

Guidance for Improving Accessibility of Public Health Communications

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About the Project: How

Through nominations from partner organizations, we convened an Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) Advisory Group. Communications staff with the Health Department conducted an initial review of existing resources on accessible and inclusive communication and outlined the topics to cover in a guidance document.

Over the better part of a year, monthly meetings were held with the IDD Advisory Group, with both an in-person and virtual option. Each month's agenda focused in-depth on a section of the guidance document, and the final meetings were for review and testing of the guide by applying it to sample campaigns previously done by the Health Department.



About the Project: Reach

The IDD guidance document has been downloaded more than 330 times since it was published in November 2024. It also was shared directly with 100+ total recipients including county leadership, health and human services staff, and communications professionals.



Lessons Learned: Stipends

Eligible IDD Advisory Group members could receive a one-time sum at the end of the project. We partnered with the nonprofit Sound Foundation for Public Health on the mechanism for stipends. Many participants were not eligible because they participated on work time and were already compensated. Some eligible individuals declined the stipend.

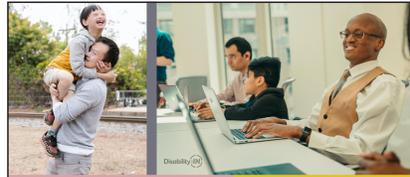
Challenges included the lack of a countywide mechanism for stipends and annual limits that trigger additional tax and benefits requirements and would be cumbersome for participants. Discussions are ongoing about establishing better avenues to pay community participants in projects like this one.



Lessons Learned: Connections

We still maintain the contact list for the IDD Advisory Group. We have better visibility on needs and opportunities. Our reach for public health information is extended through trusted community voices.

One example: When the County IT team reached out to ask if we knew anyone who could perform accessibility testing on new apps, the IDD Advisory Group quickly put IT in touch with someone.



Guidance for Improving Accessibility of Public Health Communications

A reference for communicating with Snohomish County residents with intellectual or developmental disabilities



Working alongside an advisory group of individuals who have professional and/or lived experience with intellectual and developmental disabilities in our community, we developed health communication guidance on:

Terminology and Wording

“Label jars, not people.”
- Corinna, People First of Washington

Graphics and Design

“If it's not effective, it's not communication.”
- Paul, Everett Community College

Tools and Methods of Communication

“Community partners are crucial for us. They can help provide more individualized supports.”
- Trisa, Snohomish County Human Services

Language Access Needs, Cultural Responsiveness, and Equity Considerations

“People don't always want to have to ask for something different or acknowledge that they have a disability.” - John, Northwest ADA Center

Resources and Partners

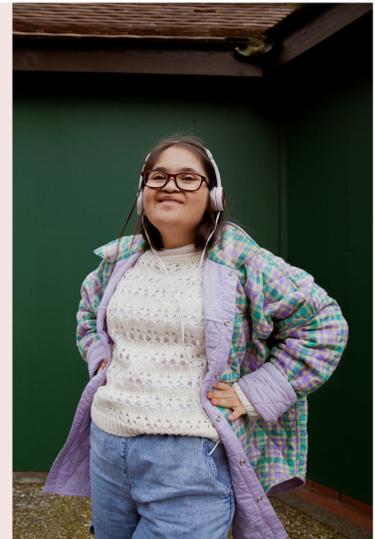
“Once you get community buy-in, it's a force-multiplier.” - Todd, Center for Independence

Find the full guidance document at www.snohd.org/IDD or scan the QR code with your phone's camera



Support for the project

This project was made possible by a federally funded contract with Snohomish County through the Washington State Developmental Disabilities Council, Contract Number 23-47PH0120-01, For Expanding the Public Health Workforce with the Disability Network.



Thank you to the project team: IDD Advisory Group Members

Community representation:

- Paul Arithi (Everett Community College Center for Disability Services)
- Michelle Ballard (Community Resource Center of Stanwood-Camano)
- John Dorris (Northwest ADA Center)
- James “Jim” Engracia (Provail)
- Corinna Fale (People First of Washington)
- Todd Holloway (Center for Independent Living)
- Susan Lakey (Snohomish County DD Advisory Board)
- Jeanette Ivy Merkey (Nominated by The ARC of Snohomish County)
- Don Vanney (City of Arlington and Special Olympics)

Snohomish County staff:

- Kari Bray (Health Department and Executive Office)
- Sacha Coughran (Health Department)
- Megan Edmonds (Human Services Department)
- Jennifer Egger (Health Department)
- Trisa Harris (Human Services Department)
- Christin Seo (Health Department)
- Sue Starr (Health Department)
- Nicole Thomsen (Health Department)
- Helen Wong (Health Department)

Washington Developmental Disabilities Council (Department of Commerce):

- Kevin Vargas
- Brandi Monts
- Christie Chiles

