

# The "Little Things" Campaign: A Unified Behavioral Approach to Respiratory Illness Prevention

Christy Gray, MPH, CHES, CHTS-CP, Virginia Department of Health, Andrea Mendes, MS, PMP, Virginia Department of Health, Rachel Ellick, MS, Virginia Department of Health, Siddall Communications, LLC



## BACKGROUND

Each respiratory illness season, the public is expected to keep up with guidance for multiple viruses at once, which can make prevention messages feel complex and hard to follow.

Health departments are tasked with sharing updated guidance while also continuing to highlight **basic prevention behaviors that are foundational to reducing the spread of disease.**

The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) developed "**The Little Things**," a communications campaign centered on three basic healthy habits:

- **Washing hands**
- **Covering coughs**
- **Staying up-to-date on immunizations**

The campaign brings to life characters, each representing a healthy behavior, to deliver consistent guidance. By making health habits fun, memorable, and approachable, the campaign **encourages people of all ages to adopt small actions that can make a big difference.**



## METHODS

VDH contracted marketing vendors to conduct consumer research (in English and Spanish) among Virginia parents of school-aged children regarding their attitudes and beliefs related to vaccines.

- Researchers used the **Health Belief Model** to understand how parents perceive the threat of disease, vaccines, and related public health guidance.
- Themes that informed campaign materials:
  - Emphasis on **keeping communities safe and the collective benefits**
  - Value of **simple, supportive, open-minded, and positive** messaging
  - Reflection of relatable **lived experience**
  - **Diverse outlets** for message dissemination

## CONCLUSION

- ✓ Creative yet simple approaches to convey foundational public health messaging create **diverse opportunities for partnership**
- ✓ Enduring communication materials can be **used across seasons** and amidst evolving public health guidance and budget constraints
- ✓ **Additional evaluation** of how materials have supported partners is needed to further understand impact of campaign



Scan the QR code for the Little Things Toolkit!



## RESULTS

Communication materials developed in English and Spanish:

- ✓ **Co-brandable social media assets/shareables**
- ✓ **Website banners**
- ✓ **Static graphics**
- ✓ **Co-brandable flyers**
- ✓ **Videos/Animations**
- ✓ **VDH business tools\***



Materials broadly disseminated via a publicly available digital toolkit; a statewide media plan including TV, radio, and theater public service announcements; news releases; and partnerships.

\*Not available in Spanish

Between August 1, 2025, and January 31, 2026, the Little Things communications toolkit (posted on VDH's external website) accrued:

- ✓ **1,888 views**
- ✓ **653 downloads**

Number of regional and state-wide partnerships that confirmed disseminating communication materials: **7**

Examples of partnerships include:

- ✓ **Virginia Department of Education,**
- ✓ **Virginia Recreation and Parks Society**
- ✓ **Virginia Restaurant, Lodging & Travel Association**