#4

DELIVERING PREVENTION MESSAGING THROUGH MASS MEDIA

ADAPT
A Division for Advancing Prevention & Treatment
CULTIVATING PREVENTION

WHY?

In substance use prevention

MESSAGES MATTER.

Prevention communications - including mass communications - are most effective when implemented as part of a larger prevention strategy.

THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATIONS

in a Comprehensive Community Prevention Strategy

Prevention communications have the greatest impact when they fit within a larger context of prevention interventions supporting a community's individuals, families, schools, and/or neighborhoods.

Developing a comprehensive prevention strategy provides communities with a blueprint for where they are heading and how to get there. We know that preventing substance use requires a multi-faceted approach that integrates multiple strategies. Communications has a role in many, if not all, of those strategies. Taking time to work with stakeholders to develop your community's prevention strategy will make clear where and how prevention communications can be used to help achieve your goals.

Get Started

The Strategic Prevention Framework (SPF) offers a well-tested and user-friendly 5-step approach to assessing strengths, needs, and assets, capacity building, planning, implementation, and evaluation.

Assessment

Evaluation

Sustainability
and
Cultural
Competence

Capacity

Implementation

Planning

3

Planning for comprehensive community-based prevention efforts starts with understanding attitudes, knowledge, resources, and activities currently happening in your community.

Assessment. Identify substance use and related risk and protective factors, resources, and community readiness. In this step, community readiness is assessed.

Capacity Building. Build local resources and readiness, with strategies informed by interested parties/groups.

Planning. Prioritize risk and protective factors to select interventions.

Implementation. Put the plan into action.

Evaluation. Identify what is working, and what isn't, to get to desired outcomes.

Communities will naturally vary in how ready, willing, and able they feel to initiate or advance prevention activities. For this reason, it is important to assess your community's readiness for prevention. Broadly defined, community readiness is "the degree to which a community is willing and prepared to take action on an issue."

One approach that integrates a community readiness assessment is the Community Readiness Model. The Community Readiness Model was originally developed to guide the complex process of system and community change for substance use prevention. The model is designed to help communities more strategically initiate the process of community change and to select and implement prevention and intervention strategies appropriate to their cultures and community values and norms.

When a community has reached a level of readiness to engage in prevention activities, prevention messaging strategies will be more effective. At the same time, communications play a vital role in changing mindsets and making community members receptive to upstream prevention.

Dive Deeper

View the Substance Use Prevention Communications Toolkit section titled 'Frames for Changing Mindsets & Building Support' for messaging strategies that support the process of shifting community mindsets and building support for upstream substance use prevention.

View the Toolkit
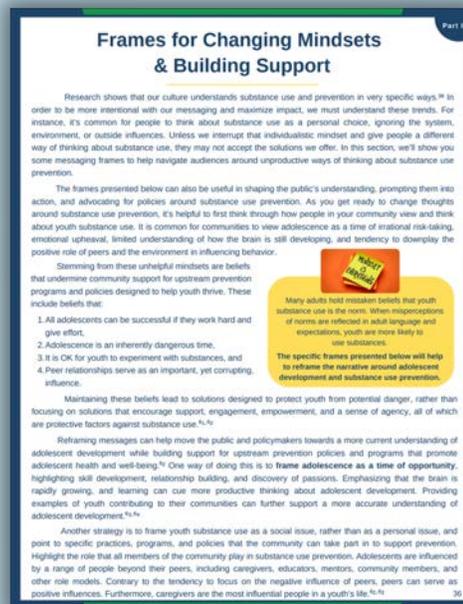
THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MARKETING

in Substance Use Prevention Communications

Social marketing is the process of applying marketing principles and techniques to promote voluntary behavior change and influence people's behavior for a social good. Social marketing principles have been determined to work in a number of different contexts including public health and substance use prevention communications. Social marketing principles have been used to both promote positive behavior such as making healthy choices (positive social marketing) as well as to persuade individuals against a behavior using fear appeals or scare tactics (negative social marketing). This overview focuses on positive social marketing which aims to make popular positive ideas, attitudes, and behaviors to encourage favorable social values and actions.

To begin integrating social marketing strategies into mass communications for youth audiences, first develop a communication plan. Giving thought and consideration to your communication goal, and how to achieve that goal using varied strategies supported by communication and marketing science, will help you craft messages that work and do no harm. Step-by-step guidance can be found in the first **MIND the MESSAGE** product, 'Developing a Communications Plan.' Access this resource to help you think through creating goals and smart behavioral objectives, getting to know your audience, developing a communication strategy tailored to your audience, ensuring the strategy does no harm, and preparing to measure the impact of your communications.

The Four Ps of Marketing. The Four Ps refer to the four critical factors involved in marketing a product or service to the public. These four factors – product, price, place, and promotion – are used to build motivation for an audience to attend and engage with your message and ultimately act upon it by engaging in the desired behavior.

Product

Product refers to the message content you are selling to consumers. In substance use prevention communications, the "product" could be messages that share positive social norms or build support for prevention activities. The product you select will stem from the communication goal generated when developing your communication plan.

Price

Price is the cost consumers are willing to pay to attend to the message and ultimately believe it and act upon it. Examples of price include giving up time or anonymity to receive or fully engage with the message. Identifying price requires understanding your audience and what they would be willing to give up in pursuit of receiving and engaging the message.

Place

Place describes making the product accessible and available. In other words, place may refer to where and how a person is exposed to the message. Place also refers to the distribution channels you use to get the message to your audience. Again, getting to know your audience can inform the appropriate place to incorporate into your messaging and dissemination strategy.

Promotion

Promotion refers to the tactics used to add value to your message. This includes using techniques such as integrating humor or awards to increase attention to the message and make it more potent, engaging, and memorable.

Exchange. The concept of exchange describes a balancing process by which a person aims to maximize benefits and minimize costs in deciding whether to engage (or not) with the message. For example, the message content should make clear the benefit of attending to your message (e.g., feeling amused because the message is funny; becoming informed by learning something new).

Audience Segmentation. The social marketing approach aims to identify one or more segments of the larger intended audience that are grouped according to a characteristic relevant to your communication goal (e.g., sociocultural demographics, middle school vs high school students, parents vs. youth, future intentions for use, readiness to change, etc.). Attention is then given to designing content most relevant to these segments and considering how messaging will be placed or promoted differently for each segment.

Competition. Factors that compete for the time and attention of your audience and/or sway your audience away from the behavior you are trying to promote (e.g., counter messaging normalizing substance use when you are aiming to prevent substance use) are your competition. Understanding the competition can inform what audience segments to prioritize and/or how to shape the message in a way that makes clear the benefits of your message over the competing message.

A Continuous Process

The social marketing approach is a continuous process. Follow this approach by walking through the steps of your communication plan and attending to these core social marketing concepts in your message design and dissemination. Evaluate the impact and adjust as necessary, and allow the process to repeat.

For those looking to invest in mass media communications, consider securing expertise in the area of social marketing to support the message design, development, implementation, and evaluation processes.

USING
SOCIAL MEDIA
to Engage Youth in Prevention Messaging

Many communication channels and platforms are available to support your dissemination of prevention messaging. As many have expressed interest in social media campaigns, we focus here on an overview of different social media channels.

As you may be aware, not all social media channels will be equally effective due to unique purposes and different intended audiences among them. The information in this section is designed to support you in thinking about how the most common communication channels might align, or not align, with your communication goals.

Dive Deeper

For a more comprehensive overview of different types of media channels, visit the Substance Use Prevention Communications Toolkit section titled 'Selecting Communication Channels for Substance Use Prevention.'

View the Toolkit

MOST COMMON SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS USED BY YOUTH

It is estimated that 90% of teens aged 13-17 in the United States use social media. Take graph below shows the percent of teens who have ever used these common social media channels, based on 2022 data.

Channel	Percent
YOUTUBE	95%
TIKTOK	67%
INSTAGRAM	62%
SNAPCHAT	59%
FACEBOOK	32%
TWITTER	23%
TWITCH	20%
WHATSAPP	17%
REDDIT	14%
TUMBLR	5%

This same survey found that teen girls are more likely than boys to use TikTok, Instagram, and Snapchat. Teen boys were more likely to use YouTube, Twitch, and Reddit.

Looking across racial categories, Black and Hispanic teens report using TikTok, Instagram, Twitter and WhatsApp at higher rates compared to White teens.

The table below provides a high-level summary of the purpose, key advantages, and considerations for each of the social media platforms described above.

Platform	Purpose	Advantages	Considerations
YouTube	Search for, create, and share videos of varying lengths	• Videos are easy to create and share via other forms of social media, email, and websites • Allows for videos of varying lengths • Good analytics	• Creating longer content may be more time consuming to record, edit, and upload compared to other apps • Videos largely need to be self-promoted
TikTok	Search for, create and share up to 3-minute videos	• Allows developers to be creative in generating content • In general, the more creative content gets the most attention from users	• Costs money to get desired reach via advertisements • Can be difficult to link videos back to websites • Limited user analytics • Privacy concerns
Instagram	Social network primarily for photo and video sharing	• Easy platform to use to feature photos and videos • Often used by businesses to represent products and services	• Photo/video captions are limited in length • Does not support clickable links
Snapchat	Exchange picture and videos with others that disappear after they are viewed to mimic conversation	• Creates a sense of urgency around the content shared • Geofilters allow you to reach local audiences easily • Augmented reality filters can be used creatively	• Needs frequent production and posting of material as content lasts on the platform for only 24 hours

Platform	Purpose	Advantages	Considerations
Facebook	Social networking where users can share updates, photos, videos, and send messages to friends	• Reasonably affordable advertising option • Can target advertisements to user groups • Detailed user analytics	• "Pay-to-play" algorithm that makes organic traction difficult today. Costs additional money to get the results you desire.
Twitter	Micro-blogging social network where users can share updates and commentary, often publicly	• Can help create brand awareness among a wide audience, especially when content is re-tweeted • Allows users to freely connect with organizations, business, and other entities • Higher potential for organic reach without paid advertising	• Tweets are limited to 280 characters without paid Twitter Blue service • Generally requires frequent posting. Tweets have a short "shelf-life" and are most effective when shared at the right time • Some users and advertisers have left after controversies
Twitch	Online video streaming most known for live video game broadcasts	• Creatively engage streamers/ influencers who align with your product/brand to promote your message • Brands can directly interact with their audience in real time through chats • Ideal for real-time and live content	• More limited use case and audience • Costs additional money to get the desired reach to your audience • Limited analytics
WhatsApp	Connect with others through text and voice messages, voice and video calls, and sharing of content with other users	• People can connect 1:1 or in groups • Allows for sharing of more dynamic content compared to traditional text messaging • Audience segmentation	• Does not provide enterprise data protection • Can't be used within or across organizations, but rather as conversations between a business and its customers

Quick Note

The social media landscape can change rapidly. Algorithms may change, use patterns may shift, and perceptions of platform trust may alter. Be sure to stay up to date on the platforms you communicate on!

Platform	Purpose	Advantages	Considerations

Reddit

Forum-based social network with discussion groups (sub-reddits) on a large variety of topics in which users share news, questions, content and more

- Audience segmentation
- Analytics provide demographic information on user online habits to inform your advertisement
- Ads can have comments and voting which provide immediate user feedback

- Organizations may be cautious about engaging on the platform as there are limited content moderation functions and controversial and unsafe content can be shared
- Users typically engage anonymously
- System allows for negative feedback

Tumblr

Blog based platform that allows users to share videos, photos, and links around common visual themes

- Platform can be used in a manner akin to a website
- Posts can be scheduled in advance
- Opportunity for organic discovery and reach as users with similar interests are brought together

- User interface is less intuitive compared to other platforms
- Reach is limited by the total number of site users
- Popularity has fallen over the last decade
- Ideal for visual forms of advertising

→ RESOURCES

Explore these resources to learn more :

- Tri-Ethnic Center for Prevention Research. Community Readiness for Community Change. Colorado State University; 2014
- Community Readiness Model
- Stead, Martine & Gordon, Ross & Angus, Kathryn & McDermott, Laura. (2007). A Systematic Review of Social Marketing Effectiveness. Health Education. 107
- Grier, S. & Bryant, C. A. (2005). Social Marking in Public Health. Annual Reviews of Public Health. 319
- Social Media Platform Comparison – What Works Best?

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