

# Donnica Smalls

Driven by **creativity**. Grounded in **strategy**. Focused on **impact**.

## CONTACT

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## EDUCATION

### M.A. in Communication

Florida State University  
Program: Integrated  
Marketing Communication  
2011 – 2012

### B.A. in Journalism & Mass Communications

University of South Carolina  
Major: Public Relations  
Minor: African American  
Studies  
2007 – 2011

## EXPERTISE

- Content Creation
- Crisis Communications
- Digital Marketing
- Influencer Marketing
- Internal Communications
- Media Relations
- Media Training
- Social Media Management
- Social Listening
- Strategy Development
- Speechwriting

## PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

I am a strategic communicator with a passion for storytelling and connecting people through communications. With expertise in health communications, public relations, and digital marketing, I thrive in high-pressure environments, delivering impactful messages with creativity, enthusiasm, and precision.

## WORK EXPERIENCE

### Senior Press Officer

CDC's National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities  
June 2024 – April 2025

In my role as senior press officer for CDC's National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities (NCBDDD), I shaped NCBDDD's external messaging, strengthening media relationships, and ensured public health information was communicated effectively and responsibly. In this role, I:

- Established and maintained strategic media relationships to enhance visibility of public health initiatives, securing coverage in outlets such as **ABC News, Reuters, Fox News, and HealthDay**.
- Led media outreach efforts for major public health campaigns, including Folic Acid Awareness Week, Sickle Cell Awareness Month, and the CDC's inaugural Disability Summit, increasing engagement with key audiences.
- Developed and executed media rollout strategies for high-impact publications, including an article on adult ADHD, resulting in **225 news stories** and a reach of **244 million**.
- Coordinated cross-agency clearance and messaging alignment for high-profile media campaigns, ensuring consistency and accuracy.
- Designed and implemented a media coverage visualization tool, providing geographic insights to inform future outreach strategies and improve engagement.
- Led a Hispanic Heritage Month radio media tour highlighting the importance of folic acid for Hispanic women targeting Spanish-language programming across four states, **reaching an estimated 31.5 million Hispanic individuals and 7.2 million Hispanic women** of reproductive age.
- Developed and implemented a **media training curriculum** for NCBDDD's Communicator's Compass, including three distinct sessions to enhance staff proficiency in media relations and public speaking.
- Created **strategic messaging materials**, including talking points, media statements, and post-release reports, ensuring clarity, accuracy, and alignment with public health priorities integrating real-time monitoring, evaluation, and timely response coordination.
- **Managed concurrent media projects** and press initiatives, ensuring timely execution and alignment with organizational objectives in a fast-paced environment.
- Supervised and mentored junior staff, providing guidance on content development, project coordination, and professional growth.

## TECHNICAL SKILLS

- Adobe Creative Cloud
- Canva
- HTML + CSS
- Media Monitoring/Social Listening Databases (e.g. Cision, Meltwater)
- Microsoft 365
- Social Media Management Platforms: Buffer, Hootsuite & Sprout Social
- WordPress

## SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

- Bluesky
- Facebook
- Instagram
- Pinterest
- Snapchat
- Threads
- TikTok
- X (formerly Twitter)
- YouTube

## AWARDS

### NCHHSTP Deputy Director's Mentoring Award

CDC's National Center for HIV, Viral Hepatitis, STD, and Tuberculosis Prevention  
2016

### NCHHSTP Honor Award

CDC's National Center for HIV, Viral Hepatitis, STD, and Tuberculosis Prevention  
2018

### NCCDPHP Emerging Leader Award

CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion  
2022

### Health Communications Specialist

CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion  
February 2021 – June 2024

As a [health communications specialist](#) in CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (NCCDPHP), I led both internal and external communications projects with an emphasis on creating engaging and inclusive communication messaging for chronic disease topics. In this role, I:

- Developed and executed strategic health communication initiatives, reinforcing NCCDPHP's commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility, and belonging (DEIAB), including messaging for 10+ national health observances annually.
- Launched and moderated several internal communications meetings including **NCCDPHP Critical Conversations** and **NCCDPHP Table Talk**, engaging staff in discussions on health equity, workforce development, professional development and leadership, improving cross-division collaboration.
- Facilitated quarterly media trainings and presentation skills trainings for NCCDPHP staff, earning high engagement scores and positive feedback on clarity and effectiveness.
- Spearheaded the NCCDPHP State of the Center presentation, an end-of-the-year speech for the division director crafting a 25-page script integrating input from leading to a compelling showcase of the center's impact.
- Managed NCCDPHP's health equity and social determinants of health [web content expansion](#), increasing visibility and accessibility of public health resources for external audiences.
- Designed and delivered TED-style talk training sessions to enhance staff presentation and storytelling capabilities.
- Created internal communication resources, including guidance on meeting accessibility, self-description best practices, and video recording strategies.
- Served as a mentor and advisor within the Office of Communication, providing guidance to colleagues and junior staff on effective health communication strategies.
- Developed and disseminated evidence-based health communication materials, ensuring alignment with CDC's priorities and public health objectives.

### Public Affairs Specialist

CDC's National Center for HIV, Viral Hepatitis, STD, and Tuberculosis Prevention (NCHHSTP)  
November 2015 – February 2021

In this role, I developed and executed strategic media outreach and communication initiatives to amplify CDC's public health messages, ensuring accurate dissemination of critical information on HIV/AIDS, viral hepatitis, STDs, and TB prevention. Accomplishments include:

- Led and supported media strategies for major awareness days and high-profile public health announcements, ensuring accurate and effective communication of CDC's findings.
- Executed a radio media tour (RMT) for the DHAP Division Director in support of National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day, generating **47 media stories** and **72.3 million media impressions** with targeted outreach.
- Established and maintained relationships with key media outlets, proactively positioning NCHHSTP's programs and research to maximize visibility and impact.
- **Evaluated monthly web analytics** to refine outreach strategies and improve audience engagement.
- Provided media training and developed messaging for CDC spokespersons, equipping them to effectively communicate complex public health issues.

## CERTIFICATIONS

### Social Media Management

Georgetown University

2020

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## MEMBERSHIPS

### Alpha Phi Omega National Service Fraternity

Member; Section 76 Staff &

National Recruitment and

Branding Committee

Member

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## COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

### LifeLine Animal Project

Volunteer

### Public Affairs Specialist (*cont.*)

- Developed and led a research-based newsroom and communication material redesign, improving accessibility and engagement for organizations and individuals seeking program data.
- Spearheaded World TB Day media outreach, securing **16 unique media stories** reaching **113 million people**—a threefold increase from the previous year—and driving a **600% increase** in Twitter visibility and **200% rise** in unique newsroom visitors.
- Crafted and secured clearance for media materials, including press releases, fact sheets, talking points, and Q&A documents, ensuring scientific accuracy and consistency across communications.
- Monitored and analyzed media coverage to identify emerging issues, mitigate risks, and shape proactive messaging strategies.
- Supervised and mentored junior media response specialists, reviewing materials and providing strategic guidance.

### Health Communications Assistant

American Institutes for Research

March 2013 – November 2015

As a CDC contractor, I supported the NCHHSTP News Media Team in executing strategic health communication initiatives, ensuring accurate and timely dissemination of public health information related to HIV, viral hepatitis, STDs, and tuberculosis. Additional duties:

- Served as a primary point of contact for local and national media inquiries, providing accurate information and coordinating interviews with CDC experts.
- Collaborated with senior staff and scientists to develop media responses, ensuring the translation of complex scientific data into clear, accessible messaging.
- Created key media materials, including press releases, fact sheets, talking points, and Q&A documents, to support CDC's communication efforts.
- Managed and updated the NCHHSTP newsroom, ensuring public and media access to the latest materials and research findings.
- Built and maintained relationships with journalists and media personnel to advance CDC's communication objectives and strengthen media engagement.

### Account Coordinator

The Moore Agency (formerly Moore Communications Group)

June 2012 – December 2012

In this role, I managed multiple national and regional client accounts in a fast-paced agency setting, executing strategic communication initiatives across public relations, media relations, and event coordination.

- Coordinated UnitedHealthcare's National Medicare Education Week events across six Florida cities, securing venue logistics, transportation, catering, and attendee recruitment to educate seniors and caregivers about Medicare.
- Developed and maintained targeted media lists, tracking and analyzing client media coverage for brands such as **Avon, Ford, and Florida Sheriffs Association**.
- Drafted and distributed press releases, media advisories, opinion editorials, and letters to the editor to increase brand visibility and media engagement.
- Managed client social media accounts fostering engagement and driving positive interactions for clients.
- Pitched client stories and key messages to traditional and non-traditional media outlets, securing earned media opportunities.
- Conducted editorial research to identify strategic PR opportunities, ensuring alignment with client goals.
- Participated in internal PR strategy meetings, contributing to campaign development and execution.