Making the case for addressing climate change

A review of select message guides for communicating about climate change and public health



berkeley studiegroup

b**m**sg

Acknowledgments

This report was written by Diana Guardado, with support from Ingrid Daffner Krasnow, Katherine Schaff, Lori Dorfman, Heather Gehlert, and Lunden Mason. It was made possible by funding from the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) under Agreement No. 24-10253 with the CDPH Office of Health Equity. The analyses, interpretations, or conclusions reflected in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the positions or views of the California Department of Public Health.

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Introduction

In a world where the impacts of climate change on racial and health equity touch many — if not all — aspects of our lives, we need effective strategies to communicate about them. That's why many health and research organizations that study climate change and/or strategic communication offer recommendations for effective messaging on how climate intersects directly with health equity and public health.

To help public health professionals identify messages that can effectively communicate the health-related challenges associated with climate change, Berkeley Media Studies Group (BMSG) sought out existing message guides that 1) prioritize addressing the public health and racial equity considerations of climate change action and 2) provide high-quality, actionable resources for engaging communities, policymakers, and partners.

These message guides each offer clear, research-backed strategies to help advocates, health practitioners, and policymakers craft compelling narratives that inspire action. Whether you need quick, ready-to-use messages or in-depth frameworks, these resources will equip you with the tools to make the case across diverse audiences.

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Message development 101

When it comes to <u>developing messages</u> to talk about the health impacts of climate change or any other important topic, we recommend the following simple formula:

- 1) Name the problem.
- 2) Talk about why it matters.
- 3) Tell people what should be done and who should do it.

Although these components do not have to be in this order, every successful message should contain them. Once you have addressed the problem, why it matters, and the solution, you will have the core of your message, which then can be expanded or distilled, depending on the format you plan to use to deliver it.



Here's a guide on what to include in each component:

1. Name the problem.

Clearly state your concern, i.e., what the problem is and how it affects people.

- What are the issues your community is facing that are leading to poor health outcomes?
- What data can you share that show how people are being affected?

Even though you might be tempted to share a lot of the available data on climate health, resist that urge. Instead, focus on the aspect of the problem that your proposed solution will address.

Remember, it is impossible to be comprehensive and strategic at the same time.



2. Say why it matters.

Use shared values, such as ingenuity, interconnectedness, or pride of place, to describe why you care. BMSG's research shows that the values component is often absent; solutions are named but not justified at a values level.

Public health professionals may state a fact or show data — e.g. "X number of people are experiencing homelessness," or "X number of people are hungry" — but this is an expression of the problem, not why it matters and what it means to our society at large. Value statements should indicate why you and your target should care about this issue.

Naming your values can help mobilize others who hold similar values, as a way to reach your target.



3. Emphasize the solution.

A common messaging pitfall is that messengers often expend so much energy communicating about the problem that when the inevitable question about the solution is asked, they are ill-prepared to answer it. It's more effective to answer with a specific, feasible solution, which will usually be an incremental step toward the larger goal or vision. Spending time speaking about your solution and how it will work can invigorate your audience and remind them that all problems are not intractable and that something can be done to solve or address it.

Guides for those short on time

These message guides provide quick tips and examples that practitioners can easily integrate into social media posts, talking points, and other climate change work.

Updated Message Guidance for Health Professionals on Advocating for Rapid Adoption of Equitable Climate Solutions

-Medical Society Consortium on Climate and Health



This guide offers **eight key recommendations**, each accompanied by sample messages. It also presents polling data that shows growing public awareness and concern about climate change, noting that support for climate policies is at its highest recorded levels. The guide's values-based, solution-oriented approach aligns with BMSG's message strategy recommendations. Most importantly, this resource outlines steps similar to BMSG's Layers of Strategy — that help us identify the problem, solution, and those who have the power to enact change. Among the key messages are that climate impacts are happening now — not in the future — and that climate solutions bring immediate improvement to health in the local community. The same group is also the author of "Encouraging Public Officials to Lead on Climate and Health," another valuable climate health messaging resource.

Key lessons

- Establish who you are and your values.
- Establish the climate-health connection: Climate change is already harming our health, and, without rapid and concerted action, many more lives will be lost or harmed — especially those who are most harmed by our current systems.
- Establish who is harmed first and worst: We are all vulnerable to the harms of climate change, but some of us are more vulnerable than others.



Digital Toolkit: Climate Action

-We Make the Future Action

DIGITAL TOOLKIT Climate Action
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Although not explicitly focused on public health messaging, **this simple and digestible guide provides sample messages** that include values, solutions, history, and dos and don'ts — messages that could be adapted for the public health context. It gives examples for communicating how large corporations and some elected officials perpetuate the drivers of climate change. The guide also includes videos, graphics, and captions ready to be shared on social media. The guide uses a helpful mnemonic, "Values, Villain, Vision," to frame the key components of effective climate messages. It also includes helpful tips on how to proactively talk about race.

Sample message

America has always been a yes-we-can kind of place. We led the way into space and onto cell phones and the internet. Today, the next big thing is clean energy: affordable, local wind and solar power made right here and now, across [the United States] in California and Texas, lowa and North Carolina. Clean energy to power our lives at home and work, create high-wage work in [the U.S.], and free us from the outdated fuels that pollute our air and water and change our climate. [The U.S.] can lead us again in the new energy future, with innovations that will fuel a cleaner, safer, and better world for our families.



-Adapted from "Digital Toolkit: Climate Action"

Climate Communication: 10 research-backed tips

—Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health

Communicati	on
	🗇 Janp In Section
Heres About Wark =	Climate communication: 10 research-backed tips
Researces = Team None Evolts Get trubied = Subaribe Get in touch	Wet to be non-effective whon taking with patients of the juddle about the health effects of dataset abouty? If y these exherce-lacked rep from <u>Data Penet</u> , <i>i</i> , Polis, F. Anging Chain and Dates of the <u>Chainer Charmacetaria Beauset</u> , <i>i</i> at the University of Chargo, and <u>Beaus Sains</u> , a cleans theory and have equivate Harvard 71. Charlos Sainski, <u>perior for Charlos, Joseph Andreaset</u> , and an emergency readicing physician of <u>Bassachawata General Fragutal</u> .
Tip 1: Frame climate as a public health issue	Emphasize near-term hauth benefits of climate-change mitigation measures. For example Everyons will breathe cleaner, healthier air as we transition away from food fisels.
Tip 2: Co-create with your audience	Don't assume you know what they need and ward-do your research. Then keep tasking and iterating as you go along.
Tip 3: Pick a trusted messenger	People's values and identities affect who they trust and how they make choices. So take some time to figure out who the commenty outs its trust in.

This quick 1-pager highlights 10 research-backed tips for framing climate change as a public health issue and channeling feelings into actions. It notes the importance of credible messengers whose values and identities reflect those of the audience.

Rapid Response Memo: Mobilizing Americans After a

Climate Disaster

—We Make the Future's Climate Cohort, ASO Communications, HIT Strategies, and Lake Research Partners

DAG	
KAF	PID RESPONSE MEMO 🎽
	Mobilizing Americans After a Climate Disaster
Introd	uction
abroa conse are m flash j	alling of millions of Americans, appliciply forced to iterative in toxic analysis from wildfree dirty Luncin is a tark minimor that we all given this planter and on the unequal quartors of our current climate catastrophe. Shared experiences with a climate disaster ments in time where public controlournees on climate issues at usually high. In these ports, we have a greater opportunity to shine a light on the weakly corporations make and anime public will control to the solutions that we call.
ASO C acros	ent qualitative research* conducted by We Make The Future, Lake Research Partners, and communications just days before the Canadian wildfres, we learned that many Americans a recear and places are primed and ready to demand government action on climate and ntability for the free, floods, and fumes corporations have caused.
camp and m	he visceral impacts of the outcomes of destroying our climate on display, we urge algorers, communicators, and community leaders to use the following guidance to mobilize own our base and persuadable audioness to call out for action and leadership that will it our climate, our families and our futures.
Findir	gs: Effective Calls to Action
•	Even in the midit of a polyable dataset, people need a fast arrays that are not of merger surve top tacking content our problem in order to be better the. Schönhe calls to action, such as holding fossil that corporationa accountable in the atternant of the events with a substang fossil and to compare the substance of the substance of the substance of the substance of the substance of the substance of the substance of the substance of the substance of the substance of the substance of the substance of the substance of the substance of the substance of the substance of the substance of the substa
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This guide aligns with BMSG's recommended components of effective messages, such as including values, naming the problem, and presenting a solution. This is a straightforward memo that helps readers get a quick understanding of the top-level items they should include in an effective message to leverage how the public is primed for messages that name the villain and inspire a positive vision for the future after a climate disaster, such as a flood or fire. It recommends combating cynicism by naming past victories achieved.

Key Messages and Guidance

—The Medical Society Consortium on Climate and Health



This guide asks messengers to name the role of fossil fuel CEOs and politicians in perpetuating climate change. It also provides **tested messages about the root causes of climate change.**

Sample message

We all want to live in safe, healthy, stable communities, but as a [doctor / nurse / etc.], I know that fossil fuel pollution is harming our health and causing climate change. That threatens our communities and our health. We are seeing more smog and air pollution, stronger storms, and hotter days. Fortunately, we've also seen that a clean energy future, with cleaner air and water and healthier people, is possible. There is widespread and growing support for this transition, and we've seen communities all around the country making it a reality.

Problem
Solution

Values

-From "Key Messages and Guidance"

Guides that connect climate change to health

These guides provide messaging strategies for public health practitioners, health care providers, and others who want to communicate the health impacts of climate change.

Real, Urgent & Now: Communicating the Health Impacts of Climate Change

-Climate and Health Alliance



This brief messaging guide is packed with usable information and examples. It equips health practitioners and their partners with effective communication strategies to frame climate change as a public health issue. **The guide provides general recommendations, dos and don'ts, example messages, and key messaging principles to motivate action**. It also highlights the severe health impacts of climate change — from respiratory diseases to mental health stressors — and offers practical ways for health practitioners to advocate for change.

If you are pressed for time and need examples, this guide is a great place to **start**.

Communicating on Climate Change and Health: Toolkit for Health

Professionals

—World Health Organization

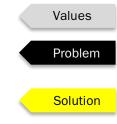


Communicating on climate change and health Toolkit for health professionals

This toolkit is designed for health practitioners, including doctors, nurses, public health officials, advocates, researchers, and students. It includes key facts, storytelling techniques, sample messages, and case studies. **The guide emphasizes the urgent health impacts of climate change, including extreme weather events, air pollution, vector-borne diseases, and mental health stressors.** It also highlights the cobenefits of climate action, such as cleaner air, improved physical activity, and community resilience.

Sample message

Climate change is one of the biggest health threats of the 21st century. As health practitioners, our role is to protect people from the health effects of climate change. Climate change will especially impact the health of many of our patients, like children, elderly people, people experiencing disadvantage, or people with disabilities or chronic illness. Making our workplace sustainable by prioritizing renewable energy, active transport, and protecting green spaces will help us become more resilient during extreme weather events. All in all, sustainable healthcare is good for the planet and good for our budget.



-From "Communicating on Climate Change and Health: Toolkit for Health Professionals"

Let's Talk Health and Climate: Communication Guidance for Health

Professionals

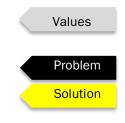
-Climate for Health, a program of ecoAmerica



This guide starts by highlighting vulnerabilities to climate change, such as limited resources, preexisting health conditions, and systemic inequities, and their impact on children, older adults, and communities of color. **It synthesizes social science research and message testing to help health practitioners communicate about climate change as a public health issue.** The guide provides key messages, language recommendations, talking points, and sample speeches to effectively frame climate solutions as health priorities. Additionally, this guide focuses on audience engagement strategies, emphasizing values-based communication and community involvement.

Sample message

We would love to leave our children and future generations a healthy place for them to raise children of their own. Our communities are experiencing notable climate impacts, including rising temperatures, irregular rainfall patterns, higher produce prices, and intense storms and heat waves, all of which impact health. We can move away from the dirty fuels that make us sick and shift toward safe, clean energy like wind and solar.



-From "Let's Talk Health and Climate: Communication Guidance for Health Professionals"

Changing the Story About Park and Green Space Equity: A Messaging

Guide for Advocates

-Berkeley Media Studies Group (BMSG)



BMSG's message guide on park and green space equity provides essential messaging strategies for public health advocates, emphasizing how park and green space equity intersects with climate change, racial justice, and health inequities. Climate change exacerbates inequities in access to parks, worsening extreme heat, air pollution, and environmental stress.

This guide helps communicators frame increasing green spaces as a climate resilience tool and provides examples of using values-based messaging, metaphors, and community-centered narratives. It also offers practical tactics for engaging policymakers and

media to advocate for climate-smart, equitable green spaces that promote health and social justice.

"This new narrative will need to encompass the joy of the world we want to see, not just the harms we need to rectify in the short term."

-From "Changing the Story About Park and Green Space Equity: A Messaging Guide for Advocates"

Guides that center racial equity in climate communication

These guides focus on effective climate messaging that explicitly addresses racial equity and highlights systemic injustices, uplifts community-driven solutions, and ensures that climate narratives are inclusive, empowering, and action-oriented.

<u>Full Narrative Strategies for Climate Migration</u> + <u>resource guide</u>, <u>worksheets</u>, webinar recording, and blog

-Narrative Initiative



These resources outline a **strategic communication framework at the intersection of climate justice and migrant justice**. Designed for organizers, advocates, and cultural strategists, it offers narrative guidance on how to shift public understanding around climate-linked displacement by centering human dignity, collective care, and practical solutions. The deck highlights harmful

narratives to avoid (e.g., fear, chaos, scarcity) and introduces messaging strategies that foreground community resilience, interdependence, and values-based storytelling. It also includes dos and don'ts, along with multiple real-world examples.

"Audiences long for a better way forward and a future where everyone can thrive."

-From "Full Narrative Strategies for Climate Migration"

Sample key lessons —excerpted from the Narrative Initiative

Dos 🗸	Don'ts 关
Frame migration as part of the solution and a form of adaptation to climate change.	Don't use crisis language when talking about climate-linked mobility.
Refer to people first.	Don't label people, e.g., don't refer to "asylum seekers," "refugees," or "migrants" without context.
Assert human rights.	Never repeat harmful frames, even in negating them. Don't say: It is "not illegal to seek asylum," "not a threat," or that there "is no need for fear," etc.

Messaging Guide: Mobilizing Towards Climate Justice

—We Make the Future's Climate Cohort, ASO Communications, HIT Strategies, and Lake Research Partners

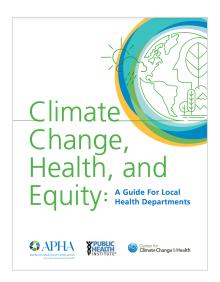
ESSA	GING GUIDE
obilizir	g Towards Climate Justice
Introd	uction
Despite	escalating disasters and unequal consequences of the climate catastrophe, too few
	ins list "climate change" as a top concern, with many feeling powerless to create
	To combat this lack of agency and urgency, we must name the villains who are
	ible for these disasters – Big Dil, fossil fuel CEOs, and the politicians they buy – and fight to past successes that were achieved because of collective action. As
	es who organize for climate justice, we must offer up a clear, compelling picture of
	n energy future enticing enough to animate Americans to act to achieve it.
By effe	tively telling this story, we can mobilize people to take action for a future fueled by
	that's not just clean, but in our hands, and build support for solutions that benefit
	of color among communities most impacted by the climate crisis. Our shared
	nces of climate disasters offer moments of heightened public awareness where we her shine the light on who is really responsible: wealthy corporations and the
	is they buy.
	ise the following recommendations, based on research conducted by We Make the
	Climate Cohort, ASO Communications, HIT Strategies, and Lake Research Partners,
	tively activate our base, persuade the conflicted, and reveal the opposition as in order to deliver critical victories
outiers	In order to deriver critical victories.
	1

This concise and practical **messaging guide offers research-backed strategies for mobilizing support for climate justice**. It includes key messaging recommendations, dos and don'ts, and sample messages to help advocates effectively communicate about climate solutions. It places a strong emphasis on racial equity, incorporating the <u>race/class narrative</u> to highlight systemic injustices and community-driven solutions. The guide also provides supplemental resources, including webinars, rapid response guides, and focus group findings, making it a valuable resource for those needing ready-to-use examples and messaging frameworks.

Sample key lessons —excerpted from Mobilizing Towards Climate Justice			
Embrace 🗸	Replace 🔀	Why	
Publicly owned utility providers Nonprofit utility	Comparisons to other public services, like schools or libraries	Comparisons to existing public goods don't prove convincing, likely because they aren't consumer goods.	
Corporate utility providers Fossil fuel CEOs	Local utility companies Private utility providers	Remind listeners these are wealthy corporations, not neighborhood entities.	

Climate Change, Health, and Equity: A Guide for Local Health Departments

—American Public Health Association



This guide centers health equity and climate change, with a focus on how climate change disproportionately impacts the health of low-income communities and communities of color. It **emphasizes how local health departments can be at the front lines of communicating about climate change in real-time with communities.** This resource also provides snapshots of how to conceptualize air quality, extreme weather, and pollution in our day-to-day lives and includes helpful, ready-to-use examples.

Climate Communications Bootcamp

—American Public Health Association

Catalog :	 Climate Communications Boot 	
Clim	ate Communications Bootcamp	
	uary 14, 2024 climate and health experts mee in Washington, DC to build skills around delivering key climate and health ing, as well as how to communicate and engage with policymakers, media and other key audiences.	
The day	is broken into three sections. View each section to find out more about the presentation and the speakers.	
2. Wh	yreaching policymakers monter yreaching the media and public matters nata change, health and equity message framework.	
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8	Why reaching the media and public matters Presentator: Edward Matketh, MPH, PHD - Moderator, Brely Copeland, Della Gorçalves, Natale HJsury, Relacca Leber, 52 min 0 sec	>
8	Climate change, health and equity message framework Presentation: Suril Sataria Patel, 16 min 16 sec	>
0	Resources Sector: 3 Documents	>
=	Earn Continuing Education Credits - Climate Communications Bootcamp > Femboo Sector: 3 Advestments & Centificaes & Gurvys	

This is a three-part video series on how to deliver key climate and health messages and engage with policymakers, the media, and other key audiences. For those interested in comprehensive training on climate change messaging, these hour-long videos illuminate the political landscape and how to frame climate change as an equity and public health issue. The video series includes messages from the Kresge Foundation's "<u>Climate Change, Health, & Equity:</u> <u>Message Framework</u>" (see next page).

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Climate Change, Health, & Equity: Message Framework

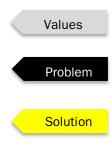
-The Kresge Foundation



This guide is **designed for engaging policymakers**, **decision-makers**, **public health practitioners**, **and health system leaders who influence climate and health policy**, and includes worksheets to help readers identify their core message, problem statements, values, and solutions. It also serves funders and community-based organizations seeking to integrate racial and social justice into climate change advocacy. It frames climate instability as a threat to public health, economic stability, and national security, urging collective action to redesign policies and practices that drive inequities.

Sample message

Our opportunity and ability to thrive — as individuals, families, communities, and as a country — is in danger because of the increasing instability of the climate. Pollution is dirtying the air, harming our health, and scientists agree that burning fossil fuels is causing harmful climate change. To protect everyone's health, we need to safeguard the air we breathe and the water we drink, as well as the places we spend time — like schools, hospitals, churches and places of worship, parks, community centers, supermarkets, and stores — and the forests, grasslands, and natural areas on which we all depend.



-Adapted from "Climate Change, Health, & Equity: Message Framework"



Further reading: Data and tools

To shape climate and health messaging, it's essential to ground our work in both local context and public sentiment. The tools in this section help identify which communities face the greatest climate-related health risks and why. Paired with polling and research data from leading national institutions, these resources offer insight into how people perceive climate change, who they trust, and what motivates action.

Local data on health equity and climate change

Climate Change & Health Vulnerability Indicators for California (CCHVIs)

-California Department of Public Health

The Climate Change and Health Vulnerability Indicators can be helpful in identifying the people and places that are more susceptible to adverse health impacts associated with climate change. Through the CCHVIz interactive data visualization platform, users can explore 21 indicators, spanning environmental exposures, population sensitivity, and adaptive capacity, at the county level.

California Healthy Places Index (HPI)

-Public Health Alliance of Southern California

The California Healthy Places Index (HPI) is an interactive online data and GIS mapping tool that allows users to easily visualize the social and economic conditions that shape health in each neighborhood in California.



Polling data

Climate Change in the American Mind: Beliefs & Attitudes, Fall 2023

-Yale Program on Climate Change Communication

This national survey by Yale and George Mason University captures how Americans currently think and feel about climate change. Key findings show that 73% believe global warming is happening, with nearly half reporting personal experiences of its effects.

American Climate Perspectives Survey 2024, Vol. I

—Climate for Health, a program of ecoAmerica

This report of ecoAmerica's American Climate Perspectives Survey explores public attitudes toward climate change, government responsibility, and the motivations that drive support for climate solutions.

A Global Review of Research on Effective Advocacy and Communication Strategies at the Intersection of Climate Change and Health —George Mason University Center for Climate Change Communication

This comprehensive global literature review synthesizes decades of research on how public audiences, health professionals, and policymakers understand and respond to the health impacts of climate change.



Anything missing? If you have a climate change and health messaging guide you would like to use that we missed, please let us know at <u>guardado@bmsg.org</u>.