

Showcasing Your Public Health Program

A How-To Guide for Writing Effective
Success Stories



Table of Contents

- Section 1: Role of Success Stories
- Section 2: Rules for Writing
- Section 3: Success Story Criteria

"You don't write because you want to say something, you write because you have something to say."

--F. Scott Fitzgerald

Why do we need Success Stories?

Success Stories are a tool that can be used to increase the:

- Visibility
- Credibility
- Accountability of the program to its funding source, stakeholders, the public

Block Grant funding has increased because of Success Stories!

Success Stories:

- Identify public health Issues
- Describe the Interventions that were carried out to bring about change
- Document the Impacts that were made

Possible Audiences:

External

- Taxpayers
- Funders
- Decision makers
- Reporters
- Partners/Collaborators
- Public Health Colleagues

Internal

- Your Boss
- Your Communications Department
- Your Peers

Distribution methods:

- Web sites
- Information kits
- News releases
- Brochures
- Speeches
- Newsletters
- Legislative reports



PROMOTE PROTECT PROSPER

South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control

NEWS RELEASE

Division of Media Relations
2600 Bull Street
Columbia, S.C. 29201
(803) 898-3886
www.scdhec.gov/news

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 16, 2006

DHEC unveils new features to help smokers Quit for Keeps

COLUMBIA – South Carolinians now have access to an improved range of comprehensive tobacco treatment services through the S.C. Tobacco Quitline, the state Department of Health and Environmental Control announced today.

“The S.C. Tobacco Quitline has offered cessation counseling since 2004,” said Dr. Lisa Waddell, DHEC Deputy Commissioner for Health Services. “These enhancements take the quitline to an improved level of service with a new, easy-to-remember phone number; increased hours of live coverage; individualized educational materials; Internet counseling and participant forums along with a fax referral system for health care providers.”

Waddell said the program also includes a personalized quit plan and multiple proactive phone-based treatment sessions with a highly trained tobacco treatment specialist called a Quit Coach.



Examples

Pitch your Success Stories to news organizations

Post stories on your Web site

Morning News Online

Florence Morning News,

3-13-06

Chesterfield County plan mixes faith, health

MORNING NEWS
Monday, March 13, 2006

CHERAW - It didn't require a huge leap of faith for the Rev. Johnny McLendon to look out at his predominantly black congregation on Sunday mornings and realize that many of his parishioners were suffering from obesity brought on by poor lifestyle choices.

"It was clear the health of many of our members was at risk," said McLendon, who leads the flock of Fisher Hill Community Baptist Church. "The statistics seemed to match up with my fears."

Numbers provided by the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control indicate that about a third of Chesterfield County's population is completely sedentary. Almost half of residents report being overweight. This is even more chronic in the black community, which is likely to be more overweight than its white counterpart.

To combat this, church leaders coordinated with DHEC to create the "Search Your Heart" program, a faith-based initiative created by the American Heart Association. The goal: to increase heart health and prevent strokes in black communities.

"Since starting the 'Search Your Heart' program, Fisher Hill Community Baptist Church has offered aerobics classes and marked off a walking trail on its property," said Lori Creech, chronic disease program manager for DHEC Region 4.

"The church is also offering healthier food choices at social gatherings and providing monthly educational sessions to members about stress, stroke prevention and the impact of nutrition and physical activity on health," she said.

All this is important, Creech said, because churches represent the heart and soul of the communities in Chesterfield County.

"That makes church the perfect place to make residents aware of their health and to educate people about the resources available in their county," she said.

Because of these efforts, Fisher Hill Community Baptist Church received the 2005 Dennis Community Health Award for excellence in community health education programs. The church plans to make its health programs available to the greater Cheraw community in the near future and challenges other churches in the area to address health and lifestyle behaviors.

S.C. DHEC: Education & Public Participation - Windows Internet Explorer provided by DHEC Ne...

http://www.scdhec.gov/education.htm

File Edit View Favorites Tools Help

Google Search

D H E C South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control
We promote and protect the health of the public and the environment.

Health Environment Services Permits Regulatory A-Z

Education & Public Participation

I'm a Climate AMBASSADOR
www.epa.gov/climateforaction

Action for a cleaner tomorrow

Success Stories

- Heart Disease & Stroke Prevention
- Preventive Health & Health Services

RACE AGAINST THE HAZE

Health

- ABCs of Safe Sleep
- All-Health Team
- Camp Runn' Gin
- Fruit & Vegetable Costumes
- Healthy Schools
- Nutrition: Menus, Recipes and Activities
- Oral Health Curriculum
- Real Men Checkin' It Out
- Tobacco Prevention

The Success Story's Primary Mission

In current times with budget woes and funding cuts, the Success Story's chief mission is to help us protect and save funding.

- The audience we are trying to reach consists of decision makers including legislators.
- Keep your audience in mind as you write your story.

Section 2

Rules for Writing

“Think like a wise man but communicate in the language of the people.”

--William Butler Yeats

Rules for Writing



- 1) Use a simple, straightforward style
- 2) State your case
- 3) Don't omit important details
- 4) Use the right word
- 5) Be concise
- 6) Use good grammar

Grammar Tips

- Avoid run-on sentences
- Avoid wordiness
- Keep a dictionary and thesaurus nearby
- Use your computer's spell-check
- Use consistent style
- Proofread the next day or later



Section 3

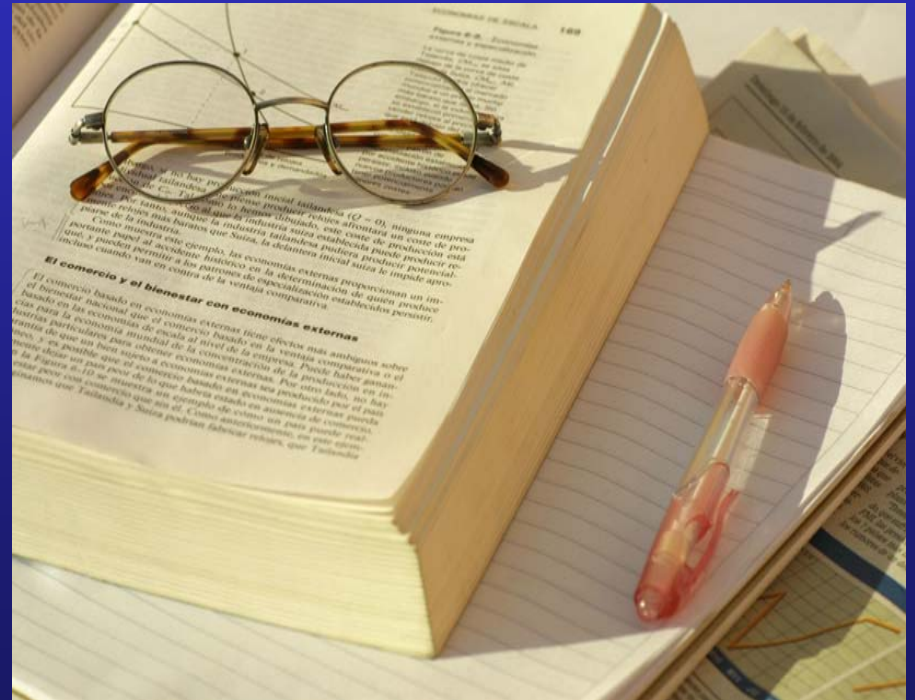
Success Story Criteria

“The finest language is mostly made up of simple unimposing words.”

--*George Eliot*

Three Sections

1. Issue
2. Intervention
3. Impact



Issue

This is where you set up the story.

- What is the health burden in dollars, loss of life, decreased quality of life?
 - Essentially, what is the problem?

Create an emotional hook

Paint a picture of the people behind the statistics

- Who was at risk?
- Who was suffering?
- Who was outraged?



Emotional Hook Strategies

- Finding that real person
- Interviewing tips
- Story Banks



Back up the “hook” with data

- Be specific
 - Use local (regional) data if possible
 - Use state data
 - Go to national as a last resort

Choose meaningful statistics that illustrate the issue (the problem)

Possible data sources

- DHEC Health Services Epidemiological Data & Reports

http://www.scdhec.gov/hs/epidata/county_reports.htm

- DHEC Division Web pages

<http://www.scdhec.gov/hdsp>

- DHEC Public Health Statistics and Information Services

<http://www.dhec.sc.gov/co/phsis/biostatistics/>

Data sources cont'd.

- S.C. Office of Research and Statistics

<http://www.ors.state.sc.us/>

- Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC)

<http://www.cdc.gov>

- Partner Organizations

<http://www.americanheart.org>

<http://www.tobaccofreekids.org>

Intervention

- Essentially, what was solution or the way you went about trying to solve the problem?
- *Who* carried out the intervention?
- *What* was the funding source?
- *What* were the elements of the intervention?
 - *When* did it occur?
 - *Where* did it take place?
 - *Who* was served?
 - *How* was it carried out?

Impact

What were the specific outcomes?

- How much money was saved?
- How many people did the intervention impact?
- How many lives were saved?
- To what extent were efficiencies increased?

Tie back to the issue. How did you help alleviate the problem?

Title

Must grab the reader's attention

- Include an active verb
- Avoid acronyms
- Think of it like a mini sentence



Don't Forget to:

- Include all required sections:
 - ✓ Issue
 - ✓ Intervention
 - ✓ Impact
- Use bullets
- Keep your story to one page in length
- Include contact info.

Successful Stories...

- Are newsworthy
- Are broadly distributed
- Make a powerful point through emotional, personal hook
- Make a difference because they get read and remembered

Unsuccessful Stories...

- Contain incomplete thoughts, sentences or sections
- Fail to identify and focus on a single health issue
- Lack emotional appeal
- Fail to follow the established format
- Fail to identify how funds contributed to results

In conclusion...

- Remember to quantify as much as possible.
- Be patient... Effective success stories typically require several rounds of revisions!



Contact Information

Bureau of Community Health & Chronic Disease

Public Information Team:

Mary-Kathryn Craft

(803) 545-4466

craftmk@dhec.sc.gov

Joann Minder

(803) 545-4501

minderjm@dhec.sc.gov