



# HHS Podcast Guidance

*This information applies to the entirety of the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. Operational Divisions and Offices within the Department may create guidance and establish policies that are more restrictive if the appropriate management so chooses.*

Last updated: May 18, 2011 | [Directory of HHS Podcasts](#)<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <http://newmedia.hhs.gov/tools/podcasts.html>





## GETTING STARTED

A podcast is an audio file that you can listen to on your computer or on a variety of portable media devices (iPod, mobile device). Podcasts are usually short, focus on a single issue or topic, and often are released in a series format. Most podcasts are available via subscription through XML feed or services that feed many podcasts, such as iTunes, and are free for download by the public. Learn more about the basics of [podcasting and best practices](#)<sup>2</sup> from CDC.

Recent data from Edison Research and Arbitron shows that Americans have in recent years become more aware of podcasts.

- From 2006 to 2010, awareness of podcasting, what it is, and how it's useful, has doubled.
- Among downloadable media, audio podcasting has a slight edge over video podcasting.
- An estimated 70 million Americans have at one time in their life listened to a podcast.
- The majority of the audience for podcasts is between ages 25-44.
- Those people who listen to podcasts are also heavily engaged in other forms of social media.

Read [The Current State of Podcasting](#)<sup>3</sup> full report by Edison Research.

*Webster, T. (2010, October 15). The Current State of Podcasting . Retrieved from Edison Research website: <http://www.edisonresearch.com/2010%20Edison%20Podcast%20Study%20Data%20Graphs%20Only.pdf>*

### Is Podcasting Right for You?

When used effectively, podcasting can enhance the mission of your office and of a campaign, supplement additional media used to engage your audience, and become a new way for you to interact more effectively with the public.

However, not every office needs to be podcasting. When starting a new podcast, it's important to understand that you need the right resources for it to be successful.

The following factors should be included when deciding whether or not you should create and maintain your own podcast.

- **Is there enough content to warrant an individual podcast or podcast series?**  
Content should be exclusive to the podcast medium. Advice: When planning a podcast series, plan how many episodes there will be, the content that will make up each episode, and how often an episode will be released.
- **How will podcasting supplement other forms of new media that you use?**  
If your YouTube or Twitter account draws heavy engagement, will these same users want to listen to podcasts? Will podcasts reach a different audience all together?

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.cdc.gov/podcasts/BestPractices.htm>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.edisonresearch.com/2010%20Edison%20Podcast%20Study%20Data%20Graphs%20Only.pdf>





- **Do you have the necessary resources to regularly produce podcast content?**  
Though relatively inexpensive, costs include equipment and time. Podcast production can be a time-intensive resource. For every three-minute podcast, you may put in as many as 10 hours to produce the podcast.

### Listen to a Center for New Media Podcast

Podcasting can be an inexpensive and engaging way of sharing information. However, producing a podcast series requires commitment and organization. To learn more about the production process, you can listen to an hhsCNM podcast.

#### How does the HHS Center for New Media Produce its Podcasts?<sup>4</sup>

This podcast is one of a series dedicated to innovative projects at HHS. In this podcast, the hhsCNM goes behind the scenes to learn more about the ways in which a podcast is produced. Public Affairs Specialist and former intern Nicholas Garlow shares his experience and expertise in producing the HHS New Media Podcast series.

### How Do I Start Podcasting?

When producing an individual podcast or podcast series, you must have a clear vision of the end product you intend to create, the style, and the purpose of the podcast. When developing your concept, we encourage you to create a plan that outlines these considerations.

**Mission Statement** - CDC offers guidance defining the [purpose](#)<sup>5</sup> and communication goal of your podcast.

**Target Audience** - Whom do you intend to reach with the podcast? Successful podcasts reach a very specific audience who finds that content useful. In defining your mission statement, remember to take into consideration these questions about your audience. Who will find this information useful? How do I engage them? How do I properly market this information to them? How do I keep them coming back for more content?

**Timeline** - How often will the podcast be released? Being consistent with your deadlines and planning ahead is important for attracting a consistent and engaged audience.

**Communication and Marketing Strategy** - How do you plan to spread the word about the podcast and engage your audience prior to launch? Tools like email, Twitter and Facebook are effective in attracting attention to your podcast. Tell your audience what content they can expect, when they can expect it, and how it is relevant to them.

**Additional New Media Tools** - New media technologies drive engagement. Will the podcast be supplemented with additional media, such as a blog, photos, or a customer feedback tool? Additional mediums like these will attract your target audience to engage more with your product. [Customer feedback tools](#)<sup>6</sup> are also another way to measure your engagement and

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<sup>4</sup> [http://newmedia.hhs.gov/blog/hhs\\_cnm\\_produce\\_podcasts.html](http://newmedia.hhs.gov/blog/hhs_cnm_produce_podcasts.html)

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.cdc.gov/podcasts/BestPractices.htm>

<sup>6</sup> [http://newmedia.hhs.gov/blog/yellow\\_bubbles.html](http://newmedia.hhs.gov/blog/yellow_bubbles.html)





improve your product.

**Structure** - How long will each podcast be? Will there be standardized introduction and closing tag? Will there be a music bed, and if so, for how long and at what points in the podcast?

**Resources** - Understand and plan out what audio equipment, time, and additional items you will need for producing the podcast, and how those items will be managed.

### Podcasting and HHS Standards and Policies

Any HHS office or agency using podcasts must recognize and understand the relevant laws, policies, standards, and guidelines. The HHS Center for New Media offers guidance on those standards and policies. Please read the [HHS Standards and Policies](#)<sup>7</sup> before beginning to plan and produce any individual podcast or podcast series.

The policies that apply directly to podcasting include:

**Accessibility** – every podcast must be compliant with Section 508 of the [Rehabilitation Act of 1973](#)<sup>8</sup>. To make an audio podcast fully accessible, you must provide a link from your podcast to a transcript of the audio.

**Record Keeping** - whether you produce an individual podcast or a series, you must archive your material in an organized manner on your website. The archived podcasts should be located in one spot that is easy for the public to access.

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<sup>7</sup> <http://newmedia.hhs.gov/standards/index.html>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.access-board.gov/sec508/guide/act.htm>





## DEFINITIONS

Podcasting has a unique vocabulary that is essential to your understanding of the medium, when producing a podcast and when communicating with your new media staff and desired audience.

**Audio player** - A media player used for playing back and streaming digital audio files.

**MP3** - An audio file format (MPEG-1 Audio Layer 3).

**RSS Feed (“Really Simple Syndication”)** - A family of web feed formats used to publish frequently updated works—such as blog entries, news headlines, audio, and video—in a standardized format.

**Script** - A written version of the podcast, used to voice and edit the package together. This version will not be the same as the transcript (defined below).

**Tag** - In podcasting, a tag can refer to the portion of the script used to introduce (intro) or end (outro) the individual podcast.

**Transcript** - In terms of podcasting, a transcript refers to the written record of the audio production it represents, commonly used to supplement the audio package and fulfill Section 508 requirements.

**Music Bed** - Background music used in audio formats. Typically, this music is instrumental.

**Natural Sound (Nat Sound)** - Sound that is common to an environment you are describing or referring to (ex: running water, planes taking off, typing on a keyboard). This is used to build a scene for the listener. It is commonly used under the voice over, but can be used by itself as well (nat sound full).

**Sound on Tape (SOT)** - Any audio recorded in analog or digital, typically used to refer to a portion of an interview or natural sound.

**Voice Over (VO)** - The recording of a voice; commonly recorded and implemented by the author of the podcast.

**Subscriber** - A user who selects content (by series) for automatic updates to his or her personal computer through an RSS feed, using an RSS reader.

For more information on Audio, refer to the [Audio Consideration Checklist \(AHRQ\)](#)<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.ahrq.gov/news/pubcomguide/pcguide4apb.htm>





## AN INDIVIDUAL PODCAST: START TO FINISH

When producing an individual podcast or a podcast series, it is important to understand what elements should be included in the podcast and how to properly plan your time and procedure, from start to finish.

### What Resources Do I Need?

Audio podcasting requires you to utilize various audio tools and software for production purposes. Here is a list of physical resources needed to produce a single podcast.

- Audio recorder (with a mic)
- Computer with audio editing software
- Quiet recording area or sound booth

In addition to physical resources, the following supplementary office resources should be considered to produce a higher quality, more professional podcast.

- **Time** - How much time does your office have to commit to a podcast project?
- **Funding** – Does your office have the appropriate funds to dedicate to a podcasting effort?

### Content of an Individual Podcast

Whether you are producing a podcast series or just an individual podcast, having a process that goes from an idea to a final product is necessary to make the podcast successful. Developing a consistent planning process will help you meet your deadlines, produce a quality product, and generate listenership.

This step-by-step process was used when producing the [Center for New Media Podcast](#)<sup>10</sup> series; an interview-style podcast series. It may have to be modified to meet your projects needs.

**1. Topic and Thesis** - These two items should reflect the objective of the podcast and the mission of the office or agency that is producing it.

**2. Point of Contact (POC)** - Who is considered the expert in the topic area that you'd like to have a podcast on? The person(s) you choose to interview will reflect your ability to engage listeners and be considered a credible source of information.

**3. Schedule an Interview** - Be conscious of the location of the interview. Depending on the quality of the sound equipment or editing software you have, you may not be able to edit out additional noise created by the environment. A quiet area works best and will help you develop a better final product. You will need to work around the POC's schedule.

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<sup>10</sup> [http://newmedia.hhs.gov/blog/hhs\\_cnm\\_produce\\_podcasts.html](http://newmedia.hhs.gov/blog/hhs_cnm_produce_podcasts.html)





**4. Briefing** - If you are not familiar with the topic or haven't met the POC, it is beneficial to speak with them prior to the interview to "break the ice" and better prepare for the formal interview. Again, be aware of the POC's schedule when doing this.

**5. Questions and Interviewing** - Help the POC feel comfortable, be open about recording the interview, and make sure you ask questions in an order that is appropriate for generating an open-ended conversation. Always ask and record the POC's name and official title, for background and pronunciation purposes. Always listen and prepare to follow up on items you didn't plan to cover.

**6. Transcription** - After the interview, it is best to transcribe quotes and take notes on the parts of the interview that you feel will be in your podcast.

**7. Script Writing** - Using your notes and interview transcriptions, write a script for your podcast that includes the podcast introduction, an introduction of your POC, SOT's, and a closing. You may or may not decide to use standardized intro and outro tags.

**8. Script Consultation** – Review the script with an individual supervisor or team who can approve the content to be published for the public.

**9. Tracking** - Once your transcript has been approved, you must track your voice over, again using a quiet area.

**10. Editing** - Using audio editing software, you must edit your voice over around the sound bites and music bed (if included), finalizing the audio package.

**10. Produce additional media** - This must include an official podcast transcript and may additionally include a blog or photos.

**11. Posting your podcast** - Include all parts of the podcast when posting it online.

### How to Publish a Podcast

Publishing an individual podcast or a series of podcasts requires a basic knowledge of XML feeds. iTunes offers a step-by-step process that will help you quickly understand how to publish your content, gather feedback, and troubleshoot any problems you have during the process.

To learn more about publishing a podcast, visit the [iTunes: Making a Podcast<sup>11</sup>](#) page.

### Tips on Broadcast Writing

A podcast gives you limited time to give someone information, therefore it's important to keep certain things in mind. Remember the "4 C's" of writing:

- Clear
- Concise
- Credible
- Conversational

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.apple.com/itunes/podcasts/specs.html>



Introductions and introduction tags should be short and to the point to grab the audience's attention. The introduction to your podcast should also give them the most important background information first (who, what, where, when, why, and how).

For more tips on broadcast writing, refer to the [CDC Audio Script Writing Guide](#)<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www2c.cdc.gov/podcasts/AudioScriptWritingGuide.pdf>





## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### Who else in HHS is Podcasting?

Across the Department, many agencies are podcasting. Below you will find links to some of the more effective podcast series within HHS.

[HHS HealthBeat<sup>13</sup>](#) - A 59-second, five-day-a-week audio program featuring the latest research and HHS initiatives that have action steps people can take.

[NIH Research Radio<sup>14</sup>](#) - Bi-weekly 15-25 minute podcasts containing two to three audio reports and one in-depth interview, designed for the general audience.

[Podcasts at the CDC<sup>15</sup>](#) - The Center for Disease Control and Prevention offers more than 30 podcasts including A Minute of Health, Healthy Aging, and CDC Radio.

[AIDS.gov Podcast Gallery<sup>16</sup>](#) - Audio and video podcasts on basic HIV/AIDS information, information on federal programs and policies, and more.

[AHRQ Healthcare 411<sup>17</sup>](#) - One-minute News Series podcasts from the Agency for Healthcare Research & Quality.

View all [HHS Podcasts<sup>18</sup>](#)

### Great Information! But I still need one-on-one consultation

Podcasts can be produced at the most simplest or complex of levels. The more you know and understand, the better your podcasts will become.

The [iTunes Podcasting Resources<sup>19</sup>](#) is a valuable tool for beginning to understand the ins and outs of podcasting, for beginners and experts.

Technical and strategic training and brainstorming is available from the HHS Center for New Media.

There are a number of government groups available as well, including the [HHS-NewMedia ListServ<sup>20</sup>](#), which is open to all individuals with an email address from the HHS family of agencies.

We are also growing an HHS group of individuals interested in podcasting, so let us know if you're interested in contributing to that community.

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<sup>13</sup> <http://www.hhs.gov/news/healthbeat/2011/index.html>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.nih.gov/news/radio/nihpodcast.htm>

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.cdc.gov/podcasts/browse.asp>

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.aids.gov/podcast/podcast-gallery/>

<sup>17</sup> <http://healthcare411.ahrq.gov/default.aspx>

<sup>18</sup> <http://newmedia.hhs.gov/tools/podcasts.html>

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.apple.com/itunes/podcasts/>

<sup>20</sup> [https://list.nih.gov/cgi-bin/wa.exe?SUBED1=HHS-NEWMEDIA\\$A=1%X=6D10FA126AEF0E5972](https://list.nih.gov/cgi-bin/wa.exe?SUBED1=HHS-NEWMEDIA$A=1%X=6D10FA126AEF0E5972)

