

IDDRC/AUCD National Communications Strategy

Goal: To increase our stakeholders' access to reliable information about IDD, including research findings and programmatic accomplishments of the IDDRC network via a national communication strategy.

- To create a partnership between the AUCD and IDDRC members sites that cohesively links together communications from each IDDRC site via a set of shared activities and goals.
- To increase the visibility of the IDDRC network and to enhance its brand as an influencer on issues related to IDDs.
- To progressively evolve the strategy over time with additional approaches, and by improving first rendition components based on direct feedback and metrics such as read and click rates.

Target Audiences: IDD Stakeholders, including Individuals with IDD, Researchers, Policy Makers and Funding Agencies, Families and related Foundations and Community Organizations that support individuals with IDDs.

- Reaching under-represented segments of society, including under-represented racial, gender or socioeconomic groups and those with IDDs and other impairments (e.g., the visually impaired/hearing impaired) will be an area of emphasis and work in progress. We will start by assessing who is accessing our communications using available Google analytics (e.g., click rates), who visits the AUCD website (e.g., age group, location, gender). Future strategies may include surveys and focus groups to learn how best to engage these segments of our target audience. AUCD is in the process of doing this as part of its website overhaul to learn what their constituents want.

Strategies

1. National dissemination of press releases and/or news articles that are already generated by each IDDRC site. Dissemination will be through a dedicated section of the AUCD website. Appropriate Press Releases are ones that describe
 - a. novel discoveries of unique significance (discoveries from cross site collaborative research may be prioritized); or
 - b. new programs relevant to our target audiences and stakeholders.
 - c. Press releases will include boilerplate text highlighting institutional information for the IDDRC site(s) which conducted the research, and a statement about how the site(s) are part of a broader IDDRC network supported by the NICHD.
2. Short articles (350-600 words), one article or set of two complementary articles from each of the 15 sites per year posted on the AUCD website at the rate of 1-2 per month. AUCD will provide plain language resources; could be tailored for different audiences, or plain language with a hyperlink with more technical language. Use of infographics is strongly encouraged. Translation into other languages is a future goal. These articles could be related to any intellectual or developmental disability topic.
 - a. Each site will be asked to have a delegate member(s) for an ongoing Communications Strategy Workgroup (WG). The work group will include representation from the AUCD.
 - The WG group will meet regularly to monitor the effectiveness of each of the three communication strategies, brainstorm new ideas. New Ideas and any major changes will be presented to Directors and NICH program officer for approval.

3. Social Media. To be rolled out and expanded over time, recognizing that not all IDDRC sites will currently have formalized social media efforts or current capacity.
 - a. Each site that does not yet use social media will be encouraged and supported to start by creating a Twitter account.
 - The communications lead at CHOP/Penn (Emily LaSasso) will have scheduled monthly “office hours” to support member IDDRC sites to start or expand their social media efforts. Meetings can be scheduled on an as needed basis.
 - b. Submissions will be distributed to the NICHD and to the social media representatives at each site on the day that they are posted on the AUCD website.
 - c. Each IDDRC site will amplify other site’s press releases/ news articles (Strategy #1) and short articles (Strategy #2), by posting links to these on their Facebook account and/or by promoting through tweets and retweets.
 - d. The Communications WG may incorporate other tactics into a yearly social media communication campaign that focuses on that year’s IDD theme.

Target launch date is February 1, 2022, with CHOP/Penn and UC Davis/MIND being the first to publish short autism articles.

We expect that additional strategies will be added across time once the network is smoothly up and running with these first 3 strategies. Suggestions discussed by the WG include special articles that focus on cross IDDRC collaborations/accomplishments that may include excerpts from interviews of those involved with the work as well as other outside experts. Podcasts were another idea that still needs creative discussion. It was also suggested that our WB look at the UCEDD Resource Center and funding support through the [Administration for Community Living \(ACL\)](#) to support knowledge translation, plain language, infographics.

APPENDIX 1. AUCD Social Media Guide for IDDRCs

What to share

- Repurpose content shared on aacd.org
 - o [AUCD's 360](#) (monthly e-newsletter)
 - o [AUCD Weekly](#) (weekly e-newsletter; updated on Wednesdays)
 - o Other network or AUCD [news items](#)
- Research articles relevant to your work
- News from your IDDRC
 - o Examples include press releases, blog posts, articles

Important things to note when posting on social media

Images. Every post should include an image that is easy to understand. To meet accessibility standards and as best practice, each image should include alt text as part of 508 compliance. Alt text (as a part of the “508 compliance) should be short and only describe what is happening in the image. [Learn more about creating alt text for images.](#)

- o If you’re looking for an image to pair with your social post, or even your article, feel free to check out these free image resources:
 - [Noun Project](#)
 - [Pexels](#)
 - [Pixabay](#)
 - [CDC Photo Bank](#)

Social Media Image Sizes		
<i>Twitter</i>	<i>Facebook</i>	<i>Instagram</i>
1600 x 1900 px	1200 x 630 px	Landscape: 1080 x 566 px Portrait: 1080 x 1350 px Square: 1080 x 1080 px
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Twitter will show your audience the entire image even if not in these dimensions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For more than one photo, each should be 1200 x 1200/ 1:1 ratio 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aim to use an image 1080 pixels wide

Graphics. If you have someone in-house who has design skills, great! If not, [Canva](#) is a great free resource for creating graphics. They provide templates which make designing graphics simple. A few data visualization best practices to keep in mind:

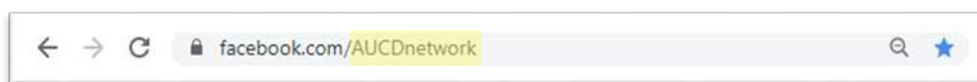
- Allow the data and your goals for the visualization to dictate the format and style

- Support the visuals with a brief description of the overall graphic
- Ensure there's sufficient color contrast so people who are blind or have low vision can understand your graphic
- Include alt text – reminder to check out this great resource on [creating alt text](#)

Videos. Using videos is a great way to grab someone's attention but stick to a 30-60 second video clip. If the video is longer than 60 seconds, consider taking a 30-second snippet of the video, using that for your social post and linking out to the full video.

Tagging. Tagging helps increase reach on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Keep tagging limited to the people/organizations that are relevant to the content of your post. Note that handles vary from platform to platform.

- To search for the person or organization's social media handle, type in the name in the specific platform's search bar. If it's an organization, you may start by looking at the organization's website. Typically, social media handles can be found at the header or footer of a website.
- To tag on any social media platform, type "@" followed by the handle which you can see following the website in the address bar: :



Hashtags. Use hashtags effectively. Don't string too many words together. Limit the number of hashtags you use.

- To ensure your hashtag is accessible, start each word with a capital letter when possible. For example: #AutismResearch
- The purpose of a hashtag is to categorize posts into one bucket. Consider using #IDDRC on all posts to connect your content with another IDDRC's content.
- If you're unsure of what hashtags to use, start on Twitter and do a basic search of the hashtag you're thinking of using and see what comes up. Always check a hashtag on social media before using it to avoid categorizing your content with something completely off-topic or potentially inappropriate.

Links. Keep links short and sweet so that it doesn't overpower the content of your message. Use a free [bit.ly account](#) to create shortened links. You can even customize your link if you'd like. And most importantly, you can track the clicks using the bit.ly account.

Scheduling and tracking tools. A tool like this can be used to schedule social media posts in advance so it goes out during a peak time based on analytics. AUCD uses AgoraPulse because of its ability to use alt text in scheduling posts. But there are a lot of other [great scheduling and tracking tools](#) that are free or low cost.

Engagement. How do you get people, more specifically the goal audience, to lean in and read your post? Here are a few things to keep in mind.

- Use imagery. Avoid posting just text or text with a chart. Make the chart interesting. [Canva](#) provides a lot of simple templates for plugging in data and making it visually appealing to social users.
- Tagging helps connect people to your content. In addition to tagging an organization and/or person, reach out to them with a link to your post and have them help to amplify by sharing across their social channels.
- Post content to the relevant platforms. Consider your target audience and meet them where they are.
- Using hashtags is going to help connect your content to a larger audience. Using a common hashtag will bring you a larger audience without much effort.
- Check your analytics. When are people engaging the most? If you're an admin on Facebook, you can see by clicking on "Insights" > "Post Engagement" > "When Your Fans Are Online." For us, the peak is between 6 and 7 pm, which is why we often schedule posts to go out at 6:30pm. Read: meet them when and where they're at!

Examples of what's been shared via AUCD's Facebook page

- Important note: we're constantly learning about the new trends on social media, especially within Facebook and Instagram's algorithms. While the posts below did OK in terms of engagement, since posting these, we've learned that shorter posts (2-3 sentences) perform better than longer ones. Again, images are key. You only have a few seconds to grab someone's attention – make it count with a good image or graphic. And don't forget to tag.
- We want to share your content! If you have an article, press release, image, etc. that you'd like AUCD to promote, please submit a request via the [public promotion request form](#).

Association of University Centers on Disabilities
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Checkout this CBS News segment examining the cause of autism, featuring Dr. Charles Nelson, a professor of pediatrics at Harvard Medical School and a neuroscientist at Boston Children's Hospital's Hospital IDDRC

"What does cause autism? That answer has been slow to come, partly because of the enormous detour researchers were forced to take following the Lancet article. Charles Nelson, a professor of pediatrics at Harvard Medical School and a neuroscientist at Boston Children's Hospital said the article caused "irreparable damage." for several reasons: First It led many parents to stop vaccinating their kids for no reason. Second, it derailed the course of science by investing all this money to prove that vaccines didn't cause autism, rather than try to understand what does cause autism. It was a big diversion.



CBSNEWS.COM

Teaching anti-vax parents to trust science and the MMR vaccine

With hundreds of measles cases on the U.S., and approximately 110K global deaths from measles...

People Reached: 42 Engagements

Boost Post

21 Shares

Like Comment Share

Comment as Association of University Centers on Disabilities