Memorandum

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| To: | Kate Massey |
| From: | Caroline Broder |
| Date: | June 7, 2022 |
| Re: | Communications at MACPAC, and opportunities for growth |

As noted in the memo to Commissioners for the retreat, MACPAC reaches the public and policymakers primarily through our website, Commission meetings, e-mail announcements, direct mail of our reports, media reports, as well as social media platforms such as Twitter and LinkedIn. This memo offers a brief overview of the communications functions at MACPAC, highlights from the past year, and opportunities for growth.

## The role of communications at MACPAC

The major functions of the communications team at MACPAC are as follows:

* managing the publication process and making final edits on all external publications produced by MACPAC. This includes handling the distribution of major reports, such as the reports to Congress and MACStats, as well as the design of these reports;
* maintaining MACPAC’s website;
* responding to media inquiries, conducting press outreach, and tracking media mentions;
* creating and distributing content through social media and e-mail;
* maintaining MACPAC’s email subscriber list, which has more than 4,400 names; and
* compiling a daily email on Medicaid policy issues in the news to help keep staff informed.

In calendar year (CY) 2021, we produced 2 separate reports to Congress, the *MACStats Medicaid and CHIP Data Book*, 19 issue briefs, 15 fact sheets, 5 contractor reports, 6 comment letters, and 2 separate 50-state policy compendia. Thus far in CY 2022, MACPAC has produced the March and June reports to Congress, 11 issue briefs, 4 comment letters, 1 contractor report, 9 fact sheets, and 1 50-state policy compendium. In addition, MACPAC jointly produced with MedPAC a data book on beneficiaries who are dually eligible for Medicaid and Medicare, which we plan to produce with MedPAC again. We also updated the reference guide to federal Medicaid statute and regulations on our website, which was a popular publication with our readers.

Other highlights over the past year include improvements to the search function on MACPAC’s website. In the first few months of 2022, MACPAC’s site has had an average of 31,500 visitors per month, up from an average of about 24,000 visitors per month in 2021 and more than double the average number of monthly visitors (14,800) in 2020.

We’ve also significantly increased MACPAC’s social media presence in the last year. Our Twitter followers grew by 42 percent in 2021. As of June 2022, we now reach more than 3,770 followers who include many influential health policy reporters, organizations, and researchers. In addition, MACPAC began sharing work on LinkedIn in 2021, and now has 1,228 followers. Our email list continues to grow and now has more than 4,400 subscribers that include key agency leadership and staff, members of Congress and staff, state Medicaid directors, health policy reporters, and policy organizations.

Perhaps the biggest change I implemented in the last year has been bringing the graphic design function in-house at MACPAC. Previously, MACPAC held an outside contract for graphic design services, which included creation of the reports to Congress and *MACStats*. While the outside vendor did an acceptable job on the work, it limited our ability to create graphics quickly and have permanent design support, which resulted in a more stressful publication process for staff.

We hired Carolyn Kaneko as our in-house graphic designer in September 2021. As a result, we can now produce more publications and graphic content without the administrative burden of contracting. It also has eased some of the deadline pressures around report publication, since we have someone who is devoted to our needs. I can say with confidence that staff view her as an essential resource who makes their lives easier and is pleasant to work with.

## Opportunities for growth

There are several opportunities to grow the reach of MACPAC’s work and make improvements to the processes we have in place while saving money for the agency. Here are three ideas for your consideration:

* Improving MACPAC’s website. Although improvements were made to the website’s search function in 2021, the website last received a comprehensive overhaul in 2015 under previous leadership. Key areas for review include improving the user experience and the updating the look of the site.
* Exploring new ways to communicate with stakeholders. MACPAC sends emails to our subscriber list of more than 4,450 people around meetings, major new publications, and during the summer to help inform our readership about new products that MACPAC has published post-June report. While a balance is needed to ensure we do not lose subscribers by sending too many emails, an opportunity exists for us to create an opt-in system for people to receive publications of specific interest (e.g., financing issues, health equity) for our readership. In addition, MACPAC has the opportunity to continue growing its social media presence. While we have made major headway toward that end in the last year, we are in the process of developing a regular content calendar to continue a regular cadence of communication on Twitter and LinkedIN. However, more can be done to explore opportunities for outreach on LinkedIn, Twitter, and perhaps other social media platforms where we do not currently share content (e.g. TikTok).
* Improving current processes. One of the biggest complaints among staff is the difficulty of use around some of our publication templates, which is caused by a font (Roboto) that was selected years ago. The font was designed for web use, but not for print publications. It causes issues when updates are made to the font, which is not standard to Microsoft word. My recommendation is that MACPAC update these templates with a font that is easier for staff to use, while retaining the look and feel of our current font. I have delayed this decision until staff were done with the current publication cycle so as not to create unnecessary disruptions. We have a recommendation that is ready for staff and IT input prior to implementing. The goal would be to overhaul these templates this summer.

The other process improvement I would like to implement is MACPAC’s approach to our physical mailing list. MACPAC mails out nearly 1,700 copies of our reports, a number that I believe is too high since we send the report electronically, and many people seem to prefer that. We also spend a lot of the communications specialist’s time maintaining physical mailing addresses. In addition, mailing the reports costs MACPAC close to $10,000, not including printing costs. I believe that maintaining print delivery to key congressional staff, Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services leadership, and state Medicaid directors is important. However, beyond this group, I recommend that we send a print copy only to those who request one. MedPAC has taken a similar approach and now mails very few copies of its printed report. This will save MACPAC money and time.

Thank you for your consideration of these ideas. I look forward to additional discussion at your convenience.