The nation’s only federally supported resource center devoted to advancing the National Strategy for Suicide Prevention.
EFFECTIVE MESSAGING: CHANGING BEHAVIOR THROUGH SAFE & STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

May 16, 2017 | 9:00 am – 5:00 pm
Concordia University | Lincoln, NE

Suicide Prevention Resource Center
www.sprc.org
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The views, opinions, and content expressed in this presentation do not necessarily reflect the views, opinions, or policies of CMHS, SAMHSA, or HHS.
Learning Objectives

✅ Understand the **key principles of strategic communication planning**

✅ Be able to develop messages conveying a **credible narrative of hope and recovery**

✅ Be able to list **key messaging pitfalls to avoid**

✅ Know about important **safety considerations for suicide prevention messaging**

✅ Identify **next steps** for planning/improving your own communications efforts
Morning Agenda

9:00 – 9:30am Opening & Introductions

9:30 – 10:30am Strategic Communication Planning, Part 1
  – Analyze the Situation
  – Understand your Audience
  – Set Objectives

10:30 – 10:45am BREAK

10:45 – 11:45am Strategic Communication Planning, Part 1
  – Develop your message
  – Key messaging considerations/pitfalls

11:45 – 1:15pm LUNCH
Afternoon Agenda

1:15 – 2:30pm  **Strategic Communication Planning, Part 3**
  – Choose your Channels
  – Develop a Creative Brief/Action Plan
  – Evaluation

2:30 – 3:15pm  **Addressing Stigma: What Works?**

3:15 – 3:30pm  BREAK

3:30 – 4:30pm  **Putting It All Together**

4:30 – 5:00pm  **Wrap up & Evaluation**
About SPRC and EDC

SPRC (www.sprc.org)
- National resource center
- TA for GLS and NSSP grantees
- Support for Zero Suicide initiative
- Action Alliance/national leadership

EDC
- Global non-profit working in health, education and youth development
- Specialization in behavioral health, substance use prevention, and suicide prevention
SPRC’s Prevention Model

EFFECTIVE SUICIDE PREVENTION

COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH

STRATEGIC PLANNING

KEYS TO SUCCESS
Getting to know you a bit
What actions are needed to reduce suicide or substance misuse?
Think of a health behavior you changed.

What made you/helped you do it?
“Public Communications Campaigns”

✓ AKA:
- Awareness campaigns
- Social Marketing
- Health Communication
What CAN’T Communications Do?

Communication (alone) cannot:  (“Pink Book,” p. 3)

• Compensate for inadequate health care or access to health care services

• *Produce sustained change in complex health behaviors without the support of a larger program for change*

• Be equally effective in addressing all issues or relaying all messages…

→ Many problems are not messaging problems
Features of Successful Communications Campaigns

- Systematically planned
  - ‘Formative Research’
- Communications tied to overall strategy
- Clear audiences and goals
  - Clear call to action
- Pre-tested
- Evaluated
Why Communication Planning?

✓ Know who you want to reach and what you want them to do

✓ Use communication tools and tactics effectively

✓ Be sure your audience hears what you want to say

✓ Integrate communication with other efforts

✓ Avoid messaging that could be harmful
Communication Planning Steps

1. Analyze your situation
2. Identify and understand your audience
3. Develop your message
4. Create/implement your strategy
5. Evaluate your plan
Step 1: Analyze Your Situation

- What problem are you trying to solve?
- How can communications help?
- What else is being done?
- What is your organization’s capacity?
Your goals: What problem are you trying to solve?

✓ Who is most affected by the problem?
✓ Why is this group affected?
✓ What can be done to lessen, prevent, or solve the problem?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT DO WE NEED IN ORDER TO DO WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?</th>
<th>WHAT CAN BE DONE?</th>
<th>WHO IS MOST AFFECTED? HOW DO WE REACH THEM?</th>
<th>WHAT ENABLES THE THINGS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THIS PROBLEM?</th>
<th>WHAT CONTRIBUTES TO THE PROBLEM?</th>
<th>WHAT IS THE SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, CMHC, ENVIRONMENTAL OR HEALTH PROBLEM?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Resources (time and money) and staff</td>
<td>1. Conduct Education &amp; motivation programs in the community</td>
<td>- Black and Hispanic Women - Churches, priests and ministers and lay leaders in the community - Community, community centers, worksites, etc</td>
<td>1. Lack of knowledge about diets and physical activity 2. Lack of resource and or place to exercise 3. Lack of healthy food options</td>
<td>Lack of physical activity Poor diets</td>
<td>High rate of obesity, high cholesterol and heart disease deaths</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Educational materials/books, videos, brochures</td>
<td>2. Build walking trails, polices, fitness areas</td>
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<td>- Volunteers</td>
<td>3. Farmers market in area and neighborhood gardens and teach healthy cooking tips</td>
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Problem to be addressed: Misuse/abuse of opioids

Local Manifestation of the problem: 7.43% of local high school students in grades 9-12 report past 30-day misuse of prescription opioids.

Create take-back days in the community and drop boxes in police stations

↑ Use of drop boxes and take back days by parents and grandparents of school-aged youth

↓ Access to prescription pain medication in the home

↓ Rates of 30-day prescription drug abuse among 13-17 year olds

Media campaign to promote take-back days and drop boxes to parents and grandparents

↑ Messaging promoting take-back days and drop boxes

↑ Motivation to use take-back days and drop boxes
ACTIVITY

Worksheet 1: At your table:

✓ Identify communications efforts you are currently doing/planning

✓ Link those to your larger project goals and objectives
What resources does your organization have?

- Budget
- Staff
- Timeline
- Technology
- Community Partnerships
• Step 2: Understand your Audience
Clarify your audience(s)

- Narrow down who needs to change
- Think about Primary vs. Secondary audiences
- Different objectives for different audiences
  ≠ everyone or 'general public'
Who is your audience?

Communication efforts

Who has influence

Agent of change/secondary audience

Who should change

Target of change/primary audience
What are some primary and secondary audiences you are trying to reach?
What do we want the audience to do?
(sometimes also know, think, feel)

- What exactly do we want them to change?
- Awareness is not specific enough
- Be clear: how will the change contribute to your overall goals?
Use data to tailor objectives

Based on these data, what needs to change?
Kentucky Statewide Survey Data (Shemanski & Cerel, 2008)

- 64% felt that suicide was a problem
- 79% believed everyone should have a role in preventing suicide
- 64% knew one person who had attempted or died by suicide
- 70% confident they could seek help if a family member was suicidal
- 49% confident about finding assistance for a suicidal friend
- 24% knew a crisis line number to call if a family member was suicidal
- 37% had heard of the Lifeline (1-800-273-TALK)
Let’s practice setting communication objectives with some of our audiences
Why audience research?
What do we want to know?

✔ Understanding what it will take for your audience to take the desired action
  - Readiness to act
  - Motivations
  - Values, beliefs
  - What do they think about the desired action?
Formative research

- Community assessments
- Focus groups
- In-depth interviews
- Published literature and national surveys
- Polls
- Observation
Learn more about your audience

- Focus on attitudes/barriers/insights related to your objectives
- Create an audience profile/persona
Break
Where are we: quick review

✅ We know how communications will support our overall program
✅ We know who our audience is
✅ We have communication objectives, including what ACTION we want our audience to take
✅ We found out more about our audience’s lives and perspectives
• Step 3: Develop your Message

✓ Message = what you want to convey
  – ≠ a slogan

✓ Build motivation, highlight benefits

✓ Think about credibility and overcoming known barriers
Include a ‘call to action’

(a) What to do (rather than what not to do)

- “Model” complex behaviors

(b) Promote actions acceptable to the audience
Use audience research to build motivation

✓ Include content that will increase the likelihood that THIS audience would perform the THIS behavior.

✓ In general, include content that
  – Corrects erroneous beliefs or attitudes
  – Minimize barriers that are impeding the behavior
  – Enables the desired behavior
  – Motivates the audience to take the desired action

✓ Key benefits of performing the behavior— as defined by them!
Characteristics of good messages

✓ Appealing
✓ Culturally appropriate
✓ Audience’s own language
✓ Attention getting for your audience
✓ Clear -- don’t trade cleverness for clarity
✓ Visuals/sounds match and support the message
What’s the message??

Everybody wants to be a dog
Pre-Test Messages & Materials

• Ask target audience for reaction
  – Understandability, clarity, language
  – Does anything distract from the message?
✓ Use broad prompts (don’t lead)
✓ Take pre-testing feedback with a grain of salt
ACTIVITY

Worksheet 2: At your table:

✓ Pick a specific audience and communication objective

✓ How would you pre-test messages?

✓ What questions would you ask?
Diving deeper on messaging
National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention
Framework For Successful Messaging

Four considerations when developing messages:

✓ Strategy
✓ Safety
✓ Positive narrative
✓ Guidelines

www.SuicidePreventionMessaging.org
Safety

Messaging can be harmful by:

✓ Increasing suicide risk among vulnerable individuals
✓ Undermining prevention
Communicating about suicide

✓ Certain types of media coverage can contribute to suicide “contagion” and increase the risk of suicide for vulnerable individuals.

✓ Covering suicide carefully, even briefly, can change public misperceptions and encourage those who are vulnerable to seek help.
Safety

AVOID....

- ...showing/describing methods or locations
- ...focusing on personal details
- ...glorifying or romanticizing suicide
- ...“normalizing” by portraying suicide as common, acceptable
- ...using data/language implying suicide is inevitable, unsolvable
- ...oversimplifying causes
- ...reinforcing stereotypes, myths or stigma
Bullying can kill. If you’re a bully, or are being bullied, you can get help and support at cybermentors.org.uk – the site run by young people, for young people.
Suicide Awareness For Older Kansans

Depression is NOT a Normal Part of Aging

There is Help and Hope

KANSAS
DEPARTMENT ON AGING

Did You Know...

In the United States in 2004, every 100 minutes, one person over the age of 64 died by suicide.

Each of those 5,200 people’s lives and deaths affected many others - family, friends, neighbors, and more.

**Kansas ranked 16** in highest rates of suicide in the U.S.A. with 13.5 deaths per 100,000 compared to the national rate of 11.1 per 100,000.

In 2005, **55 Kansans** over 64 years old died by suicide - 47 men and 8 women. 70% of these deaths were by firearms.

In 2005, **49 Kansans** over 64 years old were hospitalized after suicide attempts. 76% of these attempts were by poisoning, including medication overdoses.

Studies have found that many older adults who die by suicide - up to 75% - have visited a primary care physician within a month of their suicide.

Information sources:

Kansas statistics: KS Dept of Health & Environment
National statistics: Centers for Disease Control
Physician visits: National Institute of Mental Health
EVERY 40 SECONDS 1 PERSON COMMTS SUICIDE SOMEWHERE IN THE WORLD.
But wait, aren’t statistics about suicide important?
Convey a Positive Narrative

- Counter the “negative narrative”
- In every message: help the public to envision prevention.

Go deeper than this!
What ‘stories’ are out there about substance use and suicide?

New VA study finds 20 veterans commit suicide each day - Military Times
www.militarytimes.com/story/veterans/2016/07/07/va-suicide-20...86788332/ 
Jul 7, 2016 - In 2014, the latest year available, more than 7,400 veterans took their own lives for 18 percent of all suicides in America. ... About 70 percent of veterans who took their own not regular users of VA services. ... Researchers found that the risk of suicide for ...

As the opioid epidemic grows, paramedics feel the weight of trauma
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette - May 9, 2017
The city’s paramedics are on the front line of the opioid epidemic, a growing wave of people abusing opioid drugs. In 2012, paramedics ...

Every two minutes a student commits suicide.
Every five minutes it was a very young teenager.

Youth suicide, bullying far too widespread
Mount Airy News - May 6, 2017
Generally, we don’t run articles on suicides unless there is some sort of … so if the youth felt he was being driven to this because of bullying.

Why Do Alcoholics and Addicts Relapse So Often?
Yahoo Finance - Apr 24, 2017
Why do so many alcoholics and addicts in recovery relapse, knowing it could cost them their relationships, their freedom, their careers and …
Convey a positive narrative

✓ What we know about successful prevention
✓ Stories of people who were helped/ Your own story
✓ Concrete actions people can take
✓ Program successes
Substance Use Prevention Messaging Considerations

- Use humanizing language
- Avoid stereotypes
- Avoid normalizing substance misuse

- Addict, abuser, junkie: Person with substance use disorder person misusing drugs
- Drug habit: Active addiction substance use disorder alcohol and drug disease
- Clean/dirty: Negative/positive substance-free
Other messaging considerations: Myths vs. Facts

- Consider how the audience is engaging with message
- Caution with factsheets, posters, etc.
- Danger of introducing myths
- ‘Facts only’ is an equally effective approach
Other messaging considerations:
Social Norms campaigns

- Require a survey of actual social norms around a health behavior
- Communications campaign corrects misperceptions about the behavior
- Audience must care about social norms
- Match images to message!
Other messaging considerations: Fear Appeals

✓ May work, if the audience:
  - Feels at risk
  - Believes acting will lower risk
  - Feels/is able to act

✓ If not, can backfire
Cultural and Linguistic Competency

✓ More than just translation!
  - Messages/images should reflect audience’s health beliefs/practices
✓ Consider role of family, community,
✓ Consider historical experiences
✓ Consider literacy/numeracy as well as spoken language
Cultural and Linguistic Competency (cont.)

- Involve community members in campaign development
- Engage individuals with ‘lived experience’
New resource on culturally competent suicide prevention materials

Eight Steps:
1. Choose a target population
2. Establish a work group
3. Understand the target population
4. Select appropriate messages and formats
5. Adapt materials into other languages
6. Design materials
7. Plan outreach and dissemination
8. Evaluate
LUNCH BREAK
Where are we: quick review

✓ We know how communications will support our overall program
✓ We know who our audience
✓ We have communication objectives
✓ We’ve developed initial messages, and learned about key considerations
• **Step 4: Create and Implement your Strategy**

- Choose your Channels
- Develop an Action Plan
- Write a Creative Brief
Getting your Message Out

✓ Channels = paths to share messages
  - Consider a broad range
  - Think creatively!

✓ Consider:
  - What does the audience use?
  - What is credible to the audience?
  - How complex is the message?
  - Where are they in a position to act?
Create Repeated Message Exposure

✓ Format & design – attention-getting

✓ Placement for your audience
  – Where they get information
  – Mix of channels
  – Frequent exposure

✓ Sustained over time

✓ Repetition vs. variability
  – Balance repeated exposure with novelty
6 Main Channel Categories

1) One-on-one communication
2) Local outreach
3) Mass media campaigns
4) Media relations/PR
5) Social Media
6) Non-traditional
Activity

Worksheet 3: At your table:

- Pick a specific audience and communication objective
- What channels would reach your audience?
- Match channels to resources to prioritize
Action Planning

✓ Specific calendar, including:
  - Detailed steps for each channel
  - Who is in charge
  - Partner/staff responsibilities
  - Milestones to monitor progress
  - Regular team meetings to identify roadblocks and make adjustments
Writing a Creative Brief

- Create buy-in
- Keep team members on the same page
- Clarify priorities and available resources
- Use as a reference for action planning
- Avoid wasted effort
• Step 5: Evaluate your Plan

✓ Plan for evaluation from the start
  – SMART Communication Objectives
✓ Process and outcome evaluation
✓ Improve and sustain
✓ Consider finding an evaluator to help
Planning for Evaluation

✓ What
  – Based on objectives -- what are you trying to change?
  – Include:
    • Reach/exposure
    • Did knowledge/attitudes change? Behavior?
    • Did changes last?
    • Any unintended effects?

✓ When
  – Plan for evaluation before implementing
  – Assess as you go -- use results for improvement
SMART Objectives for Evaluation

✓ Plan for evaluation from the start by setting SMART communication objectives

- **Specific**
- **Measurable**
- **Attainable**
- **Relevant**
- **Time-sensitive**
Using Evaluation Results

✔ Use evaluation results to:
  - Identify needed improvements and modifications
  - Demonstrate impact
  - Share successes to build sustained support and buy-in
  - Empower other coalitions/groups to follow in your footsteps
And that’s communication planning!

1. Analyze your situation
2. Identify and understand your audience
3. Develop your message
4. Create/implement your strategy
5. Evaluate your plan
Final Thought: Managing the Message

When working with partners, ad agencies, youth, or others to create messages:

- Provide guidelines and parameters
- Use a creative brief or other tool to keep everyone on the same page
- Review messages to ensure they meet guidelines
Break
Now it’s your turn!

✓ Get into groups and pick a notetaker
✓ Pick a real or potential communication challenge
✓ Fill out the creative brief (as best you can)
✓ Be prepared to share some of your strategy with the group!
Closing Reflection

Share one thing you will do to improve your communication efforts when you return home.
Resources

• Suicide Prevention Resource Center: www.sprc.org

• Framework for Successful Messaging: www.SuicidePreventionMessaging.org

• MassTAPP Communication Toolkit: http://masstapp.edc.org/communications-toolkit

References


http://www.cdc.gov/healthcommunication/audience/index.html


Partnership for a Drug Free America (1987). This is Your Brain on Drugs. Accessed Sep 2015 at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dk9XY8Nrs0A.


Thank you!

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Visit the SPRC website – www.sprc.org