Strategic Communication for Environmental Change

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Webinar Objectives

- **Develop** clear messages connecting social problems to environmental factors.
- **Utilize** events and data to call community, legislators, and policymakers to action.
- **Engage** technology to paint clear pictures and activate viewers/readers.
Environmental Behavior Theory

- Environmental factors either encourage/enable or discourage/disable individual behavior.
Environmental Messaging

FOCUS of message is on LINK between:

Environmental Factor  Behavior
5 Keys to Environmental Messaging

1. SHOW the environment and its effects – make it visible.
2. CONNECT the current environment to key mechanisms that explain its effects.
3. BUILD a solid argument for how the mechanisms can improve the environment’s effects.
4. DEMONSTRATE how these mechanisms have worked in other communities.
5. FOCUS on the benefits of an improved environment – what’s the win for all?
Avoid at all costs!

- DECLARING WAR against an environment.
- BLAMING the current environment on individuals.
- ASSIGNING motives to stakeholders who are entrenched or profit from the existing environment.
- STOPPING at the community’s recognition that something in the environment is problematic.
- ACCEPTING that a current environment is the result of “culture” and therefore cannot change.
- COMMUNICATING that you are “fixing” the environment.
Step 1: Identify the Environmental Factors linked to Behavioral Outcomes

- What is encouraging or enabling unwanted behavior in your community?

- START WITH THE DATA: Tie a SPECIFIC behavior to a SPECIFIC factor.
  - Assaults/drunken behavior at concerts
  - High-risk drinking/underage drinking on weekends
  - Marijuana use in certain neighborhood or public space.

- Focus on the MECHANISMS that enable this factor to exist.
Toward a Broader Environmental Framework for Student Health & Safety

ENVIRONMENTAL INFLUENCES

INDIVIDUAL INFLUENCES

Background Mental State Genetics Attitudes & Values

Community Norms, Beliefs & Values Messages Across the Community

Codified & “Lived” Community Standards Promotion & Marketing of High-Risk Activities

Community-wide Policy Knowledge Traditions & Celebrations Group Rituals

Community Recognition and Reporting Community Activities Spaces & Places

Quality of Enforcement & Adjudication Systems Opportunity & Access for Behaviors

POLICY EDUCATION DESIGN

ENFORCEMENT
What can we show?

- **DATA.**
  - Mapping assaults, calls for service, vandalism to addresses/locations.
  - Using self-report data to build a case about a place/space.

- **IMAGES.**
  - Photo/video of a party out of control, an illegal sale, service to intoxicated, intoxicated behavior
Showing, Not Telling
Graphic Information Systems

- “Mapping” crime, police call for service, or medical rescue data by address.
- Shows “hot spots” of activity by location.
Density of Party Complaints Near Campus

North Bottoms Neighborhood
Step 2: Communicate the mechanism that resolves the problem

- THE PROBLEM IS THE SOLUTION.
  - The mechanism that leads to harms can be reversed to improve outcomes.

- MECHANISMS must be employed to be effective – don’t forget about the implementation details.
Example 1: Wild Parties

- Parties become “wild” when responsible social host policies are not communicated, enforced, or practiced, especially in neighborhoods where students assume no one cares.
- The result is increased crime, noise, trash, vandalism.
- The mechanisms to address this are:
  - A clear policy in our community about disruptive parties.
  - A focused effort to communicate the policy to students and landlords.
  - A consistent effort to enforce the policies and provide meaningful consequences to those who violate it.
  - An effort to improve: the quality of the neighborhood, the quality of student rental housing, and the interaction between student and permanent residents.
Example 2: Overservice

- Alcohol overservice at bars and restaurants occurs when servers are not able to identify intoxicated patrons or refuse service to clearly intoxicated patrons.
- The result is public intoxication, and the potential for drunk driving, assault, and other harms.
- The mechanisms to address this are:
  - Management policies and procedures to avoid overservice.
  - Training for servers about refusing service to intoxicated patrons.
  - Management support of staff refusing service to intoxicated patrons.
  - Enforcement of liquor laws prohibiting overservice in licensed establishments.
Step 2: Build the Message

- Clear description of the Environmental Factor
  - Use evidence, data
  - Show, don’t just tell

- Connection of environmental factor to Unwanted Behavior: Why is this factor causing this behavior/problem?
  - Show effect of behavior

Central Message:
A SPECIFIC STATEMENT OF ACTION

- Explain the mechanism of change (law/policy, activity)
- Show the mechanism success at changing the environmental factor

- Show the benefit of the change, inoculate the costs/challenges and counterarguments
**EXAMPLE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wild parties have led to a large number of issues in our neighborhoods including noise, trash, assaults, vandalism, high demand for police intervention.</th>
<th>Police can break up these parties, but can’t stop them from occurring; there is no accountability for those hosting parties</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A social host ordinance holds the host or landlord responsible, penalizing those who do not engage responsible social host practices</td>
<td>With consistent enforcement, the ordinance gets at the root cause of the problem and enables the community to promote good social host practices</td>
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Step 3: Communicate!

- Use all available forms of communication.
- NEVER underestimate the power of conversation.
- TRAIN ALL stakeholders about the central message and key points, BUT --
- ENABLE stakeholders to speak from their individual perspectives as neighbor, parent, faculty, police, etc.
Help the news media get the story right

- Press Kit
  - Press release
  - Fact Sheet
  - Interview Contact list
  - Images/video/graphics

- Interaction with reporter
  - Explaining the story
  - Exploring the angle
Don’t stop with traditional media

- Bar or Neighborhood Walk for new coalition members/stakeholders.
- ID check test at special lunch.
- Post-event trash pick-up.
- Social media posts of photos and video.
Key Partners

- Police Department: GIS maps, crime data, alcohol-related crime tracking, expert testimony
- Hospitals: Emergency room data, alcohol-related health information, expert testimony
- Responsible Hospitality Association: expert testimony, access to businesses
- Neighborhood Associations: Experiences, testimony
Measure Your Success

- Track the community dialogue:
  - Are people talking differently about the issue than they did before?
  - Are they focusing on mechanisms?
  - Are they seeing the connections?

- Measure the level of acceptance and resistance
  - Note especially key issues that need resolution
  - Focus on the WIN for all stakeholders
Contact

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Connected Communities
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