

PFS & BG Social Media Best Practices

Purpose of a Media Message

Does the media message?

- Target a specific audience? List the target: _____
- Raise awareness? About what: _____
- Influence attitudes and norms? Which Attitude/Norm? _____
- Increase knowledge? How? _____
- Reinforce knowledge, attitudes and/or behavior? How? _____
- Show benefit of behavior change? Which behavior(s)? _____
- Demonstrate skills? Which skills? _____
- Suggest/prompt an action? What action? _____
- Refute myths and misconceptions? What myth/misconception? _____

Best Practice Guidelines

Resources:

http://frameworksinstitute.org/assets/files/adolescence_youth/reframing_adolescent_substance_use_playbook_2018.pdf

<http://www.frameworksinstitute.org/adolescent-substance-use.html>

A. CONTENT CONSIDERATION

- **When using substance abuse information and data, use reliable sources.**

Misinformation is rampant online, so make to not spreading inaccurate information from sites that may be unreliable. Accurate sources generally include government agencies (ex: professional associations, well known national nonprofits and academic journals). **ALL statistical data must be cleared through the Chemical Dependency Bureau and the DPHHS PIO (Public Information Officer).**

- If retweeting or sharing a link, look at the entire content before passing it along.
- Assess whether it contains any inaccurate or stigmatizing content.

Consider sharing positive stories rather than posting substance use related content when there is a negative incident. Focus on messages of hope or assets that help stay away from substance

use and/or abuse. This is not to suggest that there are not appropriate times to focus on problem areas and/or behaviors. We understand that this is not always the case and will review all media submitted.

B. LANGUAGE AND IMAGES

USE:

- **Use images that either do not have a copyright or that permission to use has been given if there there is a copyright.**
- **Use person-first terminology rather than labels.** This means describing, for example, someone as “living with a person who drinks” rather than “an alcoholic.”
- **Use correct terminology that is trauma informed.** Such as “Substance Use Disorder”
 - <https://www.acesconnection.com/blog/how-to-be-trauma-informed-for-real>
 - <https://www.samhsa.gov/capt/sites/default/files/resources/sud-stigma-tool.pdf>
 - https://www.naabt.org/documents/NAABT_Language.pdf

AVOID:

- **Avoid stigmatizing or derogatory language.** This includes words like “DUMB” “druggie”, “loser”, “irresponsible”, “inattentive”, “you have bad parenting skills”, etc.
- **Avoid descriptions and images of drinking/substance use acts or methods,** such as images of popping pills, drinking games, binge drinking , depictions of youth engaging in substance use should be avoided, (crunking, dexing, chasing the tiger, dabbing) etc.
- **Avoid using photos of people who live in your community.** Images of youth who pledge not to drink may soon be facing an MIP charge. Avoid using faces from your community.

C. BUILDING ENGAGEMENT

Media is a powerful tool that can either cause your community to join in your efforts or turn against your efforts. Our goal is to engage the community. In order to do this you need to ask yourself what kind of picture of your community you are trying to paint. All messages have an intrinsic message and we want to ensure that all messages are non-blaming.

- Does your message imply that “you are all bad people who need to get their act together” or “we are good and we can be even better”?

Science has shown us that punitive and/or scare tactics do not work in media messaging with regards to decreasing substance use. A supportive and joining message has a better response in the community so *focus on what you want to become* and not what you already are.

D. USE PLAIN LANGUAGE

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services - Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion

- “Plain language has to do with clear and effective communication—nothing more or less”

Writing plainly

Key elements of plain language are:

- Organize information so the most important behavioral or action points come first;
- Break complex information into understandable chunks;
- Use simple language or define technical terms; and
- Provide **ample white space** so pages look easy to read.

E. HEALTH LITERACY

Health literacy has many definitions. Healthy People 2010 has defined health literacy as “the degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions” (Ratzan & Parker, 2000).

A key point in this definition is the *behavioral component* associated with health literacy. Not only do people have to be able to **understand the words**, but they have to be able to **critically assess the information and take appropriate action**. Therefore it is important to write in a manner that everyone can understand – the simpler and more straightforward, the better.

Centers for Disease Control’s Examples to Promote Health Literacy

D. Incorporation Guidelines

Below are some guidelines for incorporating social marketing into your communications.

- <https://www.frameworksinstitute.org/storytelling.html>

A. Highlight the positive aspects of your health message.

- Tell your audience what they should do rather than what they should not do.

Example of a positive message

GOOD EXAMPLE: Wear your seatbelt every time you drive your car.

B. Answer the audience's question, "What's in it for me?"

- Tell your audience how your message will benefit them.

Example of a benefit-driven message

GOOD EXAMPLE: Learn ways to have a healthy pregnancy and how to prevent possible complications.

C. Respect your audience.

- Do not talk down or preach. People are less likely to act on information if you make them feel bad about their current behavior or health situation.

Example of a message that respects its audience

GOOD MESSAGE: Fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS) is a condition that occurs when a baby is exposed to alcohol during pregnancy.

No thanks I'm pregnant- Drinking alcohol during pregnancy can cause a permanent disability called Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. Learn more to protect your baby.

D. Encourage your readers to take a particular action or to learn more.

- Emphasize small, practical steps. Offer concrete examples of successful action steps.

Example of an encouraging message

GOOD EXAMPLE: You can live a healthy, tobacco-free life. The first step is deciding to quit. Set a quit date and mark it on your calendar.

E. Tie messages to specific products or services when possible (such as "Find out where to get tested" or "Know your status").

- Give specific directions or links to services that allow people to personalize their search or get information that will be useful for them.

GOOD EXAMPLE: Learn how to protect your children by disposing your unwanted medications. Visit XXX.yyy.org

F. Media Etiquette

Avoid the following:

- Vulgar, profane, or abusive language; personal attacks of any kind; inappropriate religious, sexual, political, or racial references; unsupported accusations.
- Endorsements of commercial products, services, organizations, or other entities.
- Endorsements of political parties, candidates, or groups.

- Content that infringes on copyrights.
- Solicitation of funds.
- Comments on any ongoing investigation of any sort.
- Surveys, polls, or questionnaires other than those approved by the *Chemical Dependency Bureau* staff.

When in doubt – ask Youth Connections RTAL and/or the Chemical Dependency Bureau.

We also encourage community feedback so hold “focus groups” within your community.