

RAISING AWARENESS OF & RESPONDING TO MPOX OUTBREAKS COMMUNICATIONS TOOLKIT

Provided by the National Coalition of STD Directors

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National Coalition
of STD Directors



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COMMUNICATIONS TOOLKIT OVERVIEW

The robust and successful public health efforts that quelled the nationwide outbreak of mpox in the Summer of 2022 were bolstered by community outreach and media coverage that conveyed the risks posed by mpox and encouraged people at risk to get vaccinated. After the initial outbreak subsided, many people felt a reduced sense of risk and a reduced sense of urgency to be vaccinated. However, public health officials predict occasional outbreaks of mpox will occur. While more than one million doses of the mpox vaccine were administered during the 2022 mpox outbreak, many people who still may be at risk may not have gotten vaccinated yet.

As a result, the National Coalition of STD Directors (NCSD) and communications firm SKDK have created this communications toolkit designed to help local health departments around the country respond to outbreaks when they occur and raise awareness about the continued need to get vaccinated against mpox. This toolkit includes proactive (to prevent an outbreak) and reactive messaging (to respond to an outbreak) materials that can be customized for the public health efforts in your own community.

Designed to educate your community about mpox and the mpox vaccine and to amplify preventive and reactive measures your local health officials may be taking, this toolkit includes:

- Talking points;
- Frequently asked questions and answers;
- Media advisories;
- Press releases;
- Tips for how to host a press event; and
- A blog post.

These materials have been drafted as templates and are intended to be customized to suit your communities' particular needs and timelines. This toolkit can help your health department save valuable time and resources by providing you with ready-made tools and templates developed with focus group input from members of the most affected communities. To help inform your usage of this toolkit, SKDK will be offering trainings to department staff. Following each training, we stand ready to support your department in your communications needs as we continue to encourage people to receive their safe, effective two-dose mpox vaccine.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out to Elizabeth Finley at NCSD at efinley@ncsddc.org

TEMPLATED MATERIALS

TALKING POINTS

The following section outlines suggested talking points which explain what mpox is, how it spreads, and the importance of getting vaccinated. These talking points can be used by public health professionals for press conferences, conversations with patients, and media interviews.

When in conversations with patients specifically, it's important to use non-stigmatizing, succinct language in order to effectively communicate and build trust. Recent message testing conducted by the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) found that:

<p>Gay, Bisexual and Other Men Who Have Sex with Men (MSM) want succinct and clear information, not a lecture or long winded explanation.</p>	<p>Use visuals or graphics to get across details</p>
<p>MSM are persuaded by messages with psychological and physical health benefits.</p>	<p>Use language such as "empower" or "you matter" Include physical benefits of testing, such as info about some STIs not causing symptoms</p>
<p>MSM have difficulty discussing testing or STDs with health care personnel (HCP).</p>	<p>Acknowledge barriers that some MSM face (e.g., not feeling comfortable with an HCP)</p>

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Proactive Messaging

This section provides talking points to be used as part of an ongoing effort to encourage vaccinations when cases are low and there is no local outbreak occurring. These talking points can serve as a reminder or a nudge to vulnerable populations who may be hesitant, not realize vaccines are still available, or may just need that second dose. These messages can be adapted to align with your local needs, such as a change in the number of cases or ways people can access vaccines. This messaging has been primarily developed to support media interviews or public speaking engagements related to mpox.

- In the Spring of 2022, the U.S., along with many other countries around the world, experienced an unprecedented outbreak of mpox.
- For months, headlines were focused on the outbreak, its exponential growth, and the impact it was having on people who were infected.
- In response, public health organizations and leaders quickly deployed to educate the public on what mpox was, who was at risk, and where to get tested and vaccinated.
- Gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men (GBMSM) quickly took steps to reduce their risk of acquiring mpox through behavior modifications.
- Quickly providing harm reduction information for mpox, as well as broader sexual health information and vaccine recommendations, helped public health organizations and community influencers equip GBMSM to protect themselves and their partners while helping lower the number of cases in the outbreak.
- Since then, news of mpox has subsided, but the risk remains.
- Currently, there are very few cases of mpox in the U.S., but experts caution that cases could increase again.
- Health experts expect that mpox will continue to circulate in the U.S. and that small outbreaks could still occur.
- Gaps in vaccination put everyone at risk and could lead to future infections and outbreaks.
- Getting vaccinated now can protect you in the future and help prevent future outbreaks.

- Getting both doses of the mpox vaccine before you are exposed to mpox provides the best chance to prevent disease.
- That is why it is so important to get the safe, effective, and free 2-dose mpox vaccine. It will protect you and your sexual partners against potential infection and limit the likelihood that we will repeat another season like the Summer of 2022.
- With more than one million doses of the vaccine safely provided to people throughout the country, we have made tremendous strides to protect individuals at increased risk and prevent future infections and outbreaks, but we still have much more work to do.
- Mpox cases have decreased but the risk is not gone.
- [insert name of health department] continues to receive reports of mpox cases indicating that community transmission continues.
- We encourage those who plan to travel this year, attend large events or parties, participate in group sex, or have multiple sex partners to get vaccinated to help protect yourself and prevent future outbreaks.
- If you are planning to travel, attend large events or parties, participate in group sex, or have multiple sex partners, make sure to get both doses of your mpox vaccine at least 14 days before your trip or event.
- Even if you think you're at a lower risk of contracting mpox because you're in a monogamous relationship, you're just taking part in a guys night out and not attending large parties or events, or because you don't know anyone who has had it before, you should still plan to get the vaccine to prevent the disease and make it less severe if contracted.
- It's important to stay ahead of the virus and ensure you guard yourself against potential infection or symptoms that may result in painful or life-altering treatments.
- Right now, many people have not received both doses of the vaccines, putting themselves, their partners and families at risk.
- Even if you received your first mpox vaccine dose months ago, you can and should get your second dose now.

- If you are concerned that the vaccine will leave a mark or scar, talk to your doctor about your options.
- You may be able to choose if you want the shot in the back of your upper arm, your forearm, below your shoulder blade, or in the skin of your shoulder above the deltoid muscle.
- By receiving both doses of the vaccine, you can prevent painful symptoms of mpox, including:
 - Rectal bleeding and rectal pain
 - Painful lesions that can last between two to four weeks followed by itchiness during healing
 - Possible long-lasting and/or permanent side effects that result in scarring of lesions or, in extreme occurrences, circumcision
- We try to take care of our health - and our sexual health specifically - in so many ways, by undergoing regular STD-screenings, getting the HPV vaccine, and using PrEP or medications to prevent HIV or stay undetectable; the mpox vaccine should be considered a key tool to ensure good sexual and personal health as well.
- So, as we prepare for summer, protect yourself and your partners: get the safe, effective, and free 2-dose mpox vaccine at **[your local health clinic]** today.
- Getting vaccinated helps you protect your health and live the life you want.

Reactive Messaging

This section provides talking points to be used in media interviews, public remarks, or with community members when cases of mpox are increasing in your community. These can be augmented to address the communities most at risk.

- In the Spring of 2022, the U.S., along with many other countries around the world, experienced an unprecedented outbreak of mpox.
- Thanks to the rapid response of public health officials, advocates, and communities most impacted by mpox, we were able to quickly curb the outbreak.
- While conversations have subsided around the threat, mpox remains a risk and cases are still occurring throughout the country.
- Now, cases of mpox are beginning to rise here in **[INSERT COMMUNITY HERE]** among **[INSERT DEMOGRAPHIC]**.
- We are working diligently with the CDC, and local elected leaders, and directly with the **[INSERT COMMUNITY/TOWN/CITY HERE]** community to respond to this rise in cases count and control the spread of this virus.
- The good news is we know what works and we have the tools to stop rising cases in their tracks.
- The best protection against mpox is the safe, effective, 2-dose vaccine that is available for free at **[local STD clinic/health department]**.
- Let me repeat: It is safe and effective and more than a million doses have been safely provided.
- By receiving both doses of the vaccine, you can prevent painful symptoms of mpox, including:
 - Rectal bleeding and rectal pain
 - Painful lesions that can last between two to four weeks followed by itchiness during healing
 - Possible long-lasting and/or permanent side effects that result in scarring of lesions or, in extreme occurrences, circumcision
- It will protect you and your sexual partners against potential infection and limit the likelihood of the outbreak growing.

- If you are concerned that the vaccine will leave a mark or scar, you may request a subcutaneous injection.
- You may also be able to request having an intradermal injection given on the back of your upper arm, your forearm, below your shoulder blade, or in the skin of your shoulder above the deltoid muscle.
- If, for some reason, you cannot receive the vaccine, we would recommend:
 - Avoid skin-to-skin contact with people who have a rash that looks like mpox
 - Avoid contact with objects and materials that a person with mpox has used
 - Wash your hands often
 - If you are sexually active, we recommend **[limiting the number of partners you have, using condoms (though condoms alone may not prevent all exposures to mpox since the rash can occur on other parts of the body), talking with your partner about any unexplained rashes, temporarily reducing some activities that might increase your exposure to mpox like visiting a bathhouse or sex club or meeting anonymous partners].**
- During the 2022 outbreak, mpox spread primarily through sexual contact; however infections have occurred through other exposures, including non-sexual contact with infectious lesions. Some of those with the highest potential for exposure to the virus, include:
 - Gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men (GBMSM) who in the past 6 months has had any of the following:
 - A new diagnosis of one or more sexually transmitted diseases (e.g., chlamydia, gonorrhea, or syphilis)
 - More than one sex partner
 - Those who have had sex in association with a large public event in a geographic area where mpox transmission is occurring
 - Sex workers
- For a full list of those with highest exposure, visit the CDC's website on the mpox vaccine.
- So **[with summer fast approaching], we would encourage those who [plan to travel, attend large events or parties, participate in group sex, or have multiple sex partners] to get vaccinated TODAY.**

- The vaccine is most effective 14 days after the second dose, so make sure to plan accordingly before travel or events where you may have sex.
- Even if you think you're at a lower risk of contracting mpox because **[you're in a monogamous relationship, you're just taking part in a guys night out not attending large parties or events, or because you don't know anyone who has had it before,]** you should still plan to get the vaccine to guard against potential infection especially with the recent rise of infection in your area.
- Receiving both doses of the mpox vaccine is safe and effective and allows you to continue leading the life you want to live. Only receiving one dose does not offer nearly the same amount of protection as a full, two-dose course.
- Two doses of the mpox vaccine provides the most protection. Get your second dose even if you received your first mpox vaccine dose months ago.
- Getting vaccinated is quick and easy - so easy that in 2022 over one million doses were given in the US. No new or unexpected safety concerns emerged as a result of this and the effort helped to curb the outbreak.
- Now, as we focus on containing the cases in our own community, we would urge people at high risk of contracting mpox to think of this as part of their regular health care routine.
- And if you believe you have been exposed to mpox, you can still receive the mpox vaccine and it can help reduce your symptoms. To get your safe and effective vaccine for free today, visit **[local STD clinic]** today.
- When those at risk get vaccinated against mpox, we can prevent illnesses that limit individuals' ability to lead the lives they want.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

This section provides high-level questions and answers to explain what mpox is and why individuals should get vaccinated.

What is mpox?

Mpox, previously called monkeypox or MPV, is a virus that causes a rash that may be located on hands, feet, chest, face, or mouth or near the genitals, including penis, testicles, labia, vagina, and anus. The incubation period is 3-17 days. During this time, a person does not have symptoms and may feel fine. The rash will go through several stages, including scabs, before healing. The rash can initially look like pimples or blisters and may be painful or itchy.

Other symptoms of mpox can include:

- Fever
- Chills
- Swollen lymph nodes
- Exhaustion
- Muscle aches and backache
- Headaches
- Respiratory symptoms (e.g., sore throat, nasal congestion, cough)

How does mpox spread?

During the 2022 outbreak, mpox spread primarily through sexual contact; however, infections have occurred through other exposures, including non-sexual contact with infectious lesions.

Who is at risk of mpox?

In the 2022 U.S. outbreak, the vast majority of individuals who tested positive were gay, bisexual, and other MSM but anyone can be at risk for mpox.

I haven't heard of any new cases of mpox. Why do I need to be vaccinated?

Gaps in vaccinations put everyone at risk and could lead to future infections and outbreaks.

That is why it is so important to get the safe, effective, and free 2-dose mpox vaccine. It will protect you and your sexual partners against potential infection and limit the likelihood that we will repeat another season like the Summer of 2022.

While case counts have recently been low, cases are still occurring and another outbreak is possible - getting both doses of the vaccine remains the most effective tool

to protect yourself and prevent future mpox transmission and serious illness. It can also help you avoid painful symptoms of mpox, including:

- Rectal bleeding and rectal pain
- Painful lesions that can last between two to four weeks followed by itchiness during healing Possible long-lasting and/or permanent side effects that result in scarring of lesions or, in extreme occurrences, circumcision

Is the mpox vaccine safe?

Yes, the mpox vaccine is safe, effective and free at your local STD clinic. Over one million vaccine doses have been given in the US with no new or unexpected safety concerns and serious adverse events to the mpox vaccine are rare.

Do I need both shots to be safe from mpox?

Yes, the best chance of preventing mpox is to get both vaccine shots. Having only one shot does not provide as much protection as two shots do.

I got both mpox shots. Do I need a booster?

At this time, the CDC does not recommend a booster for the mpox vaccine because we don't if a booster will be effective or provide any additional protection. This may change as we learn more.

Where can I find a vaccine?

You can find a vaccine location near you at <https://www.cdc.gov/poxvirus/mpox/vaccines/index.html> or [name of local health department].

SUGGESTIONS ON HOSTING A PRESS EVENT

Below is a basic how-to on steps to follow if you're considering hosting a press event.

1) Define event goals

What outcomes do you hope to achieve by having this event? What are the main messages you want the public to hear? What is the call to action?

2) Identify spokespeople

Considering your goals, who from your department is best suited to speak at the event? Should any of your partners or other stakeholders speak too? You should not exceed four people including your spokesperson for a press event; otherwise it will run on too long.

3) Select venue / medium

Select a venue based on convenience for your audience and your event needs. You may want to opt for a location outside of your department if you're looking to highlight work being done on-the-ground (ie., at a clinic). Compelling visuals at a venue will also help attract the interest of TV outlets.

4) Draft & send a media advisory

You'll need to draft an advisory for media, notifying them of an event being held and inviting them to RSVP (templates below). Advisories typically have basic information on what the event is about, who will be speaking and where it is being held. To maximize the chances of attracting media to the event, we recommend issuing the advisory at least 3-4 days out from the event and re-sending it the day before or the morning of the event.

As part of this step, if you haven't already, you'll want to identify the reporters who typically cover health and related issues in your area and send them the advisory in advance. In addition, we recommend sending this to the desks of the local TV and radio affiliates. Once you've sent the advisory widely, it's also worth following up individually with select reporters who cover your department or mpox frequently and might be particularly interested.

5) Coordinate logistics & draft run of show

In addition to confirming a venue and any relevant logistics (e.g. tables, microphones, banners, etc), you might also want to consider whether you want

to livestream the press conference online and arrange any necessary equipment (e.g., video camera, mult box, laptop, etc). Finally, we'd recommend creating a run of show for the event that will dictate how the event will flow and the order of the speakers (template below)

6) Conduct a prep call

A day or two before the event, we'd recommend getting all the speakers on a call to walk through the run of show and main messaging objectives. This is also a chance to answer any questions they may have and ensure everyone is on the same page leading into the event.

7) Post Event Follow-Up

Following the event, we'd recommend issuing a press release recapping the discussion with key quotes from the speakers. You can also choose to include a link to the video from the press conference as a resource for reporters who were not able to make it to the event but might still be interested in watching. Additionally, it is worth reaching out to the reporters who attended to thank them for attending and see if they had any follow up questions for any of the speakers.

Template Press Event Run of Show

- 10:00 AM** Health Department team arrives at [location] for setup
- 10:40 AM** Speakers arrive no later than 10:40am
- 10:45 AM** Press arrive and sign in; [health department staff checking in press]
- 11:00 AM** Health department spokesperson provides opening remarks, speakers are presented
 - After remarks, passes it to speaker 1
- 11:08 AM** Speaker 1 provides remarks; passes it back to health department spokesperson
- 11:12 AM** Health department spokesperson introduces speaker 2

- 11:13 AM** Speaker 2 provides remarks; passes it back to health department spokesperson
- 11:17 AM** Health department spokesperson introduces speaker 3
- 11:18 AM** Speaker 3 provides remarks; passes it back to health department spokesperson; opens it up for Q&A
- 11:22 AM** Q&A Begins, health department spokesperson OR communications point person call on reporters
- 11:32 AM** Call to Action and Wrap Up
- 11: 35 AM** Event concludes

PRESS EVENT WORKSHEET

Use this worksheet to plan your press event.

Event Logistics	
Date/Time of Event:	
Event Name:	
Event Location:	
Will you livestream?	Y/N
Equipment needed:	
Speaker Logistics	
Key Speakers:	
Prep Call Date/Time:	
Media Logistics	
Media Invitation List:	
Date to Send Media Advisory:	

MEDIA ADVISORY

A media advisory is a formal invitation to members of the media to cover a specific event or activity. It provides key details about an upcoming event, such as a press conference or pop-up vaccine site, including the location, date, time, a brief description of the event, and its significance as well as key speakers and participating individuals. A media advisory should be shared with the press 2-3 days prior to the event and the morning of the event.

Below are three template media advisories to invite press to: (1) a press conference highlighting a new outbreak of mpox and encouraging individuals to be vaccinated, (2) a press conference urging individuals at high-risk to be vaccinated despite no new cases, and (3) a pop-up vaccine site hosted by your local health department.

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MEDIA ADVISORY TEMPLATE 1: HIGHLIGHTING A NEW MPOX OUTBREAK
FOR PLANNING PURPOSES

[Date]

Contact: [Name] | [Email] | [Phone Number]

MEDIA ADVISORY

**[DAY OF THE WEEK]: [CITY / STATE] HEALTH OFFICIALS TO
DISCUSS NEW MPOX OUTBREAK**

*Populations at Higher Risk for Exposure Encouraged to Get Both Doses of
Mpox Vaccine*

[City, State] – On [day], [health department leader names] will convene to discuss the new outbreak of mpox in **[City / State] at the [location of the press event]**. Health officials will discuss their strategy to control the spread of the virus, including encouraging populations at increased risk for exposure to get both doses of the safe and effective mpox vaccine at **[local clinic / health department site]**. Currently, there are X cases of mpox in the **[city/per day]**.

While mpox spreads primarily through sexual contact, infections have occurred through other exposures, including non-sexual contact with infectious lesions. Populations with the highest potential for exposure to the virus include: gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men (MSM) who have been diagnosed with a sexually transmitted disease or had more than one sexual partner in the past six months; those who have had sex in association with a large public event in a geographic area where mpox transmission is occurring; and sex workers.

Since the outbreak began in May 2022, over one million doses of the mpox vaccine have been administered, and there have been no unexpected side effects.

WHAT

[City / State health official names] discuss recent outbreak of mpox in **[community name]**

WHO

[List of speakers]

WHEN

[Date & Time]

WHERE

[Location – Address / Zoom]

****All interested media, please RSVP to **[Email]******

###

MEDIA ADVISORY TEMPLATE 2: PREVENTATIVE ANNOUNCEMENT URGING VACCINES
FOR PLANNING PURPOSES

[Date]

Contact: [Name] | [Email] | [Phone Number]

MEDIA ADVISORY

**[DAY OF THE WEEK]: [CITY / STATE] HEALTH OFFICIALS TO
DISCUSS IMPORTANCE OF GETTING VACCINATED AGAINST
MPOX**

***[Number]** Doses of the Mpox Vaccine Have Been Administered in **[City / State]** to Date; **[City Official/ Health Leader]** Commits to Closing the Gap & Protecting People*

[City, State] – On **[day]**, **[health department leader names]** will convene to discuss the importance of getting fully vaccinated against mpox ahead of the **[summer season/festival season/Pride Month/Etc.]** even as cases in **[community name]** currently remain low. Health officials will stress the importance of people at increased risk receiving both shots of the vaccine and urge those who have not yet done so to visit **[a local clinic / health department site]**. **[Number]** doses of the mpox vaccine have been administered in **[city / state]** to date. As part of an effort to prevent future outbreaks **[City Official/Health Leader]** is calling on those who have not been vaccinated to do so in an effort to close the vaccination gap in the **[city/county/region/etc.]**.

While mpox spreads primarily through sexual contact, infections have occurred through other exposures, including non-sexual contact with infectious lesions. Populations with the highest potential for exposure to the virus include: gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men (MSM) who have been diagnosed with a sexually transmitted disease or had more than one sexual partner in the past six months; those who have had sex in association with a large public event in a geographic area where mpox transmission is occurring; and sex workers.

Over one million doses of the mpox vaccine were administered safely across the US in 2022, helping stop the unprecedented spread of the virus last summer.

WHAT

[City / State health official names] discuss importance of getting vaccinated against mpox

WHO

[List of speakers]

WHEN

[Date & Time]

WHERE

[Location – Address / Zoom]

****All interested media, please RSVP to [Email]****

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MEDIA ADVISORY TEMPLATE 3: ANNOUNCING A VACCINATION POP-UP SITE
FOR PLANNING PURPOSES

[Date]

Contact: [Name] | [Email] | [Phone Number]

MEDIA ADVISORY

**[CITY / STATE] HEALTH DEPARTMENT TO HOST MPOX
VACCINE POP-UP SITE, [DATE]**

Health Leaders Available for Interviews On-Site

[City, State] – On **[day]**, **[city / state]** health department will host an mpox vaccine pop-up site at **[location]** to encourage members of the **[community name]** community to get both doses of the safe and effective mpox vaccine at no cost. **[While cases of mpox remain low, future outbreaks are still possible and getting both shots of the mpox vaccine is the most effective way for individuals to protect themselves, partners and their communities. OR As cases of mpox begin to rise in [city / state], getting both shots of the mpox vaccine is the most effective way for individuals to protect themselves, partners and their communities.]**

Over one million doses of the mpox vaccine have been administered safely across the US since 2022, helping stop the unprecedented spread of the virus last summer.

WHAT

Media availability for mpox vaccine pop up site hosted by **[City / State]** health department

WHO

[List of spokespeople available for media]

WHEN

[Date & time for media availability]

WHERE

[Pop up site address]

****All interested media, please RSVP to [Email]****

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PRESS RELEASE

A press release is a written communication that is typically used to announce newsworthy information about an organization or initiative, or to highlight an event that recently happened in order to garner further media coverage. Press releases are usually written in a concise, factual, and objective tone and may include links to images. They are distributed to the media either through a paid wire service or via email.

The goal of these press releases is to generate media coverage to increase awareness of mpox and the need for people at high-risk of exposure to get the safe and effective 2-dose vaccine.

Below are two press release templates: (1) highlighting an uptick of cases in your community, and (2) highlighting the launch of a vaccination campaign. They should include quotes from a public health spokesperson in your community as well as a trusted validator in the community like a local elected official.

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PRESS RELEASE TEMPLATE 1: UPTICK IN CASES IN MPOX CASES IN YOUR COMMUNITY

[INSERT LOGO]

CONTACT: [Insert media contact]

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: [Insert date]

Public Health Alert: Alarming Rise in Mpox Cases Across **[Insert Location]**

Public health department calls on unvaccinated community members or those who have just received one dose to get the safe and effective mpox vaccine as outbreak spreads

[Insert city, state] – Today the **[insert location]** health department reported a new outbreak of mpox cases across **[Insert location]**. Mpox is a virus that spreads primarily through sexual contact with symptoms that include a painful rash, rectal bleeding, and possible permanent side effects such as scarring. People at highest potential for exposure include gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men (MSM), who have had a new diagnosis of one or more sexually transmitted diseases (STD) or who have more than one sex partner. Currently, there are **[x cases]** of mpox in the area, and public health officials are calling on [those eligible] in **[Insert location]** over the age of **[Insert age]** to get the safe and effective 2-dose mpox vaccine. There is no cost to receive the vaccine.

“We are working diligently with the CDC, local elected leaders, and with the **[Insert location]** community to respond to the recent uptick in mpox cases and control the spread of this virus,” said **[Insert local public health spokesperson]**. “The best protection against mpox is the safe, effective two-dose vaccine that’s available for free at **[local STD clinic/health department]**.”

Mpox first emerged in the U.S. in May 2022, and many countries around the world experienced their own unprecedented outbreaks. Thanks to the rapid response of local public health officials, advocates, and the MSM community, towns and cities across the U.S. were able to quickly curb the outbreak.

“It takes a village to keep every one of us safe – and that’s exactly what happened last year,” said **[Insert trusted validator from target population]**. “While we are deeply concerned about this recent uptick in cases, we take comfort in the fact that we know how to prevent the spread of mpox and lessen the severity of cases: by getting the vaccine and getting it immediately. It’s safe, effective, and available for free at **[insert location.]**”

The **[insert local health department/STD clinic]** at **[Insert address]** is offering free mpox vaccinations on a walk-in basis from **[Insert time]** to **[Insert time]**. The vaccine is most effective after the full, two-dose regimen is complete. Public health officials underscore that individuals can still receive the mpox vaccine even if they believe they have been exposed to the virus. Even if individuals believe they are not at high risk, all members of the **[Insert location]** are highly encouraged to protect themselves and receive both doses of the vaccine.

For more information about mpox and the vaccine, please visit the CDC’s website [here](#).

To schedule your vaccine appoint at **[insert location]**, please visit **[Insert local health department website]**

###

PRESS RELEASE TEMPLATE 2: PREVENTATIVE VACCINATION CAMPAIGN

[INSERT LOGO]

CONTACT: [Insert media contact]**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** [Insert date]

A New Season, A New Reason to Get Vaccinated: **[Location]**
Public Health Department & **[Elected Officials]** Urge Mpox
Vaccinations Among Eligible Individuals

*Local Officials Launch Campaign Reminding Community Members that
Mpox is Still Out There; Calls on Individuals Traveling, with Multiple Sex
Partners to Get Safe, Effective, and Free Two-Dose Vaccine*

[Insert city, state] – Today, **[insert location (e.g. on the steps of City Hall, in front of a local health clinic)]** public health officials and local elected leaders came together to kick-off a campaign leading into **[Pride Month/summer travel season/etc.]** to encourage vaccination against mpox for populations most vulnerable for contracting the disease. While cases of mpox remain low, cases may still rise and officials are urging individuals to take preventative measures to protect their personal and sexual health. Leaders announced **[insert action, e.g. the city would be hosting free vaccine sites twice a week at [Insert location] through [Insert date]]** in an effort to ensure everyone is protected against the virus and to prevent potential outbreaks moving forward.

Mpox, a virus that spreads primarily through sexual contact, was first reported in the U.S. in May 2022. Its symptoms, which include a rash and lesions, are painful and can be long-lasting. Thanks to the rapid response of local public health officials and community leaders and advocates, the public was quickly educated about and vaccinated against mpox. However, gaps in vaccine coverage increase the risk of spread to everyone.

“The immediate public health response during last summer’s mpox outbreak taught us that prevention works,” said **[Insert local elected official]**. “As a new season of travel

begins, we are calling on members of the **[Insert location]** community to get vaccinated. The two-dose mpox vaccine is a tried and true way to keep us all safe.”

People at highest potential for exposure to mpox include gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men (GBMSM), who have had a new diagnosis of one or more sexually transmitted diseases (STD) or who have more than one sex partner. However, public health officials urge all people to receive the vaccine.

“We are so proud of our community for quickly showing up and getting vaccinated last year,” said **[Insert local elected official]**. “It’s a new year and a new season, so it’s important to keep our commitment to staying healthy.”

The **[Insert location]** vaccine clinic will be open from **[Insert time]-[Insert time]** and is free for anyone on a walk-in basis. The mpox vaccine is most effective after the full, two-dose regimen is complete. Public health officials underscore that individuals can still receive a second dose of the vaccine no matter how long it has been since receiving the first dose. Even if individuals believe they are not at high risk, all members of the **[Insert community]** are highly encouraged to protect themselves and receive both doses of the vaccine.

For more information about mpox and the vaccine, please visit the CDC’s website [here](#).

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TEMPLATE BLOG POST

In the event of rising cases of mpox, you will need to get relevant information out quickly to populations most vulnerable to infection. In addition to garnering media coverage through tactics described above, it will be helpful to publish materials on your own website for additional information as this is the place the public will look after they have read or seen a news story.

Below is a template blog post that can be posted to your health department's website explaining what mpox is and the preventative measures individuals should take in the event of rising cases.

You can help share important information without stigmatizing your local LGBTQ community by sharing this post for promotion in partnership with LGBTQ websites and organizations, or by working with local writers who are a part of the communities most impacted by mpox.

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Mpox is on the Rise in [INSERT COMMUNITY HERE]. Here's How to Protect Yourself.

Today, cases of mpox are beginning to rise here in [INSERT COMMUNITY HERE] among [INSERT DEMOGRAPHIC]. As we look to stop this spread in our community, **our priority is to keep you safe and informed but we need your help.**

You may remember mpox, which was previously called monkeypox or MPV, from the news last year when an unprecedented outbreak spread in the U.S. and throughout the world. Because of the rapid response of public health officials, advocates, and trusted STD clinics who were able to quickly educate the public about mpox and vaccinate those at risk, as well as the gay, bisexual and men-who-have-sex-with-men (MSM) community who got vaccinated as soon as shots were available, we were able to quickly curb the outbreak.

While conversations about the threat of mpox have subsided, mpox remains a risk and cases are still occurring throughout the country. Now, in our own community of [INSERT COMMUNITY HERE], new cases are being reported. The good news is: we know what works and we have the tools to stop rising cases in their tracks.

WHAT IS MPOX?

Mpox is a virus that causes a rash that may be located on hands, feet, chest, face, or mouth or near the genitals, including penis, testicles, labia, vagina, and anus. The incubation period is 3-17 days. During this time, a person does not have symptoms and may feel fine. The rash will go through several stages, including scabs, before healing.

The rash can initially look like pimples or blisters and may be painful or itchy.

You can find a full list of symptoms [here](#).

You can protect yourself from it by getting the safe and effective two-dose vaccine that is available for free at [LOCAL STD CLINIC/HEALTH DEPARTMENT]. By receiving both doses of the vaccine, you can prevent painful symptoms including rectal bleeding and rectal pain. You can also help protect your sexual partners from infection and our community at large by helping to prevent the outbreak from growing.

During the 2022 outbreak, mpox spread primarily through sexual contact; however infections have occurred through other exposures, including non-sexual contact with infectious lesions. You can find a full list of how mpox spreads [here](#) and a list of those with the highest potential exposure [here](#).

Receiving both doses of the vaccine is safe and effective and allows you to continue leading the life you want to live. Only receiving one dose does not offer nearly the same amount of protection as a full, two-dose course.

As we focus on containing the cases in our community, we're asking you to help do your part. The mpox vaccine should be considered a key tool to ensure good sexual and personal health as well.

Get protected today! Get the two-dose mpox vaccine and help prevent illnesses that limit individuals' ability to lead the lives they want. You can schedule your free vaccine at **[LOCAL STD CLINIC/HEALTH DEPARTMENT]** by calling **[PHONE NUMBER]** or visiting our website **[here]**.

LIST OF RESOURCES

- [Signs and symptoms of mpox](#)
- [How mpox spreads](#)
- [CDC-recommended groups who should be vaccinated](#)