

Messaging and Communications

Why Messaging Matters

Messaging is one of the most powerful tools in advocacy and policy-making. A strong message can mobilize voters, influence lawmakers, shape media narratives, and build public will for change. In contrast, a weak or unclear message can lead to confusion, resistance, or inaction.

In today's political climate, where misinformation spreads quickly and attention spans are short, communicating effectively is just as important as having the best policy solutions. When you advocate for your issues, your message must be clear, values-driven, and easy to remember to resonate with your audience.

Who This Chapter is For

This chapter is designed for:

- Policymakers who need to communicate policies in a way that connects with constituents and the media.
- Advocates and organizers who mobilize communities, build coalitions around important issues, and work to persuade constituents and influence public opinion.

Whether you're preparing for a press interview, a town hall, a legislative hearing, or a social media campaign, the strategies in this chapter will help you deliver your message effectively and persuasively.

How to Use This Chapter

This chapter is designed as a practical, step-by-step guide. You'll learn:

- The core principles of effective messaging – What makes a message clear, persuasive, and memorable?
- How to frame a strong message – How to structure your message to resonate with your audience.
- Tailoring your message for different audiences – Voters, legislators, media, donors, and coalition partners.
- Talking points – You'll see values-based lead message points and supporting arguments, and facts that strengthen your core message.

By the end of this chapter, you'll have a ready-to-use messaging framework and talking points that ensure your communications are compelling, consistent, and action-oriented – no matter who your audience is.

Core Principles of Effective Messaging

Messaging is not about what you say but what people hear, remember, and act on. To ensure your message sticks, follow these principles:

1. Clarity – Keep it simple. People remember simple, straightforward messages, not lengthy explanations. Avoid acronyms and insider language.
 - Ineffective (Too Technical)
 - “Unregulated Pregnancy Clinics operate outside of HIPAA protections, which means their data collection and retention policies fail to meet established health privacy standards.”²⁴⁷
 - Effective (Clear and Simple)
 - “If you visit an Unregulated Pregnancy Clinic, your personal health information isn’t protected. They can collect and share your data with anti-abortion groups²⁴⁸ – and you’d never know.”
2. Consistency – Stick to the same core message across different platforms, such as speeches, social media, interviews, and legislative testimony.
 - Core Message
 - “Everyone deserves honest, unbiased care. But, UPCs deceive people, collect their personal health information, and push a political agenda rather than offer necessary health care.”
 - Reinforcing the Message Across Channels
 - Press interview: “People seeking care deserve health care, not deception. Many UPCs pretend to offer medical care, but they aren’t regulated and can misuse private health data.”
 - Social media post: “Did you know UPCs collect your personal information and don’t have to protect it? #PrivacyMatters”
 - Legislative hearing: “This is a simple issue: If a place collects your medical data, it should be held to the same standards as traditional health care providers.”



3. Values-Driven – People are persuaded by values first and facts second. Connect to shared values (e.g., honesty, privacy, freedom, fairness, safety) rather than policy details and data.

- Ineffective (Fact-Heavy, No Values)

- “Many Unregulated Pregnancy Clinics don’t employ licensed medical professionals, and 80% of them provide misleading or false information about abortion risks.”²⁴⁹



Relate before you reason

- Effective (Values-Driven First, Facts Second)

- “Women deserve honest, medically accurate health care—not deception. But Unregulated Pregnancy Clinics are lying to pregnant people and putting their health at risk. In fact, 80% of them provide false or misleading information about abortion.”²⁵⁰

4. Make It Personal – Statistics support a message, but emotion drives action. Real stories create connection and encourage action with urgency.

- Fact-Only Approach (Less Persuasive)

- “Data show that UPCs are targeting low-income communities, often setting up near reproductive health clinics to deceive people seeking evidence-based services.”^{251,252}

- Storytelling Approach (More Persuasive)

- “When Maria found out she was pregnant, she went to what she thought was a medical clinic. Instead, the staff pressured her, shamed her, and then collected her private information – without telling her they weren’t licensed medical professionals who would respect her right to autonomy in her health care decisions. No one should have to go through that.”



Emotion before explanation

5. Audience-Centered – Different audiences have different priorities (e.g., other lawmakers, constituents, organizational allies, donors, etc.). Tailor your core message to different audiences based on what resonates with them.

- Voters & the Public (Emphasize Privacy & Deception)

- “Unregulated Pregnancy Clinics collect private health data without protection.”²⁵³ Your personal information could be shared with anti-abortion groups.”

- Lawmakers (Emphasize Consumer Protection & Accountability)

- “If any other business collected private health information under false pretenses, they’d be held accountable. UPCs shouldn’t get a free pass to deceive people.”

- Media & Journalists (Give a Strong Hook & Soundbite)
 - “UPCs are a Trojan horse. They often look like all-options clinics, but they exist to mislead and manipulate, all while collecting people's private health information.”^{254,255}



Crafting Your Message

A well-crafted message ensures that every communication stays focused on your core message, with supporting points and a clear call to action. It helps you stay on message, no matter the audience or setting.

Key Components:

1. Core Message ("What") – The most important takeaway in one sentence.
2. Supporting Points ("Why") – Two to three key reasons that reinforce the core message.
3. Call to Action ("How") – A clear, actionable step people can take.

Next, we'll break each section of your message framework down into more detail.

Core Message ("What")

“Unregulated Pregnancy Clinics deceive and endanger pregnant people by collecting their private health information without protection, using misleading medical claims, and operating without medical oversight. It’s time to hold them accountable.”

Why This Works:

- Direct and clear – No jargon or policy-heavy phrasing.
- Values-driven – Emphasizes fairness, honesty, and accountability.
- Creates urgency – Frames UPCs as a threat to people seeking care.

Supporting Points ("Why")

- **UPCs use deceptive practices to mislead and manipulate women.**
 - “No one should be tricked when seeking health care. UPCs lie to women about their options.”

- UPCs often pretend to be medical clinics but are not licensed health care providers.
 - Staff often give false or misleading information to pressure women into continuing pregnancies.
 - They regularly use delays and scare tactics to limit people's options before they can access comprehensive and evidence-based care.
- **UPCs collect personal health data without protections and are not covered by HIPAA.**
 - “Everyone deserves privacy. Your private health data is protected if you visit a regulated medical clinic. If you walk into a UPC, it’s not. And they can share your information with anti-abortion activists without your knowledge.”
 - Unlike traditional clinics, UPCs aren’t bound by HIPAA, meaning they can collect, store, and share client information without consent.²⁵⁶
 - Many UPCs share private health data with anti-abortion groups with a larger agenda.²⁵⁷
 - This puts people at risk, especially in states where abortion is banned.
- **UPCs are unregulated and operate without accountability.**
 - “If a business misled customers and collected private data under false pretenses, they’d be held accountable. UPCs shouldn’t get a free pass to deceive women.”
 - They receive public funding in many states, but there is no oversight for how they use their funds.²⁵⁸
 - Most UPCs don’t employ licensed medical professionals²⁵⁹ – yet they give medical-sounding advice that is often false or misleading.
 - If any other business engaged in this level of deception, it’d be shut down.

Call to Action ("How")

“Women deserve comprehensive health care, not manipulation. Lawmakers must step up and regulate these centers to protect individual privacy and stop the spread of misinformation.”

Why This Message Framework Works

This message framework can be used in speeches, interviews, legislative hearings, advocacy materials, and social media to ensure a consistent, compelling argument for regulating UPCs. It works because it:

- Keeps the focus on a simple, repeatable message.
- Connects to values people care about, including privacy, fairness, and accountability.
- Provides clear supporting points that reinforce the main message.
- Ends with a strong call to action.

Tailoring Messages for Different Audiences

A strong message must be adapted for different audiences. While your core message remains the same, your framing should align with what your audience cares most about.

- Constituents and the Public – Use values and personal stories.
 - “UPCs are collecting private health information without protections.²⁶⁰ Your personal information could be shared with anti-abortion groups.”
- Media and Journalists – Give clear, compelling soundbites.
 - “UPCs are a Trojan horse. They pose as clinics to mislead people and steer them away from evidence-based reproductive care, while collecting their private data.”
- Policymakers – Frame the issue as one of public accountability.
 - “If any other business misled customers and collected private data under false pretenses, they’d be shut down. UPCs shouldn’t get a free pass.”
- Coalition partners – Emphasize shared goals.
 - Regulating UPCs is about protecting reproductive freedom, consumer rights, and data privacy. We must work together to hold them accountable.”
- Donors and Funders – Highlight urgency and impact.
 - Without action, more people will fall victim to UPCs’ deceptive practices. Your support will help expose the role UPCs play in the broader anti-abortion infrastructure and protect health care access.”

Checklist for Effective Messaging

- ☒ Is your message clear and simple?
- ☒ Is it tailored to your audience?
- ☒ Does it connect to values people care about?
- ☒ Is it consistent across platforms?
- ☒ Does it inspire action?

Key Arguments for Regulation of Unregulated Pregnancy Clinics (UPCs)

Values-Based Framework

Everyone deserves access to accurate, compassionate, and confidential health care. But Unregulated Pregnancy Clinics (UPCs), also known as crisis pregnancy centers, offer limited information, counseling, and resources. They may provide basic services like pregnancy tests and limited non-diagnostic ultrasounds, but their advertising often leads people to expect more complete medical care than they deliver. These centers operate with little to no oversight, often receiving public funding while failing to meet basic medical, ethical, or financial standards.

The following section outlines the key arguments for regulating UPCs, along with talking points and sample messages:

Values Messages and Talking Points

1. Exploitation of Personal Data

Values Message: People generally assume their personal information will be kept private when they provide it to their medical provider. If you walk into a UPC, it's not. They can share it with anti-abortion activists, law enforcement, or anyone else they choose.²⁶¹

Talking Points:

- Heartbeat International, the largest UPC network, was caught recklessly exposing private health data, sharing full names, due dates, and addresses of pregnant people in an unprotected, publicly accessible video.²⁶²

- Training videos show UPC employees casually scrolling through clients' medical records, demonstrating how easily this private information is accessed and shared.²⁶³
- UPCs mislead clients into believing their private information is protected when, in reality, they can share personal data with anyone, including anti-abortion groups and law enforcement.
- In Alabama, a UPC gave a woman's records to the police, including details about her periods and contraceptive use that were used in her pregnancy-related prosecution.²⁶⁴

Sample Messages:

- "Walk into a UPC, and your private health information could end up with anti-abortion extremists or the cops."
- "Regulated clinics protect your data. UPCs can leak your name, period dates, and date of pregnancy to anyone."

2. Misuse of Public Funds and Lack of Financial Accountability

Values Message: Taxpayers deserve transparency and accountability when it comes to how their money is spent. Yet UPCs get public funds with no oversight. We must hold them accountable just like any organization using taxpayer money."

Talking Points:

- In many states, UPCs receive public funding without needing to provide impact assessments or audits.²⁶⁵
- In 2023, Tennessee increased UPC funding from \$3M to \$20M; Texas allocated \$140M in 2023.²⁶⁶
- UPC financial reports often inflate impact and fund marketing and executive salaries rather than services.²⁶⁷

Sample Messages:

- "Taxpayer dollars should fund regulated medical services people need and want, not a \$1.9 billion industry that, overwhelmingly, refuses to provide evidence-based care or meet basic medical standards."
- "Taxpayers deserve to know what UPCs are doing with the tax dollars they receive. If they are providing valuable services, they should be able to prove that."

- “How can we know UPCs are the most efficient and effective way to provide services if we do not accurately know how they spend the money they receive?”
- “The vast majority of UPCs take public money with zero accountability. That’s fraud, not service.

3. Deceptive Medical Practices and Misinformation

Values Message: People deserve medically accurate information to make informed decisions about their health.

Talking Points:

- 91% of UPCs advertise medical services, but few have full-time medical staff.²⁶⁸
- "Abortion pill reversal," promoted by Heartbeat International,²⁶⁹ a major UPC network, is unproven and condemned by the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) as unethical and dangerous.²⁷⁰
- Some UPCs perform ultrasounds without proper training, leading to misdiagnoses and delays in care.^{271, 272}

Sample Messages:

- “If a hospital nurse lied to a patient, they could lose their license. But at many UPCs, untrained staff hand out medical advice that can be totally wrong—and there’s no oversight, no consequences.”
- “UPCs mislead people with junk science. That’s not health care.”

4. Lack of Data Privacy and Exploitation of Sensitive Information

Values Message: Everyone deserves the right to privacy, especially when it comes to personal health data.

Talking Points:

- UPCs are not bound by HIPAA, despite hundreds of UPC websites falsely claiming HIPAA compliance²⁷³
- They collect sensitive information and may share it with anyone, including anti-abortion groups or law enforcement.
- In Louisiana, a data breach from Heartbeat International, a leading UPC network, exposed visitors’ names, due dates, and medical histories.²⁷⁴

Sample Messages:

- “When you visit a regulated health clinic, your data is protected. At a UPC, it can be shared with anti-abortion groups or even police.”
- “UPCs exploit vulnerable people by pretending to offer confidential care—then hand over their records.

5. Coercion and Withholding of Medical Options

Values Message: Everyone deserves autonomy over their reproductive decisions.

Talking Points:

- UPCs are designed to discourage abortion and provide their reproductive and sexual health services only when they feel it will help them coerce clients away from abortion.
- UPC websites often inflate the rate of miscarriage in early pregnancy and suggest people seeking abortion should wait and come to the UPC for an ultrasound to determine if they will miscarry naturally.²⁷⁵
- UPCs target people who they think might consider an abortion, delaying care until legal timeframes expire.²⁷⁶

Sample Messages:

- “UPCs don’t offer choices. They run out the clock until your options disappear.”
- “Delaying care is not health care. UPCs frequently use manipulation to deny people their rights.

6. Absence of Medical Services and Referrals

Values Message: People should be able to rely on providers for unbiased medical care and support.

Talking Points:

- A study of 607 UPCs in nine states showed:
 - Almost two-thirds made false and biased claims about evidence-based reproductive health care.
 - 95% did not offer prenatal care, and more than half didn’t even refer for prenatal care.
 - 28% provided STI tests, but most did not provide treatment or referrals for care.²⁷⁷

Sample Messages:

- “A ‘clinic’ that doesn’t refer you for the care you need isn’t a clinic, it’s a trap.”
- “When publicly funded UPCs refuse to provide complete pregnancy care, it’s time to redirect those funds.”

7. Targeting of Marginalized Communities

Values Message: Everyone deserves health care that is accessible, equitable, and free from manipulation.

Talking Points:

- There are more than 2,600 UPCs in the U.S.,²⁷⁸ outnumbering abortion clinics 3-to-1, numbers that were the reverse 30 years ago.²⁷⁹
- They advertise using abortion-related keywords to divert people searching for care.²⁸⁰
- UPCs are often located in low-income areas and communities of color, where residents already face barriers to evidence-based reproductive health services.^{281,282}

Sample Messages:

- “UPCs routinely prey on people with the fewest options and the greatest needs.”
- “Health care equity means ending deceptive practices that target the most vulnerable.”

8. Political Influence and Anti-Choice Agenda

Values Message: Public health should put patients before politics. Our laws must protect individuals’ privacy and ensure health policies reflect that priority.

Talking Points:

- UPCs are active players in anti-abortion policy-making and legal efforts.²⁸³
- They mobilize voters and lobby lawmakers.²⁸⁴
- Their leaders train affiliates to influence litigation and promote abortion bans.²⁸⁵

Sample Messages:

- “UPCs aren’t health care; they’re the boots on the ground for the anti-choice movement.”
- “This industry is more focused on banning abortion than helping pregnant people.”

“Everyone deserves honest, safe, and supportive health care. It's time to hold UPCs accountable, protect people’s privacy, and ensure public dollars go to health care providers that meet communities’ needs.”

Public Opinion Polling

UPCs are harming people all over the country. They are a little-known threat to voters, but voters reject them when they hear a little about these centers. Most voters in states want to see these unlicensed centers held accountable at all times, even before messaging. That support skyrockets when voters learn of their nefarious nature, especially their lack of health and safety standards. It stands strong even in the face of positive information about these centers.

Regulating UPCs is not a partisan matter: red state to blue state, conservative to liberal, voters are concerned about UPCs – and polling shows that voters would be more likely to re-elect lawmakers who took action against them.

This is an opportunity for policymakers to pass good policy and gain positive will among voters on both sides of the ideological aisle. Voters are more likely to consider officials trustworthy, caring about people like them, and acting in the public’s best interest if they take action on UPCs.²⁸⁶