

*Effective*  
Substance Use Prevention  
Communication Campaigns  
*Information Guide Series*



NC DEPARTMENT OF  
**HEALTH AND  
HUMAN SERVICES**

Division of Mental Health, Developmental  
Disabilities, and Substance Abuse Services

October, 2018

This Information Guide was developed as a means to provide resources for prevention practitioners in addition to the training opportunities offered throughout the year.

Thank you for your dedication to ensuring effective planning and delivery of prevention efforts within the community setting related to local, state and federal alcohol, tobacco and illicit drug laws and policies. We believe your hard work in this area will improve the lives of children, youth and communities across the state. Your work is meaningful, important and necessary in the promotion of healthy, drug-free communities.

## Prepared by:

- Jennifer Ross, PhD<sup>1</sup>
- Melinda Pankratz, PhD<sup>1</sup>
- Parissa Ballard, PhD<sup>1</sup>
- Mark Wolfson, PhD<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Wake Forest School of Medicine

## Comments and Suggestions

Do you have a comment or suggestion? We'd like to hear from you! Prevention practitioners are encouraged to provide comments and suggestions on the information and guidance provided in this document to:

Melinda Pankratz, Ph.D.  
Senior Research Associate  
Wake Forest School of Medicine  
Department of Social Sciences and Health Policy  
mpankrat@wakehealth.edu

Jennifer Ross, PhD  
Assistant Professor  
Wake Forest School of Medicine  
Department of Social Sciences and Health Policy  
jcornacc@wakehealth.edu

Mark Wolfson, Ph.D.  
Professor  
Wake Forest School of Medicine  
Department of Social Sciences and Health Policy  
mwolfson@wakehealth.edu

# Communication Campaigns Overview

## Communication campaigns are Environmental Prevention Strategies



Communication campaigns are used by prevention providers to utilize a purposeful promotional strategy to change norms, behaviors, and policies to fit with block grant guidelines in a specific, intended audience via marketing and advertising techniques.

Communication campaigns can counteract the negative impact of substance advertising (e.g., tobacco & alcohol)

Communication campaigns can influence the way that stakeholders, including the media, think about issues, and shift the focus from an individual behavior to a systems or environmental focus

### Communication campaigns have been used to:

Change behavior by influencing attitudes, norms, and knowledge

Reinforce knowledge, attitudes, and behavior

Show benefit of behavior change

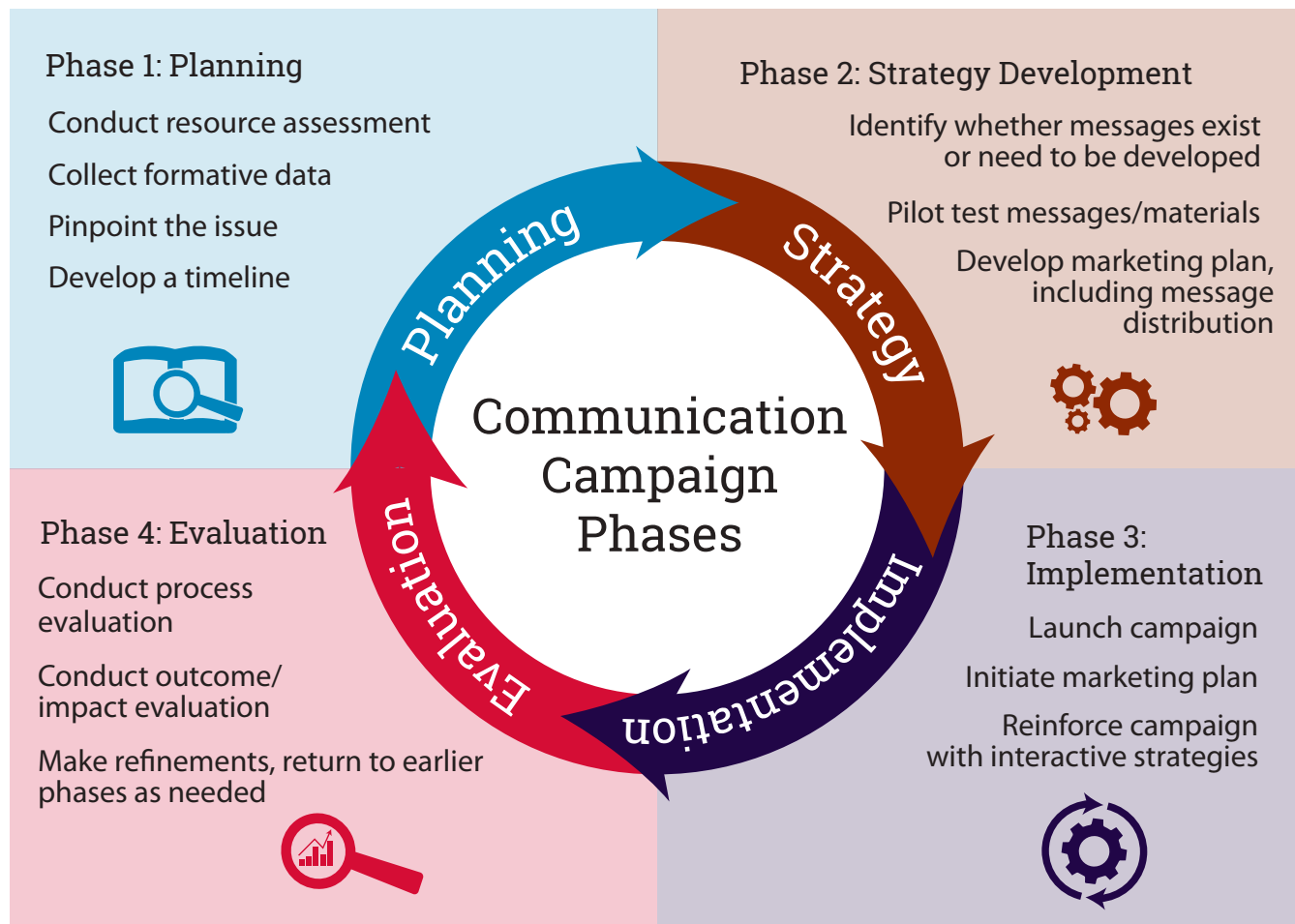
Demonstrate skills

Suggest/prompt an action

Refute myths & misconceptions

Shape the way that media & policy makers think about the health issue

# Communication Campaign Phases



Although communication campaigns can be used for a variety of goals, to be classified as a communication campaign by North Carolina Substance Abuse Prevention Block Grant rules, it may be used to:



- 1 Changing social norms.
- 2 Supporting prevention, including existing prevention programs (e.g., Lock Your Meds®).

We highly recommend you seek out one of the resources at the end of this guidebook to walk you through the process of developing and implementing a substance use prevention communication campaign.

## *Effective Substance Use Prevention Campaigns do the following things:*

### **Define the communication campaign goal effectively:**

- Identify the larger goal
- Determine which part of the larger goal could be met by a communication campaign
- Describe the specific objectives of the campaign; integrate these into a campaign plan

### **Define the intended audience effectively:**

- Identify the group to whom you want to communicate your message
- Consider identifying subgroups to whom you could tailor your message
- Learn as much as possible about the intended audience; add information about beliefs, current actions, and social and physical environment to demographic information

### **Create messages effectively:**

- Brainstorm messages that fit with the communication goal and the intended audience(s)
- Identify channel and sources that are considered credible and influential by the intended audience(s)
- Consider the best times to reach the audience(s) and prepare messages accordingly
- Select a few messages to pretest them

### **Pretest and revise messages and materials effectively:**

- Select pretesting methods that fit the campaign's budget and timeline
- Pretest messages and materials with members of the intended audience(s)
- Take the time to revise messages and materials based on pretesting findings

### **Implement the campaign effectively:**

- Follow the plans you developed at the beginning of the campaign
- Communicate with partners and the media as necessary to ensure the campaign runs smoothly
- Begin evaluating the campaign plan and process as soon as the campaign is implemented

Source: NCI PinkBook



## Phase 1: Planning Phase

The planning phase lays the foundation for the subsequent phases and steps in the campaign development process. It is important to create a solid foundation during this phase—one that is based on commitment from key stakeholders, valid and sufficient data, and realistic objectives and timelines.

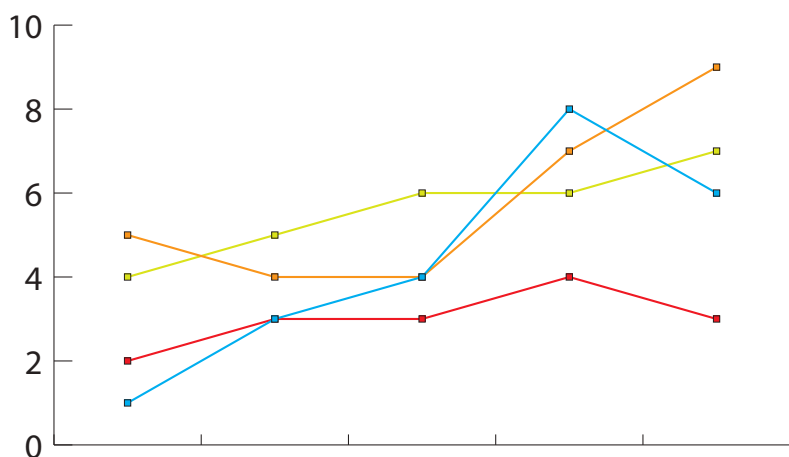
### Phase activities include:

Assess resources available for developing a project team, collaborations and a budget.

Gather information about the environment and target audience through data collection.







Analyze data and determine project objectives.

Develop a timeline.



## Planning Phase Standards & Activities

Here we present the sequential steps you will take during this phase, including the standards on which you will be audited (see page 15).

-  Complete a Division of Mental Health-approved communication campaign training
-  Broadly determine the aim of the campaign, including who the target audience of the campaign should be
-  Secure the support of the community members/ organizations who will provide access to your target audience
-  Collect or examine existing survey data about the behavior or key outcome of interest from a representative sample of the target audience
  - If using existing data:  
the baseline data cannot be more than two years old
-  Develop at least one objective of the communication campaign using the baseline data
  - This objective must:**
    - Specify the direction of change
    - Specify the focus of change (specify the end goal)
    - Be measurable from the data sources used/collected during the previous step
-  Develop a written timeline for the subsequent phases of the campaign, including:
  - Each step or task to be completed
  - A projected deadline for each step or task
  - The person responsible for each step or task

### Planning Phase Example: Lock Your Meds<sup>®</sup>

**Aim:** reduce youth access to prescription medications

**Target:** parents of youth 12-18 with medications in the home.

**Objective:** Increase youth reports that medications are securely stored in their home by 20%.

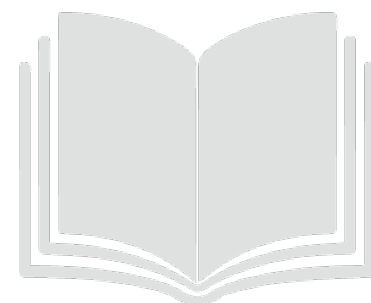
**Baseline data:** 19% of North Carolina use report misusing prescription medications. 76% of youth who misuse prescriptions medications report getting them from family and friends.



## Phase 2: Strategy Development Phase

In this phase, you will determine how to achieve your project objectives. **During this phase, you will:**

- Identify whether existing communication materials are available to use. It is good practice to use well-validated existing materials rather than creating new ones.
- Develop a marketing plan that details when and where messages/materials will be distributed.  
Identify all useful and credible ways to distribute the messages with the target audience.
- Identify a brand or logo that symbolizes or readily identifies your campaign.
- If needed, develop messages that will achieve desired results.
- If needed, design materials that are appealing and credible to the target audience.
- Pilot test messages and materials (even if using existing materials) with a representative sample of the target audience
- Modify messages and materials based on pilot testing data.





# Strategy Development Phase Standards & Activities



**Identify message distribution sources/channels that are popular and credible with the target population.**

This can be done through the initial baseline survey data collection, or through other data collection methods, such as focus groups or interviews.



**Develop a written marketing plan for the implementation phase which includes:**

All message/material distribution sources (ads, posters, promotional items, presentations etc.).

Estimated distribution/delivery dates

More information is provided under the Implementation Phase section (page 10)



**Develop campaign materials, consistent with your project objective(s).**

These materials should be guided by the data that was collected at baseline. You may develop your own campaign materials or adapt existing materials. Overall, messages must be credible, engaging, understandable, personally-relevant, and have some motivational incentive.

## Tips for Developing your own Materials

Develop a general message concept; what do you want to communicate to the audience?

Create test/sample messages, and participate in pilot-testing data collection.

Details provided below.



## Tips for Adapting Existing Materials

**It is easier to use already-existing materials if they are available.**

You will first need to make sure you can use these materials, and you may need to contact the original creator/owner of the materials

When deciding whether to adapt or modified existing materials, consider the following points:

Ensure messages are accurate, current, and relevant

Ensure messages are appropriate for the intended audience (format, style, content, etc.). You should test these during the pre-testing phase, as described below.

Ensure the messages will meet the campaign objective

## Strategy Development Phase Standards & Activities



### Remember that campaign materials cannot:

Include moral or fear appeals

Focus on the long-term risks and harm associated with ATOD use; messages that focus on the long-term health risks are not effective for youth



### Gather feedback on campaign messages and materials from a representative sample of the target audience during both the planning and implementation phases.

Pilot-testing materials (both new and existing) can be done using a variety of data collection methodologies, including focus groups, in-depth individual interviews, or survey questionnaires with the target audience

During pilot-testing, you will want to assess reactions to the messages, ways to improve them, and whether they are attention-grabbing, understandable, and not controversial/sensitive.

During pilot-testing, you will also want to determine what channels to use to deliver the messages (e.g., posters, pamphlets, schools, etc.)

### Strategy Development Phase Example: Lock Your Meds®

They contracted with a marketing company who did a series of focus groups to develop and test ideas based on the data identified in the planning phase





## Phase 3: Implementation Phase

During this phase, you will launch the communication campaign

Using the information obtained in the development phase, implementation steps and standards are:

Implement campaign for a minimum of nine consecutive months

Disseminate campaign materials using at least two message distribution sources that are popular and credible with the target audience

Release campaign materials through supplemental methods at least once every three months to reinforce the campaign message and increase message saturation. Ways to do this include:

- Contests
- Presentations
- Sponsored events/promotional items
- Institutional policy

Release new campaign materials at least once every six weeks. This will add an element of novelty to the audience, re-capturing their attention. Ways to do this include:

- Changing the wording of the text
- Modifying the presentation through use of new images or graphics or identifying new message distribution sources
- Identifying additional institutions to support communication campaign messages

Begin process evaluation of the campaign (see Evaluation Phase page 10)

Launching the campaign also includes implementing the marketing plan. The marketing aspect of the campaign is usually reinforced and supported with interactive strategies to increase the impact. The activities of the implementation to be completed in this phase are:

- Launch the campaign with targeted media placement, a press release and/or a press conference. The NCI PinkBook has detailed information on planning a kickoff event (see resources at end of this training guide)
- Initiate the marketing plan
- Reinforce the media aspect of the campaign with interpersonal strategies

### Implementation Phase Example: Lock Your Meds®

Campaign advertisements were distributed through many channels, including through advertising on television, online, radio, and magazines.

Additional campaign messages were disseminated through social media channels and partnerships with influential people.



## Phase 4: Evaluation Phase

There are two phases of evaluation during the life of a communication campaign: during the implementation phase (**process evaluation**) and once the campaign ends (**outcome evaluation**).

### Process Evaluation

#### Measuring Campaign Process Effectiveness

You will want to assess a variety of things to determine if your campaign process is working, including:

- Functionality of the campaign
- Adherence to budget and schedule
- Contractor commitments
- Partner/coalition involvement with the campaign
- Publicity and promotion of the campaign (e.g., print or digital coverage & estimated readership or online traffic)
- Number of organizations participating in the program
- Attendance at campaign events or presentations
- Media response to the campaign

#### Measuring Audience Satisfaction

You will also want to assess the effectiveness of the campaign based on reactions from the intended audience. Surveys or qualitative methods (interviews, focus groups) can be used to assess:

- Who the campaign is reaching. Is the intended audience being exposed to the campaign?
- What are the reactions to the campaign?
- Has the audience done anything with the campaign materials or information?

You should collect survey data at least once while the campaign is implemented. If it is ongoing for a longer period of time, survey data should be collected at least once every two years.



## Outcome Evaluation

Once the campaign has completed, the outcome evaluation phase occurs.  
**Outcome evaluation helps to measure the impact of the campaign.**

You will assess the objective(s) that you developed in the Planning Phase to assess the overall effectiveness of your campaign

You should have baseline data from earlier in the development phase that can be used to identify any progress made since the campaign was implemented

You will need to collect quantitative/numerical survey data for outcome evaluation; the numerical data is necessary to assess objectives. Qualitative data (interviews, focus groups) can provide more insight, but cannot be used to draw conclusions about campaign effectiveness

### Outcome Evaluation Steps (adapted from NCI PinkBook)

#### Determine what information the evaluation must provide

How will you use the results to impact any future decisions or policies?

#### Define the data to collect

What are the outcomes of interest? For example, increased knowledge about a policy

#### Decide on data collection methods

An explanation of data collection methods & their limitations are provided in the NCI PinkBook

#### Develop & pretest data collection instruments

Make sure the data collection items will elicit answers to the questions you are interested in

#### Collect data

#### Analyze data to answer evaluation questions

Data needs to be put into a usable form for analysis

#### Write and disseminate evaluation report

Outline what you did, why you did it, things you may change in the future, and key findings of the evaluation

### Evaluation Phase Example: Lock Your Meds®

- Pre- and post-surveys showed a 59% increase in concern that a teenager may be able to access medication in their home (17.3%) prior to the campaign and 27.5% after the campaign.
- 66.3% of respondents reported to have seen, read or heard advertising encouraging them to lock up their medications to prevent prescription drug abuse.
- 30% of those respondents specifically remembered to Lock Up Their Med
- 16.2% said what they saw, read and heard caused them to change their prescription medication storage habits.
- Prior to the campaign, no respondents made an effort to secure their medication and after the campaign, 8.8% of respondents reported storing prescription medications on a high shelf (4.5%) or in a lockbox/safe (4.3%) and 12.8% of respondents reported storing over-the-counter medications on a high shelf (6.0%) or in a lockbox/safe (6.8%)

# A Campaign Approach: Social Norms

Social norms campaigns are one of the approved approaches for communication campaigns by the North Carolina Department of Health & Human Services.

Social norms campaigns are communication campaigns that utilize marketing techniques to change misperceptions regarding audience behavior, and ultimately change behavior by communicating accurate group norms of the specified audience.

The social norms strategy is to gather credible data from a target population and then, using various communication strategies, provide accurate information about their behavioral norms and protective/avoidance strategies.

**This strategy should only be used when there is a discrepancy** between what the intended audience thinks the group normative behavior is compared to the actual group normative behavior. Oftentimes, people to overestimate the prevalence of an unhealthy behavior.

The theory behind the approach states that much of people's behavior is influenced by their perceptions of how other members of their social group behave (e.g., young adults are more likely to binge drink alcohol if they think most young adults (peer normative reference) also binge drink).

**When applied to teen substance abuse prevention, social norms marketing campaigns are based on the following principles:**



Most teens think most of their peers use alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs, when in fact, most do not.



Most teens make decisions and act based on how they believe the majority of the peers behave; therefore, the misperception that most teens use alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs leads to higher rates of use.



When facts are provided about how much teens don't use alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs, they are more likely to choose not to use those substances in order to conform to the actual norm.



**To develop & implement a social norms campaign, the same four phases in this guidebook should be used.**



You will measure the prevalence (percentage) of the behavior to determine baseline and changing social norms.



# Media Advocacy

Media advocacy is one way to support policy or regulatory changes. It can change the social and political environment by helping shape the topics that are covered.

## Ways to Use the Media to Communicate Your Message:

- Press release
- Writing an op-ed
- Writing a letter to the editor
- Interview
- Media event, such as a press briefing

## Media Advocacy Tips:

- Take advantage of local advocacy groups who can help support your efforts and have them involved during all stages of the campaign development and implementation.
- Develop relationships with media “gatekeepers”, such as reporters and editors
- Stage media events
- Educate the media about your campaign



# Implementation Standards Checklist

These are the communication campaign standards the Division of Mental Health will audit

Audit Standard	Study Phase	Complete?
Participate in a Department of Mental Health sponsored or approved Communication Campaign training	Planning	<input type="checkbox"/>
Secure support and/or participation from the community sectors that are responsible for providing access to the target audience	Planning	<input type="checkbox"/>
Collect & analyze baseline survey data from a representative sample of the target audience	Planning	<input type="checkbox"/>
Develop at least 1 objective using the baseline data	Planning	<input type="checkbox"/>
Adhere to these message standards: do not include moral or fear appeals; do not focus on the long-term risks associated with substance use	Planning/Development	<input type="checkbox"/>
Develop and release campaign materials; to be released at least once every 6 weeks	Development & Implementation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Implement the campaign for a minimum of 9 consecutive months	Implementation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disseminate campaign materials using at least 2 message distribution sources	Implementation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Distribute messages through sources that are popular and credible with the target population	Implementation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Distribute messages using supplemental methods (e.g., contests, presentations, sponsored events, and/or promotional items) at least once every 3 months	Implementation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Collect and analyze survey data at least once every three years to 1) help refine campaign messages and 2) measure progress toward achievement of the campaign objective	Implementation & Evaluation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gather feedback (collect & analyze data) on campaign messages and materials from a representative sample of the target audience	Implementation & Evaluation	<input type="checkbox"/>



# Resources to Support Community Campaign Development and Implementation

Title	Description	Where to Access
<p><b>Making Health Communication Programs Work</b></p>	<p>Provides more detail and guidance on all steps of planning, implementing, and evaluating a communication campaign. Developed by NCI</p>	<p><a href="http://cancer.gov/pinkbook">cancer.gov/pinkbook</a></p>
<p><b>Gateway to Health Communication &amp; Social Marketing Practice</b></p>	<p>Provides more detail and resources for all steps of planning, implementing, and evaluating a communication campaign. Developed by CDC</p>	<p><a href="http://cdc.gov/healthcommunication">cdc.gov/healthcommunication</a></p>
<p><b>American Public Health Association Media Advocacy Manual</b></p>	<p>Provides more detail and resources for implementing a media advocacy plan.</p>	<p><a href="http://bit.ly/APHAMediaManual">bit.ly/APHAMediaManual</a></p>