

Some advice as you develop a Communication Plan.....

Why we need a Communication Plan:

- Ensures all members of the HEAL coalition are aligned and your messaging is consistent and on target.
- Helps your coalition to continually review and revise progress. Are you working to plan? Do you need to make revisions? How can you improve your strategies and/or tactics?
- Be sure to look at the needs of your residents, partners and staff. What do they need to know and/or do? How can you keep them more engaged and involved?

When you are building your plan, what is the information you need to include?

- Tell them who you are and why they should care. What are the goals of your HEAL coalition?
- Identify your target audiences. Who are you trying to reach and why do you want to reach them? Narrow it down. You probably don't want to reach all of the people all of the time.
- Are you trying to educate, recruit, or raise funds? Keep your messages short and easy to understand.
- What do you want your targeted audiences to do, and how will you know you are successful?

How are you going to reach your audiences?

- Are you using multiple channels, (websites, emails, mailers, social media, local meetings, fundraisers, neighborhood word of mouth?)
- Consider which channels are the most effective, efficient and affordable for your needs.
- You may need to use some or all of the above channels and frequent outreach to get your messages across.
- Do you need to communicate in multiple languages? Are there cultural issues you need to consider?

What do you want to tell them?

- If you are working in print, electronic or social media, develop a calendar of events and articles you want to share that illustrate the work you do and the results you want to achieve. What success stories can you share? Request stories from the staff, partners, residents and your audiences. What do your audiences want to learn? How do they want to participate?
- Pay attention to key events and be sure to communicate about them frequently before and after the event. Are you having a fundraiser or conducting a HEAL event? Be sure to list the "who, what, when, where and why" information to build awareness and participation.

Are you meeting your goals?

- You will want to measure the success of your communications plan on a regular basis.
- Check out your website analytics weekly.
- If you have a Twitter account, how many followers do you have?
- Are your audiences opening and responding to your emails or e-newsletters?
- Are you responding, when appropriate, to suggestions and/or constructive criticism in order to improve and evolve your communications?
- Are you and your team keeping up with technology?
- Conduct regular communication review meetings. In what areas and channels have you succeeded? Where do you need to improve? Are there strategies and tactics you should consider dropping or improving for lack of results?