



Media Advocacy

Media advocacy is the strategic use of media (e.g., radio, newspapers, TV, op-eds, blogs, social network sites) to advance a prevention initiative. Media advocacy can be used to raise awareness of underage drinking, generate public debate about related issues, and garner support for prevention efforts.

Objective(s)

To influence community norms and organize communities to effect change on underage alcohol use

Typical Elements

- A clear purpose. Who is the focus audience? What do advocacy leaders want the audience to know or do? As specifically as possible, leaders should identify the short- and long-term change they want to bring about through media advocacy (Wilbur & Stewart, 2011).
- Strong support from community stakeholders. Some stakeholders will have more power than others to help bring about the desired change (Wilbur & Stewart, 2011).
- Research on the focus audience. Key questions to answer in the investigation can include (Wilbur & Stewart, 2011):
 - Who should be the spokesperson? Who can persuade the focus audience? For example, local businesses can be less persuaded by a message from a local teen compared to a message from a parent (a potential customer).
 - What is the most effective way to get the attention of the focus audience? How does the focus audience access and receive their information? For example, parents can be more likely than youth to notice a letter to the editor.
- A carefully crafted message. Elements to consider include:
 - *Framing the issue*: Communicate a message integrating four components: (1) describe the issue, (2) describe the desired change, (3) describe what is required to make that change, and (4) identify who can make the change.



- *Making it short and catchy:* Create 7- to 15-second sound bites that convey key points using statistics, stories, humor, and/or an emotional appeal.
- *Avoiding jargon:* Use clear, straightforward language that is easy to understand and culturally appropriate.
- *Connecting to local concerns:* Use local statistics when available and link the story/message to issues community members already care about.
- *Consistency:* Ensure that everyone involved in media advocacy efforts understands and communicates the same message, and all materials shared with media outlets support that message.
- Strong relationships with local media contacts. These partnerships can allow media advocacy stakeholders to (Wilbur & Stewart, 2011):
 - Monitor existing media for relevant coverage (e.g., news stories about underage drinking).
 - Determine which media outlets and representatives have an interest in youth, the prevention of underage drinking, or, more broadly, alcohol prevention and public health.
 - Decide which media outlets represent the best way to convey prevention messages to the focus population(s).
 - Be proactive about contacting media representatives. In addition, stakeholders should be quick to respond—and fully prepared with the information they need—when media partners contact them. Creating a system for tracking these media contacts and results is valuable.
- A message dissemination plan. Elements to consider include:
 - Identifying multiple media outlets for message delivery based on media interest and popularity with the focus population(s).
 - Designating only a couple of people to communicate with the press. This will help control possible conflicting messages from different messengers. Be strategic in the selection of spokespeople (Marin Institute, 2007). Who can communicate the message most clearly and effectively to the focus population?
 - Staying on message by keeping to the four framing components mentioned above (i.e., What's the issue? What change do you want to see? What is required to make that change? Who can make that change?) and repeating them using various media outlets (e.g., radio, newspapers, TV, op-eds, blogs, social network sites).
 - Monitoring and documenting media stories, events, or sound bites that relay the message. Fine-tune the message and delivery efforts as needed (Marin Institute, 2007).



Populations

Different segments of the general population depending on prevention needs and goals (e.g., college and/or high school students, parents, local officials)

Outcomes

Media advocacy has been linked to:

- Increased media coverage of alcohol-related issues (e.g., underage drinking prevention activities, alcohol use by minors, parental prevention activities [Holder & Treno, 1997; Treno et al., 1996; Voas, Holder, & Gruenewald, 1997])
- Reductions in underage sales of alcohol when combined with responsible beverage server training and increased enforcement efforts (Grube, 1997)
- Reductions in self-reported driving under the influence by college students when combined with a social marketing campaign and increased law enforcement (Clapp et al., 2005)

Guidelines

Community How To Guide on...Media Relations

Media Advocacy

Media Advocacy Primer

Strategic Media Advocacy for Enforcement of Underage Drinking Laws

Recognition

No recognition found for role of media advocacy in preventing underage drinking and/or its consequences.

References

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