

Module Seven

The Media and Prevention

Learning Objectives

- Understand the significant influence of media in prevention
- Apply media advocacy principles to a case study
- Analyze alcohol and tobacco ads
- Describe the basic principles associated with social marketing
- Identify and challenge campaigns based on principles of scare tactics

Media Advocacy Tools

For many years the main role of the media in preventing alcohol, tobacco, and other drug problems has been to build general awareness of the problem and to direct messages to the individual to change behavior regarding the use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. Media advocacy, however, shifts the focus and the message from individual to collective behavior change, that is, to norms and policies.

A working definition of media advocacy is “the strategic use of media as a resource for advancing a social or public policy initiative.” This contrasts substantially with the traditional mass media approach that focuses on individual behavior.

As an example, a few years ago community members were concerned about an announcement at an Oakland Athletics baseball game about a promotion for Bud Lite at a future game. Small flashlights with Bud Lite inscribed on them would be given away to anyone who came to the ballpark who was 16 years of age or older, although the legal drinking age was 21.

Community members decided to challenge Anheuser-Busch for promoting this particular product in this way. Using contacts with the media, they raised public concern about the beer promotion, and Anheuser-Busch canceled its planned giveaway.

This is one way of focusing on alcohol policy through the media, in contrast to the traditional focus on behavior change. The media was used to focus public attention on policy issues. The message was, “Shouldn’t the alcohol industry know when to say ‘when’ in their efforts to promote alcohol to underage youth?”

In media advocacy, challenging conventional wisdom and public thinking is important. Mass media becomes the arena for contesting public policies and for shifting emphasis from individual behavior change to collective behavior change and policies. Media advocates ask themselves how a media opportunity can best advance policy goals and shift the debate from individuals to the collective decisions of policies and norms.

Using contacts with electronic or print media editors and reporters, advocates can generate public interest in changing industry promotional practices, media policies, tax laws, law enforcement practices, labeling laws, school rules, workplace policies, health care policies, community norms, and other factors that may contribute to youth alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use.

Reporters may not be aware of factors in their communities that promote alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use. By using specific media-related skills, prevention practitioners can provide them with interesting information and stories that strategically support prevention agendas. Those skills include research, creative use of epidemiology and statistics, issue framing, and gaining access to media outlets.

1. Research

It is important for those using media advocacy to have current, relevant facts and figures on hand and to be able to discuss their implications for alcohol, tobacco, and other drug issues. Reporters and editors are more likely to contact people they know who have access to reliable facts when they are researching a story. It is important to be able to back up positions with concrete information and data.

Solid research in the alcohol, tobacco, and other drug field is readily available to prevention practitioners interested in media advocacy. One major resource is the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention's National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information (NCADI). By calling toll-free (800) 729-6686, prevention practitioners can obtain resource manuals, monographs, articles, and literature searches on any related topic. At the State level, Regional Alcohol and Drug Abuse Resource (RADAR) Network Centers serve as local information clearinghouses. RADAR Network Centers can be located by calling NCADI.

In addition to gathering research on topics of specific interest, media advocates must also understand how local media outlets operate. Which reporters are most likely to cover health issues? What are the names of relevant news editors? Who should receive a news release? This information can be obtained by studying local media outlets and by telephoning the news departments and asking for names. Learning how the media prefers to receive information pays off by making the media advocate appear more professional and therefore more trustworthy.

2. Creative Use of Epidemiology and Other Statistical Data

The creative use of epidemiology and other statistical data is a powerful strategy. It involves translating the research from often dry or bewildering facts and figures into attention-grabbing news. News must have some immediate relevance. In other words, facts must not only be correct, they should be presented in a way that brings the issue home to the reader.

For example, the fact that 12 million U.S. college students annually consume more than 430 million gallons of alcoholic beverages is not particularly attention grabbing. Expressed more creatively, the information can be much more effective:

The annual alcohol consumption of college students exceeds the volume of an Olympic-sized swimming pool for each of the 3,500 colleges and universities in the United States.

This image enables the public to visualize how much students on local college campuses are drinking. The public might then wonder what the college presidents and other officials are doing about student drinking. Expressing data in such a graphic way can help capture the attention of reporters and ultimately the decision-influencing public and opinion leaders.

3. Framing the Issue

Like the creative transformation of data, framing the issue, or influencing the terms of the debate, is a useful strategy. With any issue, both sides attempt to frame the issue to make their positions

seem most reasonable. For example, when media advocates point out that advertising alcoholic beverages to vulnerable populations should be limited by law, the alcoholic beverage industry attempts to frame their position in civic terms. The debate shifts from “Should children be targeted by beer companies?” to “Should beer companies have their First Amendment rights protected?”

In addition to framing the issues, the alcoholic beverage industry tries to frame itself in a positive light—by presenting itself as a supporter of sporting events, as a patron of local and national artistic endeavors, as a prevention educator of young people, and as a protector of freedoms.

According to Lawrence Wallack, DrPH, a professor at the School of Public Health, University of California at Berkeley, prevention practitioners have two means of reframing issues that the alcoholic beverage industry has framed to its own advantage. First, they can focus attention on promotional practices in the environment as the primary problem, not the behavior of individuals who drink. Second, they can address industry practices that appear unethical.

4. Gaining Access to the Media

Gaining access to the media involves watching for opportunities to contact the media with timely information. Contact may be established through a news release (with a follow-up telephone call), a letter to the editor, a guest editorial, or a telephone call to build interest in a story angle. Over time, media advocates can build credibility so that the media will contact them first when the possibility of an alcohol- or other drug-related story arises.

Gaining access to the media can help groups gain community support for their efforts. For example, when SeaWorld in San Diego, California, owned by Anheuser-Busch, announced its intention to open a hospitality center where adult park patrons could get two free glasses of beer, prevention practitioners used media advocacy techniques to bring their concerns to the attention of the public. The resulting media coverage led other groups and individuals to join a prevention coalition to continue SeaWorld protests and address other environmental issues.

Reference:

Center for Substance Abuse Prevention. (1993). *Prevention primer: An encyclopedia of alcohol, tobacco, and other drug prevention terms*. (DHHS Publication No. SMA 94-2060). Rockville, MD: National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information.

Gaining Access to the Media

Method	Tip
Monitor the media.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Determine how an issue is being covered. b. Observe main themes and arguments. c. Determine who appears as the spokesperson, what solutions are being presented, who is named as the problem solver, and what facts could improve the advocate’s side. d. Determine which reporters cover certain issues. e. Determine who the target audience is for each media outlet. f. Determine which media outlet can provide the most in-depth coverage of an issue. g. Determine which media outlet is more likely to be sympathetic to the advocate’s issue.
Contact members of the media.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Send out news releases. (Keep them short and to the point; include all relevant information; and follow up with a phone call.) b. Hold a press conference. (Use cautiously—the news to be announced at the conference should be newsworthy, dramatic, significant, or controversial.) c. Write a letter to the editor. (Make one point per letter.) d. Host a newsworthy event. (Provide good photo opportunities.) e. Write an op-ed piece or guest editorial. (Keep it simple, with no more than three to four main points.) f. Call individual reporters. (Send an introductory letter about the issue(s) for which you can be a resource.) g. Develop relationships with journalists. For example, send complimentary letters to reporters about well-presented stories.
Conduct interviews.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Develop two to three main points. b. Develop several key phrases. c. State points and phrases regardless of questions. d. Avoid jargon and acronyms. e. Anticipate questions and practice answering them. f. Be honest.

Reference:

Hogan, J., Gabrielsen, K., Luna, N., & Grothaus, D. (2003). *Substance abuse prevention: The intersection of science and practice*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Media Advocacy Case Study

In California, the State legislature passed the “Three Strikes and You’re Out” law in 1994. The law permits revocation of an alcohol license, if the licensee is caught selling alcohol to minors three times in a 3-year period. The law gave community members concerned about sales to minors a means to shut down retailers that would not comply with the law, and the law warned business owners to take measures to prevent sales to underage young people if they wanted to stay in business. In addition, that same year the California Supreme Court ruled that minors could be used as decoys to conduct compliance checks on licensees. Further, the following year the California State Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC Department) offered grants to communities forming partnerships with law enforcement to reduce problems associated with alcohol. Communities used the majority of the grant money to establish minor decoy programs. The minor decoy programs began to yield noncompliant retailers, and the three-strikes provision began to pose a real threat to businesses selling to minors.

In 1998, a California State senator introduced Senate Bill 1696 in the legislature. The bill allowed a fourth violation in a 3-year period and restricted the ABC Department’s grant funding for decoy programs. The bill was supported by multiple food and beverage retail associations, big breweries such as Anheuser-Bush and Miller, and the Wine Institute. However, when prevention advocates learned about SB 1696, they mobilized and declared defeating it a top priority.

The California Council on Alcohol Policy distributed legislative alerts around the State. Members of the North City Prevention Coalition in San Diego wrote letters to their senator (the author of the bill) opposing it. Members of the coalition also signed a petition opposing the bill. Members of the San Diego Council on Alcohol Problems (SANDCAP) also communicated with the senator and demanded the bill be dropped or dramatically changed. Other prevention and recovery organizations also opposed the bill and wrote letters and spoke to the senator. The director of the San Diego Policy Panel on Youth Access to Alcohol urged its influential members from a cross-section of the community to work for the defeat of the bill. One prevention services director estimated that the senator received more than 500 calls opposing the bill. California alcohol policy activists met with the senator and wrote letters to the members of the policy committee.

Policy advocates used their relationship with a San Diego newspaper to gain public support in San Diego for defeating the bill. The newspaper editor wrote an editorial describing the bill as beneficial to a special-interest group and not to the public interest, which prompted many letters to the editor. The newspaper ran eight more pieces on the topic within the next few months. The newspaper articles allowed both sides to voice their arguments. However, alcohol policy advocates made strong arguments: “What’s our priority, industry profit or safety for our children? The beer industry sells an estimated 1.1 billion cans of beer each year to junior and high school students; kids already have ready access to booze. We should be making it more difficult to sell to them, not easier. The industry is trying to ‘buy’ a bill in the legislature to get

itself off the hook; it made \$2.4 million dollars in donations in the 1996-97 legislative year. Why let these ‘three-strike’ violators off the hook? Prevention strategies should be implemented without giving violators a break; 95 percent of Californians want stricter, not weaker, enforcement” (Ryan & Mosher, 2000, p. 15). This local media coverage and activism by San Diego residents made it clear that the senator’s local constituency opposed the bill.

Despite all the attention and criticism in San Diego, the bill moved along with only minor revisions. Policy advocates opposing the bill believed it was going to pass and decided to strengthen their efforts in the media to defeat the bill. The advocates knew the media across the State would be interested in the story. They had data on the amount of money the alcohol industry donated to political campaigns, and they “had a frame that would attract attention: The industry was trying to protect their right to sell to kids” (Ryan & Mosher, 2000). Although the advocates had been reluctant to criticize the senator and the bill statewide because they didn’t want to anger her and risk their ability to work with her in the future, they decided to be more explicit. James E. Mosher, J.D., senior policy advisor, the Marin Institute for Prevention of Alcohol and Other Drug Problems, sent an op-ed piece on SB 1696 to newspapers in Sacramento and San Jose, outlining the principal reasons that this was a bad bill; the piece ran a few days later. Soon, other major newspapers in the State were running stories and editorials about the bill. The stories generated letters to the editor, mainly in support of defeating the bill. The media took the frame and called it the “fourth-strike bill.” One headline in San Jose read, “Responsible retailers don’t need SB 1696. And the community doesn’t need irresponsible retailers” (Ryan & Mosher, 2000, p. 24).

Apparently the media coverage worked. The senator agreed to meet with policy advocates to seriously discuss their concerns. She amended the bill by removing the fourth-strike provision and retaining the grant funding for the minor decoy programs. Grassroots organizing to generate media coverage at the local level didn’t seem to be enough to defeat the bill. Nearly everyone involved in defeating the bill felt it would not have been amended without the broad negative media attention the bill received. The surprise victory for the alcohol policy activists proved the effectiveness of their media advocacy efforts and helped to strengthen their confidence and commitment. Further, and most important, because of the relationships that were developed, alcohol policy advocates now sit at the table with legislators to assist in drafting bills related to prevention issues and continue to work with the media (Ryan & Mosher, 2000).

Reference:

Ryan, B. E., & Mosher, J. K. (2000). *The campaign against SB 1696: No 4th strike for California retailers who sell alcohol to minors*. San Rafael, CA: The Marin Institute for the Prevention of Alcohol and Other Drug Problems.

Deconstructing Media Messages

Knowing the answers to these questions is key to understanding media messages.

1. Who is communicating and why?

Every message is communicated for a reason—to entertain, inform, or persuade. However, the basic motive of most media outlets is to profit through the sale of advertising space and sponsorships.

2. Who owns, profits from, and pays for media messages?

Media messages are owned. They are designed to yield results, provide profits, and pay for themselves. Both news and entertainment programming are intended to increase listenership or viewership to attract advertising dollars, and movies are intended to increase box-office receipts. Understanding the profit motive is key to analyzing media messages.

3. How are media messages communicated?

Every message is communicated through sound, video, text, or photography. Messages are enhanced through camera angles, special effects, editing, and music. Analyzing how these features are used in any given message is critical to understanding how it attempts to persuade, entertain, or inform.

4. Who receives media messages and what sense is made of them?

Messages are filtered through the “interpretive screens” of our beliefs, values, attitudes, and behaviors. Identifying the target audience for a given message and knowing the audience’s “filters” and the way it interprets media messages help make you media sharp!

5. What are the intended or underlying purposes and whose point of view is behind the message?

Behind every message is a purpose and point of view. The advertiser’s purpose is more direct than the program producer’s although both may seek to entertain us. Understanding their purposes and knowing WHOSE point of view is being expressed and WHY is crucial to being media sharp.

6. What is NOT being said and why?

Because messages are limited in both time and purpose, all details are rarely provided. Identifying the issues, topics, and perspectives that are NOT included can often reveal much about the purposes of media messages. In fact, this may be the most significant question; it can uncover answers to the other questions.

7. Is there consistency both within and across media?

Do the political slant, tone, local/national/international perspective, and depth of coverage change across media or messages? Because media messages tell only part of the story and different media have unique production features, it helps to evaluate multiple messages on the same issue. This allows you to identify multiple points of view, some of which may be missing in any single message or medium. This is typically referred to as the “multisource rule.”

4Ps of Marketing

When developing a social marketing campaign, prevention professionals need to keep the “4Ps” in mind: **product, price, promotion, and place**. Traditional product marketing techniques include marketing analysis, planning, and control; these techniques include market research, product positioning and conception, pricing, physical distribution, advertising, and promotion—hence the 4Ps of marketing (Walsh, Rudd, Moeykens, & Moloney, 1993).

For a commercial marketer, the “product” may be soap or cereal, but for a social marketer, it is a healthy behavioral change or a changed attitude. In substance abuse prevention, the product is the knowledge, attitudes, or behavior the target audience should adopt (Linkenbach, 1998).

The “price” for a bar of soap may be \$2.00, but for a healthy behavior the price is what the person must give up to receive the benefits. For instance, the price may be the cost of separating oneself from peers who use alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.

The “promotion” is the overall strategy or message used to persuade the target audience to pay the price for the product. It is the means for persuading the target audience that the product is worth the price.

The “place” is the communication channel, such as the mass media, schools, churches, or workplaces. Some social marketers also define “place” as the location in which the audience can partake in the healthy behavior. It is important to note that social marketing does not have to include mass media.

The following example illustrates how the 4Ps of social marketing can be applied to a media campaign:

Product: Refusing to have a drink when offered one by peers

Price: Not fitting in with one’s peers (the price perceived by preteens)

Promotion: “Not drinking or using other drugs is smart and fashionable.”

Place: Mass media and community programs

Linkenbach, J. (1998). *Health entrepreneurship. Promising practices: Campus alcohol strategies*. Fairfax, VA: George Mason University.

Walsh, D.C., Rima, E.R., Moeykens, B.A., & Moloney, T.W. (Summer, 1993). Social marketing for public health. *Health Affairs*, 104-119.

Effective Media Messages

Are based on fact and focus on immediate consequences

The message must be meaningful and appeal to the target audience. It should be based on fact and linked to the present rather than to the future, especially if the focus audience is young people. For example, a message promoting nonsmoking can present messages about the immediate consequences of smoking, such as bad breath, yellow teeth, or reduced energy, rather than focusing on the future threat of cancer or emphysema. Scare tactics, which include fear arousal, and messages addressing the most extreme consequences of substance use should be avoided because they have failed to influence long-term behavior change.

Clearly state the desired behavior and its benefits

The media message should clearly state the desired behavior or behavior change the message is promoting and describe the benefits of adopting the new behavior. If the focus audience is already involved in the behavior to be avoided, then the message will be different than if they are not yet involved (Breitrose, 1992). For example, a message to smokers who want to quit smoking will be different than a message to smokers who think smoking is cool and are not interested in quitting; it will also be different than a message to nonsmokers.

Use positive emotional appeals

The arguments used to persuade the audience should be carefully considered. The messages may appeal to emotions such as fear of social disapproval, self-esteem, patriotism, and humor, **but they are more effective if they appeal to positive emotions** (Breitrose, 1992). Social marketers can also learn from traditional marketers in this area. The persuasion techniques described in the media literacy section may be helpful in developing messages to persuade young people to live healthy, drug-free lifestyles. For example, an emotional appeal may be used to focus attention on the harmful effects of a substance, humor can be used to describe the irony of using substances while participating in sports, or group dynamics may be used to persuade young people that not everyone is using drugs and that there is plenty of peer support for nonuse. The appeal selected will vary depending on the focus audience.

If the focus audience does not yet care about an issue, then an emotional appeal may be a way to grab their attention. Although fear may be a way to get the audience involved, fear tactics alone are insufficient to change behavior. Therefore, if this tactic is used, information about how people can avoid undesirable behavior and negative situations associated with it must also be provided. Focusing on the advantages of engaging in

desired, positive behavior may be even more persuasive. Further, messages should avoid eliciting such strong emotion that the audience reacts inappropriately, such as denying there is a problem or believing that adverse consequences of the behavior will not happen to them. If the emotional arousal causes the focus audience to dismiss the message or to feel that nothing can be done to create healthy behaviors and avoid unhealthy ones, they are unlikely to attend to the message. In general, **the use of fear is unlikely to effect behavior change and may reduce the effectiveness of subsequent health promotions because these messages may lose credibility with the audience.** Therefore, this appeal should rarely be used (Soames, 1988).

Appeal to logic and reason and use humor

Effective media messages also appeal to logic or reason. A logical or reasonable approach may be effective if the target audience already cares about or is involved in the issue or behavior. A logical or reasonable approach may include proving that using alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs should be avoided; this approach may also include showing ways to say no to drug offers or ways to avoid drug use in risky situations that are common to the focus audience. Humor, when used effectively, can also be an effective way to engage an audience. It is important to remember that humor is shaped by culture and context, and that the message should be funny to the focus audience and should not be offensive.

Model desired behavior

Media messages modeling desired behavior are effective ways to influence behavior. A message that shows a positive behavior, as opposed to one that shows a negative behavior that the audience is warned to avoid, is more likely to be successful (Breitrose, 1992). For example, if you want the focus audience to avoid smoking cigarettes and drinking alcohol, avoid showing young people engaging in that behavior in the advertisement; rather, show them engaged in attractive activities. Positive modeling shows the focus audience that people do practice the healthy behaviors. Models used in such media messages should have attributes similar to the focus audience. If models are too different from the intended audience, the audience is likely to discount the message because the possible benefit being extolled will not seem germane to their personal situations. For example, if the audience is teenage boys living in rural areas, then 30-year-old males in an urban setting should not be delivering the media message.

Breitrose, P. (1992). *PSAs that work: Guidelines to help you select or produce effective health promotion public service announcements*. Palo Alto, CA: Health Promotion Resource Center & Office for Substance Abuse Prevention.

Soames Job, R.F. (1988). Effective and ineffective use of fear in health promotion campaigns. *American Journal of Public Health*, 78, 163-167.

Social Norms Marketing Case Study

An example of a social norms marketing campaign is provided by Northern Illinois University (NIU). The NIU Health Enhancement Services conducted a student survey and discovered that fewer than half of the students had engaged in binge drinking during the past 2 weeks. However, the students believed that more than two out of three were binge drinkers. After receiving information from the students about the best communications channels and testing the materials and messages, the campaign organizers placed news stories and advertisements in the college newspapers and posters around the campus. The message that more than half of NIU students did not binge drink when they partied saturated the university. The same messages appeared in classified newspaper ads, a newspaper column, press releases, and flyers. Other parts of the campaign included giving money to students who knew the correct rate of binge drinking and informational flyers to those who did not. Students were also given \$5.00 to put up campaign posters in their dorms (student office workers were used to find the posters). NIU Health Enhancement Services staff spoke in classrooms, the residence hall, and sorority houses and conveyed the message about the correct binge drinking rate (Haines, 1996).

After the campaign, another survey was conducted. Students' perception of the binge-drinking rate was closer to reality, and the rate of binge drinking had declined. There was an 18-percent reduction in perceived binge drinking and a 16-percent reduction in actual binge drinking. Further, surveys revealed a 5-percent reduction in alcohol-related injury to self and a 33-percent reduction in alcohol-related injury to others. Five years after the campaign started (it was implemented each year), the binge drinking rate fell by 35 percent (Haines, 1996).

The 4Ps apply to social norms marketing campaigns. In this example, the "product" was to stop binge drinking; the "price" was fitting in with one's peers; the "promotion" was that most students at NIU do not binge drink; and the "place" was the college newspaper and other locations on campus.

Haines, M. (1996). *A social norms approach to preventing binge drinking at colleges and universities*. Newton, MA: The Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention.

Reducing Underage Drinking Internet Resources

Policy Changes to Restrict Alcohol Sponsorship/Marketing

Center for Science in the Public Interest

<http://cspinet.org/booze>

(fact sheets, surveys, Liquor Ads Community Action Packet)

Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth

www.camy.org

The Marin institute

www.marininstitute.org

(database of articles and research on underage drinking, information about the child-proof ads letter campaign)

The Trauma Foundation

www.tf.org

University of Minnesota, Alcohol Epidemiology Program

www.epi.umn.edu/alcohol

(how to's of proposing local ordinances, descriptions of what other communities have done, information about reducing underage drinking through coalitions)

Educational/Advocacy Materials on Underage Drinking Issues

Ad Busters

www.adbusters.org

(examples of alcohol counter-ads, information on creating your own counter-ad)

Facing Alcohol Concerns Through Education

www.faceproject.org or (888) 822-3223

(research-based media materials for changing community norms about alcohol, links to alcohol industry Web sites, information about media development and training, product catalog)

Join Together

www.jointogether.org

(online news and feature stories, funding information, community norms strategies, advocacy tips)

Mothers Against Drunk Driving

www.madd.org

(statistics on alcohol-related car crashes, fact sheets on underage drinking)

Media Literacy

University of Washington, Early Childhood and Teen Telecommunications Project

www.teenhealthandthemedialiteracy.net

(information for young people, parents, and educators about media literacy as a prevention tool; media literacy paper describing media literacy projects in Washington State and nationally; information about Teen Futures Media Network)

New Mexico Media Literacy Project

www.nmmlp.org

Social Marketing

“Most of Us” Campaign

www.mostofus.org

Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse and Violence Prevention Center

www.edc.org/hec

Hobart and William Smith Colleges Alcohol Education Project

<http://academic.hws.edu/alcohol/SocialNormsPrimer.html>

Central CAPT

<http://captus.samhsa.gov/central/resources/books.cfm>

Technical Assistance

Pacific Institute for Research and Development

www.pire.org

(free publications on research-based strategies to reduce underage drinking)