Kristal DeKleer

kristal@dekleer.com | (202) 957-2176 | Washington, DC | www.kristaldekleer.com

Strategic communications leader with a proven track record of shaping public perception through media relations, health and science messaging, and policy-driven engagement. Trusted advisor to senior officials across state, federal, and congressional settings. Expert in translating complex data into compelling narratives and building coalitions that advance outcomes. Skilled at analyzing trends, crafting clear and impactful content, and leading cross-functional teams to deliver measurable results under tight deadlines.

Career Highlights

- **Public Health Communications Management –** Managed all aspects of the California Department of Public Health's response to COVID-19, to include media relations, web content, and content development.
- **National Media Relations** – Pitched media outlets, developed story angles with producers, coordinated with key stakeholders, and conducted media training for legislators to advance care for America's veterans.
- **Project Management** – Scaled a public affairs team from 15 to 45, implementing systems and processes that enhanced performance, supported talent development, and advanced leadership priorities.
- **Leveraging Data to Drive Impact** – Managed national public affairs rollout of Department of Defense sexual assault data to inform decision makers, land media coverage, and engage internal and external stakeholders.
- **Creative Outreach Campaigns –** Hosted Elmo and Cookie Monster on Capitol Hill with Sesame Workshop to boost congressional engagement and promote trauma support for the children of veterans.

Relevant Experience

Communications Consultant

California Department of Public Health | Washington, DC (Remote) | July 2025-Present

Responsibilities

- Research and analyze public health data and program objectives to craft media statements, talking points, and strategic communications plans that shape statewide messaging.
- Monitor traditional and digital media landscape to identify trends, highlight opportunities, and draft key messages to prepare for media engagements.
- Manage cross-department task force to build and leverage a trusted messenger network to conduct social and public listening to adapt public health messaging strategies.

Impact

- Advise Director of CDPH on public affairs campaigns for statewide policy changes to include reinforcing public health messaging, strengthening coalitions, developing network of trusted messengers, and aligning collective impact initiatives.
- Developed a comprehensive project plan to launch a statewide health coalition that crosses medical professional organizations, health plans and insurers, patient groups, and public health leaders to navigate the fall and winter respiratory virus season.
- Crafted communications plan to announce the West Coast Health Alliance in coordination with the Governor's Office to include media statements, a national news interview, and digital content.

Strategic Communications Expert

Kentro | McLean, VA | 2024-2025

Responsibilities

- Led marketing strategy for federal IT contracting team focused on technology and innovation.
- Developed key messaging, SOPs, events, and marketing resources aligned with business goals.

Impact

- Drove stakeholder engagement and internal alignment during organizational rebrand.
- Strengthened company identity and market presence.

Public Health Senior Manager
Hagerty Consulting | Washington, DC & Sacramento, CA | 2020-2024

Responsibilities

- Managed COVID-19 communication program for California Department of Public Health and oversaw rollout of state reopening plans, vaccine messaging, and public safety campaigns.
- Produced and approved multi-channel public education campaigns on infectious diseases, extreme weather, and behavioral health, driving consistent statewide messaging.

Impact

- Coordinated with the Governor's Office, California Health and Human Services Agency, and CDPH leadership to deliver clear, science-driven public guidance to millions of Californians.
- Played key role during public health crisis to align messaging for web, media responses, and digital outreach.
- Led redesign of California's COVID-19 website (7M+ annual visits), improving accessibility and strengthening public trust.

Public Affairs Lead (Associate)
Booz Allen Hamilton | Alexandria, VA | 2012 – 2016

Responsibilities

- Advised senior defense officials on media engagement and crisis response strategies.
- Analyzed Department of Defense data to develop messaging strategies on sexual assault prevention.
- Developed internal and external messaging, congressional testimony prep, and stakeholder materials.

Impact

- Delivered communication strategies that enabled the DOD Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office to effectively navigate high-visibility media events.
- Prepared remarks for a nationally televised press conference featuring the Secretary of Defense, generating national coverage that informed decision makers and drove legislative action.

Communications Director
House Committee on Veterans' Affairs | Washington, D.C. | 2007 – 2011

Responsibilities

- Led strategic communications for legislative agenda supporting veterans.
- Crafted speeches, talking points, press releases, and digital content for the Committee Chair.
- Conducted media training and messaging prep for high-level appearances.
- Developed targeted messaging for key veteran legislation, budget proposals, and appropriations.

Impact

- Built relationships with top-tier outlets, resulting in sustained coverage that advanced legislative priorities.
- Successfully coordinated strategic alignment across leadership offices and external stakeholders, amplifying legislative achievements.

Media Relations Coordinator
The Society for Women's Health Research | Washington D.C. | 2004 – 2005

Responsibilities

- Developed media strategy to raise the Society's influence in women's health policy.
- Produced marketing materials, organized press events, and coordinated with corporate partners to enhance organizational profile and brand recognition.

Impact

- Secured coverage in outlets like CNN, LA Times, British Medical Journal, Advance, USA Today, and People, and arranged on-air interview with Wolf Blitzer for Women's Health Week.

Education

Claremont McKenna College, Bachelor of Arts Degree
Government and Women's Studies | Claremont, CA | Member of the Women's Basketball Team