

Communication or Social Norms Marketing Campaigns Research Summary

(Substance Abuse Prevention Focused)

March 2009



Published by the Center for Prevention Research and Development, within the Institute of Government and Public Affairs at the University of Illinois, based upon work supported by the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS), Substance Abuse Prevention Programs. This document was compiled to provide a summary of the research used to develop the standards of evidence-based practice (listed in the back of this document) required of IDHS-funded community-based substance abuse prevention contractors. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of IDHS.

Suggested citation:

Center for Prevention Research and Development. (2009). *Communication or Social Norms Campaigns Research Summary (Substance Abuse Prevention Focused)*. Champaign, IL: Center for Prevention Research and Development, Institute of Government and Public Affairs, University of Illinois.

Communication Campaigns

Rationale & Outcomes

Alcohol, Tobacco, and the Commercial Media

The power of persuasion in our society is not only acknowledged but celebrated; as early as 1928, the founder of modern Public Relations, Edward Bernays, declared: “The conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in democratic society...This is a logical result of the way in which our democratic society is organized” (Givel, 2007). Indeed, one of Bernays’ early and successful campaigns was to make it socially desirable for women to smoke cigarettes.

In the commercial as well as political realm, our youth encounter powerful industries with professionals highly-trained in the art of persuasion, including the promotion of tobacco and alcohol consumption. Meanwhile, in their schools and communities, they encounter prevention professionals and activists whose task is not only to address risks that exist under the best of circumstances, but to specifically counter the influence of advertising. For example:

- A study published in the May 2007 issue of the journal *Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine* found that retail cigarette marketing increased the likelihood that youth would start smoking; cigarette pricing strategies contributed to increases all along the smoking continuum, from initiation and experimentation to regular smoking; and cigarette promotions increased the likelihood that youth will move from experimentation to daily smoking (Slater et al., 2007).
- A 2002 study in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* concluded that youth who were highly susceptible to tobacco advertising and believed they could quit anytime were more likely to progress from experimentation to established smoking (Choi et al., 2002).
- In its 2008 monograph “The Role of the Media in Promoting and Reducing Tobacco Use,” the National Cancer Institute reviewed the evidence behind how tobacco advertising and promotional activities affect youth smoking initiation, and concluded that tobacco advertising has been dominated by three themes: providing satisfaction; assuaging anxieties about the dangers of smoking, and creating associations between smoking and desirable outcomes such as independence, social success, sexual attraction, and thinness (National Cancer Institute, 2008).

The Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth (2007) reports:

- Federally funded long-term studies have found that likelihood of underage drinking was predicted by youth exposure to alcohol advertising on television; in magazines; on the radio; on billboards, or other outdoor signage; or via in-store beer displays, beer concessions, or ownership of beer promotional items or branded merchandise.
- From 2001 to 2006, annual alcohol advertising spending on television increased by 27% (from \$779 million to \$992 million), while the number of advertisements on television grew by 33% (from 225,619 to 299,475).
- Youth, young adult, and adult exposure to alcohol advertising on television increased by 30%, 25%, and 29% respectively from 2001 to 2006.
- Overall, declines in youth exposure to alcohol advertising in magazines have been nearly offset by the increase in exposure coming from television advertising.

Communication Campaigns as Alternatives to Counter-Advertising

Insofar as the media are part of the problem, media must be part of the solution. But notwithstanding the influence of advertising on youth, ATOD communication campaigns in general must be clearly distinguished from counter-advertising in particular. Communication campaigns are not synonymous with explicit counter-advertising, counter-marketing, or counter-industry campaigns. In spite of the historical and political popularity (and generous funding) of “counter” approaches, they constitute only a subset of possible communication-based prevention strategies. Given that substance abuse predates consumer marketing, it is clear that ATOD abuse cannot be reduced to a problem of marketing, any more than it can be reduced to a legal issue. In sum, communication campaigns are best conceived as one aspect of comprehensive prevention efforts that respond to permanent features of adolescent development in modern society, rather than a specific response to industry marketing.

Moreover, the effectiveness of “counter” campaigns has not been well established. Farrelly and colleagues (2003) concluded: “Tobacco control advocates have used mass media campaigns as a vehicle to combat teen and adult smoking for over 35 years. Nevertheless, there is only limited evidence that counter-marketing is a cost effective strategy in isolation and the current literature provides little guidance toward designing successful campaigns. In addition, subtler questions about the effects of message theme, emotional content, and stylistic features remain unanswered.”

To be sure, communication campaigns inevitably seek to counter the glamorization of alcohol and tobacco in advertising, as well as other forms of drug use as depicted, for example, in movies. They may also explicitly promote critical thinking about the relationships among advertising, addictive behavior, and corporate profits. But by de-emphasizing methods of persuasion that problematically both mirror and counter established marketing techniques, communication campaigns may instead explore an array of research-based strategies that are more consistent with educational and developmentally-based prevention programs. Such campaigns rely on youth’s capacity for gathering information, adjusting normative perceptions and self-expectations, and making responsible choices. It follows that such communication campaigns also incorporate a genuine respect for growth and autonomy, and promote positive relationships and aspirations as integral to good decision-making (Kelly et al., 2006).

Strategic Considerations for Communication Campaigns

At least four distinct but related strategic (goal-setting) issues emerge from the research literature on communication campaigns; any or all may inform the planning, implementation, and assessment of a communication campaign as part of an overall prevention strategy (Farrelly et al., 2003; Goldberg et al., 2006; Grandpré et al., 2003; Hornik et al., 2008; Slater, 2006; Slater & Kelly, 2002; Stephenson et al., 2005; Stephenson, 2003a, 2003b):

- **Message Design and Transmission:** Selection of content of messages intended to both inform and persuade, effective media for conveying these messages, the role of aesthetic and visual criteria in communication that is designed to promote reflection and responsible behavior without relying on fear tactics.
- **Cognitive and Communication Processes:** The psychological variables that determine which ATOD-related messages may be attended to or ignored, absorbed or evaluated, accepted or rejected; and the effect that this communication process, successful or otherwise, has on beliefs, attitudes, intentions, and—ultimately—behavior.

- **Targeted Audiences:** The degree to which communication campaigns, in order to be successful, must be designed to target specific groups of adolescents on the basis of characteristics such as age (developmental level), gender, family and cultural background, personality, and risk factors, including, for example, novelty seeking and sensation seeking. Campaign planners may also choose to target parents and other adults regarding their roles in prevention (e.g., parents' communication with children).
- **Social Norms:** The distinction between descriptive norms (typical behavior) and injunctive norms (expected behavior and related sanctions); how communication campaigns may influence youth's perceptions of what is common and/or desirable behavior, especially relating to peers, but also parents and other adults in school or community contexts.

These **strategic** considerations may inform **tactical** choices relating to implementation, such as **delivery, dosage, and duration**. They may also inform expectations for **outcomes** and the methods for **assessment** of those outcomes.

At the most general level, addressing these **strategic** considerations may lead planners of a communication campaign to emphasize, for example, any or all of the following themes:

- **Self-protection, resistance** (health effects, negative academic and social consequences, legal sanctions)
- **Reason, judgment, autonomy** (accurate information, costs and benefits, self-efficacy, choice)
- **Normative behavior** (accurate perceptions, realistic standards, high self-expectations)

Research Overview: Contexts, Theories, and Outcomes

Depending on strategic planning choices, planners may wish to address any or all of at least four major research contexts and related theories and outcomes that emerge from the literature, which are described briefly below and then elaborated on the following pages:

1. The **cognition-communication context** refers to interactions between the communicative environment and beliefs, attitudes, intentions, and ultimately behavior; specifically to the manner in which communication campaigns can influence beliefs regarding the risks and "rewards" of ATOD use; and the degree to which targeting high-risk and "high sensation" adolescents affects outcomes (Slater, 2006).
2. The **normative context** stresses the relation between "subjective" (perceived) norms of youth and the "objective" normative environment, in terms of both expectations and examples, created by the media, the community, influential adults, parents, and especially peers; and the manner in which youth respond to norm-based communication campaigns, including social marketing campaigns (Kelly et al., 2006).
3. **The ecological context** refers to communication campaigns directed at influential adults, including parents and policy makers, as part of indirect approaches to influencing adolescents' behavior by modifying their interactions with significant others; for example, the promotion of "authoritative parenting" (Hornik & Yanovitzky, 2003; Stephenson et al., 2005).
4. The **commercial context** refers to efforts to mitigate or counter the influence of marketing not only with legal restrictions that apply to industries and commercial establishments, but with communication campaigns that alert youth to the manipulative nature of the alcoholic beverage and tobacco industries, and promote criticism and resistance (Thrasher et al., 2006).

1. The **cognition-communication context**: The bulk of research on communication campaigns is grounded in theories addressing cognitive processes and behavioral choices in general (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Bandura, 1986) and those related to ATOD in particular (Slater, 2006), in relation to communicative interventions.
 - Campaigns may utilize cognitive, behavioral, and developmental theories, which have been integrated with communication theories, and explore the manner in which messages effect beliefs, intentions, and behavior (Slater, 2006; Zhao et al., 2006); again, the effectiveness of changes in beliefs and intentions as central to prevention strategies must be re-affirmed by behavioral outcomes.
 - Central to prevention-based developmental research are established behavioral theories such as the **Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA)**, the **Health Belief Model (HBM)**, and the **Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)** that explore message content, the communication process, and behavioral outcomes, as mediated by beliefs and intentions. HBM, for example, proposes that in order for someone to perform a recommended health behavior (or avoid a risk behavior), the person must believe that he or she is at risk for a negative outcome (Fishbein & Yzer, 2003; Zhao et al., 2006); thus adolescents' perceptions of their invulnerability or lack of concern with long-terms outcomes becomes an important factor.
 - The **Theory of Media Priming (TMP)**, an aspect of Communication Theory, explores the qualities that allow a message to reach a threshold of attention and eventually affect behavior. It considers the possibility that a message may generate change in behavior by increasing or decreasing the relative importance (or weight) attributed to the variables underlying behavioral decisions. Thus TMP suggests that the strength of arguments and evidence may be less important than it becoming conscious at a rational or emotional level (Cappella et al., 2001; Zhao et al., 2006).
 - **Integrative Theory** incorporates (cognitive-behavioral) TRA, HBM, and TPB, with (Communication) Media Priming Theory. At a practical level, Integrative Theory explores how messages may be constructed and delivered in order to overcome resistance and promote changes in beliefs, attitudes, norms, intentions, and behavioral outcomes among either general or targeted populations of adolescents in relation to substance abuse (Cappella et al, 2001; Fishbein & Yzer, 2003).
 - One highly salient targeted group is **sensation-seeking and novelty-seeking** adolescents, which is understood as a biologically-based characteristic in a portion of the population. Recognition of this group and the challenge they pose has been integrated into research related to communication campaign efforts to capture the attention of at-risk adolescents (Audrain-McGovern et al., 2003; Paek, 2008; Palmgreen et al., 2001, 2007; Stephenson, 2003a, 2003b).
 - The **Theory of Reactance** and related concepts addressing adolescents' need for autonomy explore the notion that youth react against threats to their freedom of choice by reestablishing that freedom by "restoration," including engaging in the proscribed behavior; raising the possibility that a communication campaign will engender effects that are "iatrogenic"; i.e., the opposite of its intended positive effect (David et al., 2006; Grandpré et al., 2003).
 - Research may address the independent effects of communication campaigns, or explore the effectiveness of communication campaigns when combined with programmatic school-based or community-based prevention-intervention programs or broader public health efforts (Kelly et al., 2006; Slater et al., 2006).

2. The **normative context** emphasizes the relationships among societal (including peer) norms, subjective (or perceived) norms, beliefs, and behavior, suggesting that communication campaigns that promote positive and accurately perceived social norms will decrease risky behavior (Kelly et al., 2006). This context is salient in contrast to an emphasis on fear or rigidly moralistic appeals.
 - Perceived social norms are central to the **Theory of Reasoned Action**. TRA proposes that an adolescent's behaviors relative to substance abuse are based on intentions, which in turn are determined by attitudes and perceived social norms regarding substance use (Kelly et al., 2006). Put differently, a subjective (or perceived) norm represents one's beliefs of how significant others feel about the behavior in question, as well as one's motivation to comply with these others' feelings (Stephenson et al., 2005).
 - As children transition to adolescence (early adolescence), their normative environment is complicated by decreasing parental influence, increasing peer influence, and the desire for autonomy. Their perceptions of normative social behavior among peers and their **reactance** to perceived threats to autonomy compete with dictated social norms and even an awareness of risks. Normative messages and communication strategies must be constructed with these factors in mind, including in relation to counter-industry and counter-advertising campaigns (Crano et al., 2007; Paek, 2008; Stephenson et al., 2005).
 - **Social norms marketing** campaigns, promoting accurate perceptions among youth of normative peer behavior and emphasizing choice over conformity, is a normative communication campaign strategy adapted to a specific geographic and peer milieu (Martino-McAllister & Wessel, 2005). In this context "descriptive norms" are usefully distinguished from "injunctive norms;" descriptive norms provide *information* about group members' noncompliance, while injunctive norms provide *sanctions* for group members' noncompliance (Rimal & Real, 2003).

3. The **ecological context**: Goals and methods for communication campaigns may focus on the social environment (other than the media) of family, community, and public policy; relating to parenting techniques, collective social norms, and legal regulations and deterrents; as well as institutional integration and coordination of efforts to discourage underage ATOD use and abuse. In this context, the communicative intervention with adolescents can be seen as relatively indirect. That is, behavior change among adolescents depends partly on the influence of communication campaigns on adults and their subsequent interactions with youth (Hornik & Yanovitzky, 2003).
 - Communication campaigns may be directed at parents, the public, journalists, and policy makers; in relation to parenting techniques, the promotion of adults as role models, news coverage focusing on the consequences of abuse, and **policy advocacy** directed at the commercial environment (Birckmayer et al., 2008; Yanovitzky & Stryker, 2001).
 - Research in this context may incorporate theories and perspectives regarding **authoritative parenting, role models, community mental health, public health, and public policy**. In relation to parents and role models, for example, adolescents' subjective norms are understood as based on the expectations of adults and one's motivation to comply with them (Stephenson et al, 2005; Stephenson & Quick, 2005).
 - Communication campaigns specifically directed at parents and parenting practices, especially those emphasizing **authoritative parenting**, promote social norms regarding both parenting practices and youth behavior that allow for normative expectations, autonomy, and flexibility. Along with prevention, the desired outcome of such communication campaigns is to make parent-youth communication central to adolescent development and prevention (Stephenson et al., 2005).

- The outcomes of such campaigns may again be addressed independently, or in relation to communication campaigns and other prevention efforts specifically directed at youth (Farrelly et al., 2003).
 - In describing pathways of delivering messages other than the direct route assumed in cognitive-behavioral theories, Hornik & Yanovitzky (2003) distinguish between **diffusion of messages to representatives of social institutions** (government, law enforcement, journalism, religion) and **social diffusion** (parents, peers, community members). Messages directed at members of these groups may in turn influence adolescents through their direct communication, or by stimulating discussion on normative expectations and other aspects of prevention.
 - Outcomes may be revealed over longer periods of time that reflect the results of the accumulated effects of communication campaigns and other methods of intervention (Farrelly et al., 2005; Hornik & Yanovitzky, 2003; Stephenson et al., 2005; Stephenson & Quick, 2005).
4. The **commercial context**: In spite of the illegality of underage tobacco smoking and drinking, our culture presents a legal and accessible commercial/advertising milieu in which methods of persuasion affect children from an early age (Kelly et al., 2002).
- Communication campaigns may in some cases choose to specifically address this context with what are variously called counter-advertising, counter-marketing, or counter-industry programs, relating to tobacco and alcohol, and promoting critical thinking and resistance in relation to the media and other promotional techniques, such as price cuts and in-store promotions (Sly, Heald, & Ray, 2001; Farrelly et al., 2003; Thrasher et al., 2006).
 - Communication theories related to this context explore the receptivity or resistance of adolescents to both advertising messages and counter-messages, and the effectiveness of counter-messages in appealing to reason and/or addressing subjective norms and peer pressure, in contrast to ads that problematically evoke “death and disease” (Farrelly et al., 2005; Goldberg et al., 2006; Paek, 2008, Pechmann & Reibling, 2006).
 - While the ultimate outcomes of communication campaigns clearly should be evaluated in terms of the incidence of substance abuse—and in longitudinal studies—short-term outcomes related to this context may emphasize short-term changes in vigilance, critical thinking, resistance, and coping behavior (Goldberg et al., 2006; Hornik & Yanovitzky, 2003; Slater, 2006).

Research Highlights: Best Practices

Campaign Planning

The following practices should be incorporated into the planning process:

- The media campaign is implemented in tandem with a complementary school-based prevention program (Friend & Levy, 2002; Pechmann & Reibling, 2000).
- The campaign primarily targets younger adolescents, rather than older adolescents (Wakefield et al., 2003). The CDC recommends a primary target audience of 11-15 year olds, with their parents and older siblings as the secondary target audience (McKenna et al., 2000).
- Issues of reactance or resistance come to the forefront when developing appeals directed to young adolescents (Crano et al., 2007); warmth needs to balance “demandingness” (Stephenson et al., 2005).
- Campaigns that promote “authoritative parenting” (Stephenson et al., 2005) incorporate discussion, explicit norms, and monitoring as practices central to family-based prevention.
- The messages are designed to appeal specifically to the target population (Lancaster & Lancaster, 2002) and are pilot tested before use (Miller, 1998).
- The messages offer the target population constructive alternatives to substance use (McKenna et al., 2000).
- If the campaign utilizes funding to employ the expertise of an advertising agency, identify one that does not accept work from tobacco or alcohol manufacturers (Stevens, 1998). In addition, the agency should have experience marketing to adolescents (Peckmann & Reibling, 2000). If working with a coalition or committee, member representation from the advertising field may prove useful.

Message Characteristics

- The message can be more favorably received when communicated by a person of the same gender as the consumer (Bochner, 1994, as cited in Agostinelli & Grube, 2002).
- In developing the “aspirational” campaign “Be Under Your Own Influence,” aimed at general ATOD use, Kelly and colleagues (2006) recommended that messages should be designed with the following considerations in mind:
 - Messages should emphasize the inconsistency of drug use with personal aspirations and valued social relationships.
 - Messages should **not** focus on long-term health risks, preach to kids, or put down any particular group.
 - Messages should highlight youth norms, not only of non-use but of positive relationships and aspirations.
 - The overall feel of the ads should be positive, upbeat, and motivating.
- In accordance with Media Priming Theory, selected messages should be those that are **not** already believed or disbelieved, and those that emphasize negative consequences for which there is strong evidence or for which a strong argument can be built (Cappella et al., 2001).

Ineffective or Iatrogenic Practices

These strategies may lead to ineffective, unintended, or iatrogenic (opposite of intended) outcomes:

- The message theme is that youth have been “duped” by the tobacco industry (Miller, 1998).

- The message theme that marijuana is a “gateway” drug (Yzer et al., 2003).
- An emphasis on physical harms is ineffective not because such messages are ignored, but because they are threatening (Crano et al., 2007); in any event, they should be avoided.
- The campaign targets beliefs that are already strongly held by the target population (Fishbein et al., 2002).
- Discussion among high-risk adolescents as a means of campaign message diffusion may result in a kind of “deviancy training” (David et al., 2006).
- While reactance is evident in 7th grade students, the peak in reactance may not occur until later in adolescence (10th grade); messages that are effective for children or early adolescents may not be effective for later adolescents; allowing adolescents the freedom to actively consider diverse health choice will ensure that resulting decisions will be seen as wholly self-initiated (Grandpré et al., 2003)
- Tobacco industry-funded smoking prevention advertising has proved harmful, as the goal may be to delay initiation rather than prevent it (Wakefield et al., 2006).

Campaign Implementation

The following practices should be included in the communication campaign implementation:

- New messages are released at regular intervals to maintain campaign salience and avoid message “burn out” within the target population (Wakefield et al., 2003).
- The campaign utilizes a variety of message styles (Wakefield et al., 2003), although the messages should revolve around a single theme (Pechmann & Reibling, 2000; Sly, Hopkins, Trapido, & Ray, 2001).
- The campaign must be of a significant duration to impact the target population (Hafstad et al., 1997).
- The campaign achieves high levels of message saturation (in terms of message reach and frequency) among the target population (Palmgreen et al., 2001; Sly et al., 2002). Lancaster and Lancaster (2002) indicate that when television is the chosen media, a minimum of three message exposures is necessary to effectively communicate the message content to the target population.
- The campaign creates and promotes a non-use “brand” (Farrelly et al., 2002; Riester & Linton, 1998).
- The campaign utilizes multiple media channels (McKenna et al., 2000). It is important to select media that are popular and credible among youth (Pechmann & Reibling, 2000; Farrelly et al., 2003).
- The campaign takes advantage of existing campaign materials to decrease costs (McKenna et al., 2000). It is important to test-pilot potential messages with your target population, even if they have been utilized successfully in other campaigns with similar populations.
- The campaign includes secondary materials, such as promotional items, contests, sweepstakes, and sponsored events to reinforce the campaign message and increase message saturation (Pechmann & Reibling, 2000). All campaign messages and materials should contain the campaign “brand,” logo, or slogan to help facilitate campaign recognition (Pechmann & Reibling, 2000).
- An evaluation of the “keepin’ it REAL” program found that classroom videotapes were effective when students viewed at least four or five different videos; Public Service Announcements (PSAs) were not found to be effective (Warren et al., 2006).

Target Populations and Cultural Considerations

The following practices were identified through formative research in the development of campaigns targeting specific race or ethnic groups. While these findings provide insight into the populations included in these studies, it is essential to integrate cultural analysis within the formative research for each unique counter-advertising campaign.

- Findings from a national anti-drug campaign targeting African American youth and families found these important campaign considerations (Hannon, 2000):
 - When targeting youth, emphasize their position as a role model to younger siblings, incorporate cultural values and a sense of black pride, include a broad spectrum of skin colors in campaign materials, and utilize radio as a primary media channel.
 - When targeting parents, portray both two-parent and single-parent families, focus on the values of African American families, empower parents to impart a sense of black pride in their children and serve as role models for this behavior, and ensure that a broad spectrum of skin colors is represented in campaign materials.
- A study that focused on a media campaign targeting an Asian and Pacific Islander population identified the following considerations through their formative research (Kuramoto & Nakashima, 2000):
 - When targeting youth, emphasize their cultural heritage as a source of pride to promote self-esteem.
 - When targeting parents, empower them to communicate with their children and act as good role models, create messages in both English and the language of their country of origin, utilize the indigenous media, and engage prominent community leaders in the campaign.
- A campaign targeting Hispanic children and parents found these important target audience considerations (Ramirez et al., 2000):
 - When targeting Hispanic youth, emphasize family while avoiding superficial references, emphasize cultural values and traditions, and deliver messages in both Spanish and English.
 - When targeting Hispanic parents, emphasize the importance of transmitting cultural values and traditions, empower them to communicate with their children, especially through mothers, target additional messages at extended family members (grandparents, aunts, uncles, etc.), and provide messages in both Spanish and English.

Research Highlights: Evidence of Successful Outcomes

- At the completion of the Arizona state anti-**tobacco** campaign, 57% of parents said the ads were a point of conversation with their children (ages 10 - 17), and 46% of youth indicated that the campaign caused them to reduce their tobacco use (Riester & Linton, 1998).
- The Florida state anti-**tobacco** campaign demonstrated significant increases in anti-tobacco attitudes and significant decreases in tobacco use (Sly, Heald, & Ray, 2001; Sly, Hopkins, Trapido, & Ray, 2001). Non-smokers who recalled viewing 1-3 television ads were 1.27 times more likely to remain non-smokers, and those who saw 4 or more ads were 1.68 times more likely to remain non-smokers, compared to non-smokers who could not recall viewing any campaign advertisements (Sly et al., 2002).
- The California state anti-**tobacco** campaign reported a 22% decrease in 30-day use among youth (Independent Evaluation Consortium, 2001 as cited in Friend & Levy, 2002).
- The Massachusetts state anti-**tobacco** campaign reported that youth (ages 12 - 13) exposed to the campaign were significantly less likely to have progressed to established smoking, and youth reported more accurate perceptions of peer tobacco use (Siegel & Biener, 2000).
- The national “truth” anti-**tobacco** campaign reported an increase in anti-tobacco attitudes and beliefs after 10 months of implementation (Farrelly et al., 2002).
- A local anti-**tobacco** campaign that specifically targeted girls for two campaign waves and targeted both sexes for the third wave demonstrated a significantly smaller increase in daily smoking among girls in the intervention county compared to girls in the control county (Hafstad et al., 1997).
- Anti-**marijuana** “public service announcement” campaigns that utilized high-sensation-seeking messages were effective in significantly reducing **marijuana** use among high-sensation-seeking youth (Palmgreen et al., 2001).
- In a counter-advertising intervention with over 400 students in 6th grade, Goldberg et al. (2006) derived a program from theories of inoculation, reactance, associative learning, and persuasion knowledge. Young adolescents who experienced the intervention—in particular, those who had drunk **alcohol**—reported greater understanding of persuasive strategies, more critical attitudes toward alcohol advertising and advertisers, and greater intentions not to drink in the future than those in the control group. The intervention appeared to be successful in helping the adolescents develop persuasion coping behaviors; they reported that they would increase their vigilance and counterarguments when confronted with **alcohol** advertising in the future.

Research Highlights: Social Norms Marketing Campaigns

Social norms marketing campaigns utilize various media channels to broadcast true norms regarding the use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs (ATOD) in a target population. This approach is based upon the premise that the majority of adolescents overestimate the amount of ATOD use among their peers. Perkins (2002) states, “the actual norms are substantially less problematic than what students believe the norms to be” (p. 169). The overestimations, or *false norms*, influence adolescent behavior as youth attempt to reconcile their behavior with the trumped-up behavioral norm. Research by Beck and Treiman (1996) suggests that “teens’ drinking behaviors are not driven so much by a need for peer approval or to be accepted by a group, but rather by what is perceived of as normal behavior among one’s close friends” (p. 642).

Social norms marketing attempts to correct these misperceptions by confronting the youth with true norms, with the assumption that if youth begin to accept the true behavioral norms (i.e., “most don’t use” alcohol, tobacco, etc.) they will change their behavior to align more closely with the true norm. Evaluations of social norms marketing have demonstrated changes in perceived peer alcohol use (Clapp et al., 2003; Glider et al., 2001; Gomberg et al., 2001; Haines & Spear, 1996) as well as decreases in actual alcohol use (Glider et al., 2001; Granfield, 2002; Haines & Spear, 1996) among college populations.

Recent literature (Martino-McAllister & Wessel, 2005) includes an evaluation of the successful **Anti-Tobacco Media Blitz** (ATMB), for youth 12-18 years old: a five-step social norms marketing model, with emphasis on student-centered evaluation and results. University students assisted middle and high school students with the implementation of this campaign, which included a variety of media. Students worked in teams to design, develop, and evaluate tobacco-free messages through posters, radio, television, and peer-led activities. Evaluation of the campaign was constant and included assessment of message retention and demonstration of positive behaviors.

Best Practices

- Clearly define the target population and collect data from them to construct your norming messages. If the population you are targeting does not identify with the population on which the actual norms are reported, the message may not be perceived as relevant. For example, one evaluation found that fraternity men did not identify with reports of actual college campus alcohol use norms, and therefore discounted them as irrelevant (Carter & Kahnweiler, 2000).
- Use a variety of media channels to assure that a majority of the target population is receiving the norming messages (Glider et al., 2001; Granfield, 2002; Haines & Spear, 1996).
- Deliver messages at a regular frequency. Glider and associates (2001) reported changes in perceptions and behavior when messages were released at least once a week. However, Haines recommends 3 media exposures per week at the beginning of a campaign, with messages tapering off to at least 1 exposure per week as the campaign progresses (as cited in Glider et al., 2001).
- Implement the campaign over a sufficient duration to affect change. Clapp and associates (2003) were unable to document a decrease in alcohol use following the implementation of an intensive 6-week-long social norms marketing campaign, but both Glider and associates (2001) and Haines and Spear (1996) reported perception and behavior changes following the implementation of three-year-long social norms marketing projects.
- Portray images in the media pieces that are consistent with the norming message being presented (Glider et al., 2001).
- Test-pilot the norming messages with the target population to ensure that they will be well-received. Granfield (2002) found that, if messages were not tested beforehand, less than 35% of students reacted favorably to the norming messages and less than 45% of students believed the norming messages.
- Use secondary materials such as promotional items, contests, sweepstakes, and sponsored events to reinforce the campaign message and increase message saturation (Clapp et al., 2003; Gomberg et al., 2001; Granfield, 2002; Haines & Spear, 1996).
- Do not use social norms marketing as a prevention approach when there is not a healthy majority norm to promote within the target population (Carter & Kahnweiler, 2000).

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Standards for Communication Campaigns

Providers implementing Communication & Social Norms Marketing Campaigns must

Planning Phase

1. Demonstrate that each CGP staff member assigned to the program activity, completes a SAPP approved Communication Campaign training.
2. Secure support and/or participation from those community sectors that are responsible for providing access to the target audience.
3. Collect baseline survey data from a *representative sample of the target audience.
 - Baseline data **cannot** be more than 2 years old during planning or implementation.**When conducting a parent campaign, data can be collected from the youth of the targeted parents.*
4. Develop a minimum of one objective using the baseline data collected from the target audience. Each objective should:
 - Specify direction of change (increase or decrease),
 - Specify focus of change (select from the menu of change),
 - Identify the specific target audience, and
 - Be measurable from the data sources collected during the preplanning and planning phases.
5. Develop a written project timeline for the planning and strategy development phases which outlines:
 - Steps/tasks to be completed.
 - Projected deadline for each step.
 - The person(s) responsible.
6. Identify message distribution sources that are popular and credible with the target population.
7. Develop a written marketing plan for the implementation phase which includes:
 - All message/material distribution sources (ads, posters, promotional items, presentations etc.). *See implementation standards 11, 12, and 16.*
 - Estimated distribution/delivery dates. *See implementation standard 13.*
8. Develop campaign materials, consistent with your project objective(s), to be released at least once every 6 weeks. *See implementation standard 14.*
9. Ensure that campaign materials
 - Do not include moral or fear appeals.
 - Do not focus on the long-term risks and harm associated with ATOD use.
10. Gather feedback on campaign messages and materials from a representative sample of the target audience during both the planning and implementation phases (e.g., focus groups, ballot voting, etc.).

Implementation Phase

The following standards are for Providers that have already demonstrated the planning standards listed above and are implementing a Communication Campaign.

11. Implement campaign for a minimum of 9 consecutive months.
12. Disseminate campaign materials using a minimum of two message distribution sources.
13. Distribute messages through sources that are popular and credible with the target population.
14. Release new campaign materials, consistent with your project objective(s), at least once every 6 weeks. Recapture the target audience's attention by:
 - Changing the wording of the text or
 - Modifying the presentation through the use of new images and graphics or utilizing a different message distribution source.
15. Collect survey data at least once every two years during the implementation phase of the campaign to aid in the refinement of campaign messages and measure progress toward the achievement of the campaign objective(s).
16. Distribute messages using supplemental methods such as contests, presentations, sponsored events and/or promotional items, at least once every 3 months to reinforce the campaign message and increase message saturation among members of the target audience. (More frequent distribution is recommended but not required.)