

Preparing and Submitting an Abstract to APHA



AMERICAN PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION

The American Public Health Association (www.apha.org)

- **oldest/most diverse public health organization in world**
- **working to improve public health since 1872**
- **APHA aims to protect all Americans, their families and communities from preventable, serious health threats and to assure community-based health promotion and disease prevention activities and preventive health services are universally accessible in US.**
- **APHA has 27 “sections,” including six Special Interest Groups, Student Assembly, and numerous caucuses.**
- **Largest meeting world wide of public health professionals--generally attracts 10k+**

MEMBERSHIP

You do not have to be a member to submit an abstract BUT, you will need to join if your abstract is accepted and you want to present

Membership ranges from \$200 (full membership) to \$75 for a student membership. (You must be enrolled in at least 3 credits worth of courses). There is also an “early career professional rate” of \$115/year, which is available for a maximum of three years post-graduation

APHA ANNUAL MEETING IN BOSTON

**141st Annual Meeting and Exposition
will be in Boston this year
November 2-6, 2013**

<http://www.apha.org/meetings/AnnualMeeting/>



THE THEME THIS YEAR IS:



**THINK
GLOBAL
ACT
LOCAL**

BEST PRACTICES AROUND THE WORLD

THE CALL FOR ABSTRACTS

Each year, APHA issues a “call for abstracts”

- You can find more about it here:
<https://apha.confex.com/apha/141am/oasys.epl>
- Abstracts are due February 4-8. Sometimes, there are extensions, but do not plan on it!
- You will be notified on Monday June 3, 2013
- Abstracts submitted and accepted for the APHA Annual Meeting may not be presented at any other meeting or published in any journal prior to Wednesday, November 6, 2013.
- Three types of sessions: Oral, Poster and Roundtable. You may submit as either an Oral or Poster or indicate no preference. Oral presentations will be placed in either the formal theater style session or a roundtable session. For more information about each session type visit www.apha.org/meetings/sessions/.

MORE ON ABSTRACTS

Abstracts have to be submitted to a specific Section, Special Primary Interest Group (SPIG), Caucus or Forum.

You may NOT submit the same abstract to more than one Section, SPIG, etc.

Learning objectives must be described but are not included in the total abstract

Each abstract paper must be submitted to only one of the topics or areas of interest described in call for papers.

Deadlines for submitting abstracts differ section to section, so check carefully.

There can be more than one author, so go in as a group!

If you have more than one data set, submit both, maybe even to two different sections. You'll often see people doing more than one presentation

Make sure your topic in some way links to your section, conference theme etc.



HOW TO BEGIN...

1. **Review the list of topics and section on APHA list of sections, etc**
2. **Click on section and you'll bring up list of subtopics they are interested in; for example:**

Adapting and implementing evidence based programs

Behavioral health issues

Disaster response: Public health social work's role, responsibility and capacity

Health care reform and its impact on social work practice

Human trafficking/human rights

Immigrant health

Indigenous populations and health outcomes

International public health

Levels of prevention: Primary, secondary, and tertiary

Promoting intergenerational health and wellness

Strengthening access to care for at-risk populations

Think global act local: Best practice strategies for prevention and wellness



HOW ARE ABSTRACTS EVALUATED?

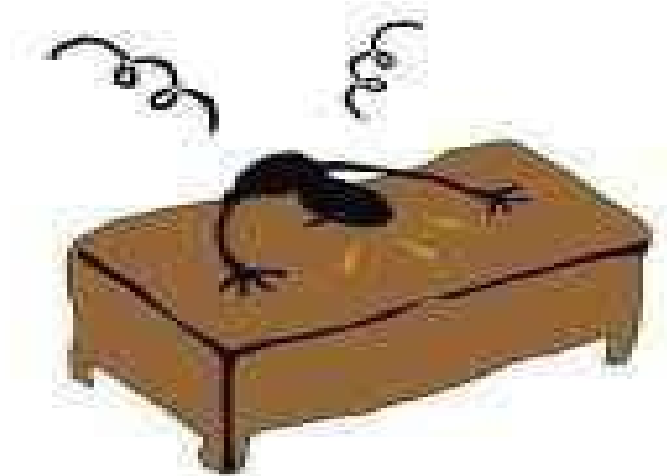
Abstracts are reviewed anonymously and rated based on the following criteria:

- (1) importance of the issue or problem addressed;**
- (2) clarity of content;**
- (3) soundness of the methodology and conceptual framework used;**
- (4) substantive findings or recommendations; and**
- (5) relevance to a broad audience.**

WRITING THE ABSTRACT: NOT THAT HARD




Writing an Abstract



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ABSTRACT BASICS

Abstracts

- **Must be 250 words or less**
 - **Must meet the deadline**
 - **Must be submitted online (try to get it in a few days ahead of deadline)**
 - **Are submitted through the section you choose by clicking on the “Ready? Start Abstract Submission” button**
- 

ONCE YOU START THE SUBMISSION....

Your information recorded in central database

- You **CAN** interrupt process & return later
- An abstract ID number & password will be issued when you start –use this info to return; you can share the abstract ID number and password with your co-authors
- You can all then revise the abstract.
- SAVE** the emails that are sent to you from APHA!



WHAT IS AN ABSTRACT?

Abstract:

- **A concise statement of the major elements of your research project**
- **A condensed version of a larger project**
- **Includes statement of purpose, methods, and findings from your project**
- **A total of 250 words; no references necessary**
- **It should tell the reader WHAT you did, WHY you did it, HOW you did it, WHAT you found and WHAT it means OR stated another way:**

The abstract should briefly state purpose of research (INTRODUCTION), how the problem was studied (METHODS), principal findings (RESULTS), and what findings mean (DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION)

The abstract is the reviewers first and possibly only encounter with your presentation, it is the major way people decide whether or not to attend your presentation.

This is your “sales pitch” for your work!!!!



THE FOUR “C’S” OF ABSTRACT WRITING

Abstracts should be:

Complete —cover major parts of project/case/study

Concise —no excess wordiness or unnecessary information

Clear —readable, well organized, and not jargon-laden.

Cohesive —flows smoothly between parts.



WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO ANSWER?

Try to get your abstract to answer these concerns:

Motivation: why should we care about the problem and results ?

Problem statement: what problem are you trying to solve ?

What is the scope of your work (a big study; part of someone else's work?)

What was your approach? How did you go about making progress on the problem ? Did you do a survey, conduct a focus group, evaluate a program? What was the extent of your work ? What important variables did you control or measure ?


What's the result or answer ? Be specific about what you found out!

What are the implications of your answers ? Will your project change the world ? Or perhaps raise new questions to be explored ?



THINGS NOT TO PUT IN AN ABSTRACT

Things to avoid:

- Do NOT include excessive introductory material
 - Do NOT use too much jargon
 - Do NOT use sentence fragments
 - Do NOT forget to refer to annual theme or to the section you're applying to
 - Do NOT define terms at length
 - Do NOT use acronyms or abbreviations that lack explanation
 - Do NOT include references|
- 

SOME WRITING TIPS

Active voice is preferable to passive voice: “We studied 15 patients with AIDS.” is better than “Fifteen patients with AIDS were studied.”

Always use the full term before you refer to it by acronym

Write only one thought/idea per sentence.

Eliminate unnecessary words

Ensure that verb tenses are consistent and correct

Use short, clear sentences; one idea per sentence

Edit, edit, edit!



WRITE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

You must provide three learning objectives:

1. Describe the information, skills, behaviors, or perspectives participants will acquire through attendance and participation.
2. Clearly identify outcomes or actions participants can expect to demonstrate as a result of attendance.
3. Write learning objectives that reflect content of session and relate to desired outcomes
4. Use learning objectives to describe behavior of the learner; state them clearly
5. More info: <https://apha.confex.com/apha/learningobjectives.htm>

EXAMPLES OF ACTION WORDS

Examples of Measurable Action Words

Explain	Demonstrate	Analyze	Formulate	Discuss
Compare	Differentiate	Describe	Name	Assess
Evaluate	Identify	Design	Define	List

TITLES, KEYWORDS, ETC.

You need to give your abstract a good title; titles should be straightforward; clear, convincing

- Capitalize only the first letter of the title, any proper nouns or acronyms, and the first word following a colon (:).
- Do not begin paper titles with "The".
- Do not end titles with a period.

Examples:

- Evaluation of a naloxone distribution and administration program in New York City
- Mapping the practice of public health social work: Results from an MSW/MPH alumni survey

You will also be asked to choose keywords:

- Choosing at least two will help attendees find your presentation; the full list is on the APHA website

You can also note your “target audience”

- While optional, this can also help to stream people to your presentation: community health advocates; public health professionals...many to choose from!


You can make “Comments to Organizers”:

- This optional area allows you to request grouping of papers; unless you’re going in with a group who are all requesting to present together, leave this blank

EXAMPLES OF LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- **List five indicators that link a healthy community to healthy economy.**
- **Articulate the procedure for assessing the health status of a patient with Alzheimer's.**
- **Develop a care plan for a family of six supported by an annual income of \$32,000, and caring for a child who has cystic fibrosis.**

A FEW WORDS ON THE ACTUAL SUBMISSION

- **All authors have to have full contact and identifying information, including email (can be added later).**
 - **Someone has to be the “lead” author or “Presenting Author.”**
 - **Presenting author must complete Conflict of Interest Forms**
 - **Follow the instructions EXACTLY! (Make sure you have <250 words; check for typos, errors, readability.**
 - **Save all information regarding your abstract: number, password, etc.**
 - **Encourage coauthors to edit their identifying information prior to deadline (easy to do so)**
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HOW TO GET STARTED

If you have data or a project: invite friends or colleagues to help you conceptualize, write abstract and do presentation

If the data is not yet analyzed: it's okay! You can submit an abstract that says data is still under analysis.

If you have no data and no project: talk with friends who do and offer to help!

If you work with a professor: ask them if they have a data set they'd like you to work on, (even a portion of,) for APHA. They can be "first author." You can do the work 😊

If your field instructor has some program evaluation data, or focus group findings, or other more informal data that can be written up, see if he or she is interested.



WHERE TO GET HELP

- **APHA provides many resources on its website!**
- **Abstract Writing Guidelines and Tips for Conference :**
[www.apha.org/NR/rdonlyres/...8518.../SA Abstracts Guide 05.pdf](http://www.apha.org/NR/rdonlyres/...8518.../SA_Abstracts_Guide_05.pdf)
- **Advisors and faculty members may be able to assist you if you have questions.**

IF YOU'RE ACCEPTED...

Keep the acceptance email and note the dates; you will receive multiple emails with date of presentation, how to upload your presentation, conflict of interest forms, and other important information.

And get started working on it early! Upload early.

Keep in mind you'll have 15 minutes at most, to present.

There are plenty of poster templates available.

Good luck!



IF YOU'RE REJECTED...

...there's always 2014, in New Orleans! Don't give up. Keep trying. Sometimes, there are just too many abstracts on a given topic.

For the future: keep records and collect data on what you are doing within your practice: projects, campaigns, program evaluations, focus groups. EVERYTHING IS DATA!



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND CONTACTS

APHA: apha.org

Mary Murphy Phillips: mcmurph@bu.edu ,617-638-5059 (Mary is Director of Student Services. Student Services offers limited funding for students interested in presenting at APHA. If you're planning on asking SPH for funds, please let her know).

Adapted from Betty J. Ruth and Abby Ross, Boston University School of Social Work, 1/30/13.

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