

“Media Advocacy for Underage Drinking Prevention”

Co-facilitated by
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and
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Development

1. Introductions

2. What is media advocacy, and how can we use it? What resources are available to help us out?

Erica presented a mini-training. Please refer to the Powerpoint presentation handouts (PDF) for the content that was covered. Here are some additional notes:

- **Media Advocacy is often confused with social marketing and public relations.** Social marketing is aimed at achieving behavior change – Examples include OSA’s parent campaign, tobacco cessation “Time to Quit” ads, etc. Public relations is aimed at raising awareness of your organization and your issues– an example would be your general activities and events related to Alcohol Awareness Month. Media advocacy is the strategic use of the media to advance a social or public policy change. Media advocacy should be used strategically, not simply as media for media’s sake. Media advocacy is not a stand-alone strategy – It’s a tool to help complement and strengthen your broader policy change efforts (for example, community organizing, talking with decision-makers, etc).
- Is media advocacy the right strategy for meeting your goals? Sometimes, you may not need to use media advocacy to get your policy change accomplished. Here is a handout to help you decide:
http://www.marininstitute.org/action_packs/media_advocacy_q.htm
- The target audiences for media advocacy are:
 - Media outlets such as reporters, news editors, editorial board members – work with them to educate them so that when they write stories it is from a broader policy perspective and reflects the latest research and best practices. For example, media often looks at individual stories such as one person’s struggle with alcohol, which places the responsibility on the individual. We need to broaden how they see these issues so that they write stories about environmental change, societal change, public responsibility, and policy rather than about individual, personal change, and private responsibility.
 - Decision-makers – While you also want to talk to them via 1x1s and letters, talking to them indirectly through media channels tells them that this is what the community wants.

- The general public –The local media shapes the way a community thinks and talks about an issue. Make sure that you’re not only raising awareness—What do you want the reader/viewer to do about it?
- To build a strong relationship with the media, you must get to know them and allow them to get to know you. They need to know that you are legitimate and available so that they can always reach you for comment if needed. Allow yourself to become a resource for them, providing your expertise rather than becoming a pest. An important note is to work with editors and reporters in a positive manner when giving your feedback to their stories. Praise them in public, and (if needed) critique them in private.
- Be sure to prepare – rather than giving an answer right away, give yourself a chance to go over some speaking point first and then respond to their request. You always want to bring their questions back to your key message. The attached handouts include great tips for interviews and traps to avoid, including sample “bridging statements” to get back on message. If you are using a spokesperson, be sure to prepare them as well.
- Tips for getting yourself known to the media:
 - Attend editorial board meetings: These are open to the public, and are often where ideas for editorials come from.
 - Bring handouts and your business card with you when meeting with editors or reporters.
 - Develop face-to-face relationships with editors and reporters
 - Take advantage of low-news seasons to build relationships, e.g. summer.
- Opinion Pages in the newspaper are great places for media advocacy, as they are often what people read first. Options include:
 - Letters to the editor (250 words) – you can write these and then have coalition members send them in under their name
 - Op-Eds (700 words) These are guest editorials that you submit, e.g. Portland Press Herald’s Maine Voices column
 - Editorials – While written by editorial writing staff, you can sway them in a particular direction with the right education and relationship-building.
 - Syndicated columns
 - On-line postings – While these can get very negative, they can also a good way for coalition members to participate and include your message in the public debate.
- Media Advocacy Tricks:
 - Make your own news by holding a press conference, vigil, summit, or walk.
 - Youth and public figures attract cameras.
 - Again, be sure to prepare your spokespeople with three speaking points.
 - Again, remember that the goal isn’t just raising awareness – it’s to promote a specific policy change.
- Use any chance you can to educate the media. Even if you don’t end up on TV, it is important to help reporters understand the issue so that they frame it properly. You can do this by providing them with your speaking points, packets of research summaries and other information when you speak with them.

- Aside from newspapers and TV stations, you can use the radio, public access television, and the internet to do media advocacy.
- There are some excellent free Media Advocacy How-To Guides available online.
 - From the Marin Institute
http://www.marininstitute.org/action_packs/media_advocacy.htm
 - From Institute for Public Strategies
<http://www.coalitioninstitute.org/EnvironStrat/mediaadvocacyprimer.pdf>
 - From Institute for Public Strategies
http://www.publicstrategies.org/pdfs/step_series_access.pdf
 - From American Public Health Association
http://www.apha.org/NR/rdonlyres/A5A9C4ED-1C0C-4D0C-A56C-C33DEC7F5A49/0/Media_Advocacy_Manual.pdf

3. Discussion

- Many call participants had great examples of PSA's and awareness campaigns that aren't necessarily media advocacy, but are actually "social marketing" and "public relations" strategies, because they're aimed at behavior change and raising awareness. (It's only media advocacy if you're using it to promote or support a specific policy.)
 Social marketing/public relations examples included:
 - Using a PSA campaign along with a series of articles as part of a social hosting/parental responsibility campaign.
 - Getting a free PSA to support a prom season campaign consisting of putting cards in tuxes and flower boxes which talk about parental monitoring and alcohol use changes over the years.
 - Producing articles for a column in a weekly paper about underage drinking by taking information from OSA's Parent Guide and forming it into something of local interest.
 - TIP: To expand social marketing or public relations into media advocacy, you could use these same media efforts to support or promote a specific policy that ties in with your message—Examples are the 21 MLDA, underage drinking law enforcement party patrols, penalties for hosts and furnishers, etc.
- A lot of call participants had examples of media advocacy efforts that were used to support an existing policy, for example to prevent community backlash or weakening of the policy:
 - Letters to the editor to praise the city council for denying liquor licenses to problem establishments and for listening to the community's concerns about youth's access to alcohol.
 - Highlighting through the media a reward to a retailer that made huge progress in their policies and practices.
 - When a local columnist complained about stricter carding, rather than write a piece attacking that article, a letter was written three weeks later praising a store clerk for carding.
 - A thank you letter for an editorial which led to a request for an op-ed piece.

- Holding a press conference about policy changes and later following up to show the results.
- 21 Reasons keeps an online database with samples of news coverage and editorials resulting from media advocacy efforts:
<http://www.21reasons.org/newsroom.html>
- Additional questions and comments
 - Media Advocacy can be reactive, and can be important for both preventing and responding to backlash to a particular policy change.
 - With the buzz happening around the 21 MLDA, Alcohol Awareness Month can be used as a chance to support the 21 MLDA. The same can be said for pricing and promotion campaigns. Use big events going on such as Alcohol Awareness Month to promote broader campaigns or policy initiatives.
 - What are some ways to use media to promote Law Enforcement work to the communities, especially to prevent community backlash?
 - This is absolutely media advocacy if it is used to support or promote policy changes in the way law enforcement is handling underage drinking, furnishing, hosting violations (Maine Model Policy).
 - Media possibilities include launching new enforcement with a press conference that includes other community members speaking in favor of the initiatives or having the police department send a press release which could be co-written with the coalition.
 - A handout from the presentation, Sample Media Advisory, was left out of the pre-call email, and is included here – attached.
 - A couple of people suggested that it would be helpful to put together a database of stories in which adults are prosecuted for hosting and furnishing alcohol to minors to show that this initiative is working.
 - There are some examples, although of course a lot depends on the prosecutor & judge and their own level of awareness and buy-in. We'll try to put some together and send out to the group. If you have examples, please forward to Suzanne DiBella, sdibella@mcd.org.
 - Another thing that was suggested is a sample list of speaking points that coalitions can use.
 - Speaking points will depend on the particular issue/policy you are trying to promote, but we can put together some sample points to send out on various issues (this might be an ongoing project). If you have examples to share, please forward to sdibella@mcd.org.

Please send additional feedback and questions about the Media Advocacy materials to Erica Schmitz at eschmitz@mcd.org; 773-7737 or Jacinda Goodwin at jacinda.goodwin@maine.gov.

An evaluation of this conference call will be sent out through surveymonkey. Feedback on any and all parts of the call is greatly appreciated! Be sure to include your input on the possibility of changing the May 21st call topic from Facilitating Great Coalition Meetings to Objective 3.11 – Pricing and Promotions, as many questions have come up about this objective.

We hope that everyone can join us for the next call:

Substance Abuse & the Workplace Updates, Thursday, April 16, 1-2 pm.

Online registration: <http://mcdregistration.org/signup.asp?ID=138>

SAVE THE DATES! Upcoming calls...

Facilitators/Moderators	Topic	Date/Time of call
Anne Rogers (OSA) and Erica Schmitz (MESAP)	Facilitating Great Coalition Meetings	Thursday, MAY 21, 1-2 pm
Maryann Gotreau (OSA) and Erica Schmitz (MESAP)	School Policy Updates	Thursday, SEPTEMBER 17, 1-2 pm
Geoffrey Miller (OSA) and Erica Schmitz (MESAP)	Using Student Survey Data	Thursday, OCTOBER 15, 1-2 pm

Call topics may change to reflect community needs. For this reason, registration is not available until 1 month prior to each call. To register: <http://www.mcd.org/registrations.asp>

If you have specific materials or resources you would like to share with call participants, or if you have any specific questions you would like to see addressed during a call, please contact Erica Schmitz from MESAP (Maine’s Environmental Substance Abuse Prevention Center) at Medical Care Development, (207) 773-7737, eschmitz@mcd.org.