

# MEDIA ADVOCACY WORKBOOK



at THE CENTRE FOR  
HEALTH PROMOTION  
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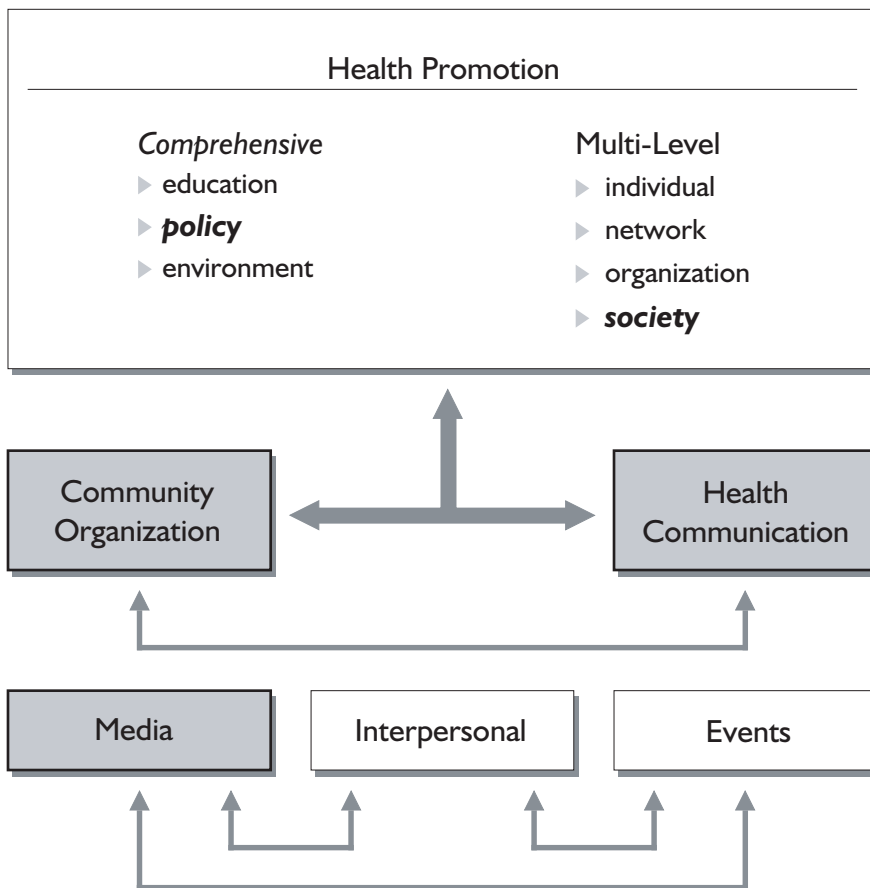
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# OVERVIEW OF MEDIA ADVOCACY

## WHAT IS MEDIA ADVOCACY?

Media advocacy is a type of health communication. It involves the strategic use of media (usually the news media) to shape public opinion, mobilize community activists, and influence decision makers to create a change in policy.



For further details about this diagram, see THCU's workbook "Overview of Health Communication." All workbooks are available free of charge at our website <http://www.utoronto.ca/chp/hcu/> or for Ontario residents by calling (416) 978-0522.

FIGURE 1. Health communication as a part of health promotion

As the diagram above shows, media advocacy can fit into a comprehensive, multi-level health promotion strategy.

It is important to note that advocacy can be done at levels other than society and with health communication strategies other than mass media, but these activities do not fall into the category of media advocacy.

For more information on policy development, please see "Making a Difference in Your Community: A Guide for Policy Change", Ontario Public Health Association, 1996.

## **DIFFERENCES BETWEEN EDUCATION CAMPAIGNS AND MEDIA ADVOCACY CAMPAIGNS**

There are different ways to use media for public health. It can be, and often is, used to educate and persuade individuals with the goal of convincing them to make better health choices. Media advocacy, on the other hand shifts the focus from individual responsibility to social and environmental causes for health problems. Media advocacy is also different in that it primarily uses news media, rather than other types of health communication approaches.

<b>Education/Persuasion Campaigns</b>	<b>Media Advocacy</b>
Informs/persuades the person with the problem.	Mobilizes community activists and influences decision makers.
Focuses on individual responsibility.	Focuses on social accountability.
Focuses on behaviour change in the individual.	Focuses on changing the environment, through policy changes.
Uses a variety of types of health communication approaches. Focus is not on news media.	Focuses is on news media (though paid advertising is sometimes used).

FIGURE 2. *Differences between education campaigns and media advocacy campaigns*

## SHIFTING FROM AN INDIVIDUAL FRAME TO A SOCIAL/ENVIRONMENTAL FRAME

In media advocacy, shifting the focus of an issue from individual responsibility to social and environmental causes is referred to as shifting the *frame*, or reframing an issue. When deciding which frame an issue has been presented in, ask yourself, "Who is to blame?", "Who is responsible?", "Who must make a change?" Some examples contrasting the individual frame with a social/environmental frame are below.

Individual Frame	Social / Environmental Frame
Encourage expectant mothers to eat fresh fruit, vegetables and milk by providing them with pamphlets.	Have the government make fresh fruit, vegetables and milk conveniently available at low (or no) cost to mothers.
Persuade employees at a worksite to reduce their fat intake by distributing posters.	Have management provide low-fat food in workplace cafeterias.
Frighten people into quitting smoking, or not starting to smoke using TV ads.	Have the government raise the price of cigarettes, pass legislation that restricts where people can smoke or reduce tobacco advertising.
Encourage people to increase their physical activity by walking.	Have local municipalities create safe walking paths in a community.
Encourage women not to walk after dark or to carry a personal alarm.	Have local municipalities increase lighting in dark areas, increase security to a particularly dangerous area.

A **frame** is the way a message is presented. For example, in scientific journals, science frames the issue. In the courts and in scholarly policy debates, issues are framed by facts and arguments. In the mass media, issues are framed by compressing science, facts, and arguments into labels and symbols (Benton Foundation, 1991).

FIGURE 3. *Shifting from an individual frame to a social / environmental frame*

## **ADVANTAGES OF MEDIA ADVOCACY**

Since media advocacy focuses on policy changes, it often involves direct confrontation with powerful vested interests, so health agencies and the media may be hesitant to work with advocates on certain issues (Wallack, 1990).

That being said, there are a number of advantages to taking a media advocacy approach instead of other, more traditional (and sometimes “safer”) media approaches.

- Since media advocacy relies primarily on *earning* access to the news media, rather than paid advertising, it is a cost effective strategy that is not (as) affected by fluctuations in funding (though media advocacy does require intensive human resources).
- The effects of public policy changes are long lasting. They set the standard for expected health behaviour and reach large numbers of people over the long term.

Though it requires planning, skill, creativity and a long-term commitment, media advocacy has been successfully used by many community groups to address a variety of health issues.

**Earning** access to the news media involves good media relations and "pitching" a newsworthy story to media representatives. Please see step 6 for more details.

## **MEDIA ADVOCACY STEPS**

Becoming a truly effective media advocate takes practice. There are, however, some standard steps that can be taken and tactics that can be learned to enhance all media advocacy efforts, including those of groups just starting out. This workbook will discuss these within the following framework;

These steps may be repeated over time in many different ways, as advancing public policy is normally a lengthy process spanning months or years.

Step 1: Project Management

Step 2: Clarify Your Health Promotion Strategy

Step 3: Audience Analysis and Segmentation

Step 4: Set Communication Objectives

Step 5: Select Channels and Vehicles

Step 6: Plan Access to the News Media

Step 7: Sequence Activities

Step 8: Develop and Present Key Messages

Step 9: Message Delivery

Step 10: Evaluation

These steps are based on THCU's 12 Steps to Health Communication, but only the parts of each step that are relevant to media advocacy will be discussed in this workbook. For more detailed information on how to carry out any one of these steps, please see THCU's workbook, "Overview of Health Communication".

# PROJECT MANAGEMENT

At all steps of media advocacy, it is essential to properly manage

- Time
- Money and Other resources
- Data Gathering and Interpretation
- Meaningful Stakeholder Involvement
- Decision Making

## ***TIME***

Being late can result in missed opportunities, poor impacts, and stress to relationships with partners. It is therefore essential to consider appropriate timelines at each step.

## ***MONEY***

Unanticipated costs create problems, so it is useful to determine what financial (and other) resources are available at the outset. Good planners and organizations are wise to create an inventory of their resources on hand. This includes allocated budgets, as well as staff, equipment, and space which are already budgeted (called “below the line” costs). Other resources to be considered include expertise and in-kind contributions from volunteers, partners, and the community at large. It's important to know what these are from the outset, and to keep reviewing this inventory.

## **DATA GATHERING AND INTERPRETATION**

Poor decisions may result if the information you base your decisions on is misleading, weak or incomplete. It is important to assess existing data, identify information that is missing and choose (and implement) a strategy for gathering and analyzing new data at each step.

## **MEANINGFUL STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT**

Stakeholder participation is critical to getting the best results. A lack of participation can lead to decisions being overruled, delayed, challenged, or questioned by internal or external stakeholders. The key to meaningful stakeholder involvement is identifying the key stakeholders and examining their desired directions and perspectives. Consideration should also be given to who will be informed, who will make decisions, who provide information and who will provide hands on support.

## **DECISION MAKING**

Good decisions take time, creativity, and a supportive climate. It is also important to determine at the outset when important decisions will be made and who will make them to avoid confusion and conflict at critical turning points.

For further details about project management and related worksheets, please see THCU's workbook, "Introduction to Health Promotion Planning".

In the case of media advocacy, project management (particularly with respect to time) can be tricky, because advocacy is not a simple, sequential process. The media advocacy steps presented in this workbook may each be revisited many times as situations change and evolve, before achieving the policy goal. Regardless of the order in which the steps are carried out, it is important to assess time, money, available information, stakeholder involvement, and decision making procedures frequently throughout all stages of media advocacy.



## STEP 1 WORKSHEET: PROJECT PLAN

Activities / Steps	Target Date	Resources Required	Roles / Responsibilities
<b>Step 1</b> Project Management			
<b>Step 2</b> Clarify Your Health Promotion Strategy			
<b>Step 3</b> Audience Analysis and Segmentation			
<b>Step 4</b> Set Communication Objectives			
<b>Step 5</b> Select Channels and Vehicles			
<b>Step 6</b> Plan Access to the News Media			
<b>Step 7</b> Sequence Activities			
<b>Step 8</b> Develop and Present Key Messages			
<b>Step 9</b> Message Delivery			
<b>Step 10</b> Evaluation			

# STEP 2

## CLARIFY YOUR HEALTH PROMOTION STRATEGY

As discussed in chapter one, for any health promotion goal, a variety of strategies can be used, multiple levels can be targeted and different types of health communication can be combined with community mobilization. In this step, we make sure that:

- the policy goal is in line with the health promotion goal;
- and the target audiences are clearly defined.

Sometimes organizations have the opportunity to be very deliberate about their media advocacy plans. Other times, media advocacy involves reacting quickly to incidents, events, news or changing political environments. Either way, it is important to have clear goals and be sure about the target audiences.

### ***DETERMINE WHETHER THE POLICY GOAL IS IN LINE WITH THE HEALTH PROMOTION GOAL***

Once the health promotion goal and policy goal have been established, consider whether the policy goal is appropriate.

- What are the health issues related to the policy?
- What are the financial and health costs of the related health issues?
- What will the costs of adopting/not adopting the policy be?
- What valid and convincing evidence is there that a change in policy will have the desired effect or that it is the most effective solution to achieve the health promotion goal?

For more information on choosing appropriate health promotion strategies see THCU's workbook, "Introduction to Health Promotion Planning".

**DETERMINE PRIMARY AND SECONDARY AUDIENCES**

Once the policy goal is determined to be appropriate, it is important to be clear on who the audience is. For media advocacy, the primary audience is usually elected officials, or the law makers – essentially the people who have the power to make it happen.

Secondary audiences are also important because they can influence the primary audience. Sometimes, they act as simple communication channels to the audience, but other times their influence might be more active and powerful. The news media, key influential community members (key influencers) and the community at large (voters) are always important secondary audiences for media advocacy efforts. The news media influence key influencers, the community at large and decision makers directly. Key influencers, and the community at large can also influence the decision makers directly.

Note: There may be relationships between audiences other than those outlined in the figure below. Arrow directions are for the purpose of media advocacy only.

“The mass media, particularly the news media, play an important role in advancing democratic discussion around policy debates. The media, it is often said, may not tell people what to think, but certainly tell people what to think about. In this role, the media effectively set the public agenda for discussion of an issue and establish what the boundaries of that discussion will be... mass media, particularly the news media, can amplify voices so that policy makers cannot ignore them.” (Wallach, 1996)

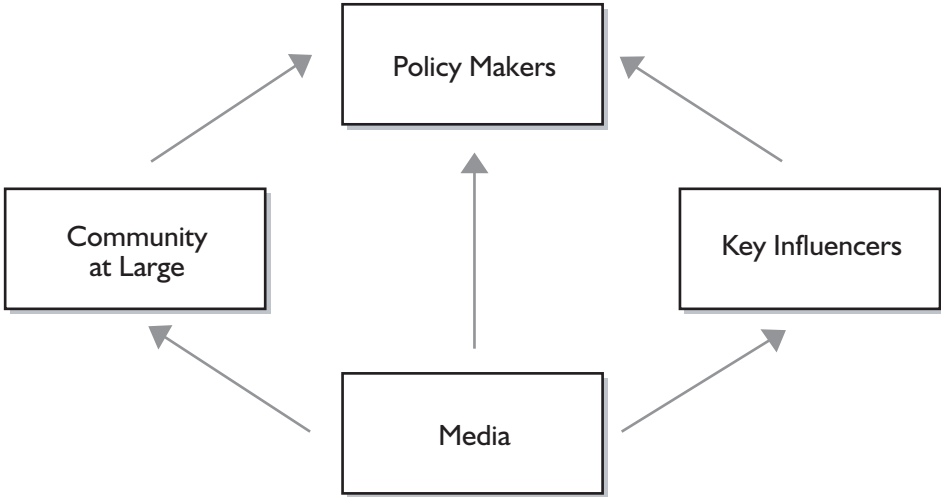


FIGURE 4. Media advocacy audiences



# STEP 2 WORKSHEET: CLARIFYING YOUR HEALTH PROMOTION STRATEGY

<b>Health Promotion Goal</b>
<b>Media Advocacy/Policy Goal</b>
<b>Analysis of Policy Goal</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What are the health issues related to the policy?</li> <li>• What are the financial and health costs of the related health issues?</li> <li>• What will the costs of adopting/not adopting the policy be?</li> <li>• What valid and convincing evidence is there that a change in policy will have the desired effect or that it is the most effective solution to achieve the health promotion goal?</li></ul>
<b>Identify Primary Audience/s</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Who has the power to make it happen?</li></ul>
<b>Identify Secondary Audience/s</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Who has the power to influence the decision makers?</li></ul>

# STEP 3

## AUDIENCE ANALYSIS AND SEGMENTATION

### **AUDIENCE ANALYSIS**

Convincing your target audience to adopt your policy (policy makers), support or advocate for your policy (general public, key influencers), or provide news coverage of your policy (media) is contingent on understanding how your audience makes decisions, what is important to them and how to reach them. Learning about your audience is called audience analysis. Audience analysis information allows you to predict reactions and develop messages that appeal to your audience using the channels and vehicles that will reach them. This step is central to all other media advocacy steps.

### **SEGMENTATION**

Segmenting large audiences into a smaller number of subgroups that are as homogenous as possible and as different from each other as possible can also help predict behaviour and formulate tailored messages and programs to meet specific needs. The importance of segmentation cannot be stressed enough. Without it, we try to reach everyone, but are less effective with the audiences we really want to reach.

### **TYPES OF CHARACTERISTICS TO EXPLORE**

#### ***Demographic characteristics***

- What is the gender breakdown?
- What are some of the most typical occupations?
- Where do they live and work?

### **Behavioural Characteristics**

- What barriers would they face in trying to adopt/support the policy?
- What benefits do they/would they derive from adopting/supporting or not adopting/supporting your issue?
- What are their current levels of knowledge and attitude toward the issue and policy solution?
- Are they supportive/neutral/opposed to your issue?

### **Psychographic Characteristics**

- What organizations and social networks do they belong to?
- Where do they get their information? Which media channels are they exposed to?
- What are some of their key personal characteristics?
- What are the fundamental values and beliefs among your audience? What is most important to them?

## **HOW TO COLLECT AUDIENCE ANALYSIS INFORMATION**

Secondary (existing) research such as opinion surveys and unpublished studies can help analyze the audience/s and identify whether there are segments of people within the audience that are likely to respond to messages in different ways, or require different communication strategies.

Primary (new) research is also useful. This means consulting with members of the target audience by observing them, using focus groups, in-depth interviews, case studies, surveys or other less formal research methods.

When analyzing audiences, feel free to use a variety of qualitative and quantitative information, formal and informal research. You can use your own and other staff's experience and expertise, but be careful about stereotypes and other biases.

For more information on collecting audience analysis information, see THCU's workbooks, "Evaluating Health Promotion Programs", "Using Surveys for Evaluating Health Promotion", and "Using Focus Groups for Evaluating Health Promotion."

## TIPS ON INFLUENCING THE COMMUNITY AT LARGE

Values Generally Viewed as Positive	Values Generally Viewed as Negative
Fairness Hard work Family Freedom Financial security Personal safety Good health Education Increased or new opportunities Boldness or initiative	Unfairness or selfishness Laziness or irresponsibility Financial or governmental oppression Favoritism Deceit Violence or abusive behaviour Lack of control Cheating Taking advantage of others  (Benton Foundation, 1991)

## TIPS ON HOW TO INFLUENCE DECISION MAKERS

<p><b>Demonstrate that:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• progress is possible</li> <li>• collective action cannot be avoided</li> <li>• participation is beneficial to all parties</li> <li>• proven tools and methods are readily available</li> <li>• short-term successes will be readily apparent</li> <li>• the credibility and influence of various sources (stakeholders and coalitions) are well established.</li> </ul> <p>(Making the Case, THCU, 1999.)</p>
--

Not all decision makers are the same. They can be divided into innovators and traditional decisions makers (Douglas, R, 1988). It can be worthwhile to explore the characteristics of individual decision makers, and of groups of decision makers.



### STEP 3 WORKSHEET: AUDIENCE ANALYSIS AND SEGMENTATION

Audiences	Demographics	Behavioural Characteristics	Psychographic Characteristics
Primary Audience  Policy Makers Segment A  Policy Makers Segment B			
Secondary Audiences  Key Influencers Segment A  Key Influencers Segment B  Community at Large Segment A  Community at Large Segment B			

# SET COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVES

There are many objectives that can be set as steps on the road to policy change. Some of the important ones include:

### **Immediate objectives**

- increased media coverage

### **Short term objectives**

- setting the agenda
- shaping the debate
- discrediting the opposition
- advancing the policy

### **Intermediate objectives**

- initiate and sustain the policy making process by:
  - increasing audience awareness
  - influencing audience opinion
  - motivating audiences to act (e.g. write letters, vote a certain way, etc.)

### **Long term objectives**

- policy change

**Setting the agenda** means raising the public or decision maker awareness about an issue by convincing the media to cover it (or sometimes by purchasing media time or space).

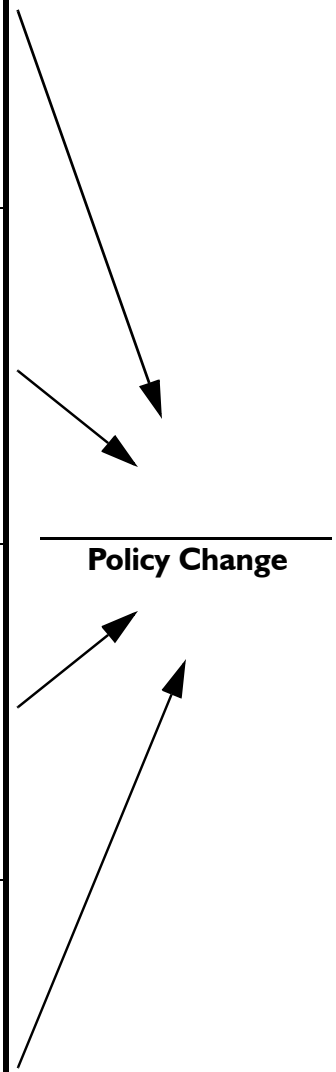
**Shaping the debate** is working with the media to frame the issue (or make sure the issue is presented) in terms of social and environmental causes with a policy solution, instead of in terms of individual responsibility.

**Advancing the policy** involves convincing the audience that a given policy, or a specific action leading to the adoption of a policy, is the best way to deal with the health issue.



**STEP 4 WORKSHEET:**  
**SETTING COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVES FOR EACH AUDIENCE**

Audience	Short Term Objectives	Intermediate Objectives	Long Term Objectives
			<hr/> <p><b>Policy Change</b></p>



# STEP 5

## SELECT CHANNELS AND VEHICLES

This step involves selecting the right channels and vehicles to deliver your message by using a media resource inventory.

It is important to find *channels* and *vehicles* that will work best for your audience, your communication objectives and your budget. Choosing the right channels and vehicles for your campaign is essential to achieving maximum impact, and to reaching the audience on which you have decided to focus.

The focus of media advocacy is on news media vehicles, because of its important role in influencing decision makers, key influencers and the community at large. Many studies have shown that the news media are a credible source of information. They can influence how the public, policy makers, and the media themselves rank the importance of different issues and how they feel about those issues (Jernigan, D.H. and Wright, P.A, 1996).

To help you select the best channels and vehicles, it is a good idea to create a local *media resource inventory* that includes information on local channels and vehicles (different news formats), the target audience they reach, and information on who to contact for each. As creating such an inventory is a fair amount of work, it pays to find out if another local organization has done one that you can “borrow”.

**Channels** are the way in which a message is sent (tv, radio, newspaper, etc.) **Vehicles** are specific ways to deliver messages through the channels (ads, news article, editorial, etc.).

For more information on non-news channels and vehicles, see THCU's workbook, “Overview of Health Communication”.

Some examples of news channels and vehicles to consider for the inventory include:

Channel	Vehicles
Print/Radio/TV	paid ads news stories special features/series
TV/Radio	call-in shows group interview programs/debates
Print	letters to the editor regular columns community calendars guest opinion columns editorials supplements comics

The key to this step is using your available resources efficiently, which means that it is of the utmost importance to select channels and vehicles according to their ability to reach the target audience and achieve your objectives. Selecting too many non-specific channels may result in spreading yourself too thin. Once you have selected the most effective channels/vehicles, it is a good idea to consider whether you have alliances or good relationships with individuals such as the radio station manager or the local newspaper editor. These relationships can be a major assets as they can help maximize your resources. Details of these alliances can be added to your resource inventory.

“When seeking to persuade active citizens or community leaders to support your policies, it is important to target your media initiatives to those media that your target audience reads or views, and respects... for example, editorial pages are usually less well read than 'style' sections of local newspapers, but they are read intensely by community leaders who shape public policy.”

### Considering Paid Media

Paid ads can act as a non-news vehicle to reach the audience directly and can also be a way to create news.

#### Advantages

- Buying an ad gives you control over timing, placement, content. It can help explain health issues the way you want and address any misconceptions about the issue.
- It can be used quickly in response to breaking news, time sensitive events or criticism from the opposition.
- It can help give your cause increased visibility.
- It can result in news coverage from sources who ran or saw your ad.
- It can be used to generate controversy.
- It can be used to thank your supporters which lend your group credibility and bestow prestige on community members who contribute to your work.

#### Disadvantages

- It's expensive!
- It takes time, thought, and often assistance from an ad agency, to create an effective ad, and unless the ad is effective, you will have wasted money. (Whitman, 1999)



**STEP 5 WORKSHEET A:**  
**CREATING A LOCAL MEDIA RESOURCE INVENTORY**

<b>Channel / Vehicle</b>	<b>Target Audience Reached</b>	<b>Contact Information</b>	<b>Notes on Alliances / Good Relationships</b>



**STEP 5 WORKSHEET B:  
SELECTING VEHICLES AND CHANNELS**

Audience	Communication Objectives	Channels/Vehicles

# PLAN ACCESS TO THE NEWS MEDIA

Once you have selected your channels and vehicles, you will need to plan your access strategy or in other words determine how to get your story covered. Once the news media is interested in your story, you will be able to work with them to achieve your communication objectives (see step 8).

Accessing the *advertising* media involves purchasing time or space, but accessing the *news* media involves “earning” your time or space. You can earn access by making your issue into a newsworthy story, by maintaining good “media relations” and by “pitching” the story in an effective way.

## **NEWSWORTHINESS**

The news media are more likely to cover your story if it is one or more of the following types of stories.

### ***An ironic or unusual account***

For example, how can alcohol manufacturers support a “Don't drink and drive” campaign yet refuse to change their advertisements that encourage people to drink alcoholic beverages?

### ***An uncovered injustice***

Are there basic inequalities or unfair circumstances to be reported? For example, how can we allow smoking in public places where children accompany their parents, since they cannot choose not to go there?

### ***A human interest story***

Who is the true victim in this story? Who has the voice of experience on this issue? An example would be a story on the factors that contribute to the delinquent behavior of teenagers who have been identified as troublemakers by their schools.

***A local interest story***

Why is this story important or meaningful to local residents? An example would be a story on frequent violent crimes in a particular area of a city.

***A story that is associated with a local, national, or topical or historical event or milestone***

A good example of this would be marking the anniversary of the first charges laid against tobacco companies with a story about banning cigarette advertising.

***A story with a prominent local person involved***

Is there a locally well-known person already with or willing to lend his or her name to the issue? Be sure it is someone in whom you have confidence that their “good-standing” will remain so for quite some time.

***A controversial story***

Are there opposing sides or conflicts in this story? For example, how do public health advocates feel about the government's determination to cut spending for AIDS prevention campaigns?

***A story that is attached to a holiday or event***

Perhaps a high school prom night is a perfect time to run an article on preventing teen pregnancy (since prom night may correspond to increased teen sexual intercourse).

***A story that provides a good photo opportunity.***

(Whitman, 1999)

A **media audit** involves monitoring and analyzing what appears in each media channel/vehicle. Knowing what types of stories each type of news media is covering (and in what way), can help you provide reporters with information that they consider newsworthy.

**Some specific ideas for creating newsworthy stories include:**

- Releasing new information about your issue such as public opinion survey data, “breakthrough” research information, community health status indicators or a community story (testimonial).
- Securing (and announcing) a political endorsement.
- Developing controversial ads/counter ads.
- Sponsoring a preschool graduating class.
- Sponsoring a community event such as a health fair, t-shirt exchange, walk or bikeathon.
- Forming and launching a new partnership with an organization or group such as a church, volunteer organization, coalition or media organization.
- Holding a contest such as an ad contest, quit smoking contest, physical activity challenge, etc.
- Holding a press conference about any of the above items.

**Generating News at Various Stages of the Media Advocacy Process**

When...

- a call or petition is made to a legislative body for a change in the law
- supportive legislators introduce a proposal
- your opponents actively lobby against the proposed change
- public debate and controversy over the issue is aroused
- editorial writers endorse your position
- hearings on the policy are held
- policy-makers debate the issue
- the policy is passed
- implementation procedures are developed
- activities commemorate the date of implementation

(Benton Foundation, 1991)

Another way of making a story newsworthy is to piggy-back on an existing piece of news – or in other words use existing news as a springboard for your own story. Sometimes the best opportunities appear to have nothing to do with your issue.

An existing story, on which you **piggy-back** your own story is also called a **hook** or a **peg**.

### **Piggy-backing on breaking news**

“Some years ago, there was a story about grapes being imported from Chile that had been sprayed with cyanide. Some media advocates got together and realized that one cigarette contains several hundred micrograms of cyanide and second hand smoke contains ten micrograms. All fruit imports from one entire country were banned because of two grapes containing a tiny fraction of one of the many poisons in cigarettes! This was a perfect opportunity to show the need to regulate tobacco. So a big press conference was called with a pile of grapes on one side of the podium and a pile of cigarettes on the other in order to compare the different amounts of cyanide. The idea was strategic: how can we piggy-back on the news and get something positive out of it for our side?” (Linda Weiner, 1995 Social Marketing Conference).

## ***MEDIA RELATIONS***

Media relations is working with the media to ensure accurate, complete and credible coverage of your issues. If reporters and editors know that you/your organization are a reliable source of information, your chances of getting favorable, well placed coverage will improve.

To maintain or improve media relations:

- Meet with local editorial boards, news directors or promotions directors.
- Cultivate relationships with key journalists.
- Maintain your list of media contacts (established in previous step).
- Make sure that you have trained spokespeople.
- Develop a (one page) media policy for your organization.
- Know your facts when you speak to the media.
- Know and respect media deadlines.
- Follow through when they asked for information.
- Provide thanks for interviews/coverage.
- Always be honest.

## **PITCHING**

To get the news media interested in your story, you need to “pitch” your story to them - or suggest to them that they cover it. This could involve a one on one conversation with a reporter or writing a press release, media advisory, etc. For more information on these media tools see University of Kansas. Community Tool Box. <http://ctb.lsi.ukans.edu/> 1999.

The following things will help make your pitch successful.

### ***Convince them that your organization is credible***

Part of establishing your credibility is maintaining good media relations (see above) in all your interactions with the media, but more specifically, at this stage of the pitch you need to demonstrate that your organization is significant and legitimate. If the media consider your organization credible, they will be more likely to listen to your pitch.

### ***Convince them that your story is newsworthy***

This means showing that your issue is exciting, relevant and important. Please refer to previous section on newsworthiness.

### ***Package the story appropriately***

Packaging the story is also part of media relations. It involves making the job easier for reporters. You can do this by gathering information for the reporter, telling them where they can verify the information you have given them, offering to send a follow-up photo, providing names of credible people to contact from the opposition, and sending fact sheets, etc..

#### **What to do when you call a reporter:**

- Before you call, find out when the reporter you want to speak with is most likely to be available.
- Find out about the reporter’s deadline.
- Explain your credentials and your organization. For example say, “I am calling on behalf of Tobacco Free Youth, a local organization with over 300 members.”
- Be confident and assertive. Sure, reporters have a lot of influence, but they’re human too.
- Give your pitch: Explain what the suggested story is and why it is significant.
- Get to the point quickly and give the reporter the important facts first. You likely only have 30-60 seconds to capture their interest.
- Keep your responses simple and to the point.
- Use the media bites you have prepared.
- Tell the reporter where she can verify this information and collect more.



## STEP 6 EXERCISE: PIGGYBACKING

Scan the local newspaper at your table for opportunities that can be used to advance your policy objectives. Don't limit yourself to news articles. Add cartoons and photographs, as they also present opportunities. Remember your best opportunities may appear to have nothing to do with your particular issue. Find as many opportunities as you can. From the opportunities you've identified, select the one that has the best chance of advancing one of your policy objectives. On the basis of that opportunity, answer the following questions.

**1. What policy objective are your trying to advance?**

**2. Who is your audience and through which available media will you best reach them?**

**3. How are you going to access the media?**

**4. How are you going to frame the issue for access (i.e. make the story newsworthy)?**

**5. What is the timeline (window of opportunity) to piggy-back onto this piece of news?**

# SEQUENCE ACTIVITIES

Regardless of whether you create news or piggy-back on existing news, it is important to constantly monitor for breaking news, unexpected events and other opportunities to catch the attention of the media.

Though much of media advocacy involves reacting quickly to incidents, events, news and changing political environments, it does pay to be as strategic as possible when planning media advocacy activities. Part of being strategic is considering the timing of media advocacy activities.

In the previous chapter, some ideas were provided on how to create a newsworthy story. In order to take advantage of those ideas, advance planning is required. It is a good idea to brainstorm about news opportunities (events, campaigns, etc.) over the course of one year or two and plot the opportunities on a timeline.



## STEP 7 WORKSHEET: SEQUENCING ACTIVITIES

January - March

April - June

July - September

October - December

# DEVELOP AND PRESENTING KEY MESSAGES

## **DEVELOPING KEY MESSAGES**

In step 6, we discussed framing for access, or pitching a story to the media in a way that made them want to cover it. Before access to the media is gained, it is important to think about message content, or what you need to communicate in order to achieve your objectives (see step 4). Shaping a story in a way that achieves your objectives is called *framing for content*. Listed below are some strategies for achieving your objective.

### **To set the agenda:**

#### ***Tailor the message to the specific media and the specific audience***

Use the information collected in the media audit and audience analysis to develop a message that shows the audience why they should care, why the issue is relevant to them, and what they stand to gain or lose (hit them in the head, heart, gut and pocketbook). Make sure that their beliefs and values are taken into account and that an appropriate tone is used.

e.g. Public health advocates in favor of abortion rights have promoted their viewpoint using symbols such as “the right to choose” and a woman’s right to privacy. Opponents in the anti-abortion movement have represented abortion as “baby killing” and as “murder of unborn children.” People on both sides of the issue have chosen effective, highly emotional values that we all have strong opinions about such as freedom, murder and the right to privacy (Whitman, 1999).

**To shape the debate:**

*Make sure that the issue is presented in terms of social/environmental causes, instead of individual causes*

This helps to assign responsibility to the government (or organization) instead of individuals.

**To discredit the opposition:**

*Anticipate their arguments and develop counter arguments*

e.g. The tobacco control industry and tobacco control advocates frame identical issues in different ways to garner support for their respective “sides”.

For more information on message development, please see THCU's workbook “Overview of Health Communication”.

<b>The tobacco industry says...</b>	<b>Tobacco control advocates say...</b>
Censorship	Freedom from the public promotion of an addictive drug.
Discrimination against smoker.	Freedom from having to breathe poisonous air.
Singling out tobacco-why not coffee or cholesterol or fat?	Tobacco is the only legal product that when used as intended, kills. (Linda Weiner, 1997)

or “*shame*” them

Exposing why they are irresponsible, deceptive, manipulative, unethical, etc.

**To advance the policy:**

*Make sure that it is clear what you want to audience to do*

e.g. Write a letter; call someone or vote a certain way.

The challenge is to tailor the messages to the audience, yet shape it to advance your policy.

## PRESENTING THE MESSAGES

Key messages should be designed or phrased in a way that makes them meaningful and memorable.

Some general tips for being understood and remembered are:

- be specific;
- be visual;
- be brief;
- use media bites;
- use social math (see below);
- try to see it through their eyes;
- avoid sloganeering, shrillness, moralizing;
- be careful with humor, not everyone will appreciate the same type;
- use literative devices (alliteration, rhyming, puns);
- be authoritative and commanding;
- and be fresh, alive and surprising.

### Social Math

Social math can help make data relevant, understandable and interesting. There are three types of social math.

#### *Localization*

Localization is presenting overwhelming statistics and numbers in such a way that the media and public in a particular community can easily relate to them. Localization illustrates a story's numbers in terms of how many people in a certain neighborhood or community are affected by a problem; it makes statistics human and local. For example, instead of telling the public that the government spend 15% of its GNP on health care, tell members of the community that health care costs the community \$25 every hour, 24 hours a day, to pay for the costs of health care.

#### *Relativity*

Relativity compares the effects of one problem with those of another, usually more dramatic, problem. For example, cigarettes kill over 40,000 Canadians every year. This death rate is equivalent to the crash of a jumbo passenger jet every four days, with no survivors."

#### *Public policy effects*

Public policy effects illustrate the potential effects of public policies in debate. For example, how many children's lives will be saved by mandating the use of baby seats in cars? How many lives will be lost to the increased health risks posed by revoking water safety regulations?

(Whitman, 1999)

The key points that you want to communicate to the target audience through the media should be formulated into media bites.

If you are producing materials, see THCU's workbook "Overview of Health Communication".

**Media bites**

Media bites are short, concise statements (10-15 seconds maximum) that summarize the main point of the message. They are a key tool to use when interacting with the media. The more catchy they are, the more likely they are to be used by the media and remembered by the target audience. A full-length story on the evening news, after all, may be only 90 seconds long, so your media bite has to say a lot in a little bit of time. Media bites should be kept as short as possible, and complex ideas should be divided up into more than one sentence. The goal is to make them meaningful and memorable.

When developing media bites, be careful not to fall into the "It Won a Prize" syndrome where a message may be wonderfully produced but not in line with the values and needs of your organization and/or the audience. The important thing is to advance the policy goal.



## STEP 8 WORKSHEET: DEVELOPING AND PRESENTING KEY MESSAGES

Audience	Communication Objectives	Channels/Vehicles	Key Messages

# STEP 9

## MESSAGE DELIVERY

When writing a letter or press release or developing an ad, getting all the key messages into the content is relatively straightforward. Effectively getting your points across in an interview, however, can be a much more difficult skill to master as you may have someone actively pushing or pulling you in a direction that you do not want to go.

The most important thing when doing an interview is to be absolutely clear on the 2 or 3 key messages that you must communicate to achieve your objectives, and to work at communicating those messages. Some interview control techniques to help you do that include bridging, hooking and flagging.

### ***INTERVIEW CONTROL TECHNIQUES***

#### ***Bridging:***

Yes, but....

No, but...

I don't know the answer to that, but I do know...

That's the way it used to be, but today....

#### ***Hooking:***

That is just one of the ways...

#### ***Flagging:***

The most important point is...

That one thing you should remember is...

## CONDUCTING SUCCESSFUL INTERVIEWS

Some general techniques to help you conduct a successful interview are outlined in the lists below.

### **When a reporter calls you:**

- Find out who else have they have talked with.
- Make sure you understand the format of the interview. Is it a call-in radio or TV show or will you simply be interviewed?
- Find out if it will just be you, or if you will be interviewed with another person - if so, who will it be?
- Find out how much time will you have for the interview.
- Determine the reporters deadline.
- If you are not the best person to talk to, help the reporter find someone appropriate.
- If you are nervous or unprepared, ask the reporter when you can call back to schedule another time, so you can collect your thoughts. If there is no time to call back, answer the questions the best that you can. The reporter may contact you for help later and you may have another opportunity.

### **Preparing for an interview**

- Try to determine the point of view of the program. Will the host be friendly or hostile to your viewpoint? Will they be informed or uninformed on your issue?
- Explore how the program typically present its topics. With humor or sarcasm, or as serious “facts only” presentations?
- Try to anticipate questions that the reporter might ask you.
- Develop media bites and prepare written notes.
- Practice speaking out loud.
- Make sure the interviewer has plenty of background information. Ideally, your organization will have sent the reporter a media package before the interview.
- If interviewing for television or newspaper, consider bringing along a prop for a photo opportunity.
- Be prepared to suggest who journalists should talk to from the opponents and what questions they should ask.

Regardless of the circumstances of your interview – over the phone, in person, over the radio, on television – if you can anticipate the questions the media want answered and know exactly what you want to tell them (i.e., push your advocacy goals), then your interview experience can be exciting and effective!

**During an interview (any type of media)**

- Know your communication objectives.
- Concentrate on two or three main messages and repeat them every time you get the chance.
- Speak clearly but don't raise your voice.
- Never make a comment off the record.
- Look for ways to interpret their point in your favour.
- Avoid using technical jargon.
- Stay focused on the topic you want to discuss.
- Use statistics that are meaningful to your audience.
- Never say “no comment”. It sounds guilty.
- Don't repeat a reporters negative statements-politely correct incorrect statements.
- Don't be afraid to repeat your key messages.
- Don't number or itemize your responses.
- Don't patronize, exaggerate or argue.
- If a key point has been missed, make it yourself.
- Slow the pace - pause before you begin to answer.
- Don't question another person's motive or scrutiny.
- Don't lose your cool. Stay calm; be nice, and politely correct misinformation.
- Use the name of your organization - remember that you are not representing yourself..
- Avoid overuse of “ifs”, “ands”, and “you knows”.
- KISS (Keep it simple...).
- PEW Point, example, what it means.
- As the interview winds down, summarize what you've said to the reporter or audience.

If you are uncomfortable with a question, don't feel pressured to answer it. Instead, bring the focus back to your message. Use stand-by responses such as “I don't think that's a relevant question”; or “What's more important to me is...”. If it is a relevant question, and you don't know the answer, admit this and, if appropriate promise to get the answer (don't make it up!).

### ***Interviewing in person***

- Make good eye contact with the reporter or the person to whom you are talking.
- Be as natural as possible. People will be impressed by a sincere manner more than a polished response.
- Look alert!
- Be aware of what your body language suggests, remember that the camera might zoom in on you even when someone else is talking.
- Avoid nervous reactions such as throat clearing, fidgeting with hair or glasses.
- Don't wear clunky jewelry, plaid or loud clothing, or short skirts.
- Use your smile. It adds credibility, likability and sincerity.
- For a television interview, wear solid colors (brights for women and more subdued colors for men). Avoid wearing black, white, or shiny fabrics.
- Speak clearly and confidently.
- Don't be afraid to use hand gestures or to vary your voice tone (not to be confused with your voice volume!) to emphasize your point, but be careful not to jostle the microphone.
- Don't be afraid to ask the moderator or a guest to repeat a question. This strategy buys you more time while you think of a good answer.

Print interviews for newspaper or magazines are generally longer than for TV or radio. For TV, try to deliver your message in 60 seconds. For radio, try to deliver your message in 30 seconds.

### ***Interviewing with the opposition***

- If you appear with a member of the opposition for a joint interview or debate don't ask them questions; it simply gives them more coverage that could be yours.
- Be polite, but not passive! If your opponent is dominating the conversation, firmly but politely interrupt.
- Avoid arguing.

***After an interview***

- Thank the reporter for his or her time and offer to answer questions that may come up later.
- If you don't like what a reporter wrote or said about your organization, keep it to yourself unless you can back up a contrary opinion with fact.
- If a reporter misrepresents the facts, ask for a correction in print or on the air.
- Always be professional and courteous with reporters (even when you don't like them!).
- After the show, get a tape (or make one yourself) and watch or listen to it critically. This is an excellent teaching tool for improving your performance next time.

# STEP 10

## EVALUATION

Though evaluation is discussed here as the last step in media advocacy, evaluation should in fact be an ongoing process that is considered at almost all other steps of media advocacy. There are three types of program evaluation.

### ***Formative Evaluation***

Formative evaluation is used in the planning stages of a program to ensure the program properly addresses the needs of the target audience and that appropriate materials and procedures are used to implement the program. Formative evaluation may include activities such as literature reviews, readability tests, surveys, interviews and focus testing. Formative evaluation was carried out in step three in audience analysis and segmentation.

### ***Process Evaluation***

Process evaluation focuses on what happened and whether activities went according to plan. It is used to address questions about program implementation and whether communication objectives were met.

To evaluate the immediate objective of increased coverage, ask:

- How many stories were aired/printed?
- How much time/space did you get?
- Did you get coverage using the vehicles that were best for your audience and objectives?
- Did your piece appear on the front page, or was it an eight second reference on the evening news?

Don't be fooled by evaluation methods that only measure output. Meaningful evaluation is more than numbers of words or length of article. Remember that the goal is not just coverage, but policy advancement, so evaluation should include examining the content of coverage received.

To evaluate whether you set the agenda ask:

- Did the media coverage explain why the audience should care?
- Did your message hit them in the head, heart, gut and pocketbook (based on what you know about them from audience analysis)?

To evaluate whether you shaped the content, ask:

- Was the issue framed in terms of social/environmental causes or in terms of individual responsibility?

To evaluate whether you discredited the opposition ask:

- Did the writer/speaker use positive or negative words when referring to your organization and your policy?
- When referring to the opposition?

To evaluate whether you advanced the policy ask:

- Was it clear that the policy solution is the best solution to the problem?
- Was it clear what you wanted the audience to do?

### **Outcome Evaluation**

Outcome evaluation is used to describe program outcomes by assessing objectives such as:

- Did audience awareness increase?
- Did audience opinion change?
- Did the audience participate in the policy setting process?
- Did the policy change?

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