

Public Affairs Communications: Authentic Words for Changing Times

Association of Ohio Health Commissioners



September 2025



NATIONWIDE CHILDREN'S®
When your child needs a hospital, everything matters.

Agenda

Presentation

Conversation

Q&A



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always easy

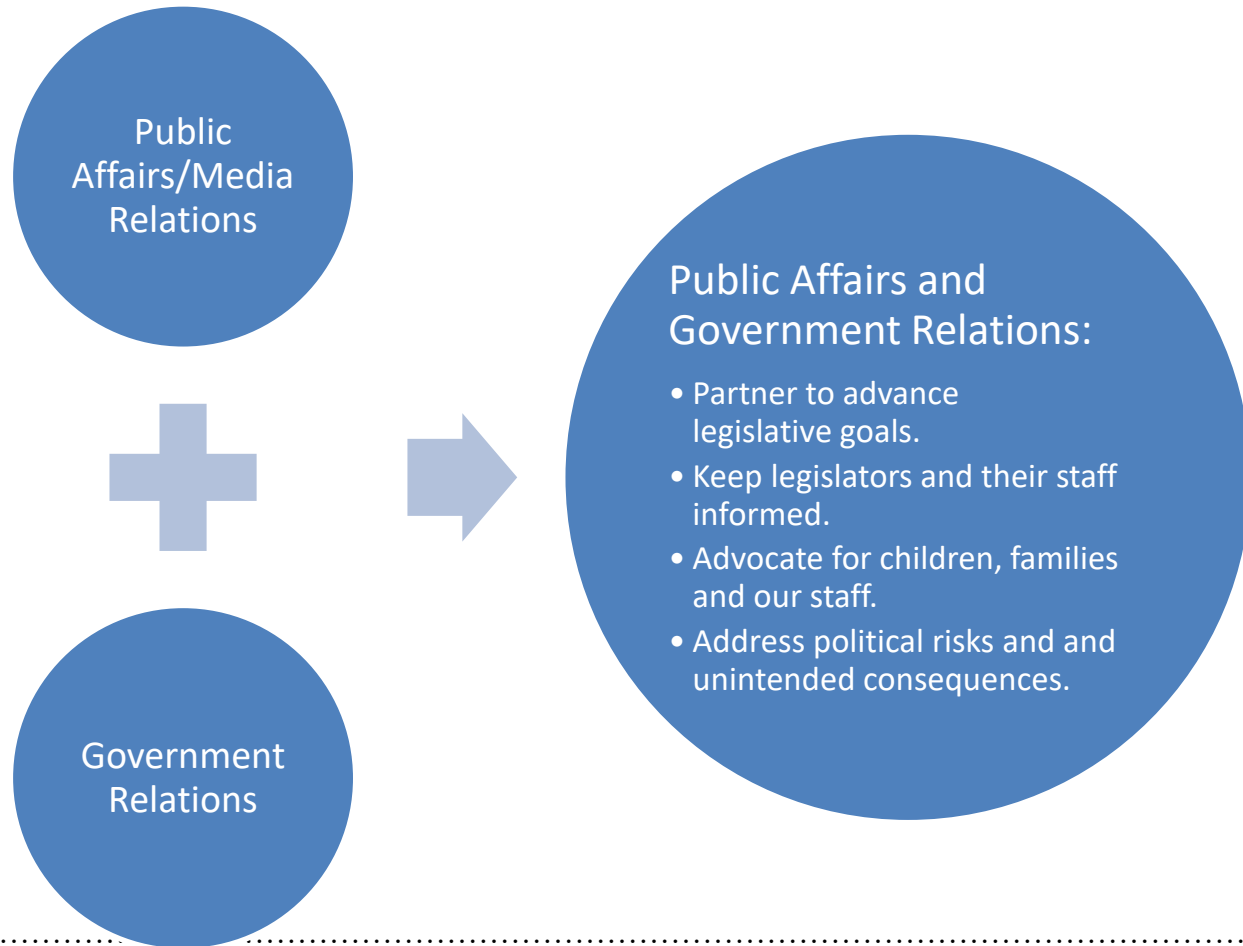


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Strategic Communications Functions



Goals of Public Affairs/Issues Communications



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Collaborating with Subject Matter Experts

Shared goal: Partner with Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) to share expertise, protect the integrity of our providers, programs and patients and ensure accurate, balanced coverage that advances the best outcomes for children everywhere.

Key Elements for Success

Trust

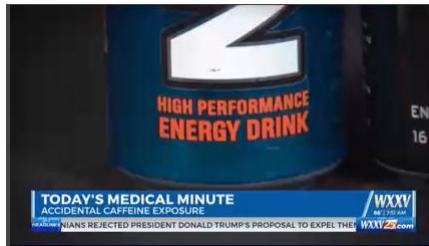
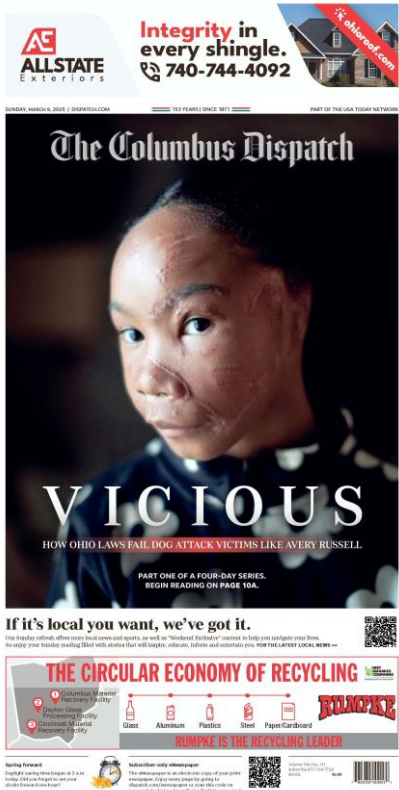
Communication

Balance

Patience

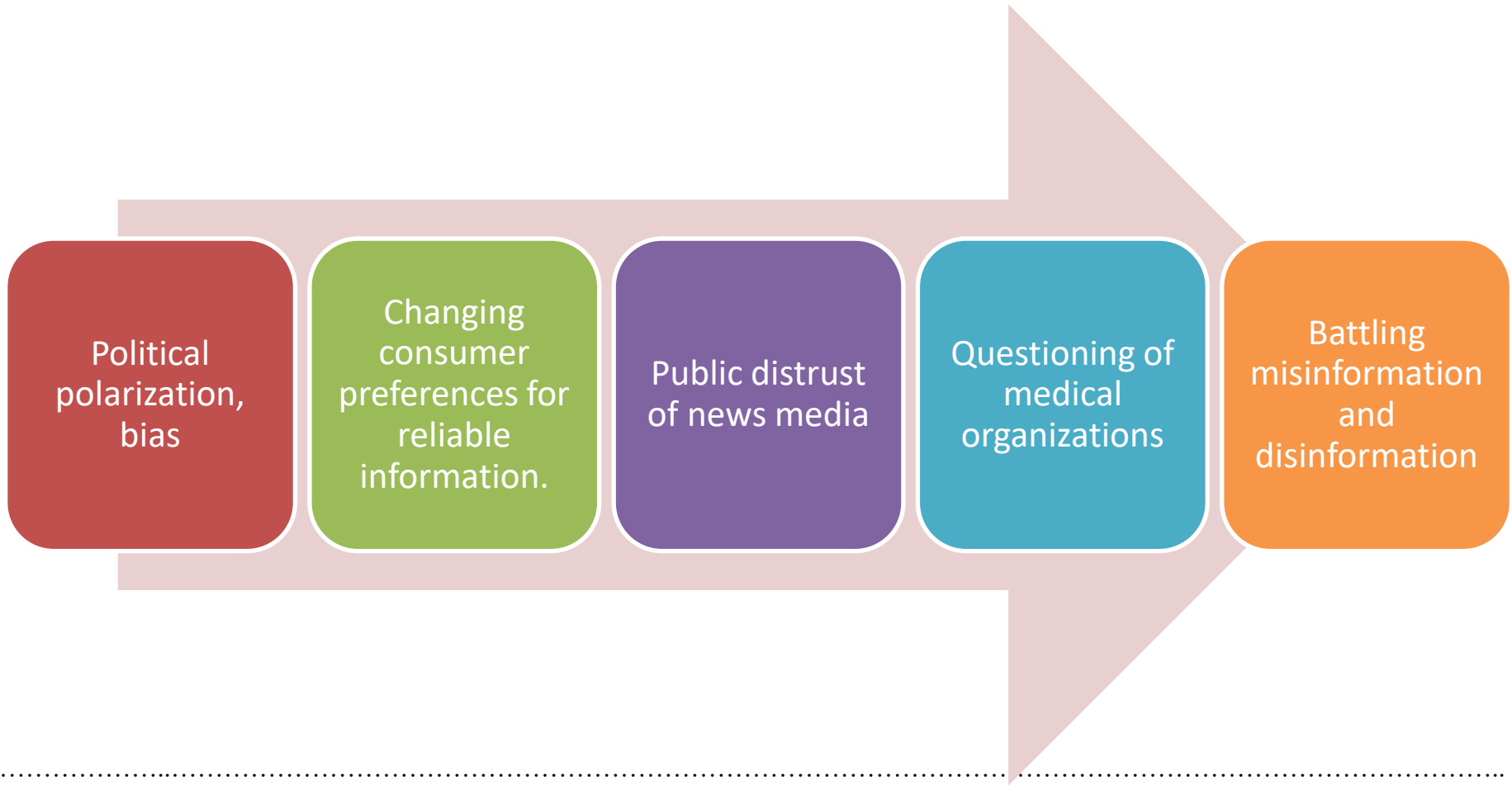
Responsiveness

The Positive Side of Public Affairs and Media Relations: Promotion, Awareness and Hope



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Shifting Landscape/Changing Political Climate



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Misinformation vs. Disinformation

Misinformation

- Any kind of wrong or false information.

Disinformation

- Misinformation that is knowingly and intentionally spread.

Pay attention to news sources

AllSides Media Bias Chart™

Ratings based on online, U.S. political content only – not TV, print, or radio.
Ratings do not reflect accuracy or credibility; they reflect perspective only.



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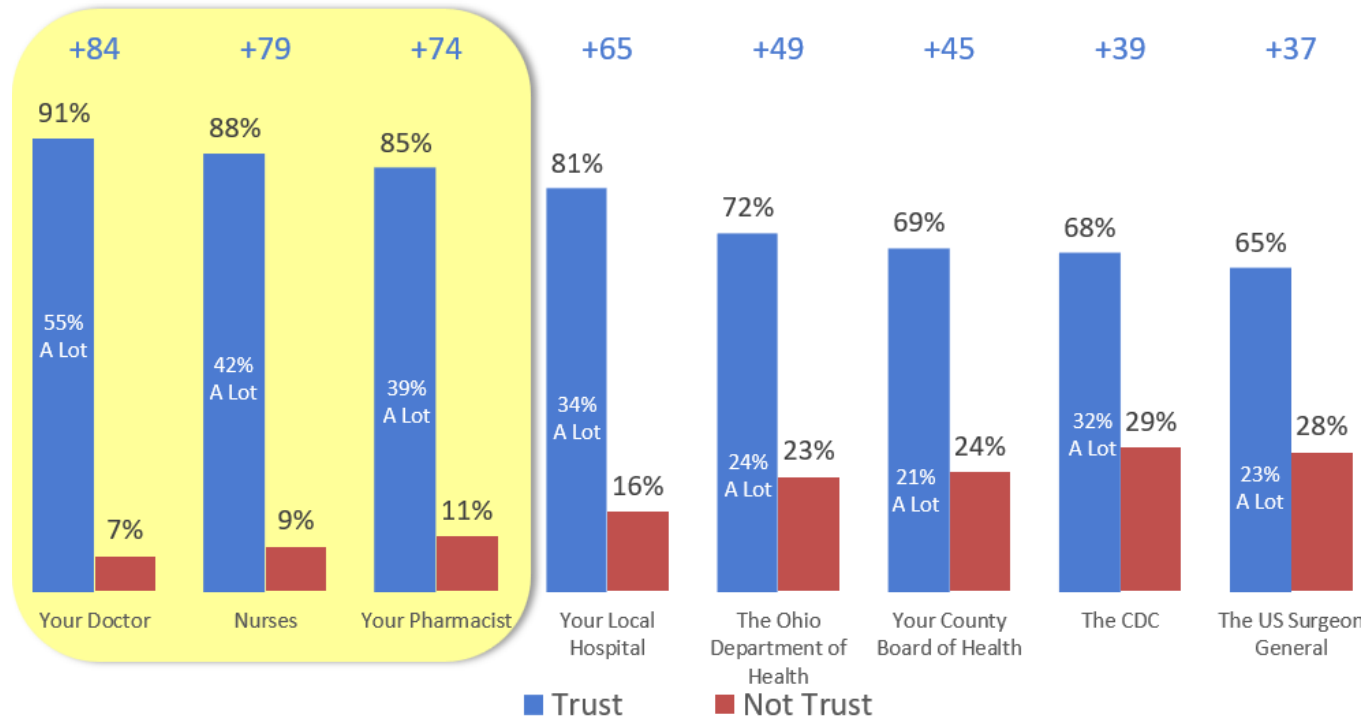
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Trusted sources of Information

Doctors, nurses, pharmacists and hospitals top the list of trust sources of public health information.



And, on the issue of where you get public health information, how much do you trust information you receive from each of the following...

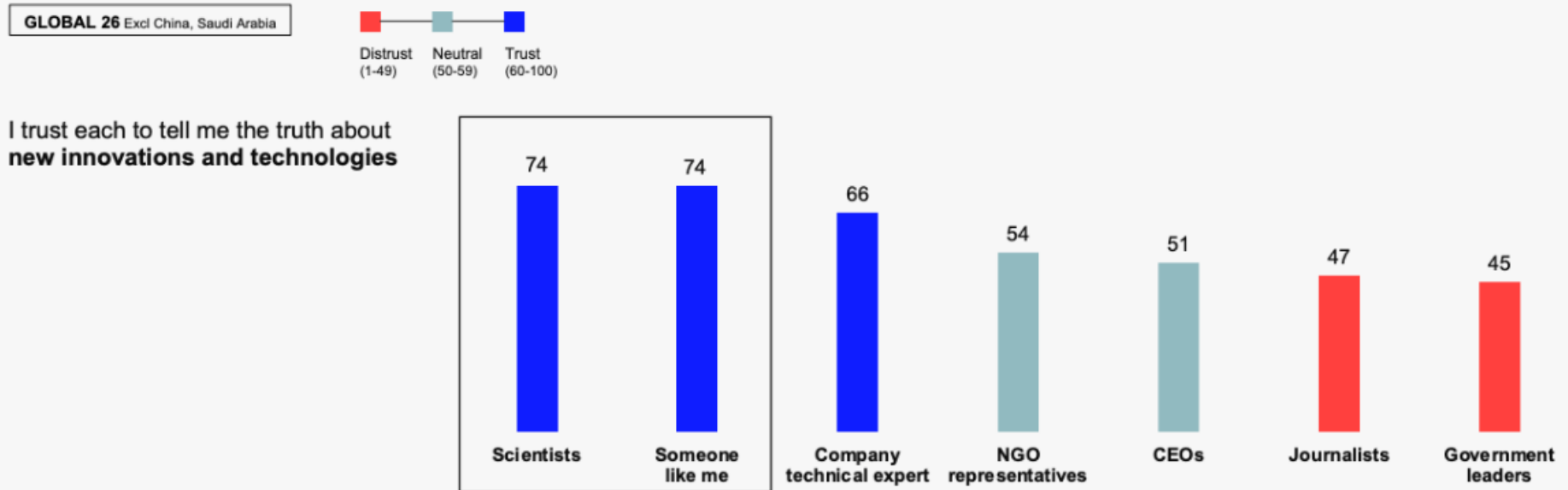
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2024 Edelman Trust Barometer

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Dispersion of Authority: Peers on Par With Scientists

Percent trust



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Risk/Relevance Scorecard

Primary Risk vs Relevance Scorecard

RISK CALCULATOR	Score (4 for highest risk, 1 for lowest risk)
Does responding hurt our stakeholder trust, and credibility?	
Could our response escalate the situation or create unintended consequences?	
Could responding hurt our long-term reputation in healthcare?	
Would staying silent help prevent the spread of confusion, fear or misinformation?	
Would our absence be seen as conspicuous?	
Total Risk Score:	
RELEVANCE CALCULATOR	Score (4 for highest relevance, 1 for lowest)
Does this situation impact the community we serve?	
Does our mission compel us to respond?	
Do we have a clear, well-articulated position with prepared spokespeople?	
Have other respected organizations, including healthcare institutions, responded?	
Is this an opportunity to reinforce our key messages or offer useful context that sets us apart or educates?	
Total Relevance Score:	

Media Interview: Yes or No?

Journalist

- What is the outlet's reputation and current editorial stance?
- Could this story attract attention from groups opposing our values or goals?
- Do we have a trusted relationship with the journalist? Any past experiences with our experts or institution?
- How knowledgeable are they on this topic? How much guidance do they need?
- What is their typical story style—investigative, inflammatory, or balanced

Audience & Impact:

- How many key audiences are directly affected by this issue?
- Could responding help support or reassure internal teams and frontline staff?
- How significant is the risk of negative perception from different stakeholder groups if we respond?
- Would our response have a direct impact on public health, safety, or trust?

Story Angle:

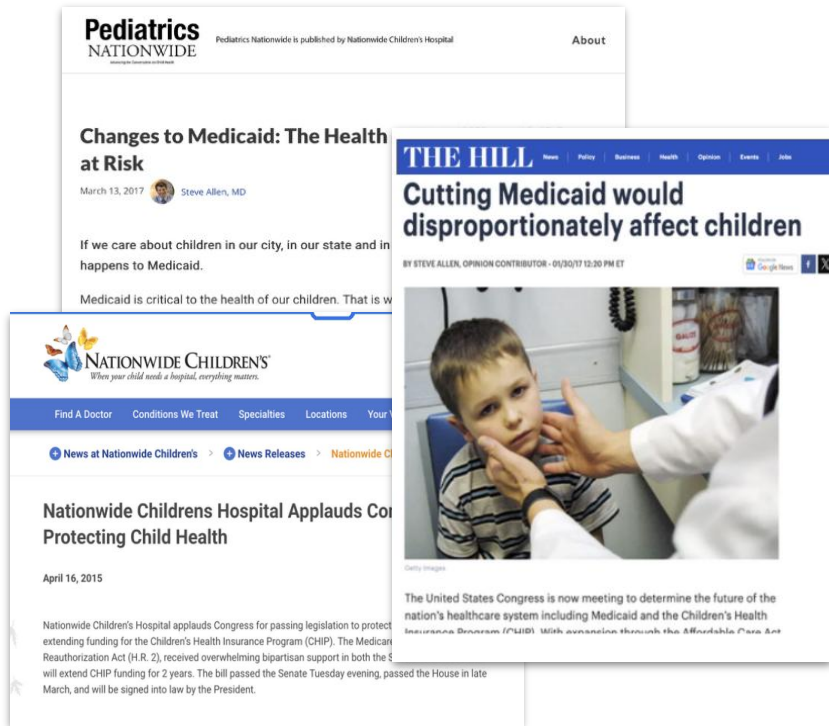
- Are we the full story, or will other experts/institutions be included?
- Will an opposing viewpoint be featured?
- Do we want national recognition for this topic?
- Is this within our expertise, or is another stakeholder better suited?
- Will this be a simple expert quote or an in-depth feature?

Moderating Approach to Achieve an Impact

Medicaid Advocacy At Different Volumes



2017



2025



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Tips for Effective Communication

Be honest

- Be up front if you have to deliver a tough message.
- Share what you are able to and be consistent in your messaging.
- Be authentic.
- Stay calm. Your team will take their cues from you.

Be humble

- When you don't know what will happen, be honest and tell people that.
- Be prepared to try and fail. Learn from your mistakes and adjust your approach.

Be nimble

- Be prepared to pivot. A lot.
- Acknowledge that the work is hard and that the pivots are tough.
- Listen to your team. They often will have different perspectives that will improve your communication.

Be grateful

- Everyone is going to be exhausted. Tempers may flare. Assume positive intent.
- Your teams are working incredibly hard. Thank them for their work. And, then thank them again.

Discussion Questions

- What are you hearing from your communities? What education are they seeking?
- How do you share your information?
- Do you have challenges in your market with media outlets?
- What's your biggest communication challenge?
- Are there issues that you are hearing about that are surprising to you? If so, what are they?
- What are your biggest barriers to doing your work?