

# Health Communications Short Course

May 7, 2025

Welcome & Health Communicators' Roles



GILLINGS SCHOOL OF GLOBAL PUBLIC HEALTH  
North Carolina Institute for Public Health



**NCDHHS**

**Welcome!**

**Please share information about yourself in the chat.  
You might include your name, pronouns, location,  
affiliation(s), role(s)...**

*Please note that we are recording today's session to share with anyone who misses it and for future uses of mini-presentations.*

# Welcome!

## FCs of Focus

- Communications
- Policy Development & Support
- Organizational Administrative Competencies
- Accountability & Performance Management
- [go.unc.edu/FCInitiatives](https://go.unc.edu/FCInitiatives)

### IN 2025,

The NC Foundational Capabilities Task Force, sponsored by the Division of Public Health under the Public Health Infrastructure Grant, will pilot several initiatives for the governmental public health workforce to strengthen the Foundational Capabilities in North Carolina.



Executive Leadership Short Course  
May 31, 2025



Foundational Capabilities 101 Webinar  
November 1, 2025



Early Career Leadership Program  
November 1, 2025



Aligning Reporting Requirements Technical Assistance  
April 24, 2025



Culture of Quality Improvement  
April 28, 2025



Implementation of Communications Strategic Plan  
April 2025



Public Health Policy Forum  
Starts April 11, 2025.



Policy Skill-Building Seminar Series  
May 2025



Communications Collaboratives  
May 2025



Health Communications Short Course  
May 2025

# Overview

## What to Expect in This Session:

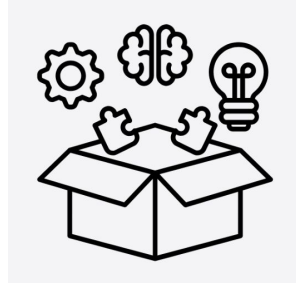
- Get familiar with the structure of the short course
- Connect with other health communicators across North Carolina
- Explore: Who are health communicators? Roles and real-life activities
- Discuss resource challenges — and how to at least partially address them

*Please keep your camera on as much as you can and engage through the chat and verbally.*

# This Short Course is Designed for YOU



Inspire and support deepening of understanding of foundational topics relevant to NC public health communicators



Provide real-time reference and easy access to related resources



Hold space for sharing and networking

**Special Thanks to the Contributors to this Short Course!**

# Health Communicators Short Course Structure

Session 1: Welcome,  
Health  
Communicators'  
Roles

May 7



Session 3:  
Communication  
Campaigns and Materials

May 21



May 14

Session 2: Engaged  
Health  
Communication

May 28

Session 4: Storytelling  
to Improve Public  
Health

Survey and Certificate

For additional  
information  
please see  
document  
linked to the  
calendar invite.



# Individual Session Structure

1. **Welcome & Overview**
2. **Mini-Presentations**
3. **Q&A, Sharing & Discussion**
4. **Resources & Closing Circle**

Please feel free to  
use the chat to  
**comment,**  
**share resources,**  
**ask questions,** and  
**more.**

# Mini-Presentations



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# Suzanne Metcalf



Suzanne is director of communications with the Division of Public Health in the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services and the CDC Foundation. She is a public relations and marketing consultant. Previously she held communications and partner engagement roles with Unlikely Heroes, Prevent Child Abuse NC and the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.

<https://www.dph.ncdhhs.gov/>

# Adrienne Ammerman



Adrienne is a social innovation startup founder and health communications practitioner dedicated to empowering health communicators with evidence-based, culturally competent, and measurable health information.

She is the Founder & CEO of Arclet, a national platform that helps local & state health communicators create and share trusted, community-focused messaging. Arclet is a U.S. National Science Foundation Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) grant recipient and an NC Idea grant awardee, supporting our work in public health technology and communications innovation.

[www.arclet.com](http://www.arclet.com)

# Who Are Health Communicators & Our Roles



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# Who Are Health Communicators

## We are:

- Strategists
- Translators
- Relationship builders
- Listeners
- Creative problem-solvers
- We come from a range of fields — and that's a strength.

# What's Really in the Job Description

- Social media manager
- Press contact, manage media and messaging
- Internal and external communicator
- Meeting wrangler
- Strategic advisor and guide communication strategy
- Emergency responder
- Research translator
- Copywriter, editor, designer
- Build community trust

**One person. Fifteen jobs. Sound familiar?**

# Does Public Health Communications Really Matter?

Health communication is not an accessory — it's a public health essential.

- Builds trust before, during, and after crises
- Makes science and policy understandable
- Connects programs and services to real people
- Counters misinformation with facts and empathy
- Helps people make informed decisions about their health

**If people don't hear it, understand it, and believe it — they can't act on it.**



## Trust in Public Health is High

**More than 80%** of North Carolinians say they trust the NC Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) and their local health departments to support their well-being.

Trust is strongest when people:

- Know their local health department
- Recall receiving information directly from us
- Understand how public health affects their daily life

When people **know us**, they're more likely to **trust us** — and act on our information.

# The Communication Connection

People who received **timely, clear, and relevant** communication from public health:

- Had **higher levels of trust**
- Were more likely to **follow guidance**
- Felt public health was **part of their community**

People want:

- Localized information
- Direct communication from *us*
- Culturally relevant messaging
- Fewer acronyms, more plain language

# What This Means For Us

- Communication isn't a side task — it's central to trust and public health success.
- Our audiences want our voice, not just national messages.
- Clear communication increases uptake, trust, and impact.
- This is our moment to define our value — and ask for the resources to match it.

# Resource Challenges and How to -at least partially- Address Them



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# Addressing Resources Challenges Now

**Start small. Start together.**



Use shared templates and tools



Ask for help from peer communicators and DPH Communications



Set realistic boundaries and priorities








Partner across teams to share the work



Reuse and adapt existing materials when possible

# Addressing Resources Challenges Long Term?

## Build the case for sustainable support.

-  Track and report communication outcomes
-  Present communications as part of strategic planning
-  Make the case for dedicated staff or shared services
-  Create professional development pathways
-  Align communications with department goals

# Q&A Discussion



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# Resources & Opportunities to Engage



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# Resources

**Public Health Communications Collaborative (Messaging, workshops)**

– <https://publichealthcollaborative.org/>

**NACCHO Communications Planning Resources (Toolkits & webinars) –**

<https://www.naccho.org/communications/health-department-communications>

**CDC Clear Communication Index –** <https://www.cdc.gov/ccindex/>

**Arclet (Customizable Health Comms Assets) –** <https://app.arclet.com/>

*(Use coupon NCLAUNCH to create free account at [www.arclet.com](http://www.arclet.com))*

**We will send out a follow-up email message with links to today's materials and the resource list.**

# Opportunities to Engage



**Come back to this space now through May 28th!**

Fill out the link in the chat to connect with the NCIPH FC Communications Team.

*Your participation helps build a stronger, more connected public health infrastructure across our state.*

# Next Session & Closing Circle



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## Closing Circle

**What is one takeaway as you leave today's session?  
Please put it in the chat.**