

Communications—what to expect

The Communications team is here to help you create accessible, interesting and informative material rooted in best practices. To give you a sense of what that entails, here's a list of what we focus on when creating or renewing agency materials:

1. Clear messaging

- One main idea and just a few supporting ideas
- Important information first
- Content limited to “need-to-know” information (rather than “nice-to-know” information)

2. A reader-centered approach

- Speaks directly to your audience

This

You could get sick if you don't get your annual flu shot.

Not

Lack of a flu shot can cause adverse health effects.

- Action-oriented information that is specific

This

Talk to your provider about how you can get involved today.

Not

Get involved today.

- Active voice

This

Clients attend the group.

Not

The group is attended by clients.

3. Accessibility

- Short
- Informal
- Avoid technical jargon

This

High blood pressure

Not

Hypertension

- Reading level is between 4th and 6th grade
- Translated into Spanish

4. Relatability

- Specific examples
- Stories or quotes

This

Someone who is depressed feels sad, worried, or fearful for weeks at a time.

Not

Someone who is depressed has feelings of sadness or anxiety that last for weeks at a time.

5. Formatting

- Font size 12-14 at least (bigger is better!)
- Easy-to-read font

This

Health Care
Health Care

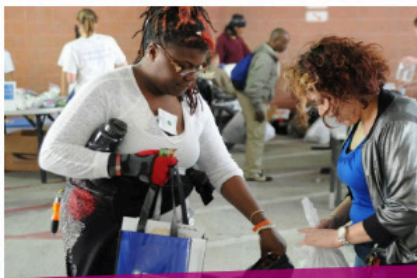
Not

HEALTH CARE
Health Care
Health Care

- Lots of white space between text
- Text broken up with bullets, headings and subheadings
- High contrasted colors and color-coordinated information

6. Visuals

- Photographs
- Diversity



DIGNITY

Fostering respect and compassion



AUTHENTICITY

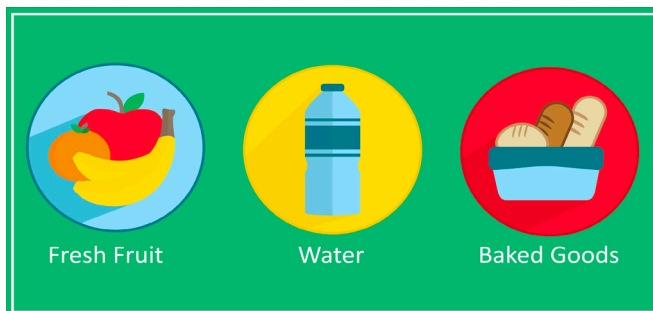
Practicing open and honest communication



HOPE

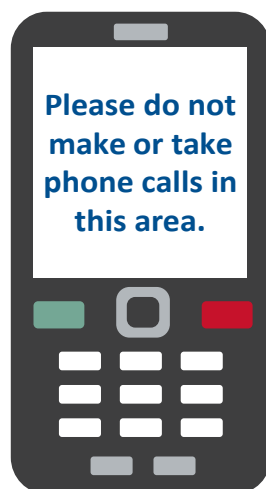
Finding and focusing on people's strengths

- Graphics and graphs



- Familiar and clear symbols

This



Not



7. Client input

If your project is something meant for clients, the Communications team will work with you to get client feedback. We may:

- Bring your project to a client group for discussion
- Ask a client to participate in a meeting to discuss your project

8. Agency alignment

- Message and tone support our [core values](#)
- Design follows [brand guidelines](#)

This



Not



- Language follows [written guidelines](#)

This

Health Care for the Homeless

Not

HCH

This

A person experiencing homelessness

Not

A homeless person

References

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [Simply Put](#), April 2009

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U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, [Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Everyday Words for Public Health Communication](#) May 2016

Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, [Toolkit for Making Written Material Clear and Effective](#), March 2012

Questions? Email: communications@hchmd.org

