PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION

COMMUNICATIONS TOOLKIT

TEXAS
Department of Family
and Protective Services

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

THANK YOU for making a difference in the future of Texas by working with the Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) division of the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services.

This communications toolkit will give you the resources you need to let your community know about the services you provide and the difference your program can make in the lives of Texans. It includes an extensive section on communications planning and contains tips, templates, and techniques that will help you spread the word about your important work. Each component has an explanation that shows the most effective way to use it to achieve your communications goals. Remember, this toolkit is just a guide. Feel free to modify the template documents in ways that you believe will be most effective at reaching your target audiences.

In addition, we have also included tips for reaching out to the media, conducting interviews, and effectively spreading the word about your program through social media. Together, these tips, strategies, and customizable templates should help you to build and implement a successful communications plan.

PEI PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

PEI contracts with community-based programs and agencies to provide a variety of services that help prevent abuse, neglect, delinquency, and truancy of Texas children. Not all services are available in all Texas communities. Services are free of charge and participation is voluntary.

Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention - Fatherhood

This PEI program supports fathers and father-figures through parenting education and support, outreach, and systems improvements. It is funded by the federal Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) grant.

Community Youth Development (CYD)

The CYD program contracts with community-based organizations to develop juvenile-delinquency prevention programs in ZIP codes with high juvenile crime rates for youth ages six to 17 (with a focus on youth ages 10 through 17). Communities use mentoring, youth-employment programs, career preparation, and alternative recreational activities to prevent delinquency.

Healthy Outcomes through Prevention and Early Support (HOPES)

HOPES is a community-based program providing child abuse and neglect prevention services that target families with children from birth to five years of age. Community organizations in targeted counties may provide home-visiting programs and community coalition support, as well as services that promote child welfare, early childhood education, and other family services.

Helping through Intervention and Prevention (HIP)

The HIP program provides free, voluntary services to eligible families that build a positive, nurturing home environment and prevent child abuse. The program provides in-home parenting education and basic needs support through community-based organizations using an evidence-based or promising practice program.

Military Families and Veterans Pilot Prevention (MFVPP) Program

This program's purpose is to:

- Improve the wellbeing of Texas military and veteran families by promoting positive parental involvement in their children's lives.
- Support parents' abilities to provide continued emotional, physical, and financial support for their children.
- Build a community coalition of local stakeholders who are focused on the prevention of child abuse and neglect.
- Prevent child abuse and neglect in military communities.

Services to At-Risk Youth (STAR)

The Services to At-Risk Youth (STAR) program's primary purpose is to serve youth and their families. STAR often provides guidance and support related to depression, bullying, grief, trauma, suicidal tendencies, ADHD issues, anger anxiety, drug and alcohol abuse by family member or caregiver, or coping with divorce or abandonment.

Statewide Youth Services Network (SYSN)

Statewide Youth Services Network supports statewide associations of youth programs in order to provide mentoring, after school, and community-based support programs to school-aged youth across the state.

Texas Home Visiting (THV)

The primary goals of THV are to enhance maternal and child outcomes and to increase school readiness for children. THV currently uses a combination of evidence-based home visiting programs including Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP), Parents as Teachers (PAT), Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY), and Family Connects. THV also supports best practices for building awareness and local collaboration efforts.

COMMUNICATING ABOUT YOUR PROGRAM

WORKING WITH PEI AND YOUR MARKETING/OUTREACH REPRESENTATIVE

External communication is an important part of any public program. Organizations need to be able to share their mission, values and successes with their stakeholders and the larger community. Leaders must be able to tell the stories of how their organization's services help people. Doing so builds trust and name recognition, may lead to more community support and new families being served.

You should work with the Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) program and your marketing/outreach representative (if you have one) to promote your programs and successes. This section explains how PEI can help you spread the word about your work.

Working with PEI

PEI has networks it uses to inform providers, stakeholders, and the public. PEI publishes its Tidbits newsletter for providers and sends out messages via the Texas Prevention Network on a case-by-case basis.

You can send announcements, success stories, and event promotions to PEI for possible inclusion in these publications. Send your news to your PEI program specialist.

Be sure that all information is correct, all names are spelled correctly, and contact information has been included in case PEI has any questions. Include all the information you would send to the public.

Try to get a few quotes from your organization's leaders to include with the information.

Tidbits
Tidbits is PEI's e-newsletter, which includes news about PEI initiatives, staff, training opportunities, and news related to prevention and early intervention statewide.

PEI sends Tidbits to its staff, program providers, external partners, and other stakeholders. Subscribe to Tidbits through this link:
https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/TXDFPS/subscriber/new?topic_id=TXDFPS_41

Examples of content that PEI publishes in Tidbits includes:
- Program highlights.
- Family success stories.
- Tips to share with providers and families.
- Early childhood, youth, and family news.
- Model news.
- Health Resources and Services Administration news.
- Events, training opportunities, and more.

To submit an article, send your PEI specialist:

- 200-300 words, maximum, including the purpose of the event or significance of the story (who, what, where, when, why, website link).
- Approved pictures with a caption (pictures optional).
- The name (and contact info) of the person that PEI can contact if there are questions.

Texas Prevention Network

The Texas Prevention Network (TPN) is a channel for informing stakeholders about key updates. TPN brings together experts and prevention partners from various sectors, to combine intellectual and material resources, and guide state efforts to prevent child abuse and neglect.

The network is comprised of a diverse set of stakeholders including advocates, service providers and coalitions. PEI communicates with the network via email newsletters sent periodically. Sign up here: https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/TXDFPS/subscriber/new?topic_id=TXDFPS_471.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR SHARING OR USING SUCCESS STORIES

As providers of social services, we know that following policies on confidentiality and protected health information is of utmost importance. Moreover, respecting the privacy of families is critical for many reasons. Family well-being, autonomy, and safety are the top priorities whether composing an annual report, creating a brochure, updating your website, or posting on social media.

Please review and be aware of the following information when considering using, publishing, and distributing any private information, success stories, or descriptions of program involvement.

When Protected Health Information (PHI) is Involved

According to the HIPAA Journal, "PHI is individually identifiable information relating to the health status of an individual, the provision of healthcare, or individually identifiable information that is created, collected, or transmitted by a HIPAA-covered entity."

Some of the most common HIPAA violations include impermissible disclosures of PHI, disclosing PHI unnecessarily, and disclosures of PHI after an authorization has expired.

Health information such as diagnoses, treatment information, medical test results, and prescription information are considered protected health information under HIPAA. The same is true for national identification numbers and demographic information such as birth dates, gender, ethnicity, and contact and emergency contact information.

Some common examples of PHI related to a family or child you may be working with include whether a client is pregnant, has recently given birth, has symptoms of depression, has had prenatal conditions like gestational diabetes, preeclampsia, etc. Treatment, including counseling services, is also included. Simply put, it is good to keep in mind the broad range of experiences and services that may be considered PHI and may be covered by HIPAA guidelines.

Always Consider Family and Child Confidentiality

According to the National Association of Social Workers *Code of Ethics,* practitioners should respect a family or individual's right to privacy and should not solicit private information unless it is essential to providing services or conducting social work evaluation or research. Once private information is shared, standards of confidentiality apply (Standard 1.07[a]).

While not every provider or agency staff member is a social worker, most social service organizations adopt these general principles and practices around privacy and confidentiality in order to protect their family or individual's well-being and, in most cases, to be consistent with current legal standards. These practice guidelines and ethical principles apply broadly to anyone providing social services.

Confidentiality refers to the understanding and practice that information shared by or pertaining to a family or person will not be shared with third parties unless permitted.

Always consider the safety of clients. Some family or individuals may be victims of abuse, domestic violence, or stalking. Their privacy can be critical to their basic safety, welfare, and chances for success. Social media posts and sharing information on anyone's activities, choices, or whereabouts could put them at risk for harm as well as compromise their emotional safety and mental health. Do not post or share such content under any circumstances if there is any risk to the family or an individual or their relatives.

Before you or your agency shares any experiences or success stories, the family or individual must be fully informed of what you would like to share. The family or individual should make the decision that is best for them and must give written consent before you use their information or story in any reporting, outreach, or marketing material. Even without disclosing personal identifying information, circumstances of a family or individual's story may be recognizable to themselves and to others.

When planning to share a client's information or story, begin by considering what the information may communicate about the family or person involved as well as which audiences will receive the information.

Meet directly with the families or individual to discuss your wish to share their information, success stories, or program experiences. Explain specifically what you want to share, how you would like to share it, when you want share it, and the audiences that will receive it. After fully explaining, ask for their consent to share their information – this includes the use of any images, video, or recordings.

If the family or individual agrees, obtain written consent. If the subject is a minor, you must get written consent from a parent or guardian.

Before posting, publishing, or disseminating the success story or information, share a draft with the family or individual and get feedback. Make sure they feel comfortable with what you plan to share and how their experience is depicted.

Note that:

- Having a standard consent to release information form on file does not authorize you to share a client's information whenever you wish to do so. A family or individual should be fully informed about what you plan to share, when you plan to share it, and the specific purpose, nature, and audience of the materials.
- Data-sharing agreements to report data for purposes of program evaluation do not cover client success stories or materials for reporting, outreach, marketing, or advocacy.

Here are some questions to ask yourself when developing material to use in reporting, outreach, and marketing materials, publications, or posts:

- Is the language or content you plan to share respectful and strengths-based?
- Could a family or individual's information, experience, or story be perceived as shameful or unflattering to the family or individual? Is any language shaming, blaming, or unflattering to the family or individual?
- Is the family or individual still struggling with an experience? Consider framing the experience by highlighting the journey, efforts, and successes.
- Would the family or individual still recognize their own story even though the audience may not be able to readily identify the family or individual? Even when doing your best to leave out specific identifying details, you must still obtain a family or individual consent to use their information and story.
- How would the family or individual feel hearing or seeing their story? Would the family or individual feel comfortable, respected, or empowered if they were sitting in the room listening or reading the material?
- Would the family or individual feel safe, comfortable, and respected encountering the information in a brochure, report, or posted online?
- Does publicly connecting the family or individual to the program or service pose any privacy concerns or pose any potential risk to their employment, future employment, social networks, school community, court involvement, etc.
- Does publicly connecting the family or individual to the program or service pose any safety concerns, physical or emotional?

Remember, even if you are just promoting a program in general or highlighting staff members' efforts and successes, you must get the express written permission from the family or individuals involved. Also, be sure that you have written permission from your own organization's leadership.

For further reference:

What is Considered Protected Health Information under HIPAA. From https://www.hipaajournal.com/what-is-considered-protected-health-information-under-hipaa/ (4/2/18).

WRITING AN EFFECTIVE SUCCESS STORY

Stories are an important tool for sharing an organization's successes. If written and packaged correctly, success stories can inspire and educate audiences, while showcasing the organization's services.

A well-written success story is structured much like a piece of short fiction. It has a beginning, middle and an end. There is a problem that gets addressed. There are characters and scenes.

Narrative 101

Choose a subject for your success story. It helps to focus your success story on a single person. Maybe your program has a participant who used your program to overcome a problem or challenge in his or her life.

Briefly describe the situation before the success story happens. What was happening in the participant's life? What challenges was he or she facing? If your success story is about a community, describe what life was like there. Describe the problem before anything was done about it.

How did your organization get involved? Did the participant approach you or vice versa?

What did the organization do to help solve the problem? Who addressed the problem – the participant or the organization? If the participant solved the problem, which programs or resources did the organization use to help the participant? What exactly did everyone do? How did the organization's actions live out its mission and values?

Describe progress in measurable ways. How could a bystander tell things have improved?

Lastly, where is the participant now? How has the issue been addressed? How far has the participant progressed?

Story Example 1
John saw a flyer for a fatherhood class at the local YMCA. At his first meeting, he said he loves his four-year-old son, John Jr., but that he "drives him crazy." John said his son does not listen to him and

often misbehaves. John said he argues with his partner about how and when to discipline their son. Occasionally, his son would run away from him. John said he did not want his son to be afraid of him. John attend a class offered by the Fatherhood EFFECT program, which uses an evidence-based parenting curriculum. The program taught John the behaviors he can expect of his son at each stage of development and age-appropriate ways to address challenging behavior.

The program also taught John how to talk with his son and build trust. John and other the fathers in the class discussed ways to talk with their partners to co-parent effectively.

After several weeks of classes, John proudly reported he was making progress interacting with his son. John tried the strategies to get his son to listen to him, and they worked. John was able to defuse tense situations more quickly and reported seeing his son listen more quickly. He brought in a picture his son had drawn of the two of them.

"My relationship with my son is so much better now. He's not afraid of me anymore and we have a lot more fun together," said John. "I can't tell you how grateful I am for what I've learned."

Story Example 2

The Community Youth Development program created a youth advisory council (YAC) at the beginning of the school year. At the first meeting, the students were asked what their Community Strengths and Needs Assessment identified as the most pressing issue their classmates faced. The unanimous response was cyberbullying.

Everyone knew someone at [Example High School] who had been cyberbullied. One YAC member had admitted to cyberbullying a classmate the previous year. "It's just the way it is at this school," he said. "No one likes it, but everyone does it."

The students wanted to change the culture to reduce cyberbullying at their school. They talked with their YAC coordinator about how to best accomplish that. They made a plan to systematically address the issue.

The students created an online survey asking [Example High] students how widespread the problem was. The students worked with school administrators to draw attention to the issue. A few students got permission to address the school during an assembly. The students created an online pledge where signees agreed not to cyberbully anyone. Students researched cyberbullying online and staffed a booth at several popular school events. The students got parents involved and passed along tips that they could use to help their children stop cyberbullying.

At the end of the year, they took stock of their campaign. They created a second survey and asked students again. Incidents of cyberbullying were down, according to the survey. The YAC received a special commendation from the State Board of Education at its May meeting. Some of the younger YAC members plan to continue the campaign during the next school year.

HOSTING STAKEHOLDER EVENTS

Basics

Stakeholder events—dialogues and community forums—are great ways to increase public awareness. A stakeholder event may serve to provide information, motivate community champions, bring local partners together, increase awareness of your program in your community, or announce a coalition initiative.

Goals

A stakeholder event should have numeric goals (e.g. audience turnout, funds raised, stakeholder subscribers) as well as non-numeric goals (e.g. to educate the community about the issue, to raise awareness about the campaign, to celebrate a victory).

Before planning an event, you should be able to state your goal clearly, such as *"Produce 35 hand-written letters to our elected representative."* All other decisions about your event should be made with this goal in mind.

Step-By-Step: How to organize a stakeholder event

Logistics

- **Type of event:** There are many different formats for a successful event. The choice of format depends, in part, whether your goal is to educate or motivate. If your goal is to educate, a debate or a panel discussion is an engaging way to provide information. If your goal is to motivate, a single focused speaker or a screening of a video allows for an emotionally resonant presentation that will motivate your audience. Speaker possibilities include community members with expertise in a given subject area, local or community leaders, local college or university professors, elected officials, or someone who have been personally affected by your issue.
- **Co-hosts/co-sponsors:** Working with another organization to co-host or co-sponsor your forum offers several advantages. Collaboration provides a bigger pool of resources and potential attendees. It can result in a more balanced or diverse perspective, which is especially important for a debate. Furthermore, working with other organizations represents a great opportunity to build and maintain coalitions, presenting a united front.
- **Location:** Choosing the right location for your event depends on who you'd like to attend and the particular environment you want to create. If you want to encourage your local public officials or other community leaders to attend, select a location that would be appropriate and convenient for them. Find a space that is big enough for your guests to be comfortable, but

not so large that it is difficult for people to see the presentation or participate in a group discussion. Here are some good potential locations for your event:

- o   Reserve a room in your local library or community center.
- o   Incorporate the forum into the regularly scheduled meeting of a local club or organization.
- o   Hold the forum on a school or university campus – perhaps in a classroom, student center, or dorm lobby.

Recruit Volunteers

Planning and running a successful event takes time and energy. You might need volunteers to make the event run smoothly. The number of volunteers you will need depends on the size and scope of your event.

Once you have your volunteers, make sure you clearly explain each of their tasks to them. One task for volunteers is to be involved with the planning and preparation for the event. Allow them to ask questions before the event so that they know what to do leading up to and on the day of your event. Most importantly, don't forget to thank your volunteers after the event is over!

Publicizing Your Event

- **Know Your Audience:** Not every event is of interest to every audience. Before you develop your publicity plan, decide who you want to attend your event.
- **Paid Advertising:** Knowing your intended audience will ensure that resources are targeted and well spent. Even if a publication has a large audience, if only a small percentage of readers are among your intended audience, it's not worth the cost. A smaller publication with a high percentage of readers in your target audience is a better value.
- **Know Your Event:** When hosting a stakeholder event, make sure you plan it according to the interest to the audience. What is unique about your event? Is your event linked to a national news story? Is it linked to a larger event or day of action? Different "angles" will give you a "hook" to catch the interest of potential attendees and the media, who can help raise awareness about your event.
- **Make Your Event Plan:** Having focused on your audience and event, you are now ready to make your publicity plan. This should include a calendar listing all relevant deadlines, e.g., for publications (newspapers, magazines, events listings, etc.), as well as "lead times" required for printing and distributions of flyers, posters, invitations, and programs.
- **Decide on Your "Look":** All your materials should have a consistent theme and share similar design elements that highlight the message of your event.
- **Put Someone in Charge:** Publicity by committee is rarely successful. Although several volunteers may help with tasks, make sure that one person is responsible overall for executing your plan.
- **The Five W's:** In everything you produce – flyers, posters, e-invites, news alerts, event listings –

you must have the correct 5 W's:

- o **Who** will be speaking
- o **What** will they be addressing
- o **When** will it happen
- o **Where** will it take place
- o **Why** your committee is sponsoring the event

Every publicity piece must have this information. You can be brief, but make sure it is accurate and exact—time, address, directions, etc. In addition, most publicity should have contact information where people can get additional information.

Publicity Tactics

The most typically used publicity pieces include:

- **Flyers:** Often simple 8 x 11 reproductions, flyers can be posted in high-traffic locations distributed at booths at fairs, your agency lobby, via email, and through social media, and at community meetings.

  Make sure to pay attention to local rules on posting. Flyers posted in restricted areas will likely get taken down quickly. A good rule of thumb is that if you don't see any other flyers posted in an area, you probably can't hang your poster there. Stick to community bulletin boards and kiosks.

- **Newsletters:** You might advertise your event in publications from local organizations and neighborhood associations, PTAs, or local chapters of national nonprofits.
- **Phone Calls:** Calling and personally inviting individuals is far-and-away the best way to guarantee a turnout at your event. This tactic can be time consuming, so you can try getting some volunteers together to hold a phone bank.
- **Email:** A well-designed email announcement will not only be read by those on your contact list, it will also be passed along to their contacts.
- **Websites:**

  - o Find local online calendars (these will often exist on the town website, and/or the website of the local paper).
  - o Make a Facebook event and post the event on the pages of local groups and schools.

- **Paid Advertisements:** Contact your local radio and television station for non-profit rates
- **Community Events Calendars:** Most large regional newspapers and many local radio stations

have public forum events listings. You might be able to have your event featured in several of these venues. If you have developed your message, and focused on your "local angle" or "hook," these media will be more likely to select your event for publication.

- **Collaborate:** Having partners in your publicity effort expands the reach of your message. Ask coalition members and stakeholders to make announcements at their meetings and send out an email about the event.
- **Follow Up:** If your event is worth publicizing, it's also worth reporting on. Invite the local news media to the event to try to get them to write a story about it. A community newspaper or specialty publication, may accept a story that you write and submit – check with them on their policies. It also doesn't hurt to write a brief thank-you note to organizations or media that do feature your event in their community events calendars or other publications. Let them know how many people showed up and how well the event went. The benefit of establishing good, professional relationships with media gatekeepers will pay dividends well into the future.
- **Debrief:** What worked, and what didn't? Ask attendees how they heard about your event. The more you know about which publicity techniques worked in your area, the larger crowd you'll be able to attract to your next event. Publicity is a key step to planning a successful event and an effective tool in spreading the word about both your event and the importance of your program.

The Event
Careful preparation before and on the day of your event will result in a smooth-running event.

- **Registration:** You may consider a registration table where one or two volunteers are in charge of:

  - Sign-in sheets with space for attendees name, address, phone numbers, and email.
  - Educational materials, bumper stickers, pamphlets, etc.
  - Name tags and markers
  - Extra pens

- **Refreshments:** While not absolutely necessary, guests always appreciate refreshments. You can keep it as simple as coffee and sodas with store-bought cookies or pastries.
- **Introductions and opening remarks:** As your guests get settled before the presentation, take the opportunity to welcome them.

  - Introduce yourself – explain your organization and why you are holding the event – with a few brief comments reminding attendees of the program and why their presence is valuable. If you notice any local elected officials, community leaders, or other key individuals in the room, introduce them and thank them for attending.
  - In your opening remarks, briefly explain the format of the event so that people know what to expect and how long they might be there. If you have a photographer for the event, mention the opportunity to request to not be in photos. Also, suggest that your guests write down questions, comments, or ideas they have during the presentation to bring up during group discussion.

Sample Programs

To give you some ideas on how to structure your presentation, we've included two sample agendas: one for a one-hour event and another for a two-hour event.

- **1-hour program:**

    - 8:00 – 8:10   Welcome and introductions
    - 8:10 – 8:40   Speaker
    - 8:40 – 9:00   Take individual action (letter writing, phone banking, etc.) and planning for continued action

- **2-hour program**

    - 7:30 – 7:45   Guests arrive, sign in, enjoy refreshments
    - 7:45 – 8:00   Host welcomes guests, makes introductions, explains agenda for event
    - 8:00 – 8:30   Speaker
    - 8:30 – 9:00   Group discussion, comments, and individual action— letter writing, phone banking, etc.
    - 9:00 – 9:30   Plans for next meeting and continuing actions

- **Group Discussion or Audience Questions:** An important part of the event will be when individuals can share ideas, ask questions, and potentially take action. Leave ample time for audience questions.

    - Have a few pre-planned topics or questions. If everyone in the room seems to have something to contribute, you can scale back their ambitions to focus on a few central points and one or two urgent actions. On the other hand, you can use a question or idea as a way to elicit a response.
    - Call on people. Give each person a chance to speak and graciously limit the length of their comments.
    - Stick to a time limit for questions and answers so the opportunity to speak is balanced. For example, announce to attendees that the program will have a 15 minute period for questions and answers.

- **Wrapping Up:** At the end of your event, it is a good idea to give a short concluding address. Thank everyone for coming and be sure to remind them to sign up whatever you deem as a call to action. This could be a good time to let people know about all the great work your organization has been doing and what is coming in the future.
- **Debrief:** After the event, pull together your volunteers. Evaluate whether you achieved your goals or not and what you would do the same or differently next time. Celebrate a job well done with the volunteers.

Sample Planning Timeline

- **4-6 months before the event:**

    o   Identify community partners and PEI providers that will be helping with the planning.
    o   Select location, event date, and time.
    o   Decide on the intended audience and ideal number of guests.
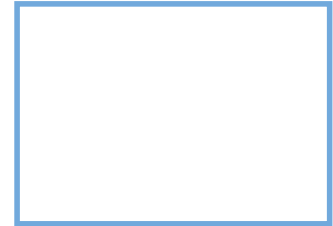
- **2-4 months before the event:**

    o   Plot your general program timeline.
    o   Secure event co-sponsors.
    o   Announce the event to your staff, friends, coalitions, and community partners.
    o   Seek volunteers.
    o   Determine appropriate promotion strategies.
    o   Start planning for your promotional materials for your event 1 – 2 weeks or more ahead of time.
    o   Submit advisory notices and information to local media and community event listings.
    o   Send emails and place phone calls.
    o   Post flyers.
    o   Prepare checklist of necessary items (refreshments, handouts, sign-in sheet, nametags, etc.) and begin gathering them.

- **2 days before your event:**

    o   Send follow-up emails to media and attendees.
    o   Make follow-up phone calls to media and attendees.
    o   Finish gathering all necessary items, including food and supplies.
    o   Confirm the date and time of your event with outside venue.
    o   Draft and practice your opening remarks.
    o   Plan a few items for the group discussion.
    o   Confirm final tasks with volunteers.
    o   Test your technology, especially if showing a video or a presentation.
    o   Print handouts and materials for guests.

- **1 day before your event:**

    o   Send second advisory notice to local media outlets.
    o   Set up all technical devices and test your technology.
    o   Set up chairs and tables.
    o   Set out handouts, sign-in sheet, pens, and name-tags.

- **Two hours before your event:**

    o   Arrange refreshments.
    o   Answer last-minute questions from volunteers.

HOSTING COMMUNITY-WIDE EVENTS

Basics

Community events—video screenings, family, youth, and child festivals—are great ways to strengthen promotion and community involvement. A community event may serve to provide information, motivate parents, bring allies together, increase awareness of your program in your community, announce a campaign launch, or celebrate victories.

Goals

A community event must have goals in order to measure success. It should have numeric goals (i.e. audience turnout, funds raised, increase in enrollment) as well as non-numeric goals (i.e. to educate the community about the issue, to raise awareness about the campaign, to celebrate a victory).

Before planning an event, you should be able to state your goal clearly: "*Gain 40 new families into our program.*" All other decisions about your event should be made with this goal in mind.

Step-By-Step: How to organize a community event

1. Logistics

- **Type of event:** There are many different formats for a successful event. The choice of format depends, in part, on the audience you want to invite. Another option for hosting an event is to host a family festival that targets families within children in the age group your program serves.
- **Co-hosts/co-sponsors:** Working with another organization to co-host or co-sponsor your event is beneficial in networking and providing wrap around services to parents and families. Collaboration provides a bigger pool for resources and potential attendees.
- **Location:** Choosing the right location for your event depends on who you'd like to attend and the particular environment you want to create. Where do people in your community already gather? Find a space that is big enough for your guests to be comfortable. Other factors to consider when selecting a space include parking, access to public transportation, and the distance your guests must travel to get there. It is a good idea to select a space that is wheelchair accessible. Here are some good potential locations for your event:

    o   Reserve a room in your local library or community center
    o   Use space available at a church, mosque, synagogue, or temple
    o   Hold the event at a local recreation center or park

2. Recruit Volunteers

Planning and running a successful event takes time and energy. You might need volunteers to make the event run smoothly. The number of volunteers you will need depends on the size and scope of your event.

Once you have your volunteers, make sure you clearly explain each of their tasks to them. One task for volunteers is to be involved with the planning and preparation for the event. Allow them to ask questions before the event so that they know what to do leading up to and on the day of your event. Most importantly, don't forget to thank your volunteers after the event is over.

3. Publicizing Your Event

- **Know Your Event:** When hosting a large public event, make sure you have planned it to be of interest to the general public. What is unique about your event? Is your event linked to a national news story? Linked to a larger event or day of action? Different "angles" will give you a "hook" to catch the interest of potential attendees and the media, who can help raise awareness about your event.
- **Make Your Event Plan:** Having focused on your audience and your event, you are now ready to make your publicity plan. This should include a calendar listing all relevant deadlines, such as for publications (newspapers, magazines, events listings, etc.), as well as "lead times" required for printing and distributing flyers, posters, invitations, and programs.
- **Decide on your "look":** All your materials should have a consistent theme and share similar design elements that highlight the message of your event.
- **Put someone in charge:** Publicity by committee is rarely successful. Although several volunteers may help with tasks, make sure that one person is responsible for executing your plan.
- **The Five W's:** In everything you produce—flyers, posters, e-invites, news alerts, event listings— you must have the correct 5 W's:

  - o   Who will be speaking
  - o   What will they be addressing
  - o   When will it happen
  - o   Where will it take place
  - o   Why your program is sponsoring the event

  Every publicity piece must have this information. You can be brief, but make sure it is accurate and exact—time, address, directions, etc. In addition, most publicity should have contact information where people can get additional information.

Publicity Tactics

The most typically used publicity pieces include:

- **Flyers:** Often simple 8 x 11 reproductions, flyers can be posted in high-traffic locations distributed at booths at fairs, your agency lobby, via email and social media and community meetings. Some additional targets include:

    o   Campuses
    o   Shopping centers
    o   Libraries
    o   Local businesses
    o   Movie theaters
    o   Sports stadiums
    o   Doctor's offices

    Make sure to pay attention to local rules on posting. Flyers posted in restricted areas will likely get taken down quickly. A good rule of thumb is that if you don't see any other flyers posted in an area, you probably can't hang your poster there. Stick to community bulletin boards and kiosks.

- **Newsletters:** You might advertise your event in publications from local organizations and neighborhood associations, PTAs, or local chapters of national nonprofits.
- **Websites:**

    o   Find local online calendars (these will often exist on the town website, and/or the website of the local paper).
    o   Make a Facebook event and post the event on the pages of local groups and schools.

- **Paid Advertisements:** Contact your local newspaper and the publications of nearby schools and   colleges; they often have reasonable rates.
- **Collaborate:** Having partners in your publicity effort expands the reach of your message. Ask other organizations to make announcements, send out an email about the event, or commit to bring a certain number of people to the event. Offer to do the same for them when they have their events. This helps to reach a larger audience as well as foster relationships amongst organizations and communities.
- **Community Events Calendars:** Most large regional newspapers and many local radio stations have community events listings. You might be able to have your event featured in several of these venues. If you have developed your message, and focused on your "local angle" or "hook," these media will be more likely to select your event for publication.

- **Follow Up:** If your event is worth publicizing, it's also worth reporting on. Invite the local news media to the event to try to get them to write a story about it. A small community newspaper or specialty publication, may accept a story that you write and submit – check with them on their policies. It also doesn't hurt to write a brief thank-you note to organizations or media that do feature your event in their community events calendars or other publications. Let them know how many people showed up and how well the event went. The benefit of establishing good, professional relationships with media gatekeepers will pay dividends well into the future.
- **Debrief:** What worked, and what didn't? Ask attendees how they heard about your event. The more you know about which publicity techniques worked in your area, the larger crowd you'll be able to attract to your next event. Publicity is a key step to planning a successful event and an effective tool in spreading the word, about both your event and the importance of your program.

Sample Planning Timeline

- **4-6 months before the event:**

    o Identify community partners and PEI providers that will be helping with the planning.
    o Select location, capacity, event date, time and permits if needed.
    o Decide on intended audience.
    o Consider scheduling a "rain out" date in the event of inclement weather.

- **2-4 months before the event:**

    o Plot your general program timeline including entertainment/performers.
    o Secure event co-sponsors.
    o Announce the event to your staff, families, and other partners.
    o Seek volunteers.
    o Determine appropriate promotion strategies.
    o Start planning for your promotional materials for your event 1–2 weeks or more ahead of time.
    o Submit advisory notices and information to local media and community event listings.
    o Send emails and place phone calls.
    o Post flyers.
    o Prepare checklist of necessary items (refreshments, handouts, sign-in sheet, nametags, trash and recycle receptacles, confirm permits, etc.) and begin gathering them.

- **2 days before your event:**

  o Send follow-up emails to media and attendees.
  o Make follow-up phone calls to media and attendees.
  o Finish gathering all necessary items, including food, water and supplies.
  o Confirm the date and time of your event with outside venue.
  o Draft and practice your opening remarks.
  o Plan a few items for the group discussion.
  o Confirm final tasks with volunteers.
  o Test your technology such as microphones for entertainment or performers.
  o Print handouts and materials for attendees.

- **1 day before your event:**

  o Send second advisory notice to local media outlets.
  o Set up all technical devices and test your technology.
  o Set up chairs and tables.
  o Set out handouts, sign-in sheet, pens, and name-tags.

- **Two hours before your event:**

  o Arrange refreshments.
  o Answer last-minute questions from volunteers.

STAYING ON MESSAGE

Message consistency is critical to effectively communicate to the public through the media. Whether in a media advisory, news release, or in the context of a live or recorded broadcast interview, having consistent messages strengthens the impact of your story across many media channels.

A helpful set of tools for achieving message consistency across all platforms is to develop (and periodically update) a set of key messages. Doing this early in the process can make the development of your other media relations materials more systematic, making the process run more smoothly. Your key message document can also be distributed to all key partners and members of your team who might potentially conduct media interviews. Having one key message document will help everyone and

all media-related documents stay on message, which is critical to reaching your audience in a way that advances your cause.

Conducting a Media Interview

- Always arrive prepared. Be sure you have already developed your campaign messaging and be very familiar with it so you can answer a reporter's questions naturally and comfortably. Before the interview takes place, be sure to know who will be interviewing you, what kind of stories they generally cover, and how the interview will be used.
- Practice, practice, practice. Prior to an actual media interview, conduct mock interviews with colleagues or strategic partners playing the role of media interviewer. Doing so will help you become more familiar with the material and may uncover some areas where your messaging should be tweaked or modified to be better understood by average media consumers.
- Every field has its own jargon. Avoid using it. Use language that is easily understandable to a broad audience.
- Try to make a personal connection with the reporter prior to or after the interview. This will help you feel more comfortable during the interview and could help build a valuable relationship for future media opportunities. However, don't say anything you wouldn't want broadcasted or printed, even when you think the camera is not rolling. Everything is on the record, so keep it cordial and professional.
- Steer the conversation toward your proactive messaging. If the reporter asks you a question about something that makes you uncomfortable or pulls the conversation off topic, "bridge" back to your messaging points. For example, a bridging answer might go something like this: "You know, I'm not sure about that. But what I think is most important is that families of young children know that resources are available to them to help their young children thrive…"
- Try to follow up after an interview with a quick email or note to the reporter thanking him or her for the opportunity and offer to provide any additional information. Let the reporter know that you would be happy to be of assistance on future stories as well. Also, don't be disappointed if your interview doesn't result in a story. Stories the media are working on often get bumped for major breaking news. The key is to build the positive relationship for the long haul.

TIPS: STRATEGIC MEDIA OUTREACH

- Every local media market in Texas has an enormous number of individuals and organizations trying to get their issues, activities, and events covered by the local media. To achieve a successful media outreach program, it is important to start by doing two things: establishing relationships with local media outlets and getting your message fully prepared so you'll be ready to deliver it in a succinct and compelling way.
- Develop a list of all the newspaper, television, radio, and online news outlets in your area. Focus on outlets—or specific reporters, editors, or other contacts at each outlet—with a track

record of covering education, community, or health issues. Also include names and contact information for news producers, editors, managers, writers, etc. In most cases you can find this information on each outlet's website or by calling and asking.

- After developing your media list, contact the people on the list to introduce yourself and your organization. Confirm that the contact you've reached is the best person at that news outlet to cover your issues. He or she may suggest that another contact who more closely follows your issue or that a different program or segment might present a stronger opportunity for coverage.
- List a media contact person and their contact phone number (cell phone is recommended, so they can be reached if away from their desk) as well as email address. You'll see in your Texas Prevention and Early Intervention news release template that this information appears at the top of the news release.
- Work with your community partners to identify media contacts and ways to contact them. If you're conducting a press event, it's best to distribute the news release to your entire media list earlier on the same day as the event. This ensures that media will receive your materials, even if they are unable to attend. Be prepared to distribute your news release to media representatives who attend the event as well.
- Keep organized by updating your media list and filing it in a place where anyone on your media team can find it.

TEMPLATES AND EXAMPLES

The following templates and examples will help you in your outreach efforts.

Message Points Template

The first step is to prepare key message points, sometimes called talking points. These key messages are what you want the news media to know about your program and related issues and to include in their stories. Preparing key messages points allows everyone who is communicating with the news media (or with anyone else) to consistently cover the most important points and stay on message.

KEY MESSAGE POINTS EXAMPLE

[YOUR ORGANIZATION]
Key Message Points

Parent Audience

- [PROGRAM YOU ARE ASSOCIATED WITH] pairs interested parents with a specially trained staff member of [ORGANIZATION NAME] who will visit their home to provide support and information about being a good parent.
- The free service is available to [ORGANIZATION'S TARGET AUDIENCE]. Participation is voluntary.

- [INSERT 1-2 SENTENCES DESCRIBING ACTIVITIES AND PRIORITIES SPECIFIC TO YOUR AREA]
- [INSERT 1-2 SENTENCES ABOUT SPECIFIC PROGRAMS YOU ARE IMPLEMENTING] e.g. NFP, HIPPY, Help and Hope, HIP, etc. (Just remember to avoid acronyms on first reference when addressing the public)
- A child's early years are critical for development of intelligence, health, and social skills.
- Studies have shown that children who participate in a high quality, proven home visiting program score 25 percent higher on reading and math achievement tests in the first, second, and third grades.
- Parents can register for the program by visiting [INSERT APPLICABLE WEBSITE] or sending an email to [INSERT EMAIL HERE]

Youth/Family Audience

- [PROGRAM YOU ARE ASSOCIATED WITH] youth engagement is a shift in thinking that challenges us to look at youth differently and include their voices and input into plans, strategies, and services to support them.
- [ORGANIZATION NAME] implements youth engagement strategies and views youth not as being "at risk," or a set of problems to be fixed, but as resilient, resourceful people who can partner with adults in a joint effort to solve community problems.
- [ORGANIZATION'S TARGET AUDIENCE] plays a critical role in promoting youth engagement. [INSERT 1-2 SENTENCES DESCRIBING ACTIVITIES AND PRIORITIES SPECIFIC TO YOUR AREA]
- [INSERT 1-2 SENTENCES ABOUT SPECIFIC PROGRAMS YOU ARE IMPLEMENTING]
- For more information on whether or not you qualify for [ORGANIZATION NAME] services please contact the [PROGRAM YOU ARE ASSOCIATED WITH] in your city.
- Families and individuals can register for the program by visiting [INSERT APPLICABLE WEBSITE] or sending an email to [INSERT EMAIL HERE].

Media Advisory Template

A media advisory is an invitation for the media to attend and cover a newsworthy event promoting Texas Prevention and early Intervention or an important local program or event. It could be a press conference, the launch of a new program, or a community meeting letting parents and expectant parents know about your range of services. A media advisory advises the media that they should consider attending your event and covering your activities. Media advisories follow a standard, simple format. They provide the four Ws (What, When, Where, and Who) of your media event. However, a media advisory doesn't tell your story in full detail the way your news release does. It provides just enough to get the media interested in covering your event. To that end, it should briefly describe why your event is important to the community.

Media advisories are usually short and direct (almost never more than one page). They are written in future tense since they are describing an event that has yet to happen. After a compelling headline and

a short, descriptive paragraph or two about the event, then list the What, When, Where, and Who of the event, plus any visuals the media can expect to capture on video or still photography if they attend. After completing your media advisory, email or fax it to media outlets on your media list. If you are working with partner organizations, you may ask them whether they have any strong existing relationships with members of the local media. If so, they might reach out to those contacts to help ensure the strongest media attendance at your event.

For many people who haven't worked with the media before, the idea of picking up the phone or drafting an email to the media regarding their event can seem a little daunting. The key to "pitching" your event to the media is to be prepared prior to your call or email outreach. Realize that reporters are very busy and that you need to be able to share with them, in as concise a way as possible, the reason your event or story is relevant to their audience and why it is an important topic for the community. Make clear to media representatives that supporting families with small children is something that directly impacts many people and indirectly affects the entire community.

Tips for "Pitching" Your Event or Story to the Media

- Practice your "pitch" with your team or key partners. Do a run-through call as though they were the media and try to succinctly explain the relevance of your upcoming event or story idea.
- When you do reach out to media contacts, confirm that they received your media advisory and ask them whether they would like additional information.
- Your pitch to the media can be made either by phone or email. As you reach out to members of the media, make a note about the way each prefers to be contacted.
- Be persistent, and don't get discouraged if media don't attend your event. The media receive numerous story and event suggestions every day, and they have to make tough choices about what to cover. If you don't receive the level of media interest you'd hoped for, try again.

MEDIA ADVISORY TEMPLATE

(INSERT DATE]   CONTACT: [INSERT CONTACT NAME]
                                             [INSERT CONTACT PHONE NUMBER)
                                             [INSERT CONTACT EMAIL ADDRESS]

[INSERT ORGANIZATION NAME] to Promote Early Learning
for Young [INSERT CITY]-Area Children and their Families

Texas Home Visiting offers support for expectant parents
and families with young children

[INSERT CITY]. Texas-[INSERT ORGANIZATION NAME] is holding a (INSERT TYPE OF EVENT] on
[INSERT DATE] at (INSERT LOCATION! as a way to let parents of young children know about the free
service that is available to them through Texas Home Visiting.

The event will highlight the important steps expectant parents and families with young children can
take lo prepare them for success later in life as well as highlight [INSERT CITY]-area resources. [INSERT
SHORT SENTENCE OR TWO THAT PROVIDES DETAILS OF THE EVENT ACTIVITIES. KEY SPEAKERS, ETC]

Studies have shown that children who participate in high quality, proven home visiting programs
score 25 percent higher on first, second, and third grade reading and math achievement tests. Home
visiting studies also show reductions in low birth-weight babies, child maltreatment, and juvenile
arrests as well as improved educational and employment outcomes for parents.

Texas Home Visiting is designed to help children reach their full potential in nurturing family and
community environments by providing evidence-based home visiting services.

Services are available to pregnant women and families with young children from birth through
Kindergarten entry. The program is funded by the Texas Department of Family and Protective
Services through a grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. More information
on the program may be found at http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/prevention_and_early_intervention/.

What: (INSERT BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF EVENT, INCLUDING TYPE OF EVENT)
When: (INSERT DATE AND TIME OF EVENT)
Where: [INSERT LOCATION OF EVENT INCLUDING COMPLETE PHYSICAL ADDRESS]
Who: [INSERT LIST OF SPEAKERS BY NAME. ORGANIZATION REPRESENTING,]
Visuals: [BRIEFLY DESCRIBE ANY EVENT VISUALS THAT MIGHT MAKE INTERESTING -
               VIDEO OR PICTURES]

                                        ###
For more information, call [INSERT CONTACT NAME AND NUMBER].

[IF DESIRED INCLUDE SHORT PARAGRAPH OF BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT
YOUR ORGANIZATION]

News Release Template

Your organization's effort is worthy of coverage in your local media because of the positive impact it will have on so many children and families as well as the entire community. A news release is an important tool for informing the media about your efforts. Media outlets often rely on news releases to learn about events, community activities, and stories that otherwise they may not know about.

This toolkit includes a template news release that your organization can use as a starting point for developing your own news release. Look at the template to get a sense for formatting and style and adapt it to your own particular needs, including filling in the highlighted blanks. Whether your news release is completely different or remains very close to the template provided, it is important that you communicate consistent messaging and distribute your news release to the media most likely to cover your story.

NEWS RELEASE TEMPLATE

FOR MORE INFORMATION   **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**
Contact: [NAME]   [DAY, AND DATE]
[PHONE NUMBER]
[EMAIL ADDRESS]

[Effective Headline Draws Audience Interest]

[Make a simple, precise headline, and expand with a subtitle here if needed]

[CITY], Texas. Your lead paragraph should cover "who, what, where, when, and why or how". If someone stops reading after the opening paragraph, they should still have a basic idea of what you want to share.

Beginning with the second paragraph, detail facts in descending order of importance. You want to lead with the information that you most want people to learn.

"A quote from a subject matter expert adds credibility and authority to other statements in the release," said [YOUR SPOKESPERSON'S FULL NAME, TITLE]. "This is an opportunity to introduce the audience to someone in your organization."

What other details could bolster the message of your press release? Depending on the purpose of your release, there are many pieces of relevant information you can share.

"A quote also gives you a chance to break from the factual tone of a press release," said [SPOKESPERSON'S LAST NAME ONLY, UNLESS USING A SECOND SPOKESPERSON]. "If a quote is powerful, news outlets will be more likely to use it."

If appropriate, include your organization's website, or a different useful resource page. If releasing electronically, use a link but type the URL out for people who might see a printed copy.

Always close by reiterating the point of contact for reporters to reach out to for more information.

Letter to the Editor

A letter to the editor can be an effective way for your organization to weigh in on timely issues that matter to the community. To be most effective, have a subject matter authority—ideally a local figure who readers will view as a reliable source of information—write the letter.
Letters to the editor are usually short (200 words or less), direct, and informative. We've provided a template that may help you with style and approach. The goal is for the reader to feel engaged, interested, and informed and know how to find additional information on the subject.

Letter to the Editor Tips

- Start by deciding who in your organization or strategic partner organization should author the letter. Who would most likely be recognized as a community leader? Who would be seen as a credible source for this kind of information? Connect to a timely "hook," either something in the news about early childhood development or youth and families or perhaps some new data that speaks to the benefits of prevention and early intervention or outlines the compelling need.
- Again, keep your letter short. Lengths vary from one publication to another, but usually 200 words or less is preferred.
- Close in a compelling way and with a call to action. Invite your reader to get involved or learn more by going to your website, spreading the word to families they know who might benefit from prevention and early intervention services.
- Many publications accept letter-to-the-editor submittals online through their website. However, you may want to write a brief "pitch" email to accompany your letter and send it directly to the editor who handles letters. Whatever submittal method you choose, make a point to follow up to be sure the publication received your submission.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR EXAMPLE

Editor's Name
Newspaper's Name
Newspaper's Address

Dear Editor:

There are many reasons that you might choose to write a letter to your local newspaper. Generally, though, you will want a timely hook to drive your point home. Is it an awareness month? Do you have recent statistics that were released that you can share? Is there a news story you can point to as an example of your message?

First, check your newspaper's website for the editorial page. There will likely be guidelines, and maybe even an online submission form you can use. Take some time to look through previous letters to the editor to determine the kind of content the paper likes to run.

If your reason for the letter is a national observance, find a way to localize your message. What is your organization doing about the issue? Are any community partners doing good work that you can praise?

Include any relevant follow-up information the audience may need. Is there an event they can attend, or a site they can visit? For instance, as a provider, you can check out the Help and Hope Community Resources site - http://www.helpandhope.org/How_You_Can_Help/Community_Resources/

Finally, make sure to get to the point quickly. A letter to the editor should, at most, only be around 250 words. That should be plenty to inform the newspaper's readers while holding their attention to the end.

Sincerely,
Your Name
Your Organization

BRANDING AND LOGO USAGE

Using Your Brand

Whether it is on social media, pamphlets and other physical products, or even speaking publicly, it is important to keep in mind that you are always representing your organization's brand. A well-placed message that an audience identifies with because you have a strong brand can be the difference that gets your services to those who need it. These guidelines are designed to help your brand flourish as you interact with your community:

TEXAS
Department of Family and Protective Services

- Develop a consistent voice for your organization. While tone might be different when talking to specific groups or on social media, don't forget the big picture and values that drive your program.
- Be visually consistent, too. Stick to as few visual representatives of your organization as possible. This includes not only making your logo clear and strategically placed, but also using a familiar color scheme across products.
- Make sure your whole team is on the same page. A style guide that your staff can refer to when speaking publicly or making products ensures that multiple people are speaking with one voice. Putting together a style guide also gives you the chance to reflect on what aspects of your organization are most important to communicate through branding.
- Consult with partners. If you are part of a joint initiative, make sure you are looping in partners when branding materials (press releases, flyers, talking points, etc.) Likewise, provide your own branding expectations to your partners for their awareness.
- Patience is a virtue, especially with branding. Creating a respected, recognizable brand is playing the long game. Do not oversaturate your market in a scramble to raise awareness, as that can backfire and frame you as a nuisance.

Use of Program Specific Logos

PEI contracts with community-based programs and agencies to provide a variety of services that help prevent abuse, neglect, delinquency, and truancy of Texas children. Given the nature of community-based services, the public may recognize the program and its services by another brand and logo and not by the PEI program logo.

Use of the DFPS Logo

At times your partnership with DFPS may be something you want to share to lend a sense of collaboration to a project or initiative. This may be a situation where you want to co-brand with DFPS.

If that is the case, please just keep in mind these guidelines for use of the DFPS logo:

- PEI providers must not use the DFPS logo on public facing materials created for clients. This includes, but is not limited to, brochures, posters, and flyers created for individuals and families.
- Providers must have permission from the DFPS Office of Communications, either directly or indirectly through your PEI specialist, to use the DFPS logo. This includes the DFPS/PEI logo lock-up.
- The DFPS logo must be used in whole (icon and text), with no additions, deletions, substitutions or modifications.
- Except for resizing, the DFPS logo must not be altered in any way.
- Resizing of the logo must be done proportionally by holding down the shift key or adjusting the size in the File properties. Never compress or stretch the logo to fit, which can distort it.
- The color version of the logo must appear on a light background, preferably white, for optimum legibility without color distortion.
- Use the version of the logo that best contrasts with the background.
- The logo should have generous margins of clear space around it. It should not be crowded by other elements on the page.
- The DFPS logo should not be boxed, encircled with a line or otherwise crowded.

SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDE

Step 1: Internal Assessment

Before incorporating social media into your organizations' communications plan, ask the following questions:

What do you hope to achieve? Example of goals might be:

- To engage coalition members and empower them with data, benefits, and news.
- To share best practices and build your base of supporters.
- To drive visitors to your website to learn more about our services.

Do you have the ability to manage and monitor social networks effectively?

Do you have the time and resources to dedicate to social media to keep the content fresh and relevant?

If the answer to these last two questions is "no," it is best not to proceed until you can allocate adequate resources to manage social media effectively.

Who's your primary audience?

This might include community partners, civic leaders, educators, and direct populations in the communities you serve. What's important to them and how will your content address their needs or interests? Items of importance to the target might include:

- Evidenced-based data.
- Program improvements, impacts, special efforts.
- Success stories.
- Helpful resources and information.
- Event promotion.

There are multiple ways to approach social media.

- **Create and manage your own social media profile(s).** This approach takes more time and effort to build a following. Be sure to incorporate a plan to drive stakeholders to the profile to expand the reach of your efforts.
- **Form partnerships with organizations that already manage social media profiles reaching a similar target audience.** With this approach, you can amplify your efforts by leveraging an existing network of followers as a distribution channel. Here the focus is on creating web-friendly content for partners to post on their profiles. Content can include pre-written tweets, Facebook images, and other social media posts. Example partners could include local nonprofits, school districts, civic leaders, and members of the media who cover education, community news, or stories about families or parenting.

Step 2: Planning

Next, create a written plan. Identify the social network(s) that work best for your organization and the audience you're trying to reach and engage. Do your research online before deciding on your platform(s). Platforms you may consider, include:

- **Facebook:** The most popular social network on the web, with over 2 billion monthly active users. This platform allows organizations to reach a wide range of ages (18-65) in both female and male populations.
- **YouTube:** After Google, YouTube is the second largest search engine and is slowly becoming more popular than TV. YouTube reaches more 18-34 and 35-49 year old than any cable network in the U.S.
- **Instagram:** One of the fastest growing photo sharing social network platforms in 2018. It is generally a younger platform, where the vast majority of users are 35 years or younger. This platform could be ideal for engaging with youth and younger populations.
- **Twitter:** One of the most oversaturated platforms with breaking news and trending information. There are over 300 million monthly unique users who are mostly between the ages of 18-29. The platform can also be good for connecting with other similar orgs and stakeholders. Reporters also use and monitor Twitter.

- **Snapchat:** On a daily basis there are about 3 Billion snaps created every day on this platform. This platform is another photo sharing and storytelling platform dominated by younger populations. In the U.S. about 78 percent of 18-24 year olds use Snapchat.

The following are items that need to be established in a formal plan before launching a page/account:

- Establish goals and objectives for each social media platform you plan to use.
- Define your target audience(s) and what you know about them.
- Decide on the type of content your organization will be sharing with audiences.

Produce an arsenal of content before launching any pages and consider using a content calendar template to make scheduling easy and organized. Establish a post schedule for each platform. How often will you post? What times? What tools can you use to schedule content in advance? How will content be managed and by whom? Having a dedicated person or team of people will make things more efficient.

Establish a policy for handling negative or potentially controversial comments.

Establish policy for posting photos, videos, and externally submitted content. Topics to address should include obtaining releases for permission to use photos/video and giving credit for third-party photos. Define an internal approval process for vetting content in terms of appropriateness, accuracy, legality, and/or potential liability concerns. Tip: when in doubt, leave it out.

Create a strategy and tactics for generating awareness about your social media (SM) pages. Examples:

- Adding SM buttons/icons to your website
- Encouraging all staff to participate by following the organization on social media
- Leveraging existing online audiences from other partners and stakeholders who have a presence
- Email blasts to contacts requesting likes or followers
- Provide possible incentives
- Dedicate funds to advertising online
- Provide incentives for becoming a fan/following/liking page

Decide how your organization plans to integrate social media into the overarching organizational structure. Examples:

- Include SM branding on print materials and consistently throughout promotional materials
- Encourage staff to mention and plug SM pages during face to face interactions
- Incorporate SM activities during special organizational events so that users can participate
- Use SM as another tool to promote important organizational messages and information to audiences
- Use SM as a way to collect feedback from audiences about how your organization can make improvements

Social Media and Family Privacy

As providers of social services, we know that respecting privacy is crucial. Some children or families may be victims of abuse, domestic violence, or stalking. Their privacy can be critical to their survival and chances for success. Social media and the act of sharing information on their whereabouts or activities could potentially put them at risk of harm. Be absolutely certain before posting any information, photos, or videos of an individual or family that you have written permission from the individual or parent/legal guardian. Also, be sure that you have written permission from the internal leadership of your organization. If the risk is there, do not post or share such content under any circumstances.

Step 3: Creating an Editorial Content Calendar

This is the "blueprint" that lists content you plan to post on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis. Your content schedule should be integrated with your organization's other communications and outreach efforts. Monthly content calendars are standard, allowing the content manager to plan on a 30-day basis and to adjust as needed.

Types of content used in social media:

- **Engagement:** These are posts that include comments and questions that elicit conversation.
- **News:** This can include awards, expanded service offerings, notification of important milestones and events, or achievements of your organization, constituents, or supporters.
- **Data/Statistics:** This is information relevant to your message, services, purpose, or audience. Think about what would make it most compelling for the audience – for example, adding a graphic or image to help tell the story.
- **Videos:** These can illustrate an important aspect of your message or mission. Be careful to only use videos if you have obtained the proper approvals and releases. Be sure to give credit to the source of the material.
- **Tip:** Using a YouTube channel to host your original video content can help you contribute content across social media platforms.
- **Photos:** Be sure to secure proper releases and credit before using.
- **Polling:** Social media can be a great tool for gauging your core audience's opinions and beliefs.
- **Contests:** These can be helpful in generating more followers, conversation, or content such as photos, videos, or stories. For any contest, post rules should cover eligibility requirements, timeframe, procedure for selecting and notifying winner(s), and the awarding of prize(s).

TIP: With all content, it is important to think of the audience and what will make the message most interesting to them. This increases the chances people will share or retweet the message within their own social networks. That's where the power of social media lies.

Step 4: Implementation

Now that you've determined your plan, identified your goals and audience, and the type of content you will use, and created a content calendar – you're ready to set up your social network(s).

Creating your social media accounts/pages is a straightforward part of the social media process. Each site gives simple step-by step instructions that require an email address and password to set up the account.

TIP: Make sure the log in credentials you create for each account are documented and easily accessible for all staff involved. Also make sure you create the account based on an organization email account and that more than one person is an administrator. That way if the primary administrator leaves your organization, another administrator can remove that person's access and assign another co-administrator.

The next step is to create a profile. This is information about the entity or brand that you want to promote and other information you want the public and followers to know. Images, logos, and other assets that help to identify your organization can be added and updated as needed. Make sure the look of your profile is consistent with your organization's brand and as consistent as possible across all the platforms. Be sure to refer to your organizations brand or style guide, if it has one, to ensure proper use of logo and colors.

TIP: When writing profile information and descriptions refer to your organization's website and repurpose existing information so that the message is consistent across platforms. Once the social page is set up and shareable icons have been added to your organization's website, your primary administrator can implement the content calendar, monitor the activity, and thoughtfully respond to posts as needed.

Step 5: Tracking, Measurement, and Evaluation

As your social network gains fans and followers, it is important to track the number of users on a monthly basis, analyzing trends in growth and attrition. Most social media platforms provide analytics for your page. Review this data on a monthly basis and document this information to help track page progress and success.

> **TIP:** Analytics data can expire after a period of time so be sure to create a spreadsheet or something similar to document analytics results regularly throughout the year.

Questions to consider:

- Did something spur an uptick in growth or result in a decline, and is that something that can or should be replicated going forward?
- Are certain topics or types of content more engaging than others? What are some ideas to create more of the kinds that generate more engagement?
- Are the current social media policies in place adequate? Have circumstances arisen that were not addressed in the plan? If so, it may be necessary to make additions to the overall social media plan or strategy.

In any marketing program, it is critical to social media efforts to look at what is working and how to build upon successful results to engage with your constituency and continue attracting followers.

After one year, it is also important for your organization to look at how the program is tracking relative to the overarching goals and to evaluate whether it is providing a return on the investment of time and resources.
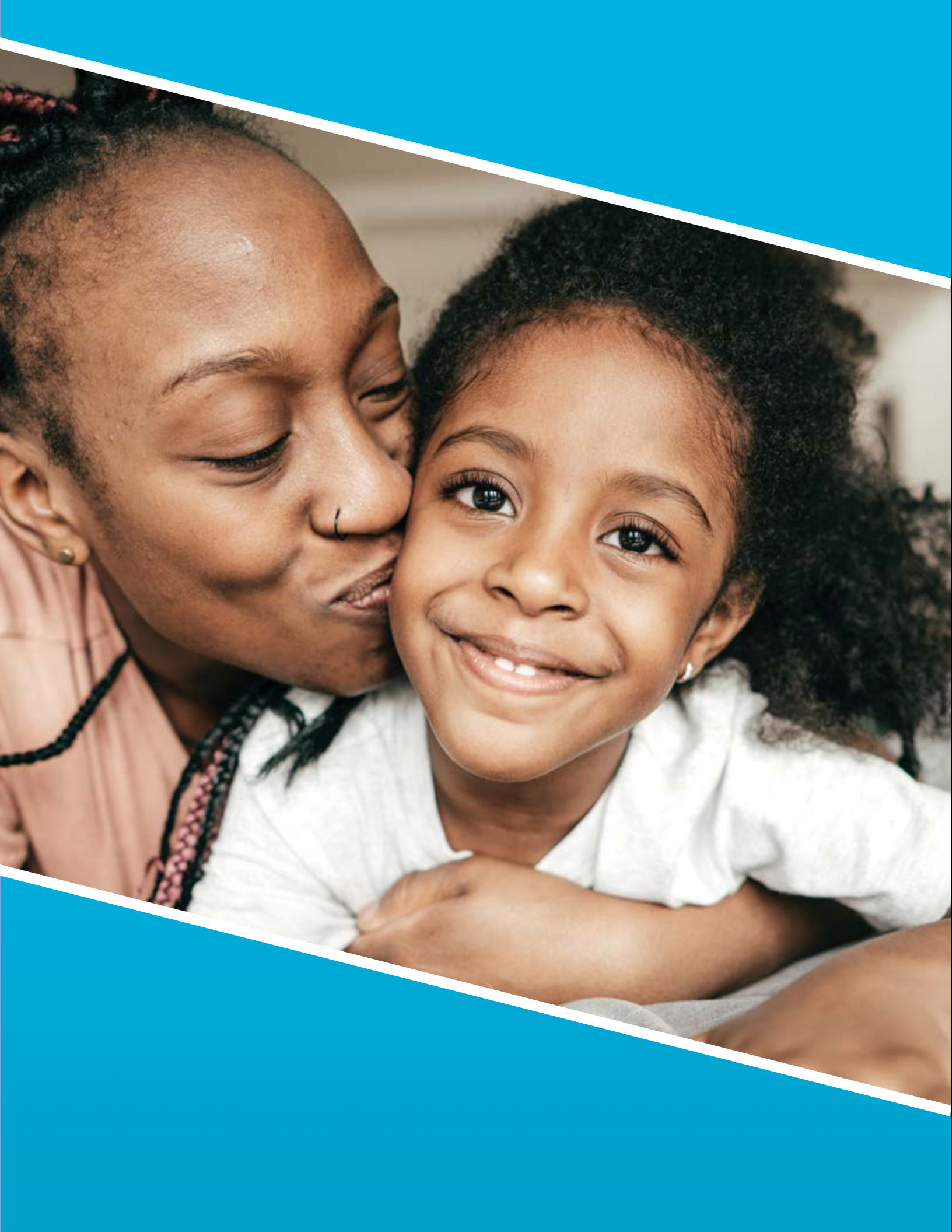
COMMUNICATIONS PLANNING

WHY INVEST TIME IN COMMUNICATIONS PLANNING?

Creating a communications plan presents you and your partners with an opportunity to commit to your ongoing success as a team. A plan consolidates your voice and helps you choose how to approach your community. As you launch your initiative, you will need to engage different audiences to participate in your programs and services, including:

- **Parents** – to encourage participation in programs for themselves and their child's various stages in life.
- **Teachers or principals** – to get buy-in and create enthusiasm about collaborating with your organization.
- **District leaders or school boards** – to update them on your work and its role in supporting children before and after they enter school.
- **Faith-based organizations** – to help educate the community about opportunities for partnership and to identify families that could benefit from services.
- **Health-care providers** – to serve as a referral source, provide health-care resources, and provide training on health-care services.

A well-conceived communications plan can do much more than simply get the word out to your community. It can help you achieve your program's goals. It can establish and deepen partnerships for sustainability. A plan can help you make the most of limited resources by being strategic about your communications activities. The work you do up front in communications planning can produce focused and meaningful future results.

It's never too early – or too late – to think strategically about your communications and begin the planning process. Your communications plan can be an important tool in elevating awareness and understanding of the benefits of prevention and early intervention and ultimately, in strengthening the impact of programs in your community.

Using This Toolkit

This workbook and its six-step process will provide guidance and worksheets for completing the first four steps. These steps represent the strategic component of your plan. The workbook also provides an understanding of steps 5 and 6—the implementation and evaluation components of your communications plan.

THE SIX-STEP COMMUNICATIONS PLANNING PROCESS

This process allows you to create actionable communications plans. Every communications plan is a living document, and its ultimate success depends on a willingness to evaluate how implementation is going and make mid-course corrections as needed.
This process will help you:

1. **(Step 1)** Set measurable communications goals and objectives.
2. **(Step 2)** Define your intended audiences.
3. **(Step 3)** Develop your messages to those intended audiences.
4. **(Step 4)** Select the best ways to deliver those messages.
5. **(Step 5)** Create an action plan for delivering your messages and materials.
6. **(Step 6)** Implement, evaluate, and modify the plan.

STEP 1: Assessment And Goal Setting

The first step in developing your communications plan is to assess your current situation and determine what you hope to accomplish.

First, ask the right questions. Questions help you and your organization identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats facing your communications plan. The answers will provide you with a strong reality check and will include both the hard truths as well as the intangibles surrounding your plan.

Assess Situation and Establish Need
Here is a list of the types of questions you should consider as you work through the first step of the Six-Step Communications Planning Process.

- How do you currently communicate about your programs?
- What seems to be working?
- What are your good ideas that keep getting pushed to the backburner?
- How many referral sources do you have?
- How do people in your community know about your programs or services?
- What are you trying to accomplish with your programs?
- What are your community's beliefs about the issues you are addressing through your program?
- How would you describe the current level of support for your programs?
- Are your programs and services on track for successful implementation?
- Have your partners embraced the program as well as their roles and responsibilities?
- What communications resources do you already have at your disposal to move your communications plan forward?

List Your Resources

What staff or contractors are available to develop the communications plan?

Which partners are already involved in similar efforts? In what ways might we collaborate?

Are there other funding or volunteer resources for marketing and outreach?

Establish Communications Goals and Objectives

Effective communications can be crucial to the success of your efforts and to creating lasting systems change. Setting appropriate and measurable strategic communications goals will help you get there.

Your communications goals should:

- Support your programmatic objectives.
- Help sustain your program.
- Promote systems change.

Set communications goals that:

- Seek to engage, raise awareness, and ultimately change behavior.
- Persuade others to take action on your behalf, whether by enrolling in your program or supporting your sustainability efforts.
- Are realistic.
- You can measure so you'll know when you've succeeded.

For example:

If your programmatic goals and activities include "Improve school readiness of all incoming elementary students," then specific communications goals could include:

- Introducing your program's services to the community.
- Hosting an annual family fun fair to promote early childhood development.
- Building a business-community initiative devoted to supporting the ongoing sustainability of your programs.
- Convincing health-care providers and faith-based organizations to refer patients and families to your program.
- Encouraging parents and community partners to participate in the family fun fair.
- Communicating to local businesses the importance of a well-educated workforce to your community's economic development.

Remember: Communications goals are not tactics!

Too often, we make the mistake of thinking that a communications goal is to "create a brochure" or "send out a quarterly newsletter." Great ideas, perhaps, but they're not goals. These are tactics that may or may not be helpful in your efforts to educate, engage, and generate buy-in from audiences.

We'll take a look at ideas and tactics—like these and others in Step 4. For now, take a step back, think strategically, and create those goals!

Communication Goals

Goals	Prioritize 1-5

STEP 2: Audience Identification

Who do you need to reach in order to accomplish your goals?
Now that you have identified your communications goals, it's time to identify the specific audiences you need to reach for each goal. To put it another way, it's time to make a list of who else needs to be informed and involved.

Using the worksheet, write your top priority goal/objective and list potential target audiences beneath. Remember, each goal—whether it is for current enrollment or ongoing program sustainability—will

have specific audiences you need to reach. There could be some overlap in audience selection, but you will need to create a separate communications strategy for each goal. Be sure to make copies of these worksheets as you work through this planning process for each listed goal.

Goals/Objective	
Audience 1	
Audience 2	
Audience 3	

Next, Segment Your Audiences

Segmenting your audiences is a critical – and often overlooked – step to creating communication messages and materials that resonate.

Let's say you're working with your partners to increase the number of new moms and preschool-aged students who participate in early childhood programs, and your communication goal is to persuade families to enroll in a prevention and early intervention program. One intended audience clearly would be parents, but not all parents will share the same level of interest in the program.

To create the most effective communication strategy, segment your broader intended audience into subgroups based on their needs, values, or mission. For example:

- Working parents
- Single parents
- Parents who speak a language other than English
- Teen parents

Breaking your general audience into subgroups helps you craft messages and materials that are specifically tailored to them.

Then, Prioritize Your Audience Segments

You may now find that instead of communicating to all parents, you really need to communicate to *four key segments* of parents. This may seem as though your work has increased, but it really has not. You can prioritize your intended audience segments and focus your efforts on those groups at the top of your list.

To help in this process, ask yourself which segment is most likely to give the support you need. Who needs to be reached first? Which segment's mission most closely resembles yours?

Directions:

- Write your highest priority communications goal at the top of this worksheet.
- In the first column, list up to three intended audiences you need to reach for this goal.
- For your top priority audience, identify up to four audience segments and prioritize each segment. (Additional goal sheets for multiple communications goals are available at the back of the workbook.)

Audience Goal/Segment Table *(Use one worksheet per goal)*

Goal:

Intended Audiences (listed in order of priority for this goal)	Audience Segments

Now, what do you know about your audience segments?

Once you've identified and prioritized your intended audience segments, learn as much as you can about their missions, values, beliefs, and goals. What sources of information do they trust? Are they aware of your program's work and supportive of it? Which parts of your goals align with their concerns? What's the best way to reach them?

It's impossible to know too much about your intended audiences, and all your findings will assist you in creating messages and materials that are more likely to persuade them to take the desired action.

Finally, how will the intended audience want to see your message presented?
No matter which goal you're trying to accomplish, or which audience segment you've set to reach, you will have more success if the information you present is:

- Easy to understand for *them*.
- Relevant and timely to *them*.
- Aesthetically appealing to *them*.
- Supported by local data that makes sense to *them*.
- Delivered by a source that's trustworthy to *them*.

With all that you've already learned about your intended audience, you'll have an easier time assessing which kinds(s) of messages and delivery methods work best.

Reach out directly to you your audience to identify which methods. Make a public survey through a site like Survey Monkey or Google Forms, then share the link with families you work with. You can email it, post it to social media, or even create a QR code through goo.gl to put it on printed material. Audience feedback will help you present information as you move forward.

Segment Audiences
Directions:

- Write your top priority audience segment at the top of the worksheet.
- In the PROFILE section, indicate as much as you know about the audience segment.
- Use the MESSAGE DELIVERY PREFERENECES section to identify what you believe will be the best methods for effectively delivering your messages to your audience segment.

Audience Segment:

Profile Section	
Areas of concern:	Shared values:
Benefits to *them:*	Barriers to overcome:
Trusted sources of information (include individuals):	Other (e.g., key dates such as budget deadlines):

Message Delivery Preferences: *(circle all that apply)*

Face-to-Face Meeting	Group Presentation	Public Testimony
Charts/Graphs	Social Math Examples	PowerPoint Presentation
Narrative Report	Fact Sheets/Program Profiles	Newsletter/E-newsletter
Brochure	Website	Social Media
Media Coverage	Email	Other:

STEP 3: Message Development

Communicate Key Concepts to Influence the Audience to Take Action

Messages can be *informative* (convey new facts to raise awareness) or *persuasive* (alter attitudes, change behavior or persuade action). They can be used as the basis of talking points, presentation, one-on-one discussions, or any other materials or tactics intended for your audiences.

For example, an overarching message running through all your materials might be that supporting your initiative's sustainability efforts is an investment in your community. The concept of investment could resonate with several different audiences, all of whom are affected by tight budgets and limited resources. For each intended audience, effective messages:

- Convey the relevance of your programs to *your audience's* values and priorities.
- Show the urgency of the program by relating it to core concerns in their lives.
- Put a face on the issue or program.
- Motivate them to think, feel, and act.
- Use language that is as free of as much technical, scientific, or bureaucratic jargon as possible.
- Make complete sense to them.

Four Components of an Effective Message

Developing messages that resonate deeply with your audiences is challenging. However, you can create four simple message components that can be mixed and matched to meet the needs of any audience for any purpose.

These components:

- Provide a frame for your message that is based on your audience's shared values.
- Outline the benefits to your audience.
- Identify and overcome any barriers your audience may have.
- Provide a call to action, or next steps, that you want your audience to take.

Use Values to Frame Your Message

A message *frame* provides a context through which your audience can easily understand your issues. A successful message frames your issues in the context of a value that your audience cares about. This significantly improves the likelihood that your audience will truly hear you because it illustrates that you and your audience share the same vision for your community and its future.

To craft a frame based on values, consider how your audience might answer this question: "What kind of world/community do we want to live in?" Look at the table below for a small sample of the kinds of values that might be most important to your audience. As you consider what value to choose for your message frame, remember that your answer should be indisputably true *for your audience.* It should represent the big dream that *they* hold dear.

What kind of community do we want to live in? A community that is…

Values Table:

Thoughtful	Caring	Safe	Honest	Just
Diverse	Healthy	Respectful	Creative	Successful
Responsible	Fair	Optimistic	Wise	Hopeful
Equitable	Realistic	Educated	Family-focused	Authentic

By framing your messages with shared values, you establish immediate consensus with audiences, increasing the chances that the rest of your message will be well-received.

Outline Your Benefits

Individuals in different audience groups will want an understanding of how the ideas in your message will benefit them, so be able to clearly define them in language that will makes sense to them. When considering how your program benefits your audiences, it helps to ask yourself whether you have ideas that will help solve a problem for them:

- School board members might provide more support once they understand the published data showing higher student test scores for children participating in early childhood programs.
- A local business might agree to provide refreshments or a location for your parent meetings in return for the free promotion you can give it at your events with signage and mentions in your newsletters and website.
- Your local law enforcement agency might be able to reduce the number of child abuse cases by working with you on an outreach campaign focused on dealing with stress experienced by new parents.

Overcoming Barriers

Your audience will probably have reservations about what you are offering in your message, and these reservations, or barriers, and you need to overcome these barriers before your audience will say "yes." Audiences may feel that you are asking something that seems too expensive or too time-consuming. It may not seem realistic or meaningful to them. This is your opportunity to explain how you are asking something that is easy for them to do.

As you develop the message components that outline your benefits and overcome their barriers, don't forget to review the findings you capture in this section—this will help you keep your focus on your audience's needs, wants, and preferences as you craft language. Both of these message components are also a natural fit for including specific quantitative data, anecdotes, or social math that will resonate with your audience and help make your case.

Call to Action

Now that you have delivered a compelling and customized message, what would you like your audience to do next? If your audience has never heard of your program, a call to action could be to request a follow-up meeting to go into detail about your program's vision, possible community solutions, and outcomes.

Below is a list of common calls to action that may help guide your thinking:

- Volunteers needed to donate time and resources
- Enroll in a program
- Write a letter/pick up the phone on your behalf
- Visit a website for more information
- Serve on an advisory board
- Donate goods and services
- Come to a meeting
- Change a behavior

It is now time for you to construct your own message components with the worksheet below.

Message Table:

Define Communications Goal	Define Audience Segment

Message Component Table:

MESSAGE FRAME Consider: What statement can link your efforts to your audience's core values?	
OUTLINE YOUR BENEFITS Consider: How would your audience members benefit from what you're asking? Can you solve a problem for them? How will partnership with you be a "win" for them?	
OVERCOME THEIR BARRIERS Consider: How will you convince your audience that it's easy to say "yes" to your requests? (Data and stories may help you with this message component.)	
CALL TO ACTION Consider: What specific next steps do you want your audience to take?	

The four message components you have just developed will serve as the foundation of your message to your audience. Depending on the way you need to deliver your message (the next step), you will be able to integrate these message components into your materials and through your delivery channels in different ways.

A Final Word about Messages: Pretest

Even the most carefully crafted messages will not be effective if they do not resonate with your intended audience. Before moving forward to develop materials or activities, pretest your messages with your intended audiences to determine whether the messages are persuasive. Ask a few members of an intended audience for input. If you find that a particular message doesn't have the effect you envisioned, use this feedback to adjust your message *before* you create materials. This extra step could save a great deal of time and money in the end.

STEP 4: Message Delivery

Determining the most effective way(s) to reach your intended audiences means going back to the work you did in Step 3. Refresh your memory:

- What sources of information do they trust?
- Who or what might compel them to take the desired action on your behalf?
- How would they prefer to get your information?
- How and where do your intended audiences spend time?

Answers to these kinds of questions will help you deliver your messages effectively. There are other considerations as well. You need to determine how you can ensure your communication will be:

- Appropriate for your goals and intended audiences.
- Delivered to your intended audiences in a timely manner,
- Aligned with your budget and resources,
- Tailored to your intended audiences' overall perceptions about prevention and early intervention programs, parental involvement, and all other areas of concern covered by your initiative.

This step guides you to select the channels, activities, and materials you will use to deliver your message. Below are just a few examples which may be relevant to your communications plan and which could help stimulate discussion with your partners.

Channels

Communications channels carry your messages to the intended audiences. Channels take many forms, and there are numerous possibilities. Some examples of channels include:

Community centers	Nonprofit organizations	Supermarkets
Doctor's offices	Parks	Television stations
Email	Radio stations	Websites
Laundromats	Restaurants	Your organization and
Libraries	Schools	your champions
Malls	Social media	
Newspapers	Sports venues	

Activities, Events, and Materials

Activities, events, and materials are the tactics and tools used to send messages through the channels. Some possible examples include:

| **Activities and Events**	**Materials**
Community events	Bookmarks
Conferences	Community report cards
Family days	Fact sheets
Fun runs/walks	Flyers and brochures
News conferences	News releases
One-on-one meetings	Posters
Open houses	PowerPoint presentations
Public testimonies	Public service announcements
Awareness Day events	Reports
	Website

Frequency and Mix

Think for a moment about the commercial marketing world. No one ever bought a can of Coca-Cola after seeing just one television commercial. You've probably seen hundreds of commercials for Coca-Cola over the years. You've also been exposed to product placement in movies and television, store displays, billboards, magazine ads, and much more—all of it designed to make you think of Coca-Cola when you're thirsty.

When we talk about the number of times you're exposed to a product, we're talking about the "frequency." When we look at the number of different ways we're exposed to a product, we're talking about a "mix." To put it another way, consumers are persuaded to buy a Coca-Cola after they've been exposed to a lot of advertising (frequency) in a lot of ways (mix).

The same principles of commercial marketing apply to you and your program as well. You may need to make presentations to key decision-makers. You may need to tap into your champions (e.g., teachers, families, and community leaders) to speak on your behalf. You may need to work with local media to do stories on your issue. You may need to provide some or all of your audiences with materials that highlight your programs and illustrate outcomes in an easy-to-understand way.

This is what we mean by frequency and mix. As you move to the worksheet, consider any and all channels, activities, events, and materials that can help you effectively deliver your message to your intended audience.
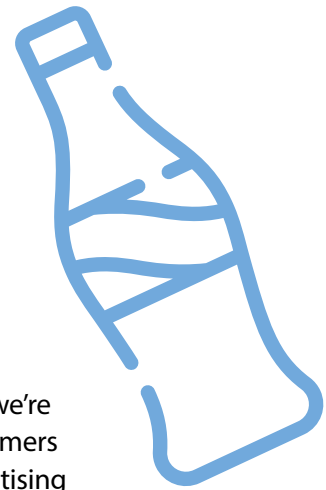
Directions:

- Once again, enter your highest priority goal at the top of this worksheet. Then identify your priority audience segment.
- Summarize your message in the appropriate space (it's okay if you can't fit it all in there—just a key point or two will help your thinking).
- Complete the worksheet to identify the channels, activities, events, or materials that will most effectively deliver your message. Consider the frequency and mix of your delivery.

Message Delivery Table 1

Goal:	
Intended Audience Segment:	
Message:	

Message Delivery Table 2

Delivery Methods	Description (Mix)	Frequency
Channel		
Activity/Event		

STEP 5: Implementation

Who is going to do the work?
A great action plan makes the best use of everyone's limited time and resources. We encourage shared participation in implementing your plan. Commitment from staff members, partners, volunteers, and champions tells your community there is wide support for your goals—and it might encourage potential new partners to get on board.

Your action plan can be as simple or as complex as your needs require, but at a minimum, it should have the following essential information:

- A listing of major activities, tasks, and subtasks
- The target date for completing each task
- The person responsible for ensuring each task is completed

Below is a sample of two tasks in a basic action plan (a blank copy is located with the other worksheets at the end of this workbook):

Task Table

Task/Subtask	Target Date	Person(s) Responsible
Parent event for Mayfest • Design flyers • Approve content/design • Print flyers • Send flyers to area organizations • Promote event at next PTA meeting • Update website with information • Email information to parents		(Add lead and team members names)
Kickoff press conference for Brain Development Summit • Write media advisory and news release • Make initial call to the local media • Assemble press kits • Send media advisory • Send press kits to media • Make follow-up calls to media		(Add lead and team members names)

Task Table *(continued)*

Task/Subtask	Target Date	Person(s) Responsible
Task: • Subtasks:		
Task: • Subtasks:		
Task: • Subtasks:		

STEP 6: Measurement

How will you know you have succeeded?

Managing a communications plan or social marketing campaign is an ongoing process. Implementation is only the beginning. Consider your communications plan to be a living document that will be revised and fine-tuned over time.

To ensure your communications and social marketing efforts are effective and successful, you must specify how and when you will evaluate, and if necessary, modify your strategy and action plan. As you roll out your communications plan, create a feedback mechanism to monitor your success. If something in your program or campaign is not working, don't worry. It's okay to make modifications to get back on track.

To evaluate the effectiveness of your communications plan, this step asks you to:

- Assess how well your goals are being met.
- Determine which messages are (and are not) resonating with your intended audiences.
- Identify the channels, materials, activities, and partnerships that are (and are not) helping you to reach and engage your intended audiences.
- Identify obstacles that you had not anticipated.
- Identify any new audiences you had not recognized when starting this planning process.
- Create or implement new strategies for reaching your goals and objectives.

Before you implement your communications plan, complete the table on the next page. These will help create a structure for measuring your results.

Measurement Table

(Data Collection Framework courtesy of CDC Division of Adolescent and School Health (DASH) Program.)

Evaluation Question What do you want to know? What information do you need?	Indicator How will you know? What observable measures will you use?	Data Source From what or from whom will you obtain the information?	Data Collector Method How will you gather the information?	Data Collection Timeline When will you gather the information
Example: What is the impact of teacher curriculum trainings for our program?	- Participants perceived confidence to teach the curriculum - Participants' skills in teaching the curriculum	Training participants Curriculum coordinator	Questionnaire Observation of teachers	[Date here} [Date here]

CONGRATULATIONS!

By working through the exercises in this book, you have made a genuine commitment to the success and long-term sustainability of your initiative. You are now thinking strategically to:

- Make the most of your available resources and your realities.
- Set realistic and actionable goals.
- Identify the specific intended audience segments that are most likely to support your efforts.
- Craft messages that resonate with those audiences.
- Deliver those messages in ways that meet the needs and preferences of your audiences.
- Make an action plan that assigns tasks and due dates.
- Implement, evaluate, and modify your plan.

Moving Forward

The communications planning process is a critical tool for providers who wish to leave a lasting footprint on their communities.

The Texas Prevention and Early Intervention program wants to support you through all of your communications efforts, from beginning to end, and provide the necessary technical assistance to help you launch, promote, and sustain your initiative.

Please feel free to contact us with any questions.

WORKSHEETS

Step 1: Assessment and Goal Setting

Worksheet – Assess Available Resources

What staff or contractors are available for the communications plan?

Which partners are already involved in similar efforts? In what ways might we collaborate?

Other funding of volunteer resources?

Step 1: Assessment and Goal Setting

Worksheet – Set Communications Goals

Goals	Prioritize 1-5

Step 2: Audience Identification

Worksheet - Identify Audiences

Goals/Objective	
Audience 1	
Audience 2	
Audience 3	

Step 2: Audience Identification

Worksheet – Audience Goals/Segments *(Use one worksheet per goal)*

Goal:

Intended Audiences (listed in order of priority for this goal)	Audience Segments

Step 2: Audience Identification

Worksheet – Profile Audiences

Audience Segment:

Profile Section	
Areas of concern:	Shared values:
Benefits to *them:*	Barriers to overcome:
Trusted sources of information (include individuals):	Other (e.g., key dates such as budget deadlines):

Message Delivery Preferences: *(circle all that apply)*

Face-to-Face Meeting	Group Presentation	Public Testimony
Charts/Graphs	Social Math Examples	PowerPoint Presentation
Narrative Report	Fact Sheets/Program Profiles	Newsletter/E-newsletter
Brochure	Website	Social Media
Media Coverage	Email	Other:

Step 3: Message Development

Worksheet – Message Components

Message Table:

Define Communications Goal	Define Audience Segment

Message Component Table:

MESSAGE FRAME Consider: What statement can link your efforts to your audience's core values?	
OUTLINE YOUR BENEFITS Consider: How would your audience members benefit from what you're asking? Can you solve a problem for them? How will partnership with you be a "win" for them?	
OVERCOME THEIR BARRIERS Consider: How will you convince your audience that it's easy to say "yes" to your requests? (Data and stories may help you with this message component.)	
CALL TO ACTION Consider: What specific next steps do you want your audience to take?	

Step 4: Message Delivery

Worksheet – Channels, Activities, and Materials

Message Delivery Table 1	
Goal:	
Intended Audience Segment:	
Message:	

Message Delivery Table 2		
Delivery Methods	**Description (Mix)**	**Frequency**
Channel		
Activity/Event		

Step 5: Implementation

Worksheet – Action Plan

Task/Subtask	Target Date	Person(s) Responsible
Task: • Subtasks:		
Task: • Subtasks:		
Task: • Subtasks:		
Task: • Subtasks:		
Task: • Subtasks:		

Step 6: Measurement

Worksheet – Data Collection Framework

Evaluation Question What do you want to know? What information do you need?	Indicator How will you know? What observable measures will you use?	Data Source From what or from whom will you obtain the information?	Data Collector Method How will you gather the information?	Data Collection Timeline When will you gather the information

Strategic Communications Planning Template

Step 1 – What are you trying to accomplish?

In a sentence or two, describe your communications objectives:

Step 2 – Who is your target audience?

What specific audiences do you need to target to achieve your goal (community organizations, parents, school district personnel)?

What do you know about your audiences? (Choose one from the list above and jot down two to three details about them, such as where they live, work, and play.)

Strategic Communications Planning Template

Step 3 – What do you need to say to them? (Messages)

Based on what you know about your audiences, what are the key concepts you must communicate to them in order to reach them? (Why would they be interested in this campaign? Are they concerned with school test scores? Community economic development? Building strong family relationships? How would this affect your messaging? Refer to the worksheets in your Strategic Planning Guide).

Step 4 – How will you deliver the message? (Communications Channels)

List the mechanisms you will use to deliver your message to your audiences in a way that resonates with them (e.g. PowerPoint presentations to a community group, post flyers in a community center, ask doctor's office to make brochures are available, etc.)

Strategic Communications Planning Template

Step 5 – Who is going to do the work?

How will you get the work done in order to achieve the goal (e.g. set up phone call with head of organization, get on monthly meeting agenda for school board, develop presentation)? Use and action plan like the one in Step 5.

Step 6 – How will you know you've succeeded? (Evaluation Planning)

Establish evaluation criteria. (How many events will be hosted, posters displayed, push cards distributed, presentations made, etc.? What were your original goals?)

RESOURCES FOR COMMUNICATIONS PLANNING

Journals

American Journal of Health Behavior
http://www.ajhb.org

American Journal of Public Health
http://www.ajph.org

Health Education and Behavior
https://guides.lib.umich.edu/hbhe

Health Education Research
https://academic.oup.com/her

Journal of Health Communication
https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/uhcm20/current

Social Marketing Quarterly
http://journals.sagepub.com/home/smq

Websites

Art and Science of Health Promotion Institute
http://www.artsciencehpi.com

National Cancer Institute's Pink Book – Making Health Communication Programs Work
https://www.cancer.gov/publications/health-communication/pink-book.pdf

Frameworks Institute – Rural Education
http://www.frameworksinstitute.org/workshops/rural/

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