



Members Informed:

**YOUR GUIDE TO LOCAL
COMMUNICATIONS**

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Keeping Members Informed: Communications Guide for Local Leaders

Providing strong and consistent Local communications is more important than ever, especially with so many issues competing for members' attention.

Reaching members across core communications platforms helps to create connections between members and our union and ensure they are informed.

Motivating members to act, such as by attending a Bargaining Unit meeting or becoming involved in a campaign, is an important reason to practice strong and clear Local communications.

This guide outlines the fundamentals of communicating to engage, inspire and inform. Please contact the ONA Communications Team at commsintake@ona.org if you have any questions or need support.

Local communications overview

Communications planning should not be intimidating. Proactively plan for success by considering the following:

- ▶ **Assess capacity:** Make an accurate assessment of your Local capacity and plan for the level of communications that you can maintain.
- ▶ **Consistency is key:** Be consistent and communicate regularly on a set schedule for various communications channels.
- ▶ **Audience matters:** Always keep your audience in mind, including what they need to know and how best to reach them.
- ▶ **Multi-channel:** Individual members have different communications preferences, so it's ideal to

communicate in a variety of ways to maximize your reach.

- ▶ **Consider all options:** There are so many ways to share and communicate information, such as a conversation, text, email, bulletin board, website post, social media and more. Consider using the combination of platforms best for your Local and for your particular message.
- ▶ **Digital first:** Research shows that ONA members prefer digital communications (email, website and social media), so prioritizing digital platforms pays off.
- ▶ **Assign roles:** If you can, designate someone on your Local team to support communications, or at least one aspect of it.



Email

ONA research confirms that emails are still members' preferred way to receive information.

As Local leaders, you play a central role in sharing information about campaigns, events, services and issues that impact members as well as their patients, residents and clients.

At a time when we are all saddled with email information overload, how do you cut through the noise and catch people's attention?

Email best practices

Here are some simple ways to strengthen your email communications:

1. Use a bulk email tool such as MailChimp or Brevo which will help you stay organized. These tools will help you:
 - ▶ Easily upload, create and update member email lists.
 - ▶ Access user-friendly templates to make your content appealing and accessible.
 - ▶ Send targeted emails (for example, to a specific Bargaining Unit).
- ▶ Track useful metrics like how many people open your email or click on links.
- ▶ If you don't use a bulk email tool, try creating lists in Microsoft Outlook so you can email your members all at once. You can create lists based on worksites, units, job classifications and more to then tailor and personalize your emails.
2. Keep the content relevant, engaging and brief.
 - ▶ Use relevant provincial information from TW@ONA, ONA's main website, F-Word and social media.

- ▶ Highlight Local information like upcoming meetings, actions, events and more.
 - ▶ Use headings and organize content to make it easier for members to find information.
 - ▶ Use website links for more information.
 - ▶ Use plain, concise and accessible language.
3. Send a regular email newsletter to keep updates consistent and predictable.
- ▶ Develop a schedule for a regular email newsletter so members know what to expect and when.
 - ▶ Keep email section headers consistent.
 - ▶ Consider naming your newsletter and add a consistent banner image, like your Local logo.
- ▶ Send important or time-sensitive email updates in between your regular newsletter.
 - ▶ Always test and review. Send yourself or a colleague a test of the email to review formatting, test links and copy edit content.
4. Use pictures and graphics.
- Our eyes are drawn to pictures of people and clear graphics. Research shows that when you use pictures, people are more likely to engage with your content.
- ▶ Keep image or graphic sizes similar for a cohesive design.
 - ▶ Be thoughtful about the placement and quantity of graphics to keep the overall email readable and appealing.



Branding and graphics

Whether you're posting on social media, creating a flyer or ordering swag, eye-catching graphics and images help capture your audience's attention.

Local leaders can make use of your brand toolkit. This is a dedicated SharePoint site called ONA Branding that all Local leaders have access to. It includes **a suite of design elements** like fonts, illustrations, patterns, Local logos, templates and more. There are also tips for applying the ONA brand.

Graphic design might not be your strong suit, and that's okay. You still know what will appeal to coworkers, friends, family and community. Here are a few tools and recommendations for creating graphics and following our brand.

1. Make use of simple tools to create graphics.
 - Try a simple design platform like Canva to develop graphics and materials. Canva is a free online platform that allows you to make

materials like social media graphics, posters, presentations, videos, invitations and more.

2. Use ONA fonts and colours.
 - ONA's two main fonts are Figtree and Righteous. These **fonts** need to be installed on your computer, and they are available in your brand toolkit. Figtree is used for most information and text because it is accessible to read. Righteous is great to highlight or accent information but should not be used for a lot of text.
 - We also use the font Tenorite for word processing and presentations. This font does not need to be installed.
3. Keep your graphics simple and limit the amount of text you use. When graphics are overwhelmed by text, people are more likely to scroll past and not engage.
 - Put the most important information on your graphics. Put the rest of the details in your social media captions, emails or Local websites.



Visit our Brand Toolkit for more information including tips on typography, fonts, graphics and more. Log into Access ONA and look for this resource under ONA Brand and Logo in the Executive Content section.
onaorg.sharepoint.com/sites/ONABranding/SitePages/ONA-Branding-Site.aspx



Websites

Local websites are an essential tool to keep members connected to your Local team and informed about events and news. They are a convenient way to provide easy access to information and resources.

What do you post?

While we aim for consistency, there is no one-size-fits-all for Local website content. Ensure you provide core information to your members, while

also highlighting the things that make you unique and the great work you are doing for your members and in your communities.

Content examples

CORE

- ▶ Executive team contacts – names and ONA email addresses.
- ▶ Links to provincial/Local collective agreements.
- ▶ Local news, such as workplace updates and Local elections.
- ▶ Local events, like rallies, celebrations and membership meetings.

ADDITIONAL

- ▶ Photo galleries.
- ▶ Local opportunities, such as discounts, bursaries and contests.
- ▶ Workplace-specific resources, including Q&A documents, notices and guides.
- ▶ Surveys and forms.



You can use tools like Google Analytics to determine which pages are the most popular with visitors.

Local website support

If you want to start a Local website, your first step is to contact ONA communications staff at digital@ona.org. We will meet with you to discuss your needs. You can ask questions and **see examples of other Local websites.**

If you decide to proceed, we will build your website using our template, which ensures a consistent look and includes core information that is vital to members.

Once you approve your website, ONA will publish it, and you can share it with your members.

While communications staff provide ongoing website maintenance and support, we welcome any Local team members who want to learn to make their own updates. We provide one-on-one training and ongoing support to

Social media

Social media channels like Facebook and Instagram make casual conversations easy. It's a place your members can exchange ideas and information, find out late-breaking news, watch how-to videos and much more. It is important to be aware of both the opportunities and potential pitfalls so you can plan Local content and support members using social media effectively.

Local website administrators. No prior experience is necessary.

Tips for website success

- ▶ Be consistent. Keep your website in mind during your regular union work and remember to regularly post updates, events and news.
- ▶ Use your social media, emails and printed materials such as posters to drive traffic to your website. For example, "Learn more at (webpage address)."
- ▶ Less is more. Stick to clear and concise content that is user friendly.

Whether you work with staff or use external vendors, there may be costs associated with building, hosting and maintaining a website. Keep this in mind when planning your budget.

Tips for members using social media

Health-care professionals are held to a higher standard for online interactions. Members should feel free to follow and participate in conversations on social media while meeting professional standard expectations. Here are a few ways to ensure you do so.

- ▶ Use social media to follow and discover current trends, ideas and best practices on a host of topics including labour and health care.
- ▶ Use appropriate privacy settings on your personal social media accounts. Check often as they can change regularly.
- ▶ Be respectful in your posts. Anything you post or share could be seen by your employer, a coworker or patients and their families, even when posted to a private account.
- ▶ If you post on social media, use your own personal device. Using your workplace's computer or employer-sponsored mobile device is a no-no, and you could be disciplined for doing so.

Facebook

Many ONA Locals have created their own Facebook group pages to help communicate with their members and create space for members to engage.



There are three different types of groups on Facebook:

1. **Public:** Anyone can join or be added or invited by a member of the group. This is the most open and accessible type of group.
2. **Private – Visible:** This group will appear in Facebook searches. Anyone can ask to join the group or be added by a member. Most ONA Local Facebook groups are “Private – Visible.”
3. **Private – Hidden:** This group will not appear on Facebook searches. Anyone can request to join the group, but they need to be added by a member.

Once you've set up your ONA group, you can now build your follower base. You can use the blue “+ Invite” button to start adding members to the group from your friends list. You can also send invitations by email using this button.

Administering and moderating a Facebook group

There are two main roles in a Facebook group:

Admin: An admin (the highest role) manages all information within the group including creating admins and moderators, managing group settings (such as naming the group, adjusting group privacy settings, etc.), approving group members and approving and deleting posts and comments.



Moderator: A moderator can approve or deny membership requests, approve or delete posts and comments and remove or block people from the group.

With a Facebook group, it's best to have at least two admins who have complete access to the page. Ideally, the Facebook group admins should be members of the Bargaining Unit and include the Local Coordinator.

ONA staff can help with the set up, but it is up to the Local Facebook group admins to determine page membership and content.

Instagram

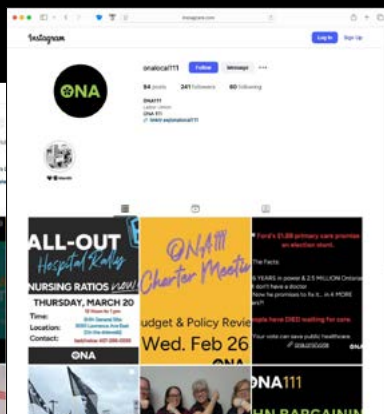
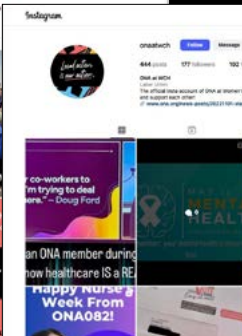
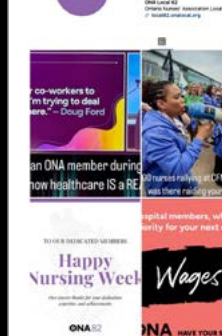
A burgeoning favourite among ONA Locals and Bargaining Units, Instagram is a visual platform where users share content through images, reels and text.

Similar to Facebook, Instagram is easy to use and can promote information to your target audiences in an engaging way. Instagram followers react to posts by liking, commenting, sharing, and saving; it generally attracts a younger audience than Facebook.

ONA Locals on social

Get inspired! Here are some examples of ONA Locals with strong Instagram accounts

*[instagram.com/onaatwch](https://www.instagram.com/onaatwch)
[instagram.com/onalocal82](https://www.instagram.com/onalocal82)
[instagram.com/ona_l95](https://www.instagram.com/ona_l95)
[instagram.com/onalocal111](https://www.instagram.com/onalocal111)*





What to post on Local social media

When deciding what to post to social media, think about your audience. Your goal is to keep members informed about what's happening at your Bargaining Unit, Local and ONA provincially and in the greater labour and health-care communities. On social media, brief is best. Post information that is direct and to the point.

How to enhance your social media profiles

- ▶ Post a cover photo. This is an excellent opportunity to make your Local stand out and show your members what you're all about.
- ▶ Post a profile picture, which shows up in newsfeeds and searches.
- ▶ Post your social media profile links on your Local website, inform the ONA communications staff that your Local has a Facebook page, Instagram account or other social

media account, and produce a flyer to post on your ONA bulletin board to spread the word and get more members to follow your social media profiles.

Trusted sources

In the era of misinformation and it is best to follow trusted sources that share information on issues that are relevant to ONA members. Here are some suggested sources.

- ▶ Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions (@NursesUnions) – a national voice for 250,000 nurses and nursing students, the CFNU advocates for a stronger publicly



Some suggestions:

- ▶ Post your Local and Bargaining Unit union meetings, events and updates from employers. Link to your website or another website for more information.
- ▶ Share any provincial information from ONA including news, events, education opportunities, campaign updates, F-Word magazine stories, calls to action, and more.
- ▶ Post information from other labour organizations such as the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions (CFNU) and the Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL).
- ▶ Share news stories that are relevant to members. On Facebook, you can get around restrictions by posting a screen capture of the news story and adding the link to the story in the comments.
- ▶ Post fun conversation starters, contests or other lighthearted content to help build community and morale.

funded and publicly delivered health-care system and better workplace for all nurses.

- ▶ Global Nurses United (@GlobalNursesU) – more than 225,000 health-care professionals representing several nations across the world, GNU fights against austerity, privatization and cuts in health-care services.
- ▶ Ontario Health Coalition (@OntarioHealthCoalition) – a strong network of community organizations from across Ontario, the OHC engages stakeholders to help protect and improve Ontario's public health-care system.

- ▶ Canadian Labour Congress (@canadianlabour) – is the largest labour organization in Canada, bringing together national and international unions, provincial and territorial federations of labour to represent more than three million workers.
- ▶ Ontario Federation of Labour (@OFLabour) – the OFL represents more than 50 unions and more than one million workers who stand up for workers' rights and is a powerful voice in Ontario's labour movement.

Other social media platforms

There are many other social media platforms available that organizations use to communicate, including X, Bluesky, YouTube and Tik Tok.

To choose the best social media platforms for your Local's needs, evaluate a number of factors. Consider the time and effort needed to keep up the content; where your audience is already present in the greatest numbers; and figure out the type of content you'd like to create (for example, text-based, images, video reels, etc.).

The bottom line

The more you know about social media and how it works, the better off and more empowered you will be to effectively use it. Make sure you also know your employer's rules about social media and follow them.

Media relations

Issues and controversies can arise from time to time that catch the eye of reporters. Sometimes, members want to bring attention to an issue by trying to generate media coverage.

Follow ONA on social

facebook.com/OntarioNurses
instagram.com/ontario.nurses
youtube.com/OntarioNurses
bsky.app/profile/ontarionurses.bsky.social

Digital best practices

Remember that your Local website and most of your social media posts are public. While you should feel free to inform – and fight for – your members, you should always be mindful of your professional standards.

Many of the common-sense best practices include:

- ▶ Avoiding inflammatory, insensitive or off-topic posts.
- ▶ Not posting any information – including photos – about your patients, clients, residents, their families, coworkers or your workplaces.
- ▶ Not providing medical advice.



The following tips are helpful when learning how and when to communicate with media. Remember that ONA communications staff provide support for all things related to news media. They should be your first point of contact.

Contact ONA media relations

While many aspects of Local communications can be done on your own, media relations is not one of them.

Should there be an incident, an issue, an event or a local development that impacts your Bargaining Unit and/or patients, residents or clients, that may receive media coverage, give ONA communications staff a heads up. They can advise you, take appropriate action, and work with you to achieve the best outcomes possible.

The Offices of the Provincial President and CEO will also need to be advised should there be provincial implications.

Email relevant information or requests to media@ona.org.

Key messages

The most important element in communicating with media or others is to develop a clear set of accurate and concise key messages that will inform everything you say.

What are key messages? They are the top high-level messages you'd like to share with a public audience.

Tip: A good rule for key messages is the three-by-three framework: identify three main points with no more than three supporting points or facts for each. Anything more will be too much information.

For instance, with a government pursuing privatization, we want Ontarians to know that: for-profit private corporations cost us more and provide less; for-profit corporations are draining needed health-care funding out of the public health-care system; for-profit corporations' priority is profit, not care.

Key messages are meant to be simple, easy-to-understand points that stick in peoples' minds. It can be challenging in our very complex health-care sector to come up with high-level, simple key messages, but communications staff can help.



ONA spokesperson

ONA's Provincial President is the designated public spokesperson for ONA as defined by ONA's Constitution. The President may delegate to, or authorize another spokesperson.

The President receives media training and is the spokesperson for a multitude of issues, including, frequently, on behalf of Bargaining Units. There are exceptions, and ONA media relations staff can guide you and provide one-on-one training when necessary.

Public relations tactics

When you think of media relations, most think of doing an interview with a reporter or a media release. But there are many tools and tactics that are just as effective to get a message out.

For instance, it is very effective to write and submit a letter to the editor for publication (online and in print). In a letter to the editor, you have the opportunity to frame your issue and make your points in a succinct way. The letters section of newspapers remains one of the best-read and your points will be read widely.

ONA media relations staff can advise you of the options and most appropriate way to approach media for the issue you have, whether it be an opinion editorial, media release, F-Word story or getting out in the community to speak to a local group within your community.

Media tips

ONA members frequently attend rallies, information pickets and other public events covered by the media. Generally, media interviews at such events are done by designated spokespersons, but if you find yourself doing an interview, or even fielding questions in a public forum, here are some tips to help.

- ▶ Remember you are having a conversation, but a brief and factual one. Keep your comments brief and to the point.
- ▶ If you don't know an answer, say so. Don't guess.
- ▶ Draw a connection between your issues and the impact on patient/resident/client care. The reporter is not your audience, the community is.
- ▶ Do not name or blame specific people at your workplace. Keep your remarks focused on solving the issue and improving care.
- ▶ When in doubt, remember that ONA is here to support you.

Photography and video

Photography and videos are important visual tools used to capture moments and create visual narratives. We have powerful cellphone cameras in the palm of our hands, but how do we take memorable photos and videos?

As a Local leader, you might find yourself wanting to share pictures or videos from an event or insert them into a post on social media. Either way, these tips and tricks will help you make the most of each shot.

Tips for taking great photos/videos

1. Assign someone to take photos/

videos: To effectively capture an event, assign someone with a smartphone to capture photos and short videos so that these assets can be used on social or for other future purposes.

2. Fill the frame:

Generally, the subject(s) should take up most of the photo/video. Don't be afraid to get up close.

IMPORTANT: Before taking photos and videos, get permission from all subjects, including members, the public and staff. Tell them how you will use or share the images. If it is an event, you can make an announcement and ask attendees to let you know if they don't want to appear in images. The exception to this is a public event such as an information picket or rally, where permission is not required.



3. **Record a story:** Document moments in a way that conveys a narrative and provides meaning to the viewer.
 4. **Act on action:** Don't just take pictures/videos of people standing still. Show them in an animated way, engaging with each other and participating in the event.
 5. **The more the merrier:** Take as many photos/videos as you can! You're more likely to come up with a good reel, and it's good practice.
 6. **Be intentional:** If you're taking photos/videos around a workplace, make sure no patient information or identifying signage can be seen in the background.
 7. **Experiment with space and levels:** Your pictures/videos will likely be boring if they all look the same. To add some variety, think of how the position of the lens affects the overall photo/video. For example, can you capture an individual in the foreground while providing context with the background? What if you get closer to the ground and then take it? This is an advanced technique, so don't worry if you can't get the hang of it. Remember, practice makes perfect!
 8. **Diversify and have fun:** Don't be afraid of trying new things as you take photos/videos – playing around is part of the magic!
 9. **Use reels on social media:** Brief video reels of no more than 90 seconds are popular and engaging ways to connect with your audience on social. Record the videos and upload them directly to your social profiles from a smart phone by selecting the plus sign and choosing "Reel."
- Did you take a great shot or super video? Submit it to digital@ona.org. Remember to include the location, subject(s) name(s) and the date it was taken.

FWORD

F-Word magazine: Stories from your members

As nurses and health-care professionals, ONA members have important stories

to tell about lived experiences – and you can play an important role in helping tell them.

Covering an array of topics under three main categories – Fuel (information on key issues affecting members' workplaces and sectors), Fuse (ONA's efforts on matters that impact members) and Fight (members' push-backs and solidarity in action) – F-Word is designed to empower your members to tell the brutal truth, fight injustice, and take back our narrative and the power that comes with that. Visit onamag.org to read more.

Getting your members involved

Contribute to F-Word. It is an outlet for expression and connection by sharing stories members can't tell anywhere

else, without the sugar coating or word limits. Here's how:

- ▶ Promote F-Word to your members at events and activities.
- ▶ Share ONA's social media posts featuring stories.
- ▶ Encourage members to submit stories, rants, praise and ideas on onamag.org.
- ▶ Inform members the F-Word team will follow up with them before posting any submissions and will ensure their safety by removing identifiers (names, employers, etc.), where necessary.

Storytelling turns lived experience into action. They fuel us, fuse us together, and get us ready for the fight. Encourage your members to make F-Word their own and get involved.

Communications support

ONA's Communications Team is here to support you. Whether you're seeking assistance with a new communications channel or require help with your digital comms needs, we're here to help.

Drop us an email at commsintake@ona.org.

Other ways to contact us:

Media relations: media@ona.org

Website and social media, photo submissions: digital@ona.org

F-Word submissions: fword@ona.org

Members Informed:

YOUR GUIDE TO LOCAL COMMUNICATIONS



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@ontarionurses.bsky.social