

Please introduce yourself in the chat

- ▶ What's your name? Where are you?
- ▶ What's your organization / role?
- ▶ Say a bit about your experience writing opeds:
 - ▶ Have you ever written one?
 - ▶ Submitted it?
 - ▶ Been published?

Writing for Public Health Advocacy – How to Make our Public Health Voice Matter

Jennifer Beard, PhD, MPH
Boston University School of Public Health

July 16, 2024

Session Overview

- ▶ What is an oped?
- ▶ Typical structure
- ▶ Questions to ask yourself before you start writing
- ▶ Some example opeds
- ▶ Getting some ideas on paper

What is an OpEd?

Opinion article published by a newspaper or online publication

The goal is to reach a broad audience with a message that will:

- ▶ Teach the reader something new,
- ▶ Change their mind,
- ▶ Expand their perspective,
- ▶ Persuade them to do something,
- ▶ Help them to see their own experience and perspective through a different lens

OpEds are written to be read!

- ▶ Written with a specific reader or type of reader in mind
- ▶ Clear engaging language, stories, clear point, evidence-based
- ▶ Short—Typically 700-1000 words

Typical Structure

- ▶ Engaging intro (known in journalism as a lede)
 - ▶ Anecdote
 - ▶ Datapoint
 - ▶ Current event (current events—why should people care about this now?)
 - ▶ Establish your authority
- ▶ Your argument
- ▶ Evidence
 - ▶ 1-3 points
- ▶ To Be Sure...
 - ▶ Acknowledge competing perspectives, contradictory evidence
- ▶ Conclusion
 - ▶ Typically brings the reader full circle to intro
 - ▶ Call to action

Questions to Ask Yourself

- ▶ Why should readers trust you?
- ▶ Can you back up what you are saying?
- ▶ What's new?
- ▶ Why now?
- ▶ So what?
- ▶ Who am I writing this for?
- ▶ What do I want them to do?
- ▶ Will my language and tone appeal to readers or put them off?
- ▶ Is my language likely to engage them and create empathy or inspiration or will it put them off?

Places Where You Can Publish OpEds

- ▶ Boston Globe & Other Major News Outlets
- ▶ Local Newspapers (Somerville Times, Cambridge Chronicle, Warren Tribune Chronicle)
- ▶ Online Platforms
 - ▶ Harvard Public Health Magazine
 - ▶ Cognoscenti (WBUR)
 - ▶ The Nation
 - ▶ New Republic
 - ▶ The Conversation
 - ▶ Medium
- ▶ Academic journals (look for the perspectives, viewpoint, piece of my mind sections)

Examples

- Eric Coles. [It's Time to Free Public Health From Health Care](#). Harvard Public Health Magazine. May 22, 2024
- Madison Cheng, et al. [The Sexual Health of US Youth is Under Attack](#). Public Health Post. June 27, 2024
- Brittany Charlton. [How to Address Health Inequities Affecting the LGBTQ Community](#). Boston Globe. June 25, 2024

Harvard Public Health

Exploring what works, what doesn't, and why.

OPINION

It's time to free public health from health care

For too long, a bias toward medicine has limited public health's potential.



FILED UNDER

#POLICY & PRACTICE



In March 2021, I helped organize a mass COVID vaccination day on the Tule River Indian Reservation in Central California. The tribe's concert venue was the only building with enough indoor space, but where would our equipment go? How would patients flow through the interior? And what information would convince the community to come?

The CDC website had detailed information on our clinical concerns: the temperature at which to store the vials, the types of syringes needed for jabs, and the paperwork to give patients. But I could not find solutions to our nonmedical questions. Fortunately, we had a staff member with emergency management experience design the event

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The Sexual Health of U.S. Youth Is Under Attack

Youth voices are needed now more than ever to improve the sexual health of teens across the United States.

Guest Authors Madison Cheng, Ezra Levinson, Ja'Karrri Pierre, Divya Reddy, Klara Sattler



Read Time: 5 minutes
Published: June 27, 2024

The sexual health of youth in the United States is under attack. Teens struggle to [access](#) necessary health care services. Their [confidentiality protections](#) are inconsistent. And the state of [sex education](#) across the country is abysmal. All these factors contribute to a rising tide of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) among youth – a clear sign that our laws, education, and culture surrounding sexual health needs to change.

STIs are an important way to measure sexual health. Numbers of cases can be used to gauge the impact of public health policies and practices. In 2021, [more than half \(51%\)](#) of 2.5 million reported cases of chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis were diagnosed among 15 to 24 year olds. As teens, we are frustrated and terrified by this statistic.

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The Boston Globe

OPINION

How to address health inequities affecting the LGBTQ community

The thesis is simple and intuitive: Stress caused by experiencing bias, rejection, hostility, and marginalization takes a toll on the body and mind. The data bear that out.

By **Brittany Charlton** Updated June 25, 2024, 11:13 a.m.



Daunasia Yancey, deputy director for the Mayor's Office of LGBTQ+ Advancement, sported rainbow braids at Boston City Hall to kick off Pride Month on June 3. JESSICA RINALDI/GLOBE STAFF

Pride Month is a welcome opportunity to celebrate the LGBTQ community's diversity and unyielding spirit. But the community needs more than parades and rainbow flags.

Ongoing discrimination and an unprecedented wave of legal, political, and societal threats are inflicting damage on the mental and physical health of LGBTQ people. The public needs need more research funding to document the resulting health inequities, more training for health professionals to recognize and address the unique needs of the LGBTQ community, and more policies to support the equality, dignity, and humanity of every human being.

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Getting Inspired

- What are you an expert in?
- What are you passionate about?

Writing Prompt

- ▶ I am an expert in / passionate about
- ▶ Because...

*Adapted from [OpEd Project Write to Tell the World Workshop](#)

Break-Out Rooms

- ▶ Hello—My name is...
 - ▶ I am an expert in / passionate about
 - ▶ Because...

- Introduce yourself, read what you wrote, **with energy!**
- 3 minutes per person (set a timer)
- Give suggestions on delivery

Create Your Outline/Write Your Lede

- ▶ Lede
- ▶ Argument
- ▶ 1-3 Key Points/Evidence
- ▶ To Be Sure
- ▶ Conclusion

Resources

- ▶ [The OpEd Project](#)
- ▶ [OpEd Writing: Tips & Tricks](#)
- ▶ [Boston University Guide to OpEds & Original Content](#)
- ▶ [Scholar's Strategy Network](#)
- ▶ [Housing Narrative Lab](#)
- ▶ [The Washington Post Guide to Writing an Opinion Article](#)