

Communicating COVID-19 to Families & Children

Content Campaign with Cincinnati Children's &
The ACTION Learning Network



In the first quarter of 2020, it felt as though the world hit "pause." Communities struggled to slow the spread of the novel coronavirus. Our team at Untold Content, headquartered in the Midwest startup hub of Cincinnati, went completely virtual. Then we braced ourselves for the immense communication tasks ahead.

As medical storytellers, we are lucky to work with some of the most innovative healthcare organizations in the world. When news spread of COVID-19 and its rapid rate of infection, we knew there would be a critical need to communicate vital health and safety information to patients, leaders, and the general public.

This story walks you through our experience creating a communication campaign with the leaders and clinical experts at Cincinnati Children's and the ACTION Learning Network, a global learning collaborative set to improve clinical outcomes for children with heart failure.

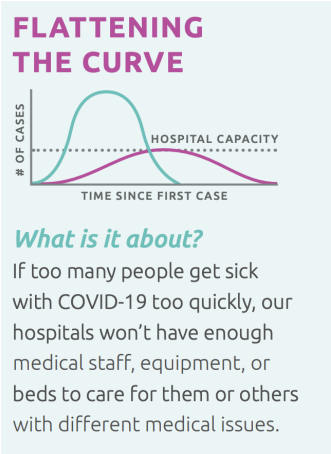
**Storytelling can help us process
overwhelming information and learn
what steps to take next.**

01

Tackling new terms



Before the COVID-19 pandemic, most Americans had never heard of terms like "social distancing" and "flattening the curve." As schools and businesses closed, healthcare leaders needed to make sure everyone understood why it mattered so much to stay at a safe distance from others.



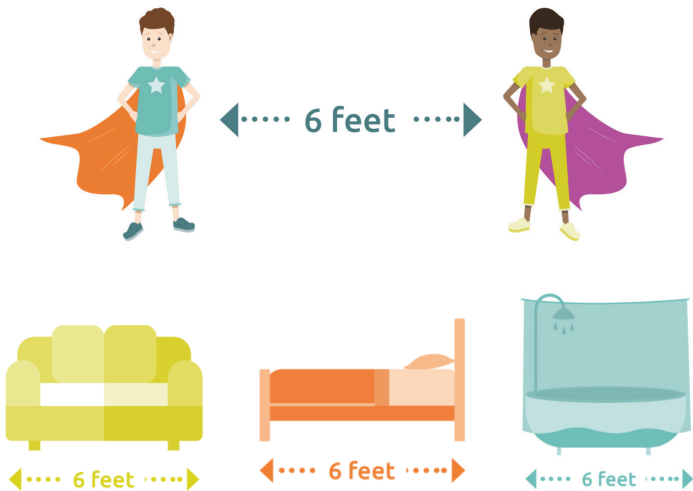
A line chart visual of "flattening the curve" swept the nation. ACTION's graphic designer branded this iconic chart and the Untold team wrote a simple explanation of how hospital capacity is impacted by infectious disease. We placed this into an infographic 2-pager about the most important things parents need to know about COVID-19.

02

Making it relatable



How do you help children understand why they can't go to school or play with their friends? To engage kids in social distancing, we knew they first needed to visualize what 6 feet feels like.



Couch. Bed. Tub. A professional basketball player! Metaphors help our brains compare new information to things we already understand. To reach children, we created short social media messages to help them relate to social distancing guidelines. These visuals were also featured in printable infographics for kids in the campaign theme of being a health superhero.

03

Answers at the ready



Every parent has questions about how to keep their children safe during this pandemic. But for parents of children with solid organ transplants or heart failure, those concerns are significant. Is my child at increased of getting very sick from COVID-19? How will our healthcare services be different in light of this crisis? Are there published clinical outcomes for children like mine?

As soon as news of the pandemic began, the ACTION Learning Network and Cincinnati Children's Hospital received a wave of questions from concerned parents. Not only were they creating and adapting to new hospital operating procedures and PPE concerns, but our healthcare leaders also needed to be there to guide patients and parents.

One of the most urgent needs, therefore, was an accurate, timely, evidence-based FAQ document. ACTION partnered with the Starzl Network for Excellence in Pediatric Transplantation and the Pediatric Heart Transplant Society to collaboratively answer parents' questions.

Our medical writers then gathered the three organizations' responses into an FAQ and edited for a consistent voice and style. Most importantly, we added to the research they cited and carefully summarized the clinical outcomes to date. When the first study on pediatric cases of COVID-19 was published in March 2020, the Untold team summarized its key findings.

Like many data visualization artists, we debated whether it was appropriate to visualize statistics from the study. Although it was important and validated scientific data, it was also some of the only existing data. And compared to the number of children worldwide expected to have COVID-19, the study size of 2,000 children was still quite small.



COVID-19 FAQs

For Children with Solid Organ Transplant or Heart failure

Our team decided to stick with text rather than data visualization to prevent misunderstanding or extrapolation of the data. The findings, by the way, were comforting for parents: most children were asymptomatic or had mild cases of COVID-19.

04

Being a superhero



05

Multiplying the content



ACTION's leaders wanted to make sure they were reaching children as well as parents. So we discussed together the most important things children should know about COVID-19. Then the Untold team ideated virtually to develop concepts. "Wanna be a health hero" was born. Because who doesn't want to be a superhero right now?

Based on CDC guidelines for effective patient education materials, our team "chunked" the most important information into clear, concise *actions* children can take to protect themselves, their families, their healthcare teams, and their communities. A block layout makes the health hero actions easier to digest. Plus it adds interactivity as kids can cut and paste each superhero action!

From a content strategy perspective, the block layout enabled us to efficiently create multiple social media messages from just one infographic. Each superhero action is deserving of attention. So ACTION parents and children saw a new action every day over a week and a half. Simple visual icons help a wider range of kids understand and remember what to do.



Wanna be a Health Hero?

It's important to stay extra healthy during this COVID-19 outbreak. We're challenging you to be a health hero by taking these steps:

 <p>Stay at home to slow the spread.</p> <p><i>If you must leave home, when you return home, change your clothes, and wash your hands to help everyone stay healthy.</i></p>	 <p>Wash your hands for 20 seconds.</p> <p><i>Try singing "Happy Birthday!" twice slowly. Wash your hands frequently to help keep yourself from getting sick.</i></p>	 <p>Keep your hands away from your face.</p> <p><i>Do your best to not touch your face or rub your eyes. Make sure to cough and sneeze into your elbows.</i></p>
 <p>Remember to take all your normal medicines.</p> <p><i>Pharmacies may be busy or have reduced hours, so remember to keep an extra four weeks of medicine on hand.</i></p>	 <p>Be more careful than normal when playing at home.</p> <p><i>Hospitals will be crowded taking care of sick people. You'll want to avoid unnecessary trips to the doctor or hospital.</i></p>	 <p>Learn something new with your family.</p> <p><i>Try new activities like cooking, writing, reading, telling stories, drawing/painting, stretching/yoga, or dance parties.</i></p>
 <p>Follow a daily schedule to stay busy and engaged.</p> <p><i>Make a plan with your family for your days at home. Make sure to include family time together and also quiet time for yourself.</i></p>	 <p>Keep more space between yourself and others.</p> <p><i>Stay at least 6 feet apart from people that don't live in your house. That's the width of a couch. This is called social distancing.</i></p>	 <p>Talk it out. Have a positive attitude!</p> <p><i>It is okay to feel sad, worried, angry, or even happy about the changes right now. Share you're feelings with friends and family.</i></p>

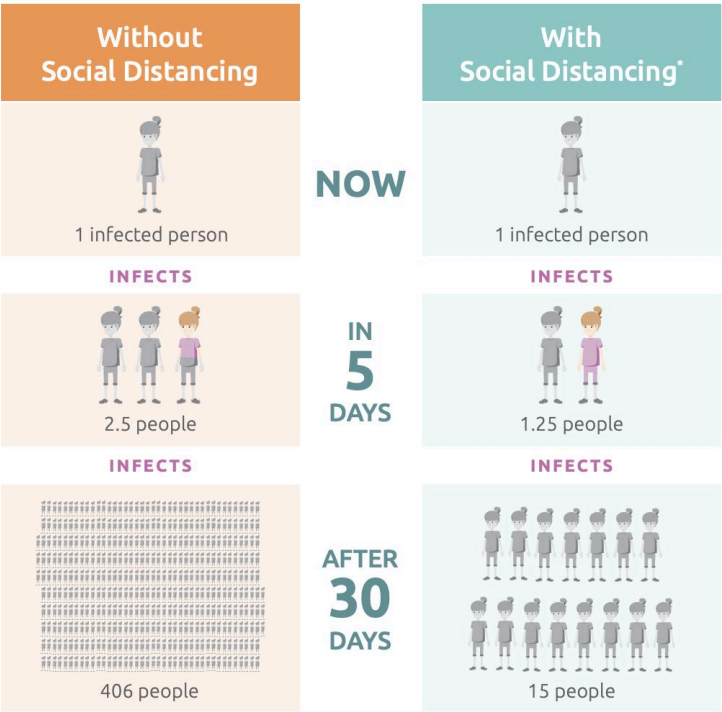
06

Data tells a story



Data storytelling can help us understand how much difference just one person can make. When BBC Health published an infographic on the rate of infection with and without social distancing, our team sprang into action to brand the data and incorporate it into our COVID-19 campaign.

Seeing infection at both the individual and community level makes the impact of our actions clear. Without distancing, over 400 people would get sick. Only 15 with social distancing.



Source: [bbc.com/news/explainers-52010555](https://www.bbc.com/news/explainers-52010555)

*If infection rate is reduced by half

07

Key insights



So what are the key take-aways from this campaign?

- **Speed and accuracy are key in times of crisis.**
As our team worked around the clock to write the FAQs and develop these educational materials, every second counted. The speed and accuracy of our work had a direct impact on every parent's peace of mind. In times of crisis, we must energize and dedicate ourselves to the mission.
- **Creativity is critical even in times of crisis.**
When we panic, we look to experts for information. But oftentimes, their content is hard to understand and access. Creative storytelling with words and visuals can bring the insights and recommendations of experts to life.
- **Evidence matters, even when it's scarce.** As technology enables us to find and share information rapidly, it's more important than ever that experts produce significant amounts of content. Rising above fake news and helping the public understand how to tell accurate info from false representation is critical.

Special thanks to the subject matter experts at Cincinnati Children's and the ACTION Learning Network, as well as Kacie Serrato of Swash & Dot Design.