

CDC DUIP Opioid Campaign Expansion *Rx Awareness* Earned Media Plan

May 9, 2019

Purpose

The purpose of this plan is to outline the approach for increasing CDC's visibility as a leader in addressing opioid use, overdose deaths, and prevention at the national and state levels. What follows outlines recommendations for significantly expanding earned media coverage of the *Rx Awareness* campaign, CDC's broader work on opioids, and CDC-funded grantees working on opioid overdose efforts in the states. This plan is intended to complement the approved paid media plan and the social media plan (in development). All proposed media relations efforts will amplify Phases 1 and 2 of the paid media plan (Phase 1: Expansion of existing assets into new states; Phase 2: New campaign materials in other states with high rates of prescription opioid overdose deaths), as well as identify national and regional earned media opportunities.

Goals

- Maximize earned media coverage of CDC's opioid awareness, prevention, and treatment messaging with a focus on the *Rx Awareness* campaign and CDC-funded state opioid prevention efforts.
- Identify additional earned media opportunities at the state and national levels, in coordination with CDC leadership and testimonial participants.
- Identify key national media opportunities—and the tactics to successfully carry them out—when CDC releases new data or new assets for the campaign (e.g., new *Rx Awareness* ads.)

Strategy

- **Media relations.** Work with reporters to engage them about the *Rx Awareness* campaign and available resources for further reporting on opioids. Leverage CDC's relationship with national media outlets (e.g., CNN) to educate CDC beat reporters about the campaign and how it complements the national opioid prevention strategy.
- **Message amplification.** Leverage state grantees as spokespeople about the campaign and resources for state-specific data and other information. Coordinate with grantees' state and local partners who can promote the campaign in their work with media.
- **On-the-ground exposure.** Identify media and speaking opportunities for CDC experts and/or current and new testimonial participants, especially in key markets identified in Phases 1 and 2. This includes conferences and events where media are likely to be present.

Objectives

- Amplify the paid media campaign by securing earned media coverage in target markets that coincide with ad buys.
- Increase consumer knowledge about the dangers of prescription opioid abuse, dependence, and overdose through expanded earned media coverage of these topics.

- Obtain media coverage that focuses on using nonopioid medications and treatments for pain management.
- Promote the *Rx Awareness* website (or funded state website, where/if applicable).
- Increase media use of CDC *Rx Awareness* resources (e.g., testimonials, social media assets, speakers).

Target Markets

During Phase 1 of the campaign expansion, ICF Next’s earned media efforts will focus on increasing opportunities and placements in the four expansion states identified by CDC: Maryland, Utah, Tennessee, and Nevada. We will aim for media opportunities in the largest markets in each state and complement those efforts with targeted outreach to reporters and outlets in smaller, harder-to-reach markets that overlap with the campaign’s target audiences (e.g., military base cities, rural areas).

During Phase 2 of the campaign expansion, we will focus our earned media efforts on the remainder of the top 10 highest opioid overdose death states (outside of the four expansion states): West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, Rhode Island, New Mexico, Washington, D.C., and Ohio. As in Phase 1, our goal will be to secure positive coverage of the *Rx Awareness* campaign and CDC’s messages in the largest markets in each state, and supplement with targeted outreach to outlets that reach special populations critical to the campaign.

Throughout both phases, and especially during launch of the new campaign assets, we also will seek national coverage of the *Rx Awareness* campaign and CDC’s overall efforts to address the epidemic. As explained in more detail below, target media will include print, digital, and broadcast outlets.

Key Messages

Earned media efforts will promote key *Rx Awareness* messages to augment existing resources, testimonials, and interviews by CDC staff. The message content will focus on:

- The prescription opioid overdose epidemic by target audiences (e.g., tribal, seniors, veterans, pregnant woman) to include compelling facts, real-life examples, statistics, and local community impacts.
- Solutions, advice, and recommended safety measure for preventing prescription opioid overdoses
- Information on state grantee programs and related campaigns.
- Recommended actions for individuals and communities to address the epidemic.
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Earned Media Plan Implementation

Campaign expansion into Maryland, Utah, Tennessee, and Nevada

To best complement efforts to place paid media assets in the four expansion states identified in the paid media plan, ICF Next will identify key media outlets and influencers in markets within those states

(Maryland, Utah, Tennessee, and Nevada). We will perform a media scan of existing coverage on opioid-related issues in each of these states to initially identify key print, broadcast, and online reporters and outlets that are likely to be receptive to *Rx Awareness* pitching efforts. For example, Nashville’s NewsChannel 5 recently launched a [Conquering Addiction](#) campaign aimed at bringing awareness to the opioid issue throughout the state. In Utah, ABC4 in Salt Lake City has dedicated [news coverage and regular specials](#) on combatting the opioid epidemic.

Exhibit 1. Earned Media Implementation



With CDC’s approval, ICF Next will collaborate with state grantees to identify key media outlets and influencers, as well as local spokespeople who can discuss their state grant work in the context of CDC’s broader opioid work. State grantees also can identify people in recovery or who have completed recovery and are willing to share their story with the media about their experiences with prescription opioids.

The following are tactics that ICF Next will tailor to each of the Phase 1 states with the goal of increasing engagement with reporters and disseminating *Rx Awareness* resources:

- Identify opportunities based on paid media placements to pitch testimonial participants and other *Rx Awareness* resources based on known factors driving opioid abuse.
- Determine effective messages based on population differences in counties compared to urban populations.
- Conduct a media scan of prescription opioid coverage and trends in key markets. Pursue news and editorial coverage with leading media outlets/beat reporters.
- With CDC approval, collaborate with the *Rx Awareness* state grantee to share resources and identify opportunities to expand media coverage.

Medium-Specific Engagement Strategies

ICF Next initially will focus our media outreach efforts on Maryland, Utah, Tennessee, and (Phase 1 target states) and then expand to generate local and national coverage in states with the highest opioid death rates (see Table 1, Top 10 States by Prescription Opioids Deaths). Earned media tactics will include specific engagement strategies based on mediums. Unless otherwise specified, we will employ the strategies below to garner coverage in the Phase 1 states and the remainder of the top 10 states, as well as national placements, when appropriate.

Table 1. Top 10 States by Prescription Opioids Deaths ([Data Source: CDC](#))

State/City/Region	Ranking (deaths per 100,000)	Largest Markets Within State
West Virginia	17.2	Clarksburg, Charleston
Maryland	11.5	Baltimore
Utah	10.8	Salt Lake City
Kentucky	10.2	Louisville, Lexington
Tennessee	9.6	Nashville, Memphis, Knoxville
Rhode Island	8.8	Providence
Nevada	8.7	Las Vegas, Reno
New Mexico	8.5	Albuquerque, Santa Fe
Washington, D.C.	8.4	D.C.
Ohio	8.4	Cleveland, Cincinnati, Dayton, Columbus

- Print and Digital:** Engagement activities will include convening deskside briefings and editorial board meetings for CDC officials; identifying new contacts to expand CDC’s media list; identifying and establishing relationships with “opioid” beat reporters; and identifying opportunities to amplify local coverage and interest in *Rx Awareness* issues through distribution of resources, current messaging, and promoting the testimonial team to supplement print and online coverage.

Some examples of national media engagement opportunities include:

- Pitch select materials to NBC News correspondent Kate Snow, who is leading the network’s One Nation Overdosed reporting.
- Pitch select materials to *USA Today* healthcare reporter Jayne O’Donnell, who is leading the paper’s “I Survived It” initiative.

In Phase 2, ICF Next recommends exploring media partnerships with NBC Universal and potentially other national broadcast outlets in the Washington, D.C., media market (proposal to be submitted separately for consideration).

- Broadcast TV:** CDC has a wealth of existing visual elements to offer broadcast outlets interested in covering the *Rx Awareness* campaign, including available on-camera experts (CDC officials, Injury Center subject matter experts, and testimonial participants), testimonial videos, campaign trailers, and high-quality images. The ICF Next earned media team will offer broadcast outlets these assets and ensure that our approach complements both paid media placements and ongoing network and local programming surrounding the opioid crisis.

A satellite media tour (SMT), combined with a radio media tour (RMT), would be an effective way to reach several key markets in a matter of hours. A media tour could even be conducted with an *Rx*

Awareness testimonial participant who could team up with a CDC official to participate in interviews in each of the top 10 states.

- **Radio:** Drive-time radio (during both the morning and evening commutes) is a great way to reach a captive audience of listeners in target markets in the campaign expansion states. The campaign’s existing audio testimonials can help radio producers build a story on CDC’s efforts to prevent opioid misuse and overdose. ICF Next recommends organizing an RMT, combined with an SMT, to efficiently reach millions of listeners in key markets in the expansion states. The RMT will be designed to target specific geographic regions and radio formats to complement paid media placements, with a focus on outlets with high market penetration and demographics that align with the campaign’s target audiences. The lead tour spokesperson(s)—who would conduct dozens of pre-arranged, back-to-back interviews—could either be a senior Injury Center official, one of the campaign’s testimonial participants, or both.

Additional Proactive Earned Media Outreach Tactics

As mentioned above, ICF Next will engage key media outlets in target markets by identifying reporters and newsrooms that have a history of covering and reporting on opioid-related topics. This list will also include trades and blogs that often seek comment from CDC but tend to be sympathetic to the chronic pain advocacy community. Proactive, ongoing engagement with these outlets may help to ensure accurate and less biased coverage.

Media engagement tactics could include:

- Creation of an editorial calendar based on national health observance days and months (see Table 2, *Observance Opportunities*). Develop news hooks for *Rx Awareness* messages to coincide with specific observances.
- Produce and place feature and matte articles for national and local print publications that reach specific, vulnerable populations important to the *Rx Awareness* campaign (e.g., pregnant women, veterans, young adults, older adults, rural populations, American Indians and Alaska Natives).
- Produce op-eds and letters to the editor for local and state media markets to advance *Rx Awareness* messaging. Pre-write and pre-approve the core language and then tailor for rapid response to news about a high-profile death, overdose, or someone entering treatment.
- Produce and place op-eds for national print publications read by key opinion leaders and stakeholders, with a focus on defining the state of the opioid epidemic, the goals of the CDC Guideline for Prescribing Opioids for Chronic Pain, and the value of CDC collaborating with state and local officials to create positive change and save lives.

Table 2. Observance Opportunities

Observance Opportunities	
May	Older Americans Month
August 31	Opioid Misuse Prevention Day
September	Drug-free Pain Management Awareness Month
October	Lock Your Meds Day
October	National Prescription Drug Take-Back Day

- Disseminate audience-specific messages that have a specified frequency (e.g., quarterly, monthly, weekly). These messages would be distributed in local and state markets in support of monthly observances and for periodically determined release dates.
- Develop Media Kits to include digital resources, testimonials, facts, story ideas, and a calendar based on opioid-related health observances throughout the year.
- Identify earned opportunities to distribute the *Rx Awareness* assets, including testimonial resources.
- Collaborate with the Association for Health Care Journalists or other organizations supporting journalists to host workshops, regional media briefings during future conferences on how to properly report on the opioid crisis, similar to the Cancer Research in the Media workshops that the National Cancer Institute’s Communications Office hosts.

We also suggest ongoing pitching of CDC’s National Center for Injury Prevention and Control leadership, including onsite interview opportunities and editorial board meetings planned around travel by Dr. Deb Houry and Dr. Baldwin to conferences and events. These opportunities would be coordinated with CDC communications staff. Earned media support would be provided for opportunities based on collaboration with CDC’s Office of Communications for access to conferences and speaking schedules. The following list is an example of opportunities where pitching for interviews could be supported:

Table 3. CDC Injury Center Leadership Speaking Opportunities

Date	Event	Attending
May 14–15	2019 Pfs/DDPI Awardee Meeting (Atlanta)	Dr. Grant Baldwin
May 22–23	Alabama TBI Conference (Birmingham)	Dr. Grant Baldwin

Message Amplification Via Key Partners and Influencers

ICF Next will identify key partners/stakeholders, including state grantees and other public health organizations, that are able to amplify CDC’s opioid education/awareness messaging. We recommend reaching out to the following influencers as a first step and offering campaign resources, such as key messages, media lists, national data, matte articles, and access to digital resources, such as *Rx Awareness* testimonials.

Outreach Resources

To support outreach and engagement, ICF Next will develop resources to arm partners with key messages and other promotional materials, including:

- Media production resources
- Library for “evergreen” story ideas
- Blogs and owned media content
- Content for ORE
- Loaded flash drives and links shared with media outlets for media toolkits, including digital assets
- Public service announcements (donated airtime)

- Radio live-read scripts for station reading (donated airtime)
- Media lists
- Outreach scripts for elected officials and stakeholders

Table 4. Targeted Partners and Key Activities

Influencer/Partner	Objectives/Activities
State grantees’ media communication leads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify populations and messages to amplify with earned media opportunities. For example, we will offer outreach engagement strategies with state grantee media leads and will share enhanced media contact lists developed through research and media scans.
Select state grantee health and medical media partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a quarterly teleconference call(s) to provide background and on-the-record updates about progress being made via funds from CDC and materials supplied by the <i>Rx Awareness</i> campaign.
State health/clinical advocates (e.g., hospitals, state/local health departments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with state and regional public health agencies to identify earned media opportunities, trends related to Rx Expansion opioid use, and campaigns or programs for collaboration to promote CDC key messages. • Establish a communication network across partner groups to share best practices and identify communication needs in promoting <i>Rx Awareness</i> messaging.
State and Local Elected officials/public information officers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify Governors, state agencies, and communities with strong opioid campaigns/outreach efforts and seek collaboration opportunities, earned media, placement of testimonial participants, and CDC engagement.
Current and future testimonial participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a Speakers Bureau for engaged testimonial participants, like Devin, and other advocates with compelling stories to tell (e.g., JJ Yeley). ICF Next will provide media training for members. Once trained, spokespeople could be on call to speak about the <i>Rx Awareness</i> campaign at conferences, meetings, and other high-profile events around the country.

Reporting and Measuring

ICF Next will provide CDC with a weekly **Earned Media Activities Tracker** for visibility. The tracker will include news hooks (such as monthly health observances or new research related to the opioid epidemic), earned media opportunities for CDC staff, scheduled interviews, and an updated tabulation of earned media placements.

Using Cision’s Advanced Analytics, Critical Mention, and Google News alerts, we will track media impressions, tone, coverage trends, and increases in website traffic. Tracking audience exposure to CDC’s messages, channels, and resources can help identify how particular activities, such as digital buys, media pitching, social media posts, and participation in events and conferences, can reach targeted audiences. The measurements will indicate the effectiveness of communications tactics and interventions over time.

Table 5. Earned Media Activities and Deliverables

Activity	Measurement	Deliverables to CDC
Conduct media pitching.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amount and length of news coverage Interest level of contacted stations Tone of stories Follow-up coverage 	Provide a weekly update via the Earned Media Activities Tracker. (Identify a scheduled delivery time to the CDC Office of Communications.)
Provide spokesperson training for testimonial participants.	Feedback from participants and spokespeople	Provide CDC with a list of trained spokespeople upon completion.
Manage a Speakers Bureau.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of requests Number of attendees Follow-up media coverage 	Provide CDC with a report summarizing staff speaking events and related media coverage.

Communication efforts can increase the public’s understanding of opioid use disorder and associated issues, treatments, and community resources to combat this epidemic. Frequent assessment of the communication strategies and tactics outlined in this plan will inform whether course corrections are necessary and help the team plan for adjustments to future strategies.

Issues/Risk Management

Note: ICF Next recognizes that any approach to risk mitigation or issues management would require the approval of NCIPC Communications, Division of Public Affairs, and the Office of the Associate Director for Communication, and would be implemented by CDC officials.

The following are risks that could affect successful execution of the earned media plan:

- Another wave of negative commentary (in the media or on social media) or slanted research aimed at critiquing the CDC Guideline for Prescribing Opioids for Chronic Pain.
- A high-profile death or spike in overdoses in a community saturates the media’s attention and drives storylines that focus on short-term solutions.
- Competing federal, state, local, nonprofit, and private sector campaigns that have conflicting messaging or dilute media interest. This can be mitigated through collaboration with regional, state, and local officials and influencers on media opportunities and aligning campaign messaging.

ICF Next recommends a five-part issues management strategy to mitigate risks and project CDC into traditional and social media spaces as a trusted, expert voice:

1. Utilize CDC’s RiskSmart™ system to “detect, assess and help respond to the opportunities and threats inherent in credibility/reputational risk ... regardless of where a risk is generated, most risks can be anticipated, its threats mitigated, and opportunities enhanced.”
2. Establish an Issues Escalation Protocol within DUIP and NCIPC.

3. Employ a rapid-response media strategy—in the form of FAQs, pre-approved op-eds, letters to the editor, and a risk mitigation social media plan—to respond to high-profile fatalities and overdoses.
4. Establish digital monitoring dashboards and utilize predictive media analytics.
5. Provide ongoing strategic counsel to leadership.