



Adam Shapiro Public Relations

THE MESSAGE BOX: FRAMING YOUR MESSAGE FOR POLICY MAKERS

AGENDA

- × Introduction
- × MCH: In the News
- × Message Box Overview
- × Example
- × Try it Yourself
- × Exercise



INTRODUCTION

- ✘ “As we move into the 21st century, communication may well become the central science of Public Health practice.”

--Dr. Ed Baker

Director-CDC Public Health Practice Program Office
2001



INTRODUCTION

- ✘ “Our tendency is too withhold information too long for fear that it will cause panic, when, in fact, it’s the absence of information that is most likely to cause panic.”

--Dr. Thomas Glass

John Hopkins School of Public Health



MCH: IN THE NEWS

- ✘ *The New York Times*/Nicholas Kristof: Looking for families affected by maternal mortality
- ✘ International studies
 - + “US risk for maternal mortality is 1 in 4,800—one of the highest in the developed world. U.S. ranked 27th in the Mothers’ Index for More Developed Countries. The U.S. under-5 mortality rate is 8 per 1,000 live births. 29 states performed better than the U.S. on this indicator. ”
—Save the Children



MCH: IN THE NEWS

- ✘ Local, regional, state health stats
 - + *Washington Post*, Aug. 5: Virginia's infant mortality rate has dipped to its lowest level ever.
 - + "Today is the first bit of really good news we have that the efforts we are all undertaking on infant mortality are working," Gov. Kaine said. "I don't think it would be the norm that you would expect a drop of this kind in the midst of the worst recession since the 1930s."



MCH: IN THE NEWS

- ✘ H1N1

- + *Iowa City Press Citizen*: Doug Beardsley, Johnson County Public Health director, said “Right now it’s still relatively mild. The major thing is if students are ill, (parents should) keep them home. Separation is key in any disease control.”



MCH: IN THE NEWS

- ✘ Budget issues

- + *Atlanta Journal Constitution*: But recent budget cuts to public health have frayed that net in Georgia, according to health care professionals. Their concerns follow a 2007 report from a legislative committee that concluded Georgia’s public health system was in a state of crisis, hampered by inadequate funding and a shrinking pool of nurses amid growing demands for services.



MCH: IN THE NEWS

- ✘ Health Care Reform

- + America's Affordable Health Choices Act

- Prevention and wellness measures of the bill include:

- Expansion of Community Health Centers;

- Creation of community-based programs to deliver prevention and wellness services; and

- Funds to strengthen state, local, tribal and territorial public health departments and programs



REPORTERS' QUESTIONS

- ✘ "77 Questions Commonly Asked by Journalists During a Crisis," by Dr. Vincent Covello

- ✘ Journalists are likely to ask six questions in a crisis (who, what, where, when, why, how)

- that relate to three broad topics:

- + What happened;

- + What caused it to happen;

- + What does it mean.



MESSAGE BOX OVERVIEW

- ✘ Fits into a single sheet of paper
- ✘ At the center of the box is your core message
- ✘ Each side of the box contains a supporting message
- ✘ Total of 5 messages
- ✘ Messages answer all questions



MESSAGE BOX OVERVIEW

- ✘ “We are overwhelmed by information, so conveying a message that sticks is tougher than ever. If you can synthesize what you want to convey into a few key points, there's a better chance that those points will make it through the clutter. Using a triangle or a box to structure your message is more effective than talking points.”

--Michael Sheehan



MESSAGE BOX OVERVIEW

- ✘ Bridge statements include such sentence openers as:
 - “However, the real issue here is...”
 - “And as I said before, ...”
 - “This is an important point because...”
- ✘ With practice, you become in control of your presentation while being responsive



EXAMPLE /EXERCISE



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