

# MEDIA CAMPAIGNS

OHIO  
—adult—  
ALLIES

## INTRODUCTION

A media campaign is a coordinated marketing effort to reinforce or assist with a goal using one or more media platforms. Media campaigns combine two proven fields to create a successful product. The first field is commercial marketing which intends to build a relationship between a product or a service and its consumer. The main goal is to make a profit while fulfilling the needs of the consumer. Commercial marketers may want to benefit society (e.g. YETI®-saves us from using plastic water bottles) but their primary focus is sales and not societal good. The second field is social sciences which is the study of human society and social relationships. A successful media campaign blends together these two fields. Media campaigns are considered an environmental strategy. The Federal Alcohol and Drug Abuse and Mental Health Service Block Grant (45 CFR § 96.125; 1993) defines an environmental approach to substance abuse prevention as: [A] strategy [that] establishes or changes written and unwritten community standards, codes and attitudes, thereby influencing incidence and prevalence of the abuse of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs used in the general population.

Many advancements and studies have occurred in the prevention field since these Federal Rules and Regulations were established. Although media campaigns were initially defined as information dissemination in the field of prevention, social science now shows when implemented effectively, they can lead to behavioral change (Wakefield, Loken & Hornik, 2010).

Youth-led programs in Ohio are distinct because they develop young people's knowledge, skills and attitudes to empower them to become catalysts for positive change within their communities. At the core of youth-led programs, young people are engaged in collective

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**For more information on youth-led programs, please see the following white papers:**

**Community-Based Process:** This paper explains the foundational role of community-based processes in prevention and youth-led programs.

**Policy and Advocacy:** Young people have a right to be heard on matters affecting their lives. This white paper provides an overview of how young people can engage in policy and advocacy.

**Prevention Education:** This paper provides an expanded definition of prevention education and explains how this strategy may be utilized by youth-led programs.

**Social Norms:** Social norms influence behavioral health. This paper explains how social norm campaigns can be developed and implemented by youth-led programs to create community change.

work that sparks their interests and enhances their abilities to address local issues. Youth-led programs engage in a strategic planning process to identify the root causes of the local issues they are interested in and then select and implement evidence-based strategies (Talbert, 2017). Should a youth-led program decide to focus on a media campaign during their strategic planning process, the team must carefully determine effective media messages to create community change. An effective media campaign raises awareness of an existing issue and may also provide information or actions that promote healthy behaviors.

## TYPES OF MEDIA CAMPAIGNS

There are three types of media campaigns: passive, active and social norms. In order to understand what type of media campaign to implement, we must first understand the differences among them.

A passive media campaign encourages healthy choices but does not tell the audience specifically *what* to do (Regional Prevention Services, n.d). An example is the “Above the Influence” campaign which encourages young people to recognize the influences around them, including the pressures to abuse drugs and alcohol (Above the Influence, 2019). Passive media campaigns typically place messages strategically to reach broad audiences through television, radio, billboards, posters, and print media such as magazines and newspapers. An individual’s exposure to these messages is generally inert – a result of routine use of media. Some campaigns utilize techniques built into internet and mobile devices that require the recipient to actively choose to seek information (e.g. clicking on a web link).

Active media campaigns tell audiences exactly what they should do. For example, instead of saying “eat healthy”, the 5-A-Day Campaign tells people to eat five fruits and vegetables a day (NHS, 2018). Active media campaigns work through direct and indirect pathways to alter behavior of whole populations. These campaigns are intended to directly affect the individual recipient by invoking cognitive or emotional responses. Such campaigns are intended to touch upon the decision-making processes at an individual level. For instance, an anti-smoking campaign might directly request that audiences stop smoking, emphasize the benefits of quitting, provide a telephone number for a support line, remind smokers of positive social norms in relation to quitting, or associate quitting with favorable self-regard (Feshbein & Azjen, 2010).

Social norms campaigns are an effective, data-driven approach, that may be implemented by young people to promote, through positive messaging, the healthy protective behaviors and attitudes which are the actual norm in a given population (Haines, 2018). See the white paper entitled [Social Norms](#) in this white paper series for more information about social norms campaigns.

## DEVELOPING A MEDIA CAMPAIGN

Is your youth group interested in implementing a media campaign as part of its strategic plan? Several factors are important to consider when designing and implementing a media campaign. Understanding some core steps will help ensure the media campaign achieves its intended outcome.

**Analyze your budget.** It is important to know your budget because it will help you determine if you are able to work with a marketing company or not. Working with a marketing firm to create a local media campaign may be accomplished if resources and funds are available. If resources and funds are limited, you may need to develop the campaign or use existing state or national resources. You may also choose to identify and engage key stakeholders in your planning process to help provide additional resources and/or financial assistance. For example, if you are interested in a campaign about mental health, an agency that specializes in that field would be a beneficial stakeholder.

**Determine and research your priority population.** Your priority population should be determined as part of the strategic planning process by reviewing community-level data. As you begin to plan your media campaign, you need to determine where your priority population can be found. Where do they live? Where do they spend time? Where and how would you be most successful in reaching them? This might be achieved by noting or observing their actions, habits or daily behaviors.

**Develop your media message.** Knowing your priority population and the intervening variables (or contributing factors to the problem of practice) helps you develop the appropriate campaign message. The campaign message should cater to your priority population and address one of the identified intervening variables. If you have a budget to work with a marketing firm, make sure they are aware of best practices for effective behavioral health media campaigns or work to educate the firm on these best practices. If your resources are limited, you may choose to analyze and select an existing state or national campaign, provided the message aligns with your locally identified intervening variables and priority population. When developing your media campaign, be sure to be specific about what type of media message you want to design: passive, active, or social norms. Additional information and resources can be found at <https://pfs.ohio.gov/SPF-Phases>.

**Determine the appropriate platforms and locations to deliver the media campaign.** What form of media will you use? Research is imperative to find the most effective and efficient vehicles to reach your priority population. In this digital age, today's youth have a wide variety of media options. Recent research has confirmed that 7.5 hours a day are spent on some media device, whether cell phone, television, video games etc. (Kaiser Family

Foundation, 2010). This variety of media options provides several opportunities, such as the ability to selectively target audiences by their age or location.

**Measure Outcomes.** Evaluation should be an ongoing process throughout the media campaign. How many retweets, posts on Instagram, likes on Facebook, calls to a hotline, emails, or users signed up for your services? In the end a measurement of how many people altered their behavior or adapted a healthy lifestyle change is imperative in understanding your impact and can be identified by continuing to track local data around your intervening variables and problem of practice (Ethos, 2018).

### CASE STUDY: BE PRESENT ACTIVE MEDIA CAMPAIGN

Be Present is an active media campaign released by the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OhioMHAS) focused on primary prevention of mental health issues among youth and youth adults. The campaign educates and empowers peers, friends, classmates and siblings of at-risk youth to step up and provide needed support if they see or feel they know someone who is struggling. It also makes youth more aware of and able to address their own emotional state. By learning the art of living mentally well they will more likely be comfortable helping others in a time of emotional distress (OhioMHAS, 2019).

This media campaign was originally created by members of the OYLPN Youth Council, as a result of their strategic planning process, to change young people's attitudes toward depression and mental health. Youth played a leading role in content development for the campaign. The priority population identified was youth ages 12-17. A 90-second video was created with the original tagline #BeAware. #BeAware is one example of young people working together to create societal change by reducing the stigma around mental illness. The campaign's main message was "Mental health is a real health issue. And it's time we talk about it." This media campaign was further developed when OhioMHAS contracted with MEE Productions (a marketing firm that specializes in public health messaging). MEE Productions received research insights from young people in five counties across the state and through this process updated the campaign message to Be Present. Using their firsthand accounts and stories of the challenges facing youth, MEE released the campaign using the tagline "Your Presence is a Present" in 2017.

BePresentOhio.org is dedicated to the Be Present campaign and has different levels of involvement for different priority populations (youth and caring adults). The website has links to various YouTube and educational videos for information seekers to engage. There is a calendar that provides information on rallies, presentations, and other activities around mental health throughout the state. Be Present also has a multi-platform presence on social media (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram and Snapchat), print ads and digital public service announcements on Pandora Radio.

## CONCLUSION

Understanding that media messages come from many sources and that our youth are inundated with opportunities to absorb information creates this chance for adult allies to encourage adolescents to move toward a healthy lifestyle through a media campaign as an environmental prevention tool. We must seize the opportunity to create community level change by embracing environmental strategies.

## AUTHORS



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Ohio University's Voinovich School and Leadership and Public Affairs and Prevention Action Alliance collaborated with the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OhioMHAS) to host a series of training and technical assistance (T/TA) activities for adult allies of youth-led programs. This series of white papers was developed by adult allies to support their peers who work with young people to use local data and evidence-based prevention strategies to create meaningful change within Ohio's communities. Dr. Jessica Collura, Ms. Aimee Collins, Dr. Holly Raffle and Mr. Zach Gheen of the Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Affairs supported Ohio's adult allies as they developed the white paper series. Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services Grant# 1900157 provided funding for the Youth-Led Training and Technical Assistance Project.