

ALANA N. YAKSICH  
CATHOLIC SCHOOL  
FLU VACCINATION CHALLENGE  
TOOLKIT  
2021-2022



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 medical practices, health departments, pharmacists, and other immunization providers to routinely assess the vaccine needs of their K-12 students and make a strong recommendation for annual flu vaccination.

As a school administrator, you are in a unique position to help spread the word about recommended vaccines for your 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, families, staff, faculty and alumni.

K-12 students are at risk of contracting the flu due to lifestyle factors. Close contact such as dorms (for some), classrooms, public transportation, parties, and sports events make flu especially easy to spread. Further, lack of sleep, not necessarily eating healthy, and perhaps not exercising regularly can weaken the immune system, making the student population more vulnerable to the flu.

*This toolkit is adapted from the Michigan College Flu Challenge Toolkit, with permission from the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services*

# ARE YOU UP FOR THE CHALLENGE?



While reaching the 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 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](mailto:info@alanasfoundation.org)

- \* By the numbers for children 6 months though 17 years and older:
  - Flu vaccination coverage for the 2019-2020 flu season was 63.8%, an increase 1.2 percentage points from the 2018-19 flu season.
  - By child age groups, coverage increased 2.1 percentage points among 6 mo-4yr, with no significant increase among 5 - 12 yrs. or 13-17 yr., compared with 2018-19 season.
  - Flu vaccination coverage among children decreased as age increased.
    - Vaccination coverage was highest among children 6 months - 4 years (75.5%) and lowest among adults 13-17 years (53.3.1%). Children 5 - 12 years had coverage at 64.6-%.

\* Source: The CDC National Internet Flu Survey (NIFS) for children 6 months-17 years residing in the United States. <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/fluview/cov-1920estimates.htm>

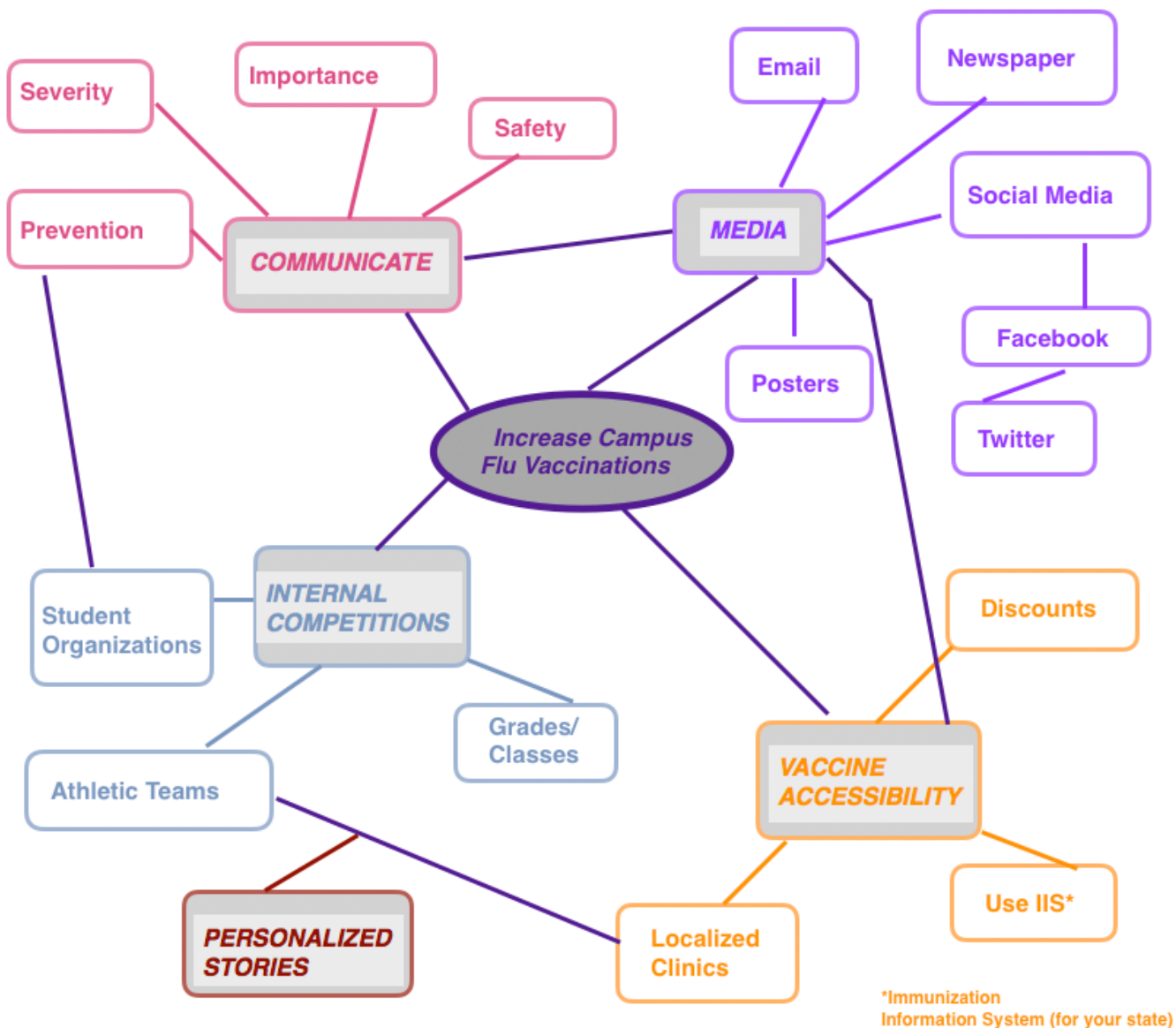
# TABLE OF CONTENTS



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

# CAMPAIGN MAP

We understand that persuading students and their families 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 at your school and *map out a plan* for your institution. Pick and choose the ideas that work best for your school!



# 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. Student organization members, communications team, student health and wellness, resident life (if applicable), 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** school 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



**Student Organization:** Student groups can be a great resource to help spread the word to their members. Contact organization leaders about communication channels you can use to reach all members.

**Grade/Class levels:** Work with class representatives to communicate about the challenge and rally their classmates. Have them communicate within their circles about the importance of vaccination.

**Communications:** Utilize the Communication Department at your school, to engage students through current campus communication and public relations initiatives. Perhaps they can reach students through social media to get the word out about the competition among fans and alumni.

**Student Athletes/Athletic Teams:** Engage student athletes and all sport teams to reach out to their supporters.

**Incentives:** Providing incentives to student groups you work with can be very motivating. Explore the option of asking local businesses to donate small items you can use such as raffles for gift cards, cell phone accessories, iPods, etc.

### 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 INTERNAL COMPETITION



**Student Organizations:** Connecting with students groups can help your message reach a large number of students without reaching out to students individually. Also, be thinking about what support you need. A student in communication, health education, or another course of study might be interested in assisting in implementing some of these ideas, and spreading the word about the importance of flu vaccine to their classmates and community.

**Athletic Teams:** Athletes are competitive, and love the chance to WIN! Build a flu vaccination competition between athletic teams on our campus, and work with 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 word about the importance of flu vaccinations. A flu shot can help keep student athletes in the game!

**Grade/Classes:** Start a competition between grade levels. These groups of students take classes together, study together, and research together. This provides an opportunity to communicate with a group of students at once. Students do not have time to be sick - a flu shot can help keep them healthy!

## STRATEGIES for IMPROVING VACCINE ACCESSIBILITY



**Host Clinic(s):** In addition to an in-school clinic, consider setting up a clinic at a major event (e.g. sporting events) to make it more convenient for students and their families, faculty, staff, alumni, fans to get their flu vaccine.

**Reduce Financial Barriers:** Remember, at clinics sponsored by Alana's Foundation, the cost of vaccine is covered for those uninsured/underinsured. For those with insurance, our vaccine administration partner, Michigan Community Visiting Nurse Association, bills the cost of the vaccine to insurance carriers. No out of pocket costs are ever billed to the vaccine recipient.

## 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):** Where applicable, 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 Student Leaders:** Student leaders such as class presidents, can also 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 Student assistants:** This would be a great project for a student assistant 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! Get vaccinated today! #GetVaccinated

In-School Flu Clinic scheduled for [insert date/time of school clinic].  
#GetVaccinated

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

Student #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 children and young adults can get sick with a vaccine-preventable disease. Listen to personal stories at [Shot-by-Shot.org](http://Shot-by-Shot.org) ~ ([www.shotbyshot.org/story-gallery/](http://www.shotbyshot.org/story-gallery/))

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.

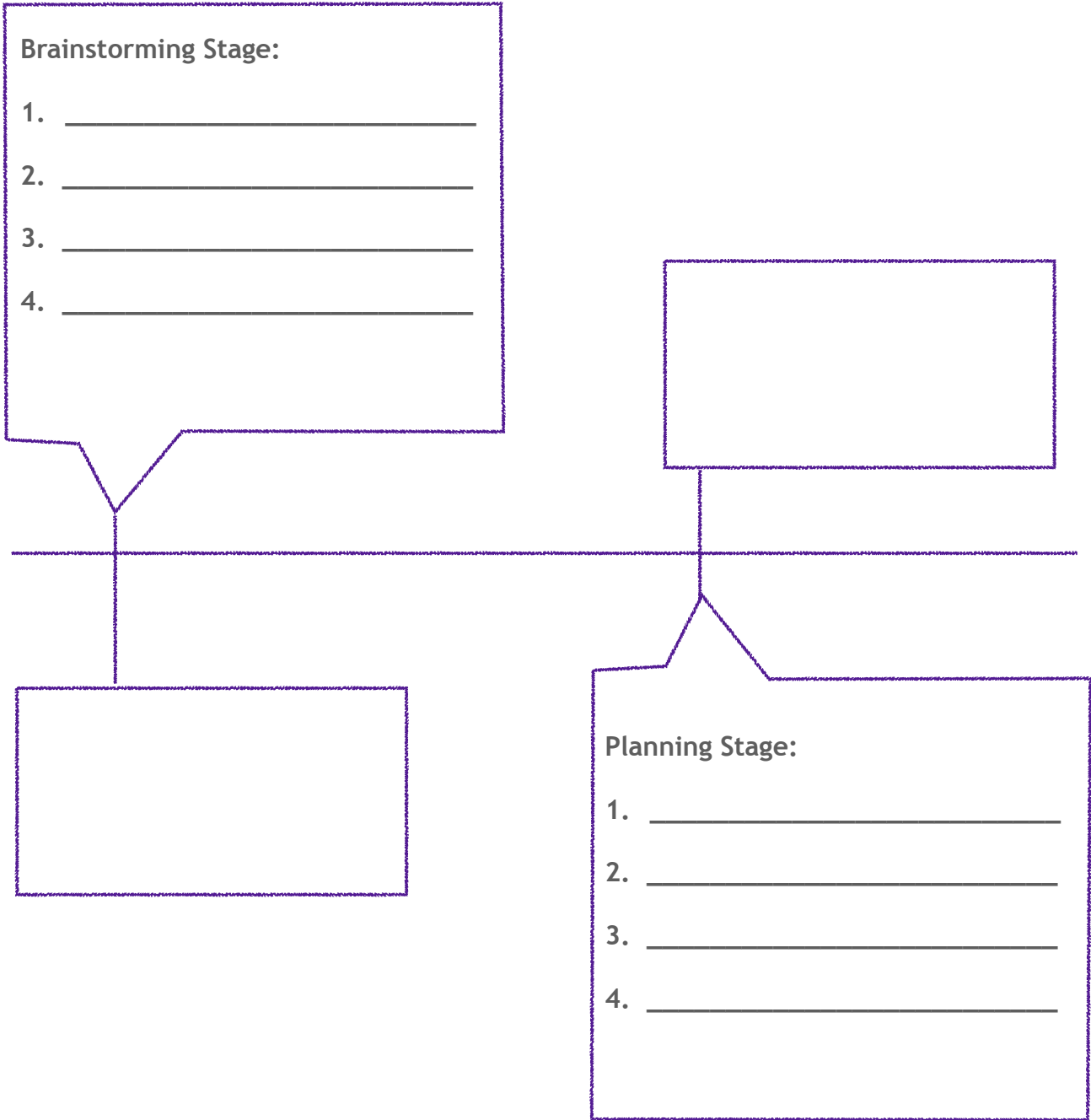
More than 200,000 people nationwide are hospitalized each year from the flu and an average of 36,000 die. This is something that needs to be take seriously. Getting vaccinated can prevent you from dying or getting sick. What benefit does not get serve? Why flirt with death when there is a simple and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





# PLANNING MAP (cont'd)



## GOALS:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

### Implementation Stage:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_



### Evaluation Stage:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

# CASE STUDIES



A few ideas borrowed from the college/university challenge that can be adapted for K-12:

## 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 school health clinic, so it is a good idea to market the self-report survey on posters and the materials so that all students (faculty, staff, alumni, family and fans) 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 school will help engage more students. Penn State also encouraged students to take selfies to post with the hashtag, and challenge friends (faculty, staff, alumni, family and fans) 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.

# SUMMARY OF ONLINE RESOURCES



Page 8:

Community Toolbox: [ctb.ku.edu/en](http://ctb.ku.edu/en)

**Creating and Maintaining Partnerships**

[ctb.ku.edu/en/creating-and-maintaining-partnerships](http://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](http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/participation/promoting-interest)

Page 10:

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

**Free Resources**

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

Page 11:

**Additional Free Resources**

**AIM Toolkit**

[www.aimtoolkit.org/health-care/general-public.php](http://www.aimtoolkit.org/health-care/general-public.php)

**NY State Health Department**

[https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/influenza/seasonal/educational\\_materials.htm](https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/influenza/seasonal/educational_materials.htm)

**Immunization Action Coalition**

[www.immunize.org/handouts/influenza-vaccines.asp](http://www.immunize.org/handouts/influenza-vaccines.asp)

Page 12:

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 14:

**Personal Stories**

**Shot-by-Shot::** [Shot-by-Shot.org](http://Shot-by-Shot.org)

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

**Other:**

Alana's Foundation: [AlanasFoundation.org](http://AlanasFoundation.org)

Immunize.Org: [Immunize.org](http://Immunize.org)

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

