

NATIONAL  
COUNCIL  
*for Mental  
Wellbeing*

# Strategic Communications & Stakeholder Engagement Toolkit for CCBHCs



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**CCBHC-T** *Certified Community Behavioral  
Health Clinic **TRANSFORMATION***

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This toolkit builds on the National Council's [Developing Your Value Proposition](#) guide, which walks CCBHCs through defining their unique value to different stakeholder audiences. This and other complementary resources are referenced and linked at the end of the toolkit.

# Executive Summary

Effective communication is essential to sustaining the impact of Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHCs). This toolkit provides a practical, step-by-step roadmap to help CCBHCs define their value, engage key stakeholders, tailor messages using data and stories, and build strategic communication plans that strengthen partnerships, expand access to care, and support long-term sustainability.

Designed for real-world clinic settings, it includes tools, templates, and resources that help organizations communicate consistently, measure results, and continuously improve their stakeholder engagement efforts.



# Introduction

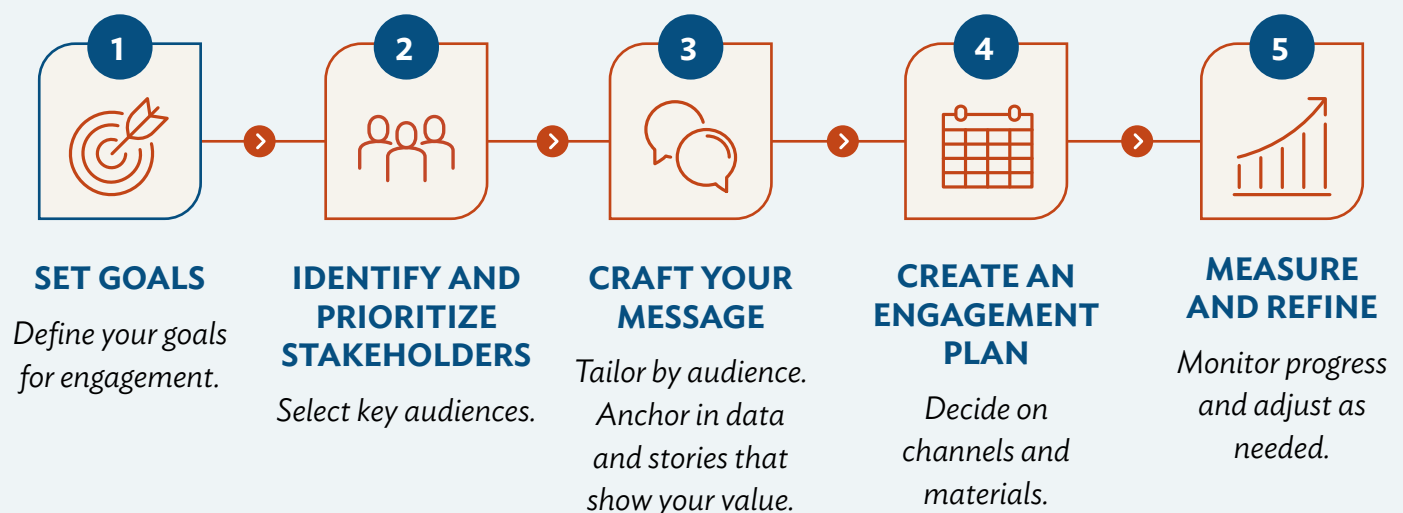
## ***A Communications and Stakeholder Engagement Roadmap for CCBHCs***

Communication is a core function of CCBHCs. Done well, it shapes internal culture, builds external trust, and influences how stakeholders understand and value your work – from staff and board members to referral partners, policymakers, and the people you serve. Clinics that communicate intentionally are better positioned to align their teams around a shared vision, deepen their referral and care partner relationships, and demonstrate impact to the audiences who matter most. Strong communications are also a sustainability lever. CCBHCs operate in a fast-moving policy environment, and clinics that can clearly articulate their value are well-positioned to navigate shifts in funding, regulation, and political priorities.

This toolkit focuses primarily on external communications and stakeholder engagement: how CCBHCs can define and communicate their value strategically, adapt messages for different audiences, and sustain stakeholder engagement. Internal communications, such as staff-specific messaging and change management, are equally important to sustaining a CCBHC. Many of the same principles introduced in this toolkit can also be applied to internal audiences.

The toolkit centers on a five-step roadmap designed for real-world clinic settings, including those without dedicated communications staff. By following each step, teams can communicate effectively and strengthen relationships with clients, key partners, and the broader community.

### **Communications & Stakeholder Engagement Roadmap**



Each of the following toolkit sections outlines key concepts for effective communication and engagement, complemented by a variety of simple tools, templates and workflows.

## ***The Communications and Stakeholder Engagement Planning Tool***

A key component of this toolkit is the [Communications and Stakeholder Engagement Planning Tool](#).

CCBHCs can use the template to help staff stay aligned and consistent, even with limited internal resources. By working across each tab in the workbook, clinics move from defining communication goals, to identifying and prioritizing stakeholders, and then building a simple engagement plan and calendar.



**Look for this icon for opportunities to use the planning tool**



# 1. The Building Blocks of a Communication Strategy

## Setting Goals

Before defining a communications and stakeholder engagement strategy, you must first articulate your goal. What are you seeking to accomplish? A clear goal anchors every downstream decision: who you need to reach, what you say, where you say it, and how you measure success.

Most CCBHC communications goals fall into a few broad categories: raising awareness, motivating action, building trust, or influencing policy. Selecting the right goals depends on where your clinic is in its transformation, and what challenges or opportunities are the most urgent and highest priority. Common goals may include:

- Launching or expanding CCBHC services
- Building referral partnerships with primary care, hospitals, schools, or social service providers
- Educating policymakers or state agencies about the CCBHC model and its impact
- Strengthening relationships with payers and demonstrating value
- Recruiting and retaining workforce
- Building trust within the communities you serve
- Explaining specific services such as crisis response, SUD treatment, care coordination, or integrated care
- Sustaining support and momentum after certification or as grant funding shifts

Communication goals should support your clinic's broader objectives for care, quality, and CCBHC transformation. For example, if your vision includes serving more people each year, communications strategies that increase awareness of CCBHC services can help increase access and engagement. Aligning your communications efforts with your clinic's overarching Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) plan helps ensure that communication activities contribute to measurable organizational outcomes.



**Document your goals and how success could be measured in the “Goals” tab.**

## Defining Your Strategy

Once your goals are clear, the next step is to think through how you will effectively communicate to achieve them. At its core, a communications strategy answers five questions:

| ELEMENT         | KEY QUESTION                                             | WHAT TO CONSIDER                                                                                                                                                                    |
|-----------------|----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Sender</b>   | Who delivers the message?                                | The most effective messenger isn't always the loudest one. Sometimes it's a clinic leader, a peer, a partner organization, or an individual receiving services/their family member. |
| <b>Message</b>  | What do we say, and how do we say it?                    | Strong messages are clear, concrete, and tied to outcomes that matter to your audience.                                                                                             |
| <b>Channel</b>  | How will the message be delivered?                       | Channels range from formal (press releases, policy briefs, reports) to informal (social media, community events, individual conversations).                                         |
| <b>Audience</b> | Who are we trying to reach, and what do they care about? | Different audiences often care about different outcomes. What you say - and how you say it - may need to be tailored accordingly.                                                   |
| <b>Effect</b>   | How will we know if it worked?                           | Defining what success looks like upfront allows you to learn and adjust your approach over time.                                                                                    |

## 2. Identifying and Prioritizing Stakeholders

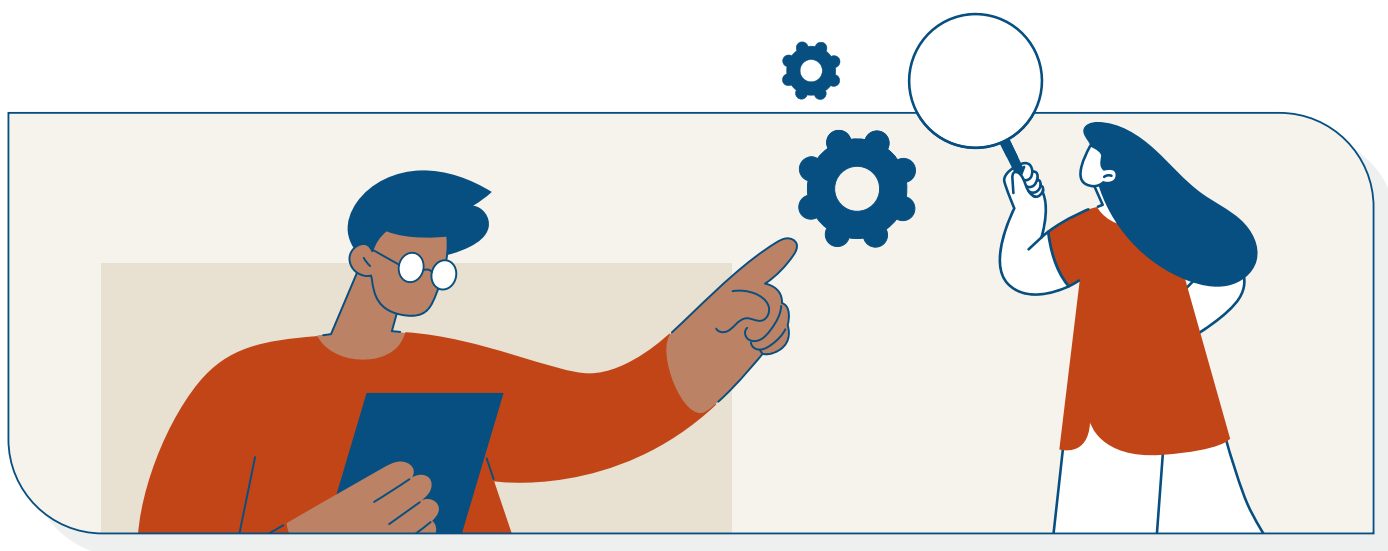
### *Working Collectively*

CCBHCs can be powerful advocates individually, but they are most effective when they speak with a coordinated voice. Much of the work outlined in this toolkit – identifying and prioritizing stakeholders, defining and delivering compelling messages, and tracking progress – can be done at the individual clinic level. However, these efforts are more impactful when coordinated across CCBHCs in your state. Work with peer CCBHCs to identify key stakeholders, align messaging, select key data points to collect and share consistently, and coordinate engagement strategies. State provider associations can be valuable partners in convening and supporting this work.

In addition to other CCBHCs, think about who else could be an ally. If your clinic works with a Designated Collaborating Organization (DCO), they can be natural partners given their formal role in extending CCBHC services. CCBHCs in many states have also found that schools, as well as law enforcement and justice partners, become great advocates for the CCBHC model once they learn more about it or see its impact in action. The more voices speaking consistently about CCBHC impact, the stronger and more influential the message becomes.

### *Identifying and Prioritizing Stakeholders*

Identifying stakeholders is the first step in building an effective communications and engagement strategy. Start by considering everyone who may influence, be affected by, benefit from, or help advance your CCBHC's work. Think broadly, including individuals, organizations, partners, decision-makers, and community groups that play a role in the behavioral health system.



The list below includes common stakeholder groups for CCBHCs. Use it as a starting point and add others that are important in your community.

| POTENTIAL CCBHC STAKEHOLDERS         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Current and Potential Clients</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individuals with mental health and substance use challenges and their family members</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>State and Local Leadership</b>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State behavioral health authorities or single state agencies</li> <li>State Medicaid agencies</li> <li>Regional and local agencies, including counties and municipalities</li> </ul>                                                    |
| <b>Policymakers</b>                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elected officials at the state, county and municipal level</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Community Partners</b>            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Law enforcement and criminal justice agencies</li> <li>Schools and youth-serving agencies</li> <li>Primary care partners</li> <li>Hospitals and EDs</li> <li>Veterans service organizations</li> <li>Social service agencies</li> </ul> |
| <b>CCBHC Staff and Board</b>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff in different roles</li> <li>Governing Board members</li> <li>Advisory Board members</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Other Stakeholders</b>            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Payers and managed care organizations (MCOs)</li> <li>Schools and training programs at universities, community colleges and other workforce development sites</li> <li>Donors to the organization</li> </ul>                            |



**Document your goals and how success could be measured in the “Goals” tab.**

Once your clinic has identified potential stakeholders to engage, it's time to prioritize them. For each stakeholder identified, rate the following:

| INFLUENCE FACTOR                     | DEFINITION                                                      | EXAMPLES                                                                                                                                                             |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Influence over CCBHC success</b>  | Ability to affect outcomes, both in the near term and long term | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Staff influence day-to-day clinic performance</li> <li>■ Policymakers influence CCBHC sustainability and funding</li> </ul> |
| <b>Alignment with CCBHC goals</b>    | Shared interest in clinic priorities                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ A referral partner focused on improving outcomes for the same target population</li> </ul>                                  |
| <b>Urgency</b>                       | Requires timely engagement                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ A legislator preparing for an upcoming state budget cycle</li> </ul>                                                        |
| <b>Engagement feasibility</b>        | Resources and effort needed to engage                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ A local FQHC may be easier to engage than a busy state agency staff member</li> </ul>                                       |
| <b>Potential risk if not engaged</b> | Consequences of inaction                                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Missed funding opportunities</li> <li>■ Weak referral pipelines</li> </ul>                                                  |

Use these ratings to determine where to focus your time, resources, and engagement efforts. Then translate the results into engagement tiers:

- **Engage Deeply:** Highest-priority stakeholders. Invest in active, ongoing engagement, including regular touchpoints, personalized communication, and relationship-building.
- **Keep Informed:** Important stakeholders who should feel consistently connected. Provide regular updates, planned touchpoints, and clear communication about your work.
- **Check-In Occasionally:** Stakeholders worth engaging periodically. Offer light-touch outreach, occasional updates, or targeted engagement around specific opportunities.
- **Monitor:** Stakeholders to stay aware of without active engagement. Requires only minimal outreach. Revisit periodically to reassess.



**The “Stakeholder Prioritization” tab will automatically calculate engagement tiers based on your ratings.**

Remember that stakeholder priorities may change over time. Review your stakeholder tiers regularly, especially during major planning, implementation, or organizational changes.



# 3. Crafting Effective Messages with Data and Stories

## Crafting Messages that Stick

A good message does more than convey information. It sticks with the audience, shapes how they think about your work, and motivates them to act. For CCBHCs, the messages that land best are usually the simplest: they answer three basic questions for the listener.

- **What is the problem?** What gap, need, or challenge are you addressing?
- **What is the solution?** What does your CCBHC do about it?
- **Why does it matter?** What changes for people, families, and communities as a result?

In their book *Made to Stick*<sup>1</sup>, Chip and Dan Heath identify six qualities that make ideas memorable and actionable. Strong CCBHC messages reflect most (or all) of these principles.

| PRINCIPLE                                                                 | WHAT IT MEANS FOR CCBHCS                                                                                                                                                                        |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Simple:</b> Keep it concise.                                           | <b>Focus on 1-2 key ideas.</b> The strongest messages are short, focused, and easy to repeat.                                                                                                   |
| <b>Unexpected:</b> Surprise generates attention, curiosity sustains it.   | <b>Lead with a surprising story or data.</b> A message that challenges assumptions or reframes a familiar issue is more likely to be remembered.                                                |
| <b>Concrete:</b> Use sensory language and human action, not abstractions. | <b>Don't rely on jargon.</b> Concepts like “integrated care” may not resonate. Show what it looks like in practice, using simple language.                                                      |
| <b>Credible:</b> Ground your message in trustworthy evidence.             | <b>Use trusted data.</b> Policymakers, payers, and partners rely on data to make decisions. Use validated metrics, well-sourced statistics, and clearly attributed outcomes to build your case. |
| <b>Emotional:</b> People care about people, not concepts.                 | <b>Connect to human impact.</b> The most effective messages combine what audiences need to know with something they can feel: hope, urgency, pride, connection.                                 |

1 Heath, C., & Heath, D. (2007). *Made To Stick: Why Some Ideas Survive and Others Die*. Random House.

| PRINCIPLE                               | WHAT IT MEANS FOR CCBHCS                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Stories:</b> Bring the data to life. | <b>Pair stories with data.</b> A well-told client story paired with the data behind it, such as wait time reductions or improved outcomes, communicates both the human and the systemic value of CCBHC care. For example, a 25% reduction in ED visits is more powerful when paired with a client story reflecting that shift. |

**Try it!** Take a recent message your CCBHC sent out — a press release, social post, board update, or community flyer. Score it against the six principles above. Which ones did it nail? Which ones could you strengthen next time?

## ANATOMY OF A STICKY MESSAGE

Here's a simple structure to put them into practice. Use it as a starting template the next time you need to craft a message for a specific audience.

- **Core Message:** One sentence communicating the most important idea you want the audience to walk away with. If they remember nothing else, this is it.
- **Audience-Specific Framing:** A specific adaptation or expansion of the core message that speaks directly to what this audience cares about.
- **Proof Points:** Two to three data points or facts that support your message. Choose the ones most relevant to the audience, not necessarily the most impressive overall.
- **Human Impact Story:** A brief, real example of what your work looks like in practice.
- **Plain-Language Explanation of CCBHC Services:** A jargon-free description of what you actually do. Avoid acronyms and clinical terms unless your audience uses them too.
- **Call to Action:** What you want your audience to do or think as a result. Be specific. "Support our work" is vague. "Sign our letter to the state Medicaid department by June 30th" is actionable!

## Ethical Storytelling

Stories are powerful tools. They humanize data, create connection, and help audiences see the impact of CCBHC care in ways statistics alone cannot. But stories also carry weight, and how they are gathered and shared matters as much as what they say.

The following principles for ethical storytelling draw from conversations with the National Council's CCBHC Living Experience Advisory Council:

- **Every story belongs to the person sharing it.** Stories are powerful because they connect us in ways that data alone cannot. Treat each story as a gift you have been entrusted with, not just content to be used.
- **Get informed consent.** Be transparent about how the story will be used, with whom, and for how long. Keep in mind that once a story is shared online, it can live indefinitely and be difficult to erase.
- **Coach before you record.** Someone newly in recovery may be eager to share their story, without fully considering the implications. Be sure to talk through considerations, give people time to decide, and offer the option to share their story in writing rather than on camera. Written stories are easier to de-identify.
- **Let the storyteller review and shape the final version.** Allow people to review and revise what will be shared before it goes public.
- **Center strengths, not struggle.** Highlight growth, resilience, and the storyteller's contributions to their community – not just the crisis or tragedy. Stories that lead with strength create hope and help others see that recovery is possible.
- **Be trauma informed.** Avoid retraumatizing storytellers in the process of gathering or editing their stories. Pay attention to language, pacing, and the environment in which stories are shared.
- **Carefully consider credit.** While some may credit a clinic or provider with “saving their life,” this sentiment is often generous and can unintentionally diminish the storyteller's own role in their recovery. The client is the one who did the work. The CCBHC provided the structure and support to make it possible.

## Bringing Data to Life

CCBHCs often sit on a wealth of data: treatment outcomes, referral volumes, no-show rates, care coordination outcomes, engagement metrics, and more. The challenge is rarely a lack of numbers, but rather making those numbers meaningful to people who don't work in behavioral health every day, including legislators, community partners, funders, and those you serve.

One practical way to make your data come to life is through a technique called **social math** – the practice of making large numbers easier to understand by placing them in a social context that gives

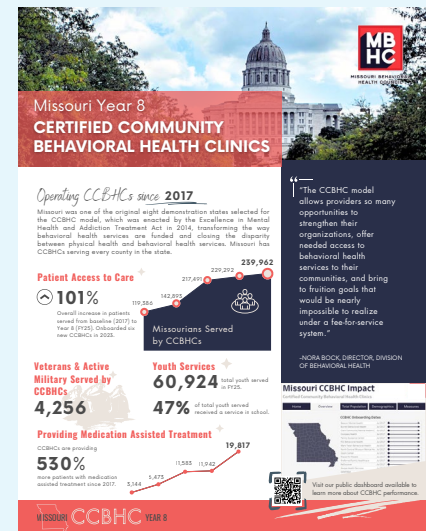
them meaning<sup>2</sup>. Instead of presenting a statistic alone, connect it to something familiar, comparable, or emotionally resonant. This helps audiences intuitively grasp the size or significance of a number without needing to be data experts themselves.

A few practical ways to build this into your CCBHC communications:

- **Break down by time:** Turn an annual figure into a daily or weekly one. Instead of “Our CCBHC served 10,000 people last year”, consider “Every single day, our CCBHC helps nearly 30 people in Springfield County access the care they need.”
- **Break down by place or location:** Translate broad numbers into something geographically or programmatically tangible. Instead of “Our CCBHC serves youth across the state,” consider “Since 2025, our CCBHC has provided mental health care on-site in 10 high schools, reaching more than 500 teens.”
- **Compare to familiar reference points:** Anchor an unfamiliar number to something your audience already understands. For example, “We would never expect one physician to serve an entire town, yet many communities face a comparable shortage of behavioral health professionals. CCBHCs help close that gap by building larger care teams and expanding access.” Familiar comparisons help audiences grasp the scale of an issue.

## Spotlight: Missouri Behavioral Health Council

Missouri’s CCBHC network demonstrates how sustained investment in data infrastructure can strengthen a policy story over time. As Missouri’s CCBHCs grew to serve all of the state’s 114 counties, state leaders and advocates worked to build the evidence needed to show that CCBHCs were expanding access and delivering value across systems including law enforcement, employment, and housing. What started as basic spreadsheet tracking eventually became a more robust data infrastructure that supports stronger storytelling with policymakers and partners. The takeaway? The story you can tell tomorrow depends on the systems you invest in today.



2 Yocco, V., & Pulli, K. (2016). Social math: A method to make complex data meaningful. <https://doi.org/10.1002/bul2.2016.1720420507>

## Tailoring Messages by Audience

Even the strongest, stickiest messages need to be adapted to resonate with different audiences. The core of the message remains the same (what we do, and why it matters), but the language, emphasis, and proof points may shift depending on who is listening. Consider who you are trying to reach, and tailor your approach accordingly, including translation, reading level, and accessibility.

A few practical questions to ask before crafting your message:

- What does this audience already care about?
- What decision or action are they in a position to make?
- What evidence do they trust?

### EXAMPLES OF MESSAGES THAT RESONATE WITH DIFFERENT AUDIENCES

The messages below show how core CCBHC values can be reshaped to land with different audiences. Notice how each one draws on the principles from earlier in this section: making the message concrete, tying it to what the audience cares about, using data in a way that feels human, and building in a clear call to action.

#### **Current and Potential Clients**

*Care that meets you where you are.*

When you walk through our doors, you get the timely care you need. Whether you are here for yourself, or for a family member, we will listen first and work with you to build a plan that fits your life.

#### **State Leadership**

*A behavioral health system that delivers, measurably.*

CCBHCs are helping states meet their goals for access, quality, and cost. In our clinic, integrated care coordination and improved access to crisis services have helped reduce emergency department use by more than 50% among the clients we serve.

#### **Policymakers**

*Providing your constituents with the care they need, closer to home.*

Every day, our CCBHC provides mental health and substance use care to more than 30 of your constituents who might otherwise end up in a hospital bed, or without care at all. Support for the CCBHC model means support for the people you represent, and for the communities that depend on them.

## EXAMPLES OF MESSAGES THAT RESONATE WITH DIFFERENT AUDIENCES

### Community Partners

*You're not alone.*

Every day, you see people in need of behavioral health support. We are here to be your partner: a place you can refer to with confidence, knowing your client will be seen quickly and cared for holistically.

### CCBHC Staff and Board

*Every role here changes lives.*

The number of clients who are functioning well in everyday life is up by 32%, and 41% fewer clients say they're experiencing serious psychological distress after their first six months in treatment. Our impact is real, it is measurable, and it is made possible by you.

### Payers and MCOs

*Better outcomes for the members we share.*

CCBHCs are designed to address the medical, behavioral health, and social needs that drive high-cost utilization. Among the Medicaid members we serve, coordinated care has reduced inpatient admissions by 40%. For health plans seeking better performance on quality and cost measures, CCBHCs offer a proven, scalable solution.

## Crafting an Effective Message Through Data and Stories: Related Resources

- [Developing Your Value Proposition: A Guide for CCBHCs](#)
- [Data-driven Advocacy: Missouri's CCBHC Success Story](#)
- [Missouri Behavioral Health Council's CCBHC Landing Page](#)
- [Stories of Hope: Free Storytelling Courses from the National Council and Joseph Green of LMSvoice](#)

### Examples of Ethical Storytelling:

- [Start With Hope](#)
- [From Surviving to Serving: A Peer Leader's Journey](#)

# 4. Creating an Engagement Plan

## *Developing a Plan to Engage and Communicate*

Now that you have identified your priority stakeholders and developed tailored messages that are likely to resonate with each audience, it is time to develop a plan for implementing your strategy. A structured plan can help CCBHCs focus limited time and resources on the stakeholders and activities that matter most, rather than reacting to requests as they come up.

A good plan includes:

- **Channels and tactics:** How you will reach each audience (e.g., meetings, email, events, social media)
- **Materials and assets:** What content you already have or need to create (e.g., one-pagers, presentations, newsletters)
- **Accessibility and language:** How you will ensure your communications are accessible to all intended audiences, including considerations for literacy levels, primary language, and hearing or visual abilities.
- **Engagement schedule or calendar:** When and how often you will engage each audience
- **Roles and responsibilities:** Who on your team leads and supports each activity
- **Measures of success:** How you will track progress and assess impact over time



The “Engagement Plan” and “Year at a Glance” tabs can be used to plan and track your clinic’s work to engage priority stakeholders.



## Choosing Communication Channels and Materials

Choose communication channels and materials based on where people already get their information and use formats they trust and understand. Depending on the audience, that could be in-person meetings, email updates, social media, or brief factsheets with infographics. Matching your message to the right channel improves reach, clarity, and engagement, making it more likely that stakeholders will act on the information.

| EXAMPLES OF CHANNELS AND MATERIALS SUITED TO DIFFERENT STAKEHOLDER GROUPS |                                                                                                        |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| STAKEHOLDER GROUP                                                         | CHANNELS AND MATERIALS                                                                                 |
| <b>Current and Potential Clients</b>                                      | Community events, social media, local media                                                            |
| <b>State Leadership</b>                                                   | Outcomes dashboards, one-pagers with CCBHC quality measure data, presentations                         |
| <b>Policymakers</b>                                                       | Site visits, one-pagers with system-level impact data, local data, constituent stories                 |
| <b>Community Partners</b>                                                 | Lunch-and-learns, referral guides, direct outreach (e.g., a booth at a health fair or community event) |
| <b>CCBHC Staff</b>                                                        | Huddles, newsletters, dashboards, supervisor talking points                                            |
| <b>CCBHC Board</b>                                                        | Board briefs, slide decks, impact stories                                                              |
| <b>Payers and MCOs</b>                                                    | Outcomes dashboards, cost/utilization data                                                             |
| <b>Schools and Training Programs</b>                                      | Career fairs, classroom presentations, student recruitment flyers                                      |

Being intentional about these choices helps ensure that efforts are efficient and have the greatest impact, especially when staff time and resources are limited.



The “Engagement Plan” and “Year at a Glance” tabs can be used to plan and track channels for different audiences. The “Assets & Materials” tab can help you inventory and manage materials that need to be created, updated, or disseminated for communications.

# 5. Sustaining the Work: CQI in Practice

## Measuring What Matters

Strategic communications and stakeholder engagement aren't separate from the work of delivering high quality care. Effective communications can increase the number of clients you serve, deepen your referral relationships, strengthen partnerships with community organizations, and build trust with policymakers and payers to help sustain the model over time.

This means that the impact of your communications work should appear in your CQI data. As you plan your stakeholder and communications activities, consider how they connect to outcomes your CCBHC is already tracking. For example:

- Veteran-specific outreach → more veterans and family members engaged in services
- More consistent outreach to community partners → increase in incoming referrals
- Regular engagement with policymakers → increased visibility and support during legislative cycles

## Aligning Measures to Goals

The key principle is simple: align your measures to your goals. If your goal is to raise awareness, measure awareness. If your goal is to motivate action, measure action. For most CCBHCs, practical measurement of your communications falls into four broad categories, described below.

| COMMUNICATIONS GOAL                                                                 | EXAMPLES OF RELATED MEASURES                                                                                             |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Awareness:</b> Are the people we want to reach seeing our message?               | Media mentions, web traffic, attendance at events                                                                        |
| <b>Engagement:</b> Are the people we are reaching showing signs of interest?        | Referral partner response rates, stakeholder meeting attendance, repeat engagement over time, email or newsletter clicks |
| <b>Action:</b> Are people doing what we hoped they would?                           | Referrals received, policy meetings secured, partnerships formalized, donations made                                     |
| <b>Trust:</b> Are we building the kind of relationships that help sustain our work? | Qualitative feedback from people served, families, partners                                                              |

Start with what you already have. Before creating new tracking systems, look at the data your CCBHC is already collecting. Required screening metrics, first-appointment access data and demographic data can all offer meaningful signals about whether your communications and engagement work is landing. Start with one or two that most directly support your communications work and your CCBHC's broader goals, and build from there.

## **Building a CQI Rhythm**

Building a CQI cadence into your communications and stakeholder engagement work helps you move from “we tracked it” to “we improved because of it.” A useful cadence for most CCBHCs is a light quarterly review of communications and stakeholder engagement activities, paired with deeper annual reflection. At each review, consider the following:

- Did we reach our intended audiences?
- Did our messages land the way we hoped?
- Are our stakeholder relationships getting stronger or stalling?
- What should we do more of, less of, or differently next quarter?

Beyond the quarterly and annual cadence, the CCBHC Community Needs Assessment (CNA), conducted at least every three years, offers another valuable opportunity to evaluate whether your communications and stakeholder engagement efforts are working. The CNA can surface whether the community's understanding of your CCBHC has shifted, whether new stakeholders should be prioritized, and where perceptions or awareness gaps still exist. Consider building communications-focused questions into your next CNA, or using CNA findings to sharpen your engagement strategy for the years ahead.



**The Communications and Stakeholder Engagement Plan is designed to make this CQI rhythm easier. Use it as a living document to capture what you're planning and track what you're doing.**

Communications and stakeholder engagement are long-term efforts. The clinics that get the most out of this work are the ones that treat measurement and reflection as ongoing habits, not one-time projects. Small, focused wins build momentum and give your team confidence to expand the work over time.

# Conclusion

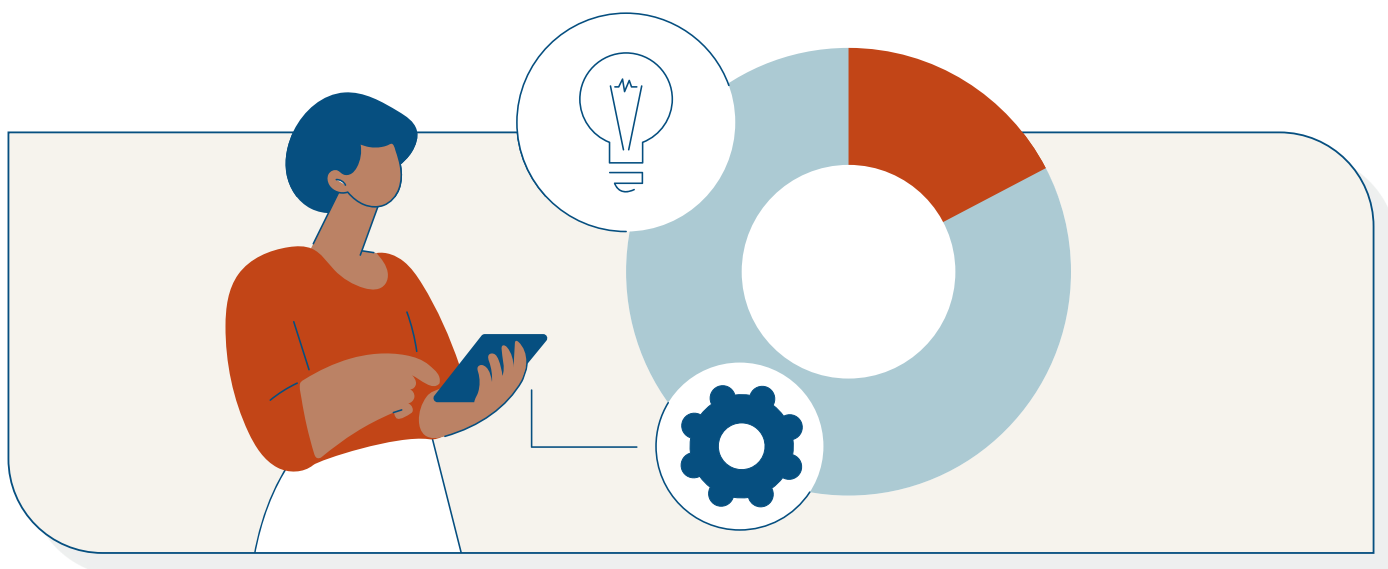
## Key Takeaways

Strategic communications and stakeholder engagement are essential tools for building trust, strengthening partnerships, demonstrating impact, and advancing your clinic's goals. By taking a thoughtful, intentional approach to communication, CCBHCs can better connect with the people they serve, the partners they rely on, and the decision-makers who influence their future.

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **Start** with clear goals and align communications activities with your clinic's broader priorities for care, quality and access.
- **Identify** and prioritize stakeholders so limited time and resources are focused where they will have the greatest impact.
- **Tailor** messages to each audience, using a combination of data, stories, and clear calls to action.
- **Coordinate** with other CCBHCs and allies whenever possible to strengthen credibility and amplify your message.
- **Develop** a simple engagement plan that defines audiences, messages, channels, responsibilities, and measures of success.
- **Measure** results and regularly refine your approach using CQI principles.

**Consistent communication builds trust, and trusted relationships are the foundation for long-term CCBHC success.**



# Appendix: Resources for CCBHCs

## *Tools to Support Communications and Stakeholder Engagement*

The following resources have been developed as part of the toolkit. [all will be linked when final]

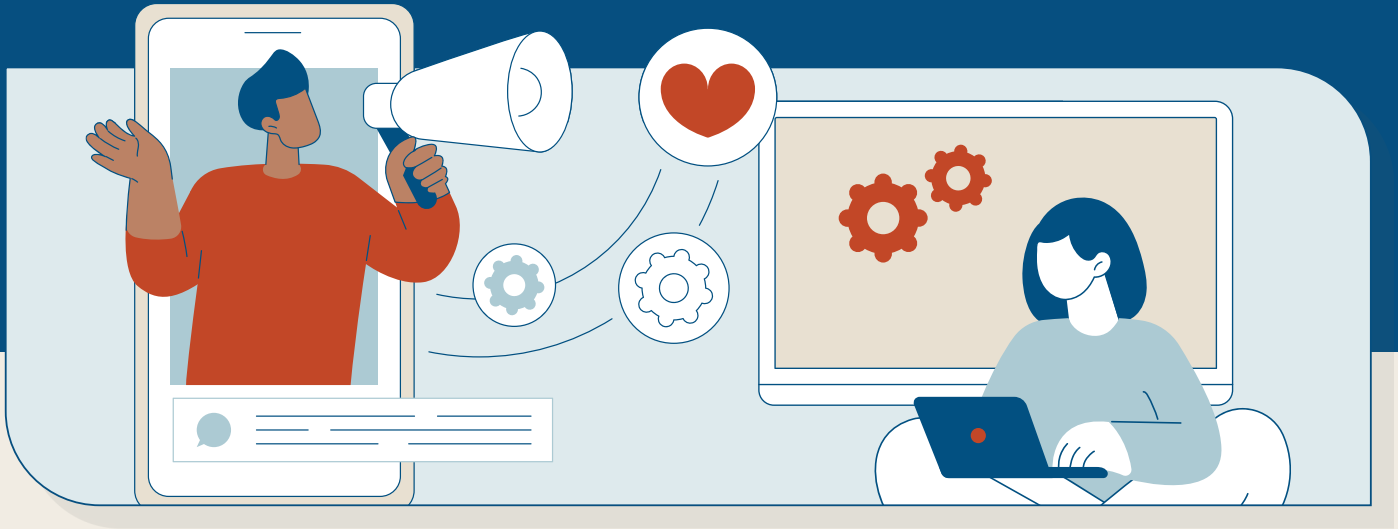
| TITLE AND LINK                                                                  | DESCRIPTION                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <a href="#"><u>Communication &amp; Stakeholder Engagement Plan Template</u></a> | A practical, step-by-step tool to help CCBHC teams organize their outreach efforts. It guides clinics through setting goals, prioritizing stakeholders, selecting channels and materials, and mapping out engagement activities over time. |
| <a href="#"><u>CCBHC Slide Deck Template for Outreach</u></a>                   | Model presentation deck for outreach to stakeholders.                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <a href="#"><u>Infographic Templates</u></a>                                    | Templates for visualizing impact, care coordination, and client engagement data.                                                                                                                                                           |
| <a href="#"><u>Communications &amp; PR Templates</u></a>                        | Model resources including sample press releases, email pitches and social posts.                                                                                                                                                           |
| <a href="#"><u>National CCBHC Data You Can Use</u></a>                          | Drawing from the <a href="#"><u>2026 CCBHC Impact Report</u></a> , provides curated national CCBHC statistics that clinics can use in press releases, media outreach, and advocacy materials.                                              |

## Additional Resources

| LINK AND TITLE                                                               | AUTHOR                                                          | DESCRIPTION                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <a href="#"><u>Developing Your Value Proposition: A Guide for CCBHCs</u></a> | National Council for Mental Wellbeing, Third Horizon Strategies | A practical guide that helps CCBHCs articulate and use a clear value proposition to communicate their impact, educate stakeholders, and support sustainability efforts.                                                                         |
| <a href="#"><u>2026 CCBHC Impact Report</u></a>                              | National Council for Mental Wellbeing                           | Provides national data on how CCBHCs are expanding access to mental health and substance use care, offering statistics that clinics can use in press releases, fact sheets, and other communications materials.                                 |
| <a href="#"><u>Start With Hope</u></a>                                       | National Council for Mental Wellbeing, Shatterproof             | Communications campaign featuring examples on non-stigmatizing, hope-centered messaging.                                                                                                                                                        |
| <a href="#"><u>Advocacy Handbook</u></a>                                     | National Council for Mental Wellbeing                           | Tips, tricks, and downloadable templates for community mental health and substance use treatment advocacy.                                                                                                                                      |
| <a href="#"><u>Data-driven Advocacy: Missouri's CCBHC Success Story</u></a>  | National Council for Mental Wellbeing                           | Podcast interview with the Missouri Behavioral Health Council describing the value of data, advocacy and cross-sector champions in building momentum for CCBHC.                                                                                 |
| <a href="#"><u>Missouri CCBHC Landing Page</u></a>                           | Missouri Behavioral Health Council                              | Resource hub featuring an overview of the CCBHC model, an interactive impact dashboard, and related press materials that highlight improvements in access to mental health and substance use treatment, crisis services, and care coordination. |

| LINK AND TITLE                                                                           | AUTHOR                                                 | DESCRIPTION                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <a href="#"><u>CCBHC Success Center</u></a>                                              | National Council for Mental Wellbeing                  | Provides TA, tools, and resources to support providers and states in implementing and sustaining CCBHC programs.                                                                                                                     |
| <a href="#"><u>Stories of Hope: A Value-centered Approach to Storytelling Course</u></a> | National Council for Mental Wellbeing,<br>Joseph Green | A two-part virtual course that will guide you through the process of shaping life experiences into powerful narratives, and how these can be used to align mission, deepen trust, and drive connection across teams and communities. |

*Disclaimer: Any links to external websites and resources are provided for informational purposes only. The views, opinions and content expressed on those sites are solely those of the original authors or organizations and do not necessarily reflect the views or positions of the National Council. Including these links also does not imply endorsement, oversight or legal relationship with such authors or organizations.*



# Let Us Know How We Did

We'd love to hear what you thought of this toolkit. Scan the QR code to share your feedback and help us make future resources even more useful.





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