

Healthy Air is Healthcare

As a health professional, your expertise equips you to influence decision makers and educate community members about the harmful impacts of polluted air, particularly on children's health. This packet provides you with tools and strategies to effectively advocate for cleaner air and a healthier future.

Getting Started

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With over 16 years of experience partnering with health professionals on air pollution and advocacy, we've curated some of our most trusted resources to help you become a Healthy Air is Healthcare Champion.

The American Academy of Pediatrics

The American Academy of Pediatrics offers a dedicated climate change page with a wealth of educational resources for health professionals. Here, you'll find the latest health research, advocacy guides, and talking points to support your efforts in addressing climate change and its impact on children's health.

Climate for Health

Climate for Health is a national network of health professionals offering resources to showcase climate leadership. This platform inspires and empowers health leaders to take action and advocate for effective climate solutions.

AirNow

AirNow, or a similar real-time air pollution report, keeps you informed about local levels of ground-level ozone and particulate matter. It's an excellent resource to share with patients to help them make informed decisions about their health.

Five Modes of Science Engagement

This article by Roger Pielke offers insights to help you navigate the roles of scientist-practitioners and advocates.

Learn the Lingo

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Advocacy

Advocacy involves identifying, embracing, and promoting a cause.

Lobbying

Lobbying is a specialized form of advocacy aimed at educating lawmakers and influencing legislation.

Bill

A bill is a piece of legislation drafted for consideration by the legislature.

Amendment

An amendment is a change to a bill or motion, sometimes replacing them entirely. Amendments are debated and voted on in the same manner as a bill.

Committee

A committee is a group of legislators responsible for developing and overseeing legislation on specific topics.

District

A district is a geographic area from which an official is elected.

Hearing

A hearing is a meeting where evidence is presented to a committee or regulatory agency, typically to consider a bill, conduct an investigation, evaluate a government department's activity, or explore topics of interest.

The House of Representatives

The House is the lower body of the Congress and most state legislatures. Elected members represent a geographic district.

Senate

The Senate is Congress' upper body. Each state has two U.S. Senators, elected at-large, to serve six-year terms.

Advocacy Tools



Here are some ways we've collaborated with health professionals to share their expertise. We encourage you to choose what suits your skills best, and remember, these are just a few examples!

Attend public meetings.

Develop organizational policy statements.

Meet with decision makers.

Participate in interviews with the media.

Share air pollution resources with your clients, students, or colleagues.

Sign on to medical professional letters.

Write a letter to the editor or an opinion editorial.



Clean air is important because health is important. How can we live healthy lives and breathe in pounds of pollution daily? We can't. In addition, I see many kids come to the ED, in hospital and even lose their lives because of severe asthma, low birth weight and cancers. All of which can have less severe consequences if we promote clean air.

My hope is that we can educate persons about the consequences of air pollution and the drastic effect it can have on their health. Ultimately, we can lead a powerful mission to influence our family, friends, state, country and the world in an effort to make a change. Not just for us, but for our kids and for the future.

- Dr. KJoy Simms, MD

Share Your Story

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Storytelling is a powerful communication tool. Inspire action by crafting a clear, compelling story with these tips from Resource Media.

Telling a very quick story

Even a brief real-life example can transform your message into a memorable anecdote, helping your audience understand, remember, and share your ideas.

Stories need characters

Stories come alive with a “villain” and a “hero”. The villain could be a threat like ozone, diesel trucks, or climate change, while the hero could be your audience, whose actions can combat these risks, or someone who helped you understand the impact of air quality on health.

Setting

The setting - both time and place - grounds your story and makes it real for your audience. For instance, a story about a patient with asthma could take place in an emergency room or on a hot playground, illustrating the connection between asthma and air quality.

Conflict

All compelling stories need conflict which represents a challenge or obstacle to overcome. This tension - whether personal, political, or scientific - adds emotion and depth, preventing the story from being flat or static.



Advocating for clean air
on Capitol Hill

How to Write a LTE

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A Letter to the Editor (LTE) is an effective way to share your thoughts with a broad audience. These letters typically appear in the editorial or front sections of newspapers and magazines.

Why write a letter to the editor?

You write a letter to the editor to...

- highlight an issue or cause that is important to you.
- educate the public about an issue or cause.
- persuade your community to take action.
- recruit support for your organization's programs.

When do I write a LTE?

Anytime! However, letters to the editor are especially valuable at times when new legislation or amendments are being processed by legislature. They offer an opportunity to voice your perspective, educate the public, and influence decision makers. They also drive community engagement and prompt action on important causes.

How do I write a LTE?

Timing is everything!

Addressing your LTE in conjunction with a bill or major issue will increase chances of publication.

Keep it concise

Many papers have word limits for their LTEs. If they don't, the general standard is 200 words.

Get to the point

Capture readers' attention with a clear main point, followed by two to three supporting arguments.

Check your facts

Check the accuracy and source of any quotes, studies, or literature that you cite in your LTE.

Make it local

Tailoring your message to address the concerns and interests of your audience helps to build a stronger connection, encouraging them to participate in meaningful advocacy efforts.

Call to action

Close your letter with a specific call to action for the reader.

Your Expert Opinion

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An opinion editorial (op-ed) is an essay in a newspaper or magazine that expresses the writer's opinion. Op-eds are written by local citizens, leaders, experts, or anyone who has expertise in a particular topic.

This is your chance to showcase your expertise on a particular issue. By presenting your insights clearly and persuasively, you have the power to connect with readers to influence public opinion and shape decisions in public policy.

Writing an Effective Op-Ed

Connect with readers

Incorporating an anecdote in your op-ed can prompt readers to reflect on the topic or even evoke a sense of humor, making your message more relatable and impactful.

Stay current

Stay informed on the latest developments in healthcare and air quality by regularly following news and research updates relevant to your area of expertise.

Use an active voice

Keep in mind that you are sharing your opinion, so it's best to write in the first person. This approach makes your message clearer and more relatable for the reader.

Keep it simple

Use clear, concise language and avoid jargon to ensure your writing is accessible and easy to understand for a wide audience.

Respect your reader

Be careful not to underestimate your readers' intelligence or understanding of a topic. Your goal is to capture their attention and present a compelling, well-reasoned argument.

End on a strong note

Conclude by encouraging your readers to take meaningful action on the issue you've addressed.

[Click here for examples of letters to the editor and op-eds focused on environmental health](#)

Meaningful Meetings

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In-person meetings are among the most effective ways to advocate for your cause. Whether you are meeting with local, state, or national elected officials, the following tips can help ensure a productive and successful discussion.

Scheduling the Meeting

- Clearly articulate the purpose of your meeting. If the elected official is unavailable, request a meeting with the Chief of Staff or the staff member responsible for the relevant issue.
- Be flexible with scheduling. Aim for times when Congress or the legislature is not in session.
- Plan for a meeting duration of 15 to 30 minutes.

Preparing for the Meeting

- Research the causes and issues that the official is invested in. Identify the initiatives or bills they have supported.

- Understand the interests and concerns of the official's constituents.
- Learn what committee the official serves on.
- Prepare relevant local statistics and facts pertaining to the issue you will be discussing.

Meeting Etiquette

- Arrive early.
- Address the official by their correct title.
- State the purpose of your visit.
- Inquire about the official's stance on the issue.
- Listen attentively, respond thoughtfully, and avoid arguing.
- Conclude the meeting appropriately and thank the official for their time.
- Offer your availability for further questions and mention you will follow up.
- Leave a business card and a position paper.
- Send a follow-up note summarizing the meeting. Include the meeting date, discussed issue, your position, and the legislator's response.

Expert Testimony

Hearings are open to the public to gather opinions and information on proposed legislation or regulations, conduct investigations, or evaluate a government department's activities. Hearings provide an opportunity to further explore current topics of interest. As a concerned citizen and a medical professional, you have the opportunity to speak directly to elected officials and contribute to the discussion.

Preparing to Testify

- When drafting your speech, remember that most hearings have a time limit. A general guideline is that the average person can speak about 125 words per minute.
- Arrive early and sign in for the meeting or session in which you wish to testify.
- Prepare a transcript containing the main points of your testimony to distribute to committee members.

Testifying

- Introduce yourself to the sponsoring group or committee chair and state the purpose of your testimony.
- Listen attentively and prepare to adjust your testimony so that you do not repeat information given by previous witnesses.
- Be prepared to answer questions from committee members.
- Be prepared to modify your testimony if a bill's sponsor offers an amendment, which could change your position on the bill.
- Bear in mind that there may be many witnesses waiting to present and you may be asked to present in a group.

Pediatrician Dr. Zuberi delivers his testimony before the EPA on the importance of cleaning up carbon pollution.



Together, we can protect children's health from air pollution.



For more information, please visit
www.mothersandothersforcleanair.org



Grand Round training for residents at Morehouse School of Medicine on air pollution, climate, health and advocacy