in long-term care. She was on a litany of medications and was suffering from multiple complications, including confusion to the point she didn't even know who I was. Her pharmacist did a thorough review of all of her medication and talked with me at length about options to keep her safe while improving her mental state and decreasing her pain. She led the way to have critical changes made in my mom's therapy. Our pharmacist ended up giving my mom six months of clarity before she passed away, and those are moments I will treasure always. By always putting my mom first, she gave us both the opportunity to say goodbye, and I'll never forget that.*

Engaging through Communication



Engaging through Communication



