

# Getting the Message Right! Considerations for Media Campaigns to Prevent Opioid Misuse and Overdose

## WEBINAR SUMMARY

**Date:** June 13, 2017

As part of a comprehensive plan, media campaigns can play an important role in the prevention of prescription drug misuse and opioid overdose. For these campaigns to be effective, however, practitioners must pay close attention to their intended audiences and ensure that messaging and mode of delivery are an appropriate match.

This national webinar presents key steps for developing and implementing successful campaigns to prevent prescription drug misuse and opioid overdose, with an emphasis on developing non-stigmatizing prevention messages. To bring these points to life, representatives from the MOON Study, the North Carolina Harm Reduction Coalition, and the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services share experiences and takeaways from developing their own media campaigns for opioid misuse and overdose prevention.

## WHAT ARE MEDIA CAMPAIGNS AND WHY USE THEM?

*Media campaigns* is an umbrella term that encompasses a variety of communications strategies, including: social marketing, social media utilization, social norms campaigns, and education materials.

Media campaigns can be used to:

- Increase knowledge and awareness of health risks
- Change attitudes, motivations, and beliefs
- Influence social norms
- Change structural factors that affect social determinants of health<sup>1</sup>
- Increase the availability and accessibility of health services
- Direct people to locally- or nationally-available resources

---

<sup>1</sup> Conditions in the places where people live, learn, work, and play that affect a wide range of health risks and outcomes. (Source: <https://www.cdc.gov/socialdeterminants/>)

Media campaigns can also play an important role in mobilizing and inspiring people to get involved in local prevention efforts, such as joining coalitions or committees in their area.

Prevention practitioners can use media campaigns to achieve prevention outcomes...

- When the necessary resources are in place in a community (e.g., you don't want to do a campaign about naloxone in an area that doesn't have access to naloxone)
- To obtain wide exposure and reach
- To get the message out quickly
- To reinforce education and awareness messages

### DEVELOPING MEDIA CAMPAIGNS: KEY COMPONENTS

---

When developing media campaigns to prevent prescription drug misuse and opioid overdose, practitioners should consider the following:

- **What is the goal of the campaign?** Campaign goals should align with the prevention priorities that practitioners want to address. If there is more than one goal (e.g., preventing NMUPD and preventing opioid overdose), practitioners may want to consider multiple campaigns or narrow the campaign's focus. It may be difficult to create campaign messaging that is authentic and believable for more than one prevention goal.
- **Who is the target audience?** When identifying the target audience, practitioners should consider the specific goal of the campaign. For example, is the focus on prescription drug misuse prevention or opioid overdose prevention? Are you trying to reach the community at large (i.e., a universal population) or a specific population within the community (i.e., selective or indicated)? Are you looking to modify behavior or direct people to resources?
- **What is the message?** Language plays a central role in campaign effectiveness. To maximize message impact, practitioners should pay close attention to the language used. For example, avoid any messages that exaggerate the dangers of use, take a moralistic stand, or otherwise serve to stigmatize a particular behavior or group of people. Additionally, evidence shows that fear-based messaging related to the strength of a drug is associated with drug-seeking behaviors, so be aware of potential unintended consequences that messaging may have.

### CONSIDERATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION: FINDINGS FROM THE MOON STUDY

---

The Maximizing OpiOid Safety with Naloxone (MOON) Study is a 3-year demonstration project funded by the Agency for Healthcare Research & Quality, whose purpose is to learn more about the public's perception of opioid safety, naloxone distribution, and the use of pharmacies as an integral site for public health intervention.

Specific study goals include the following:

- Reduce harm from opioid-related adverse events, especially overdoses

## SAMHSA'S CENTER FOR THE APPLICATION OF PREVENTION TECHNOLOGIES

- Expand and reinforce the safer use of opioids and increase patient awareness of opioid safety
- Increase awareness and access to naloxone as a rescue medication

To achieve these goals, the study's approach included:

- Working with pharmacies to increase naloxone distribution and patient safety education, and strengthen current systems such as Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs.
- Conducting focus groups with people using opioids (prescribed or illicit), caregivers, and pharmacists to identify current knowledge of naloxone and overdose, and evaluate campaigns currently in use, noting their effectiveness for relaying the intended message.
- Conducting a poster contest to raise awareness of the risks of opioid use, the importance of naloxone, and naloxone access information (see the [2016 & 2017 MOON Study winning posters](#))



Additional findings from the MOON Study include the following:

- Healthcare professionals, including pharmacists, need help providing and talking with people about naloxone; that is, there is a need for tools and training (e.g. academic detailing) to support these conversations.
- People need help asking for and getting naloxone at the pharmacy; that is, there is a need for tools (e.g., scripting, forms) and training to address this potential access barrier.
- Fidelity checks/secret shopper activities (where feedback is provided to a pharmacy based on experiences with trying to access naloxone at that location) offer an opportunity to empower communities to adopt and support naloxone access.
- Alternative media, such as radio and social media, offer opportunities to connect with important subpopulations.

**Key takeaways:** Target your audience with messaging that is evidence-based, test the message by conducting focus groups to gather formal feedback, and seek out opportunities to gather informal feedback from individuals, community members, and other consumers.

## LESSONS FROM THE FIELD: NORTH CAROLINA HARM REDUCTION COALITION

**Good Samaritan Law Awareness & Naloxone Access Media Campaign:** To raise awareness about a new law that increases access to naloxone and provides legal protection for people who call 911 to report an overdose, the NC Harm Reduction Coalition developed a statewide media campaign with little-to-no funding.

Target Audience(s)	Campaign Messages	Media Channels
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individuals at risk for experiencing or witnessing an overdose</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Don't be afraid to call 911</li> <li>Naloxone is safe and easy to use</li> <li>How to access free naloxone and training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Social media</li> <li>Printed flyers</li> <li>PSAs</li> <li>Local media</li> </ul>

### Key takeaways:

- Raising awareness and passing along information does not have to cost a lot of money.
- Word of mouth and flyers/brochures that can be printed and passed along often work best for those who misuse prescription drugs.
- Local media can be an excellent source of free exposure for your prevention efforts if you reach out to them (e.g., pitch quality stories, connect them with good interviewees).
- Become the community “go-to” expert about opioid misuse.
- Engaging in an informal anti-stigma campaign through blog posts, publications, and social media with the message “drug use is a public health issue” has been effective in changing attitudes toward people who use drugs.



## LESSONS FROM THE FIELD: OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE SERVICES (DMHSAS)

**Communications Campaign to Prevent Prescription Drug Misuse and Opioid Overdose:** As part of a comprehensive approach to reducing high rates of unintentional overdose deaths involving prescription opioids, the Oklahoma DMHSAS developed a media campaign with specific aims to:

- Present evidence-informed and factual information; avoid sensationalizing the issue
- Showcase sympathetic narratives and highlight real Oklahomans to connect the public at large and reduce stigma
- Offer simplified solutions and achievable actions that Oklahomans can use in their communities

## SAMHSA'S CENTER FOR THE APPLICATION OF PREVENTION TECHNOLOGIES

Target Audience(s)	Campaign Messages	Media Channels
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Universal populations (to prime Oklahomans to talk about these issues)</li> <li>First responders and healthcare providers (focus of overdose prevention messaging)</li> <li>Starting to move into more niche marketing with specific and well-defined sub-populations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Opioid prescriptions can be dangerous, be sure to use as directed</li> <li>Importance of safely storing prescriptions</li> <li>Properly disposal of unused or expired medications</li> <li>Dangers of mixing prescriptions with other drugs and alcohol</li> <li>Information about naloxone access and administration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Web and social media</li> <li>Earned media</li> <li>Television</li> <li>Print Material</li> </ul>

### Key takeaways:

- Leveraging partnerships with various news media outlets throughout the state has allowed them to expand the campaign's reach, particularly around sharing stories of real Oklahomans' struggles with opioids.
- Engaging local communities and using their web and social media platforms provides better reach than relying exclusively on their own media platforms.
- Reevaluating the campaign on an ongoing basis is an important step to ensuring that they are reaching the outcomes they hope to achieve.



### CAPT RESOURCES

SAMHSA's CAPT has a wide selection of resources on preventing prescription drug misuse and opioid overdose available on [samhsa.gov/capt](http://samhsa.gov/capt). Specific resources focused on media campaigns to address these issues include:

- Media Campaigns to Prevent Prescription Drug and Opioid Misuse.** Provides links and contact information for a selection of campaigns aimed to prevent prescription drug and opioid misuse, developed by states across the United States.
- Media Campaigns to Prevent Prescription Drug Misuse, Youth Marijuana Use, and Underage Drinking: Evidence of Effectiveness.** Summarizes evaluation findings from a selection of media campaigns (current and past) shown to be effective in preventing critical substance use-related problems.