

# Council on Communications

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Schott, Laura J., 2024, Texas, chair  
 Isbell, T. Stotts, 2025, Arkansas, vice chair  
 Arnold, Samantha L., 2027, Illinois  
 Baker, Carol A., 2024, South Carolina  
 Cziok, Amber D., 2026, Minnesota  
 Fitzgerald, Alexandra J., 2027, Maryland  
 Hammi Blue, Ann, 2024, Arizona  
 Jackson, Lindsey D., 2025, New Hampshire  
 Kazim, Amir E., 2028, California  
 Lewin, Rachel L., 2025, Pennsylvania  
 Limosani, Mark A., 2024, Florida  
 Nisnisan, Mary Jocelyn Elyse, 2024, Texas\*  
 Phillips, James J., Jr., 2026, Alabama  
 Quartey-Sagaille, Tricia K., 2027, New York  
 Raum, Rhett E., 2025, Tennessee  
 Schaff, Riley A., 2027, Michigan  
 Shelton Wagers, Jill, 2026, Idaho  
 Zucker, Andrew, 2026, Ohio

Jensen, Tracy L., senior manager

The Council's 2023–24 liaisons include: Dr. Karin Irani (Board of Trustees, District 13) and Ms. Roslyn Joseph (American Student Dental Association).

## **Areas of Responsibility as Set Forth in the *Bylaws or Governance and Organizational Manual of the American Dental Association***

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As listed in Chapter VIII, Section K.2., of the *ADA Governance and Organizational Manual*, the subject matter responsibility for the Council shall be:

- a. Advise on the management of the Association's reputation;
- b. Develop, recommend and maintain ADA strategic communications plans;
- c. Advise ADA agencies on branding;
- d. Advise on prioritization and allocation of communications resources; and
- e. Advise on communications and marketing for constituents and components, upon request.

## **Key Accomplishments and Outcomes: Agency Programs, Projects, Results and Success Measures**

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### **Initiative/Program:** Member Value Marketing Workgroup (MVM)

A key priority of the Council on Communications is to provide strategic guidance on elevating member benefits and the value of the Tripartite. Accordingly, the Member Value Marketing Workgroup was created for the 2023-2024 term. The group utilizes the Communications Trend Report and member survey data, along with ongoing feedback loops with state and local components, to recommend messaging strategy and focus areas to better elevate the value of ADA membership. This Workgroup also addresses projects as specified from the ADA House of Delegates and the Board of Trustees.

**Success Measure:** Increase the amount of high-quality member value content in a short “snackable” format to increase followers of ADA social media channels.

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\* New Dentist Committee member

**Target:** Underway with efforts and deployments ongoing.

**Range:** N/A

**Outcome:** The Workgroup reviewed member value survey data, along with the 2023 Trend Report findings, to advise the ADA team on the creation of member value assets. Subsequently the Workgroup has:

- Advised on ADA wins for the “Together, We Thrive” campaign. MVM insights supported the collection of “[20 ADA Wins from 2023](#)” showcasing various things that matter to members, from travel benefits to science and advocacy. MVM also advised that the format should be short/snackable, visual and includes links for more information.
- Advised on the development of [member value content](#) for multiple channels that spotlights [themes](#) from the 2023 Trend Report.
- MVM reviewed the Member Advantage mailer from December 2023 and recommended leveraging this content, or similar savings stories from authentic voices for social media content and greater awareness of member value. A March full-Council brainstorm fine-tuned themes of focus including travel discounts, [wellness resources](#), which can also be found [here](#) and [here](#), and ongoing advocacy efforts, as seen [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).

This workgroup has also helped to improve the snackable content at their fingertips as on-the-ground advocates at the state/local level, ensuring that member value content created is visible and widely utilized throughout the Tripartite. The guidance to focus on certain topics of high member value has improved the quality of content on ADA social media channels and improved upon the following engagement metrics: From January – June 2024, ADA’s Facebook channel is up 1.57K followers; Instagram followers are up 12%; LinkedIn has grown by 25.1K followers; and TikTok has added more than 2,100 followers.

**Initiative/Program:** Communications Innovation Workgroup

With the ADA drumbeat of recognizing that “what got us here won’t get us there” in mind, the Communications Innovation workgroup created the ADA Leader Reader as its innovation of 2024. This Workgroup examines existing member and stakeholder research to identify potential gaps in existing communication channels and determines opportunities to improve conveyance. This Workgroup also continues to review social media ambassador applications, a 2022-2023 pilot now in full ADA execution.

The ADA Leader Reader is a quarterly email publication created to streamline and align resources and internal operations that support ADA communications. The pilot promotes leader-to-leader communication, highlighting key updates from ADA councils and committees to improve collaboration, stakeholder buy-in and transparency across volunteer groups, while empowering volunteer leaders as well-informed ADA ambassadors.

This pilot was created in response to a 2023 survey done by the Council to national volunteers, in which only 15.9% of respondents reported feeling well-informed about major actions and activities of ADA councils, committees and commissions. The ADA Leader Reader fills that communication gap by highlighting initiatives from volunteer bodies that impact member value on behalf of the Tripartite. All information contained in the ADA Leader Reader is shareable; no information about confidential programs or initiatives is provided via this vehicle.

**Success Measure:** Exceed average industry benchmark email open and clickthrough rate.

**Target:** Launched in March 2024, with next deployments scheduled for July and November 2024.

**Range:** N/A

**Outcome:** The first issue of the ADA Leader Reader was deployed in March 2024, and was well received by both volunteers and staff. The March publication had an open rate of 62%, nearly double the industry benchmark of 34% for medical/dental/healthcare messages. The clickthrough rate was 10%, far above the industry benchmark of 2.79%. The most clicked items were on the request for member comments on medical (dental) loss ratio policy and the Mayo Clinic's Dental Well-Being Index.

## Emerging Issues and Trends

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The Council on Communications has been at the forefront of developing methods of addressing emergent issues in a rapid and cohesive fashion, assisting to maintain the health of the ADA's reputation. Notably:

- **Implementation of Responsive and Proactive Communications process** at the March 2024 meeting
  - **Responsive communications:** For selected breaking issues requiring a quick-turn response, an action group of four Council members (chair, vice chair and leader-appointed members) to provide a high-level review of key messaging, providing feedback from the dentist perspective. This has been a highly effective resource, providing information for consideration by volunteer leadership and ADA staff.
  - **Proactive communications:** For selected high priority initiatives, such as the new Membership and Engagement Model Pilot Program, the full Council is provided with background, followed by the opportunity for a subset to stand up a short-term workgroup to assist with development of key messaging and strategic recommendations.

The success of this process has spanned beyond the scope of these key topics, providing improved transparency with the Council, and cultivating conversation with staff and key stakeholders across ADA communication channels, including *ADA News*, *The Journal of the American Dental Association (JADA)* and social media, as the ongoing feedback loop with districts and member dentists.

- **Creation of the annual Communications Trend Report**  
The Communications Trend Report (Report), created in 2020, is the signature project of the Strategic Communications Workgroup. This Workgroup leverages real-time practice insights and feedback from peers and patients to design and field surveys, in collaboration with the ADA team, about issues of concern pertaining to oral health and the dental profession. It analyzes research results to yield meaningful, representative insights.

In developing the 2024 professional and consumer surveys, the Workgroup crafted questions to identify emerging issues and needs, public health themes and crisis management risks that could impact the reputation of the profession. This Report is a significant asset, shared with national, state and local leadership to assist with Tripartite strategic planning.

Key themes this year include:

- Dentists' perspectives about workplace safety and aggressive patients, handling of patient marijuana use, a closer look at areas of stress and staffing shortages.
- Consumer perspective about topics including appointment availability, marijuana use, how they select a dentist and perception of dental benefits.

The Trend Report collects both year-over-year information to track shifts in attitudes or behavior, while also seeking to understand emerging concerns within the profession. This Report is leveraged throughout the year, as shown in this episode of [Dental Sound Bytes](#) and in [ADA News](#).

## Responses to House of Delegates Resolutions

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**Resolution:** 213H-2023 Addressing Non-Members Advertising as Tripartite Members on Social Media Websites

**213H-2023. Resolved,** that the appropriate ADA agency report annually to the ADA House of Delegates on the status of complaints received of non-members who falsely advertise ADA, state or local dental society membership on social media website, and be it further

**Resolved,** that this annual report include the number of non-members that renewed, how many were issued a 'cease and desist' letter and how many removed the inappropriate references.

In accordance with Resolution 213H-2023, a process and script were created for the Member Service Center to address concerns raised. This process applies when the ADA learns that a non-member U.S.-based dentist is claiming ADA membership and/or using the ADA logo in their marketing and advertising material (including a website).

The non-member will be asked to take one of the following actions:

- 1) rejoin ADA membership if eligible or
- 2) remove the image or wording misusing ADA intellectual property or inaccurately indicating membership

### Process Steps

- State or Local component contacts ADA with name and information where the claim is being made; evidence of the misuse or inaccurate claim should accompany the communication.
- ADA Member Service Center (MSC) will attempt to contact the dentist via phone to inform them of the oversight and request them to rejoin or to remove the information within ten (10) days if they choose not to rejoin.
- MSC will send approved letter to dentist following the phone call or attempted phone call, unless the dentist asks to rejoin during the phone call.
- MSC will inform the state/local component when this is completed, and request that state/local monitor for compliance.
- State or Local component will monitor if the dentist joins/renews, requests a waiver or does not remove the incorrect information.
- If after 10 business days the dentist does not join and does not remove the claim to membership, state/local component will contact MSC with the update.
- MSC will send second approved letter to the dentist requesting compliance with the request to remove inappropriate logo and language within ten (10) days, and state noncompliance will be referred to Legal Division for appropriate action.
- MSC will inform the state/local component when this is completed and request monitoring for compliance.
- State or Local component will monitor and report to MSC if no compliance after 10 days; MSC will refer matter to Legal Division.
- ADA Legal will send a first cease and desist letter informing the dentist they are inaccurately claiming to be a member or are misusing ADA or ADA Member logo.
- ADA Legal will inform the state or local of the sending of the C&D letter and will monitor for removal of image/wording.
- Should the dentist not take action to join or remove within ten days, state or local will request follow up of the ADA Legal.
- ADA Legal will send a second letter stating that if the action to remove the logo/wording is not taken, ADA legal will take appropriate steps which may include initiating legal action.

- After ADA Legal is informed from the state or local that the action was still not taken after the second notification letter, ADA Legal will request BOT approval to engage outside counsel and pursue a claim.

## Reports

The ADA has received a list of 47 names from Suffolk County, New York. At the time of this report:

- Two (2) are now renewed members.
- 12 non-members no longer have membership information detected on their websites.
- 33 non-members still have false information on their websites, and the process detailed above is still underway.

## Self-Assessment

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In accordance with Resolution 1H-2013, the Council on Communications held a self-assessment in two parts:

1. The Council was provided with an electronic survey, utilizing questions standardized to measure efficacy of operations and impact across the Councils which have 2024 self-assessments due. Responses were discussed as a full Council, with notes and recommendations compiled for consideration for the next Council year.
2. Council members also participated in live discussions during the spring full Council meeting to discuss opportunities to improve Council operations and collaboration.

## Overall Scope of Council

Council members agreed with the overall responsibilities of the Council on Communications, as detailed in the *ADA Bylaws* and in the *ADA Governance Manual*, noting that discussion regarding revision could be useful in three areas:

- Advising on the management of the Association's reputation
- Advising ADA agencies on branding
- Advising on prioritization and allocation of communications resources

Notes included specifying how these roles may have changed with the addition of the Strategic Forecasting Committee, considering better specifying which "communications resources" fall under the Council's purview and considering narrowing the Council's focus for more actionable results. These three areas will be discussed further in the 2024-2025 term by the Council.

## Structure

The Council currently holds two in-person meetings each year, in addition to a fall virtual onboarding. There was consensus for keeping the two meetings in person, as it is the most effective way to provide opportunity to fully engage the Council and ensure that new members are quickly acclimated to their work each year.

Additionally, there are three workgroups that operate throughout the term to accomplish impactful work aligning with the objectives of the Council. Workgroups have implemented quarterly milestone goals, which provide agility as key ADA initiatives evolve through the year, while providing structure to keep delivering impactful strategic outputs. Continuing the cadence of monthly meetings is recommended.

## Opportunities to Improve

Opportunities include:

- Create more intra-agency collaboration to decrease duplication of effort and improve member value offerings
- Ensure the Council is adequately informed in a timely fashion to support reputation management efforts
- Move away from cycles of reactive communications vs. proactive, positive narratives

As discussed in Emerging Issues and Trends, the Council introduced and implemented the Proactive and Responsive Communications process at its March meeting, which has been an effective resource for ADA communications, and provides the ability for interested members to engage in additional Council projects.

In addition to ongoing announcements, to better communicate with the Council, staff now provide three new email communications. These messages have been well received by Council members and recommended to keep going forward:

- Monthly workgroup updates to full Council to keep the full group aware of work outside of their assigned areas of focus.
- Weekly emails about key happenings, launches or high engagement social media posts.
- Board meeting recaps and highlights.

### **Opportunities for Collaboration**

The top volunteer groups noted for periodic collaboration throughout the year include: The Council on Membership (CoM); New Dentist Committee (NDC); Council on Dental Benefit Programs (CDBP) and Council on Dental Practice (CDP).

- The Council initiated and led quarterly calls for the 2023-2024 Council year between leaders of the Council, the CoM and NDC to discuss priorities of interest and minimize redundancies, as well as provide communications messaging strategy and insights from their peers as it relates to flow of info across the Tripartite.

### **Onboarding and Training**

The Council identified the following recommendations to improve onboarding:

- When incoming members are identified, supplement the information initially provided by Board Trustees, detailing structure of Council, workgroup expectations and cadence of meetings.
- The Chair identifies the workgroups for the year, including the members for each. Provide the opportunity for new members to identify their interests to ensure appropriate placement to meet their strengths.
- Identify a seasoned Council member, in addition to chair or vice chair, to work with new members, providing more detailed information about expectations and Council culture, answer questions and to assist with getting to know other members at in-person meetings.
- While not all members participate in the House of Delegates, provide the opportunity for an in-person meet and greet for those in attendance so new potential members can be welcomed and meet colleagues prior to the start of the Council year.
- Continue to hold training about Strategic Forecasting, and provide a primer about Council's role and current work. Consider holding a supplemental orientation just for new members so they can meet and connect and receive more detailed information separate from the full group.

### **Policy Review**

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The Council did not have policies due for review in the 2023-2024 Council year.

### **Council Minutes**

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For more information on recent activities, see the Council's [minutes](#) on ADA.org.