

ALANA N. YAKSICH
NATIONAL
COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY
FLU VACCINATION CHALLENGE
TOOLKIT
2026-2027



Alana's Foundation was founded in 2003 in memory of 5 yr. old Alana Yaksich who died from influenza.

As extraordinary as the outcome, Alana's story is relatively unremarkable in detail.

On the afternoon of February 1, 2003, 5 1/2 year old Alana Yaksich spent the day with her parents and brothers watching movies, eating sundaes and playing. Alana enjoyed the afternoon feeling healthy and surrounded by her friends and family. Later that evening, Alana developed a 106-degree fever and was rushed to the emergency room. Within hours of her arrival at the local hospital, Alana died of flu-related complications that caused swelling and injury to her brain. Alana had not been vaccinated against the flu.

At the time, the U.S. Center for Disease Control only recommended children 6 months - 23 months receive a yearly flu vaccination. Since 2010, everyone 6 months and older is recommended to receive an annual flu vaccination.

In 2009 Alana's family established Alana's Foundation, a non-profit dedicated to educating people about the severity of influenza and the importance of yearly flu vaccination for children and adults alike.

The Mission of Alana's Foundation is to educate the public about the importance of yearly influenza vaccinations and in doing so, increase vaccination rates by providing convenient and affordable flu vaccination options as well as provide support for families that have lost a child.

ARE YOUR STUDENTS PROTECTED?



Alana's Foundation and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) encourage college health centers, medical practices, health departments, pharmacists, and other immunization providers to routinely assess the vaccine needs of their young adult patients and make a strong recommendation for vaccination.

You are in a **unique position** to help spread the word about recommended vaccines for college-age students, and Alana's Foundation would like your help. The materials in this toolkit will assist you in promoting the importance of annual flu vaccination to students, faculty, staff, fans and alumni.

College/university students are at risk of contracting the flu due to lifestyle factors. Close contact such as dorms, classrooms, public transportation, parties, and sports events make flu especially easy to spread at college. Further, lack of sleep, not eating healthy, and not exercising regularly can weaken the immune system, making these young adults more vulnerable to the flu.

ARE YOU UP FOR THE CHALLENGE?

While reaching the college/university student population with important health message can be difficult to do, it's critical that we protect them from the flu. Alana's Foundation would like to challenge you to ramp up your flu vaccination efforts this season!

Join us in a friendly competition this fall, to challenge students, staff, faculty, alumni and fans to get vaccinated against the flu.

Please use these materials to drive demand for flu vaccine on your campus today! If you have any questions, contact JoAnna Yaksich, Alana's Foundation at info@alanasfoundation.org

* 2024-2025 Season "By the Numbers" for Adults:

- Flu vaccination coverage for Adults (≥ 18 years) was 41.9%, a *decrease* of 3.0 percentage points from the prior season.
- Flu vaccination coverage was 1.6 percentage points **lower** for adults 18-49, and 4.1 percentage points **lower** for adults 50-64 and 5.9 percentage points lower among adults ≥ 65 compared 2023-2024 flu season.
- Flu vaccination coverage was higher for older adults compared with younger adults:
 - Vaccination coverage among adults was highest among adults ≥ 65 years (63.8%) and lowest among adults 18-49 years (31.2%).
- Flu vaccination coverage decreased across all races:
 - Black adults decreased by 4.1 percentage points, Hispanic adults decreased by 2.6 percentage points, and non-Hispanic adults of other or multiple races decreased by 3.8 percentage points compared with the 2023-24 season.
 - White adults had a 2.9% decrease in coverage

* Source: The CDC analyzed data from the NIS-Flu for children 6 months through 17 years and the BRFSS for adults ≥ 18 years to estimate national- and state-level flu vaccination coverage for the 2023-24 flu season. <https://www.cdc.gov/fluview/coverage-by-season/2024-2025.html>

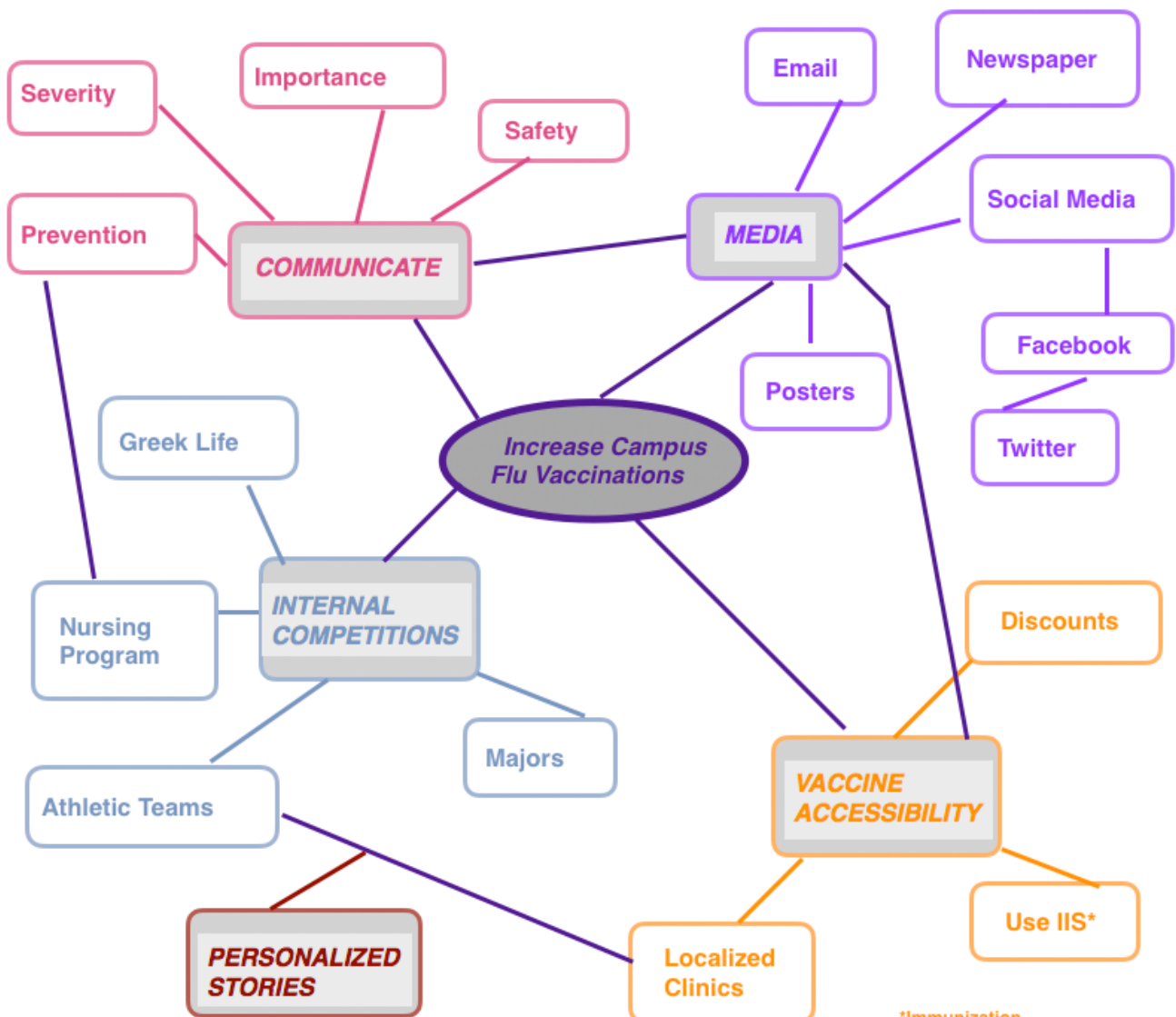
TABLE OF CONTENTS



Campaign Map	6
Campaign Plan.....	7
Strategies for Partnering with Groups on Campus	8
Strategies for Clinical Updates and Processes.....	9
Strategies for Internal Competition.....	10
Strategies for Improving Vaccine Accessibility.....	11
Strategies for Communicating Health Messages.....	12
Messages to Communicate.....	13
Strategies for Social Media.....	14
Sample Social Media Posts.....	15
Use Personal Stories.....	16
Planning Map.....	17/18
Case Studies.....	19/20
Summary of Online Resources.....	20

CAMPAIGN MAP

We understand that persuading college students to change their health behaviors can be challenging. However, annual flu vaccination is an important preventive behavior that we want students continuing throughout their lifetime. Use the resources in this toolkit to create awareness on your campus and *map out a plan* for your institution. Pick and choose the ideas that work best for your school!



*Immunization Information System (for your state)

CAMPAIGN PLAN



This toolkit can be used as a **WORKING DOCUMENT** to **PLAN** and **IMPLEMENT** a flu campaign that is unique to your institution and student body. We have left space for you to use to write in thoughts and ideas, and map out your challenge.

Step 1: Gather your Team

Gather together a group of **partners**. Use the **map** on page 6 to brainstorm who would be good team members (e.g. Greek Life members, communications team, student health and wellness, nursing program contacts, resident life, etc.). Make sure to **engage your students** as well to help spread the work about the competition!

Step 2: Create a Plan

Using the toolkit to guide your plan, lay out exactly what steps you are going to take to increase vaccination coverage. There are many ideas, but we know that not all of them are feasible for you. Pick a few ideas that work for your institution, and execute them well.

Step 3: Assign Tasks

While you have your team together, divide the plan into tasks for each person and set deadlines. Check in regularly with teammates to ensure accountability.


Step 4: Implement and Monitor

Monitor how things are going as your team progress. Make changes if something isn't working. Individualizing **YOUR** plan to **YOUR** campus will produce the best results. Remember, the way to **win** the Alana Yaksich Memorial Trophy is to get students, staff, faculty, alumni and fans talking about the flu, **getting immunized** and **taking the survey**.

Step 5:

The overall goal of this campaign is to increase vaccination coverage and create a healthier campus. Focus on the outcome!

STRATEGIES for PARTNERING with GROUPS on CAMPUS



Greek Life: Fraternities and Sororities on campus can be a great resource to help spread the word to a large campus population. Contact your campus Panhellenic Council about communication channels you can use to reach all Greek students.

Nursing School/Public Health: Does your campus have a nursing program or public health degree? You can work with these schools to host clinics, train nurses on how to give vaccines, or have them communicate within their circles about the importance of vaccination (see Case Study 1).

Communications: If you have a contact in the Communication Department at your school, reach out to them to find out how to engage students through current campus communication and public relations initiatives. There may also be someone on the Communications team who knows how to reach students through social media. You could reach a lot of students by working with the Communications team to post on the college/university-wide social media pages.

Animal Shelter:

Do you have an animal shelter in your community? Bring in dogs for a “stress relieving” visit for the students who love animals. Coincide this with a flu clinic at your health center so you can educate students while they pet and play.

Incentives:

Providing incentives to student groups you work with on campus can be very motivating. Consider raffles for gift cards, iPods, sporting event tickets, etc. Explore the option of applying for a grant from various corporations to help defray the cost of purchasing these incentives.

TIP:

The COMMUNITY TOOLBOX is a great online resource to assist with your campaign design and implementation. Check out these links to get you started:

- * [Creating and Maintaining Partnerships](#)
- * [Assessing Community Needs and Resources](#)
- * [Communications to Promote Interest](#)

STRATEGIES for CLINICAL UPDATES and PROCESSES



Standing Orders: Use standing orders to create vaccine-only visits. This way, the student does not need an individualized physician order for his/her vaccination. Standing orders authorize nurses and pharmacists to administer vaccines to all persons meeting certain criteria. Standing orders include:

- a. Protocol to identify patients
- b. Procedures to provide information on the risks and benefits of vaccines
- c. Process to record refusals or contraindications
- d. Approved vaccine delivery protocol
- e. Quality assurance and documentation procedures

Notify Patients: Send reminder/recall letters to patients throughout the Michigan Care Improvement Registry (MIR). Reminder/recall is a proven strategy to increasing immunization coverage levels. (See Case Study 2).

Use Every Opportunity: Use all patient encounters as opportunities to vaccinate, including sick and well visits. Mild acute illness with or without fever is not a contraindication to flu vaccination.

Track Progress: Tracking your progress can be beneficial in multiple ways. Having data to describe how well efforts worked can be useful as you plan for future years. Also, having information on successes and failures can allow you to adopt your strategies and provide feedback to necessary partners.

Pharmacies: Is there a pharmacy close to campus that students often go to? Make sure to talk to them about the challenge, provide them with materials, and encourage them to enter all flu vaccinations in MCIR.


TIP:

Online Resources from IMMUNIZE.ORG are helpful in implementing **standing orders** and **sending reminders**:

* **STANDING ORDERS**

* **REMINDER/RECALL** (see Step 8)

STRATEGIES for INTERNAL COMPETITION



Greek Life: Fraternities and Sororities on campus can be a great resource to help create an internal competition. There is a natural rivalry between houses, so use this rivalry to get all Greek Life students vaccinated? Work with the Panhellenic council to work out details of you you are going to monitor and evaluate the outcome.

Athletic Teams: Athletes are competitive, and love the chance to WIN! Build a flu vaccination competition between athletic teams on our campus, and work wth coaches and staff to measure how many athletes get vaccinated. Athletes make up a significant portion of students and are great leaders to engage in helping spread the work about the importance of flu vaccinations. A flu shot can help keep student athletes in the game!

Majors/Schools/Departments: Do you have contacts with Deans from different majors at your school? If so, start a competition between majors. These groups of students take classes together, study together, and research together. This provides an opportunity to communicate with a large group of students at once. Students do not have time to be sick - a flu shot can help keep them healthy!

Campus Organizations:

Connecting with on-campus groups can help your message reach a large number of students without reaching out to them individually. Also, be thinking about what support you need. A student in communication, health education, or another major might be interested in an internship opportunity focused on implementing some of these ideas, and spreading the word about the importance of flu vaccine.

TIP:

The following report highlights campus flu vaccination efforts across the Unites States: “Addressing the Challenges of Influenza Vaccination on US College Campuses: A Report by the National /Foundation for Infectious Diseases” This report provides example and insight on ways to overcome barriers to flu vaccination for the college community.

STRATEGIES for IMPROVING VACCINE ACCESSIBILITY



Host Clinics: Why make students come to you for their flu vaccine: Set up a clinic at a major event (e.g. welcome back events, sporting events, popular study areas, dining areas, etc.) to make it more convenient for students to get their flu vaccine.

Reduce Financial Barriers: Students will not want to pay out of pocket, so be prepared to help finance the flu vaccine for students. Have a system in place to bill multiple health plans to ensure a variety of health care insurance providers are accepted at your facility. You can also provide the option to bill vaccines administered at your facility to students' university accounts. For GRANT ASSISTANCE for ALANA'S FOUNDATION, please see box below.

Easy Scheduling: Designate a specific clinic room or area for flu vaccine administration appointments and walk-ins.

Recommend Vaccines: Recommend influenza vaccine to your patients! A health care provider's recommendation to vaccinate has a significant influence on patients. You can also give the flu vaccine with other needed immunizations, such as tetanus, diphtheria, acellular pertussis (Tdap), human papilloma virus (HPV), meningococcal vaccine (MenACWY, MenB), or others (see case study 4).

Schedule around classes: If possible, schedule around student class times and schedules, and offer a variety of clinic times, including nights and weekend. Clinics scheduled between 9:00 am and 5:00 pm may not be ideal timing for students (see case study 7).

ALANA'S FOUNDATION VACCINE ASSISTANCE GRANTS:

Need assistance purchasing vaccine for your underinsured or uninsured students? ALANA'S FOUNDATION is pleased to offer *VACCINE ASSISTANCE GRANTS* to the registered schools participating in the **ALANA YAKSICH NATIONAL COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY FLU VACCINATION CHALLENGE**. Please visit www.AlanasFoundation.org for grant guidelines and application.

STRATEGIES for COMMUNICATING HEALTH MESSAGES



Email Blasts: Partner with your university relations team to send blast-emails to students. This is a great exercise to practice emergency communications messaging capabilities. Use this opportunity to share information about the flu, the flu challenge requirements, why students should get vaccinated, where they can get vaccinated, and address cost issues for people who have questions about out-of-pocket expenses.

Newspaper: Does your school have a newsletter or newspaper that is distributed to all students? If so, find out what it takes to write an article for one of these publications and get the message out there about the flu challenge and what students need to do to participate (and WIN!)

Use Online Resources: Utilize credible videos and websites to create awareness about the flu vaccine. Share these widely. For example, you could use the *Moms Know Best* public service announcement (PSA), developed through an external collaboration during the pilot year of the flu vaccination challenge.

Posters: Utilize existing print materials from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevent (CDC) to promote flu vaccination across your campus. Many excellent resources are downloadable and free to use. Hanging up posters around campus and in your metal center can help reach students and bring their attention to the importance of the flu vaccine and the flu challenge (see case studies 3 & 5).

Engage Resident Assistants (RAs): RAs across campus update bulletin boards in residence halls. Provide them with posters and information that they can use to decorate their boards during the flu season.

CENTER FOR DISEASE CONTROL (CDC) has FREE RESOURCES available [HERE](#) for:

- ~ Print Materials
- ~ Video/Audio Visual
- ~ Mobile Content
- ~ Web Tools

MESSAGES TO COMMUNICATE



VACCINATION IS THE FIRST AND MOST IMPORTANT STEP TO PROTECT AGAINST THE FLU. *Everyone* aged 6 months and older should get a flu vaccination each year to protect themselves and their loved ones against the flu.

THE FLU IS SERIOUS. The flu is a contagious disease which affects the lungs and can lead to serious illness, including pneumonia. Even health people can get sick enough to miss work or school for a significant amount of time or even be hospitalized. The close-contact environment that college students live in can often lead to the rapid spread of influenza, so it is important for student to get their flu shot.

THE FLU VACCINE CANNOT GIVE YOU THE FLU. The vaccine is either made with an inactivated virus or no virus at all. The most common side effects from a flu shot is a sore arm and sometimes a low fever or achiness. If you do experience them at all, these side effects are mild and short-lived.

FLU SEASONS ARE UNPREDICTABLE. They can begin early in the fall and last late into the spring. *As long as influenza is in the community, it is not too late to get vaccinated, even during the winter.* If you miss getting your flu vaccine in the fall, make it a New Year's resolution - flu season doesn't usually peak until January or February and can last until May. *The **flu** vaccine offers protection for you all season long.*

THE MINOR PAIN OF A FLU SHOT IS NOTHING COMPARED TO THE SUFFERING THAT CAN BE CASUED BY THE FLU. The flu can make you very sick for several days, send you to the hospital, or worse, cause death. The flu shot can keep you from catching the flu. Any discomfort you may feel from the flu vaccine is worth it to avoid the flu.

FLU VACCINES ARE SAFE. Flu vaccines have been given for more than 50 years and they have a very good safety track record. Hundreds of millions of flu vaccines have been given safely.

ADDITIONAL FREE RESOURCE MATERIAL LINKS:

[AIM Toolkit](#)

[NY State Health Department](#)

[Immunization Action Coalition](#)

STRATEGIES for SOCIAL MEDIA



Engage Campus Leaders: Campus leaders such as the President, football coach, or school mascot can have a large social media reach. Ask them to tweet about the flu challenge or provide them with a sample message they can post or tweet to help encourage students to get vaccinated.

“Don’t miss the action this season! #GetVaccinated to #FightFlu”

Engage Greek Life: Student leaders in Greek Life also can have a huge social media reach. Asking them to post about the flu challenge can spread the work to a large group of students.

Hashtags: Create a hashtag that is specific to your campus and the flu challenge. You want consistency among posts about the flu challenge so branding a hashtag that is specific to your school will help increase usage of the hashtag (see Case Study 6).

Engage Users: Create a selfie competition on your campus and have students send in selfies of places they go after they got their flu shot. The most creative post can win a prize! OR, you could give those who receive the flu vaccine on campus special Band-Aids that they can use in their selfies to help spread awareness about the importance!

Utilize Interns: This would be a great project for an intern to work on. They know what their peers are reading on social media, and can help craft creative posts that will resonate with students on your campus.

CDC has examples of how you can use social media to engage users for your health campaigns. Their website has many ideas that you can use, or adapt specifically for your campus flu vaccination campaign. Get creative! Check out the links below:

[CDC Social Media website](#)

[CDC Social Media Toolkit](#)

SAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS



Flu Vaccine is now available! Make your appointment at [your health center's website] and stop by health services to #GetVaccinated

The best defense is a good offense. #GetVaccinated to #FightFlu

College #LifeHack: Get your flu vaccine early to provide you with protection the entire season #FightFlu

Studies show immunity decreases as stress increases...let flu be one less worry during the semester #GetVaccinated

Even healthy young adults can get sick with a vaccine-preventable disease. Listen to **personal stories** at Shot-by-Shot.org ~ (www.shotbyshot.org/story-gallery/)

Spread love. Not the flu. #GetVaccinated

There is nothing better than beating [Rival School}. Help us beat [Rival Schools Mascot] by getting your flu vaccine! #GetVaccinated

Finals are just around the corner, don't let flu keep you from your finals #GetVaccinated

Are you competing? Help us beat our rivals by getting the flu shot today! #GetVaccinated

Write your ideas here:

#

#

#

#

USE PERSONAL STORIES



A PERSONAL STORY BY NIKO YAKSICH, BROTHER OF ALANA YAKSICH

How did the flu impact you personally?

In 2003, I lost my sister Alana to the flu. She was a perfectly healthy 5-year-old girl, and in the blink of an eye she was gone.

The day she passed away she had waken up with a fever and was feeling a little under the weather. By the end of the day she was feeling much better and was running around with me. It was as though she had never been feeling under the weather and she back to normal. She was NOT back to normal though.

As I slept that night my sister was being rushed to the hospital with a fever of 106. The doctors said that there was nothing they could do and that the flu had cause swelling to her brain. By the following night I had lost my sister and my family's life would be changed forever.

Why is it important for college-aged young adults to get vaccinated?

I think it is important for everyone to get vaccinated. The flu vaccine is made from dead or weakened viruses, which means that it can not cause the flu.

More than 200,000 people nationwide are hospitalized each year from the flu and an average of 36,000 die. This is something that needs to be take seriously. Getting vaccinated can prevent you from dying or getting sick. What benefit does not get serve? Why flirt with death when there is a simple and easy way to prevent it?

What would you say to people that think the flu isn't serious?

I think that my story shows just how serious the flu can be. My sister did not have previous problems with her health She was a perfectly normal 5-year-old. This virus can kill and it can kill fast. You need to get vaccinated to prevent the same things that happened to my family from happening to you. No one should have to go through the pain and tragedy that a loss like this brings on.

PLANNING MAP



Mapping out your exact plans will help keep you on track throughout the flu season. You can use this timeline to set deadlines and goals for your campus flu vaccination campaign!

The diagram consists of a central horizontal line. From the left end of this line, a vertical line goes down to a box labeled "Brainstorming Stage:". From the right end of the horizontal line, a vertical line goes up to an empty box. From the left end of the horizontal line, a vertical line goes down to an empty box. From the right end of the horizontal line, a vertical line goes down to a box labeled "Planning Stage:". Each of these four boxes is connected to the central line by a short diagonal line that meets the horizontal line at a right angle.

Brainstorming Stage:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Planning Stage:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

PLANNING MAP (cont'd)



GOALS:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Implementation Stage:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____



Evaluation Stage:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

CASE STUDIES



1. **Wayne State University:** Posters that Encourage Competition

Wayne State University created their own marketing materials that encourages the competition between schools who were participating in the challenge. It is a good idea to create posters that are specific to campus activities, which show that efforts were made to personalize the campaign which will interest more students. The poster that Wayne State University created included information about completing the student self report survey. Not all students who receive their flu shot will get them at the college health clinic, so it is a good idea to market the self-report survey on posters and the materials so that all students can complete the survey and have their flu shot count towards the overall competition!

2. **Penn State University:** Social Media Campaign

Penn State University has a great social media campaign promoting flu vaccination. They use the hashtag #PSUFluFight. Personalizing the hashtag specifically to your campus will help engage more students. Penn State also encouraged students to take selfies to post with the hashtag, and challenge friends through social media to get the flu vaccine.

3. **University of Minnesota:** Guinness World Record

University of Minnesota challenged their students to get vaccinated to help break the 2008 Guinness World Record for highest number of vaccinations in one day. This led to over 11,000 vaccinations! They also used the idea of students being apart of the herd, and talk about protecting the herd by getting the flu vaccine.

CASE STUDIES



1. **Calvin College:** Nursing Students as Campus Advocates

Calvin College engaged nursing students to be influencers on campus, and they also used it as a training opportunity. “Nursing students helped provide flu shots at each flu clinic as a part of their clinical skills course.”

2. **Wayne State University:** EHR Utilization

Wayne State University used their electronic health system to alert staff to ask every patient who came in about getting the flu vaccine. This EHR acted as a reminder for staff to ask about flu vaccine so that no one would forget to ask the student if they had received the vaccine yet. Using clinical strategies to optimize processes can be an effective way to increase the number of students getting vaccinated.

3. **Hope College:** Branding and Marketing Flu Vaccine efforts

Hope College branded their flu campaign “Flunado”, and created posters that read “Stop Flunado: Get vaccinated now!” By creating a theme for their efforts to vaccinate students, they help create awareness around the challenge, and were consistent in their messaging. These posters also included information about an incentive they were offering to students: a drawing to win one of four Fitbits for any student who got their flu vaccine. Incentivizing students can be an effective way to get more students into health clinics to get their flu shot. Consistent messaging is also important. Using branding terms such as “Flunado” can help with recognition of the campaign, and awareness of the efforts on campus.

4. **Michigan State University:** Support Vaccination Staff

Michigan State University incentivized their staff to vaccinate more students with the flu shot. The person on staff who had at the most flu vaccinations in the season won a prize. This strategy can encourage staff to make a recommendation for the flu vaccine to every student who uses the clinic’s services. There are many ways to encourage students to get the flu vaccine - clinic staff are partners you will want to engage!

SUMMARY OF ONLINE RESOURCES



Page 8:

Community Toolbox: ctb.ku.edu/en

Creating and Maintaining Partnerships

ctb.ku.edu/en/creating-and-maintaining-partnerships

Assessing Community Needs and Resources

<http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/assessment/assessing-community-needs-and-resources>

Communications to Promote Interest

ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/participation/promoting-interest

Page 9:

Immunize.Org: immunize.org

Standing Orders

www.immunize.org/standing-orders/

Reminder Recall

www.immunize.org/catg.d/p3067.pdf

Page 11:

Alana's Foundation: AlanasFoundation.org

Vaccine Assistance Grants

www.alanasfoundation.org/flu-vaccine-requests

Page 12:

Center for Disease Control: <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/index.htm>

Free Resources

<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/freeresources/index.htm>

Page 13:

Additional Free Resources

AIM Toolkit

www.aimtoolkit.org/health-care/general-public.php

NY State Health Department

https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/influenza/seasonal/educational_materials.htm

Immunization Action Coalition

www.immunize.org/handouts/influenza-vaccines.asp

Page 14:

Center for Disease Control Social Media: <https://www.cdc.gov/socialmedia/index.html>

Social Media Toolkit

<https://www.cdc.gov/socialmedia/tools/guidelines/socialmediatoolkit.html>

Page 15:

Personal Stories

Shot-by-Shot:: Shot-by-Shot.org

<http://www.shotbyshot.org/stories/alanas-story/>

The ALANA N. YAKSICH NATIONAL COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY FLU VACCINATION CHALLENGE
is brought to you by Alana's Foundation.
Direct all challenge questions to Info@AlanasFoundation.org
or visit our [website](http://www.AlanasFoundation.org)
www.AlanasFoundation.org

