

2026 Health Messaging for Justice: Student Competition

Aim: To showcase the work of Mailman students in highlighting how health communications can be used as a powerful tool to address stigma, enhance social and environmental justice, and counteract racism in domestic or global settings.

Hosted by: Lerner Center for Public Health Promotion

Eligibility: Any Mailman student

Project: Students (1-4 students per submission) will be asked to create a health communication product (e.g. video, GIS mapping, data visualizations, social media posts, podcast, poster, etc) designed to reduce stigma, enhance social or environmental justice, and/or counteract racism. In addition, students will create nine pre-formatted slides that answer specific questions about their product (see below).

Health communication products *may include:* video, data visualizations, social media posts, education/workshop materials, digital stories, [podcasts](#), posters, books, [games](#), magazines, [GIS mapping](#), brochures, websites and more...

Competition Themes: *The health communication materials should inform or enhance health promotion efforts.* Topics may include: nutrition and food security, physical activity, disease prevention, mental health, reproductive health, social determinants of health, environmental health and injury prevention and MORE.

[Past project submissions](#) have included topics such as: immigrant rights, [tobacco/vaping](#), labor protections, abortion access, [misinformation](#), infrastructure inequities, maternal health, mental health, [racial justice](#) and chronic disease prevention (diabetes, obesity).

Criteria for Selection of Finalists: A diverse committee of public health communication scholars and experts will review student materials and slides. Finalists will be chosen using the following seven judging categories: effective messaging, creativity/innovation, design/aesthetics, public health impact and relevance, dissemination, project guidelines and potential ability to promote healthy behaviors. Each of the seven categories will be scored on a scale from 1-5.

Three submissions (1st, 2nd and 3rd place) will be selected and asked to deliver a ten-minute presentation (guided by their slides) at an Award Ceremony in April. First and second place teams may also be asked to present at an online award ceremony in early May.

Required Slides:

Slide 1: Title slide [include student name(s), department(s)]

Slide 2: Goal of the health communications message and call to action (e.g. reduce stigma among a certain population)

Slide 3: Information about target population: location, demographics and other relevant characteristics

Slide 4: Epidemiologic, social, behavioral and/or theoretical justification (details about the public health issue)

Slide 5: Rationale for use of the health communication channel (e.g. data visualization, podcast, digital story/video, social media, poster)

Slide 6: Storytelling: The story/narrative that you are telling with your public health message

Slide 7: Proposed dissemination (e.g. placement, campaign promotion)

Slide 8: Societal Impact: Why you feel your health communication message will be efficacious

Slide 9: Citations

Note: You may include additional slides (e.g. to spread out text/include other important info), but please make sure that your presentation includes, and centers around, the 9 prescribed slides. **This is the information that the judges are expecting to see.**

Finalist Awards: 1st place team: \$1,000; 2nd place team: \$750; and 3rd place team: \$500. Team members will be compensated equally. Finalist materials will be posted on the Lerner Center website and featured in Center communications.

Registration: Please email the name(s)/department(s) of your group members to aen2129@columbia.edu by January 21st.

Submissions (product and slides) due: Tuesday, March 31st at 5pm; Please email slides and HC product to Azure Nowara (aen2129@columbia.edu).

Finalist Presentations & Award Ceremony: TBD (April/May 2026)