

Health Communications Short Course

October 1, 2025



NORTH CAROLINA INSTITUTE
FOR PUBLIC HEALTH



NORTH CAROLINA
FOUNDATIONAL
CAPABILITIES

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Look out for
Beacon Bee to
highlight
important items!

WELCOME!



Please introduce yourself!

Name, pronouns, location, roles,
etc. in the chat.

What's your favorite fall leaf color?

Please note that we are recording today's session to share with anyone that misses it.



Foundational Capabilities of Focus

- Communications
- Policy Development & Support
- Organizational Competencies
- Accountability & Performance Management

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.



Public Health Policy Forum
Every second Friday of the month.



PHuture Leaders Program
July-October, 2025



Foundational Capabilities Webinar
August 27 and September 9, 2025



Policy Skill-Building Seminar Series
September 2025



Aligning Reporting Requirements Technical Assistance
September 25, 2025



Culture of Quality Improvement Session
October 7, 2025



Health Communications Short Course
October 2025



Implementation of Communications Strategic Plan



Executive Leadership Short Course



Communications Collaboratives
Ongoing Monthly Meetings

Short Course Structure





Individual Session Structure

1. Welcome & Overview
2. Mini-Presentations
3. Sharing & Discussion
4. Resources & Closing

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



Overview

Please keep your camera on as much as possible and engage verbally and through the chat!

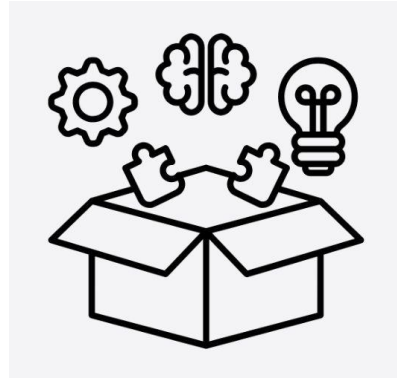
What to Expect in This Session:

- Get familiar with the structure of the short course
- Connect with other health communicators across North Carolina
- Advocate for the value of health communications within your workplace
- Discuss resource challenges — and how to at least partially address them

This Short Course is Designed for YOU



Support a deeper 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



What are you hoping to receive from this course?



What's a current need related to health communication at your workplace?

Mini-Presentations



Martha Anne Sperandio, MPH

Communications Project Manager

Public Health advocate for community engagement, healthcare access, community collaboration and health equity.

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Who Are Health Communicators?

Health Communicators Are

- Strategists
- Translators
- Relationship builders
- Listeners
- Creative problem-solvers





What's *really* in the job description

Internal and external communications

Social media manager

Strategic advising and guiding communications strategy

Research translator

Build community trust

Meeting wrangler

Press contact for media and messaging

Emergency responder

Copywriter, editor, designer

One person. Fifteen roles. Sound familiar?

Does Public Health Communications Really Matter?



Health communication is not trivial – it's a public health essential.

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

Health Literacy



- Individual health literacy refers to skills related to obtaining, understanding, and acting on health information
 - Made up of various types of literacy, such as reading/writing, scientific literacy, numeracy, media literacy, and more
- Applies at individual and broader levels (interpersonal, organizational, structural)
- Helpful to consider health literacy in strategic messaging, as part of navigating mis/disinformation, and working in and with communities to strengthen health communication...our topics for today!

Health Literacy Tools

- Everyday Words for Public Health Communication, CDC
- Public Health Communications Collaborative
- Frameworks Institute

What tools or resources would you add?





Amy Joy Lanou

***Director, NC Institute for Public Health
Professor, Public Health Leadership & Practice***

Passionate about social connectedness, inter-disciplinary teaching and learning, health policy, and more.

[Amy Joy Lanou, PhD - UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health](#)



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System Strengths

- NC DHHS as a trusted information source
- Statewide network of health communicators
- Customers need information
- NC Foundational Capabilities Task Force focus on Communication

Resource Challenges

- Limited time for health communication
- Funding is tight for all essential services
- Technology changes mean upskilling is important

Strengths & Challenges

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 as public health communicators — and ask for the resources to match it.



Let's hear
from you!



How have you advocated for health
communication in your role?



What was successful?

Q&A with Presenters

Resources & Opportunities to Engage

Resources



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

- Public Health Communications Collaborative (Messaging, workshops) (<https://publichealthcollaborative.org/>)
- CDC Clear Communication Index (<https://www.cdc.gov/ccindex/>)
- Frameworks Institute ([Resources Archive - FrameWorks Institute](#))
- [North Carolinians Trust Public Health | Division of Public Health](#)
- Arclet (Customizable Health Comms Assets) (<https://app.arclet.com/>)
 - Use coupon NCLAUNCH to create free account!

Opportunities to Engage



Come back to this space now through October 29

Join a Regional Communications Collaborative

Continue connecting with health communicators in your region, building effective campaigns with Arclet, and creating regional messaging for your communities.

Next Session: Engaged Health Communication

What is one takeaway as you leave today's session?

Please put it in the chat.

Thank you!

Martha Anne Sperandio
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