

INTRODUCTION

Community How To Guide On...MEDIA RELATIONS

[Goal-Driven Media Relations](#)

[The Basic Principles of Media Relations](#)

[Tools of Communication](#)

[Interviews](#)

[News Conferences](#)

[Ideas for Media Coverage](#)

[Developing a Tragedy Plan](#)

[Health Promotion, Policy Change and the Media](#)

[Conclusion](#)

APPENDICES

[Appendix #1 – Crash/Crime Clock](#)

[Appendix #2 – Telephone Pitch](#)

[Appendix #3 – News Advisory](#)

[Appendix #4 – News Release](#)

[Appendix #5 – Letter to the Editor](#)

[Appendix #6 – Op-Ed Piece](#)

[Appendix #7 – Message Development Sheet](#)

RESOURCES

[Resources Cited In Community How To Guide](#)

[Other Media Resources](#)

INTRODUCTION

One of the most effective ways to raise awareness about a problem and generate support for solutions is through the media. The *Community How To Guide on Media Relations* describes the basic principles of media relations that can help organizations develop an effective media strategy. The tools that are necessary for this strategy, including news advisory, news release, letters to the editor, and “op-ed” articles are described and samples provided in the appendix.

This booklet also describes the techniques for a successful interview and suggestions on how organizations can conduct effective news conferences. Additionally, there are examples of how other underage drinking prevention organizations have effectively used the media to communicate their message. Finally, because underage drinking can often end up in tragedy, this booklet suggests coalitions and organizations develop a plan to deal with these incidents when they occur in their communities. A tragedy provides an excellent opportunity for organizations fighting underage drinking to inform the public about how tragedies can be prevented in the future.

Community How to Guide On...MEDIA RELATIONS

The role of the media in American society today is complex, controversial and sometimes confusing. Never before in history have so many people been exposed to so many different influences in such a short period of time. Our electronic culture subjects adults and youth to a hurricane of media messages daily. Entertainment and news on television and radio, talk radio, popular music, print and broadcast advertising and the “new media” outlet, the internet, all disseminate words and images that help to shape how we think and feel about ourselves and our culture.

Increasingly, advocates for public health, substance abuse prevention and traffic safety are learning to use the media to help shape beliefs, attitudes and behavior among their target audiences. This *Community How To Guide* deals primarily with the tool that most small and medium-sized community groups are most likely to use: media relations. Media relations, for this purpose, can be defined as seeking coverage in the print and broadcast news media. This strategy can be highly effective in helping to build awareness of the problem, generating interest in solving the problem and mobilizing people to assist in specific programs and activities.

Social marketing, media advocacy and media literacy are all utilizing media strategies which can be employed by any concerned organization to support their initiatives. This guide will provide a brief overview of each of these exciting areas, but coalition organizers who are interested in applying these strategies in their communities can obtain additional information through the books and other sources listed in the Resource Section of this booklet.

Goal-Driven Media Relations

Busy coalition organizers and project directors are often focused on creating programs and then using media relations as a way to announce their programs to the community. In most of those cases, if the local paper or broadcast outlets cover the story, the coalition feels that their media relations effort has succeeded. This approach to media relations, although common, is not the most efficient and effective way to use this powerful tool.

Good media relations programs should be goal-driven, carefully planned and measured based on their success in achieving the desired goal. When companies marketing a product develop media relations programs, for instance, they carefully target the audience they want to reach, the message they want to deliver, the end they want to achieve and the mechanism for reaching the target audience. That is exactly the approach that advocates for prevention, safety and health should adopt.

Ideally, when a coalition is developing a strategic plan for action, a carefully thought-out media plan should be part of that approach. The media relations program should be designed to complement and support the other parts of the plan, not to simply announce them.

If a coalition has already developed a plan, the coalition should examine that plan and determine how to craft a media relations effort to augment it.

Examples of a goal-driven approach

- If a coalition is trying to encourage local police to conduct compliance checks, the group should work to place stories on the number and size of underage drinking parties in the area or on the number of car crashes and other incidents related to drinking. These stories would be a mechanism for stimulating discussion about how the youth are obtaining alcohol. Within each story, the advocates could then call upon the law enforcement community to move forward with an effort to reduce access through compliance checks.
- Targeting stories is critically important. If a coalition wants to encourage youth to attend alcohol-free activities, it could seek stories about the activities in advance and try to build “buzz” about them in the youth community. To reach young people, the coalition would have to target local media that reach the youth

directly: youth-oriented radio stations, for example. If the story ran on an adult-oriented classical music station, the coalition would have missed its mark because, although it placed a story, it did not place the story in an outlet which reaches its prime target.

Careful planning, based on a good understanding of the media and strategies to garner appropriate coverage, can help a coalition to achieve all of its goals. Because underage drinking prevention efforts do not have a great deal of money, they must focus on earned rather than paid media. Paid media is advertising, which is based on the number of viewers (television), listeners (radio) or readers (newspaper) the media outlet has. Those with the most can charge advertising rates accordingly, which places paid media out of the reach of most community coalitions and organizations. Earned media, however, can be just as effective and much less expensive.

Earned media is garnering media attention for the organization's activities and programs. Getting media attention for your issue is more than sending out a news release. Successful media relations programs require planning, creativity, careful execution and follow-up, follow-up, follow-up!

The media not only can focus public attention on an issue; they can actually become agents for change. That was the case back in the early 1980's when impaired driving was a "hot" media issue and received a great deal of attention that eventually changed the public's behavior and attitude. But why did the media pay attention to impaired driving in the first place? The news media focused on the impaired driving problem because Mothers Against Impaired Driving (MADD), Remove Intoxicated Drivers (RID) and others captured their attention with the compelling story of a mother whose child was killed in a senseless crash. The story touched people and they responded to the call for change. We can all learn from this example as we seek to interest the news media in our stories.

The Basic Principles of Media Relations

Understand the media

- News organizations are businesses and make money from advertising revenue. That revenue is based on ratings or, in the case of newspapers, readership. If a news organization does not cover what people want to watch or read, advertisers go away, revenue drops and the organization is soon out of business.
- Controversy and tragedy often generate higher ratings than so-called "good news," therefore the news media gravitates to what is sensational or shocking. The media is playing to human nature.

Target efforts carefully

Identifying your media goals, refining your message and segmenting your audience will make your efforts more effective and efficient. Following are some basic questions to ask:

- What is the specific problem you are trying to solve?

Are you trying to increase coalition membership, raise money or address a specific aspect of the underage drinking problem in your community?

- Who can help to solve the problem?

Who can become a member of the organization, donate money, help to change individual or group attitude and behavior, or help to change laws, policies and procedures?

- What do those people currently know or believe about underage drinking, your coalition and the community?

Do they view underage drinking as a rite of passage? A moral issue? A problem for the schools to solve? Do they see the coalition as “just another group of do-gooders”?

- What do you want the person or individual to believe or know so that they will provide what you need?

A change in behavior, money, etc.

- What are the key characteristics of the individual or group you need to reach?

Are they wealthy or poor? Are they highly-educated or semi-literate? Are they members of a minority group? Is English their primary language and if not, are they literate in their primary language? How old are they? Are they working in or outside the home? Is the person or group difficult to reach through individual contact?

- How can you reach these individuals or organizations?

What media do they read, watch or listen to? Is the media the best way to reach them?

- Who can influence the targeted individual or group?

Commercial marketers often target their messages to the “influencers” when they want to shape someone else’s behavior. Cereal and toy companies, for instance, advertise heavily on cartoon shows and other programs for children so that they can create demand among the children for their product. The children, in turn, will

influence their parents' shopping behavior. Coalitions can learn from these advertisers and reach out to individuals or groups who have influence with others. Reaching out to coaches through a coaches' newsletter, for instance, may ultimately influence the behavior of young athletes. Reaching out to parents may help to shape their children's behavior.

- How can you shape and deliver your message effectively for these target groups?

Based on the answers to the preceding questions about your target audience and the issue, craft your message.

- How will you know if the message and the materials will work?

Whenever possible, test the message and the materials with members of your target audience before you disseminate them. It is expensive, painful and discouraging to embark on a campaign, spend time and money implementing the campaign, and then find that the message was doomed. This process involves formative evaluation, which is discussed in the *Community How To Guide on Evaluation*.

- What will it cost to market the message to the targeted group?

Costs should be measured not only in money, but in time, energy, material and influence. Is the benefit worth the expenditure? If you have limited resources, should you redirect your media effort to get more "bang for the buck?"

- How will you know if your message has been received and accepted?

Can you measure changes in knowledge, attitudes and behavior? Can you calculate how many individuals in the target group have been exposed to your message and how frequently they have been exposed? Ways to measure effectiveness are also discussed in the *Community How To Guide on Evaluation*.

Make what you do newsworthy

- What is news? News is what is novel, different, eye-catching and thought provoking. A correspondent for *The Washington Post* said, "The classic definition of news known to all beginning reporters is credited to John Bogart, long ago editor of *The New York Sun*. It is not a definition but an illustration. 'When a dog bites a man, that's not news because it happens too often,' said Bogart to a young reporter. 'But if a man bites a dog, that is news.'"
- What the media wants is fairly simple...they want a good story. People define a good story differently. What you believe is a good story or news, may not be a good story or news to a member of the press. Study the media and find out which stories they cover and how the information is presented.

Get to know reporters

- Reporters are not the enemy. They are like other people and want recognition for doing good work. The more airtime a television reporter receives or the more inches a newspaper reporter secures for a particular story, the better they will appreciate the news source that helped them.
- Some reporters cover specific topics or “beats.” Find out who covers your issue or similar issues. Watch local television news shows and read local papers to learn what reporters cover and what stories are featured in the paper or on the news shows.
- If no one is assigned to cover the issue you are working on, determine which larger topic incorporates what you do or what you are promoting. Underage drinking, for instance, could fall under education, health, law enforcement, social issues or a variety of other “beats.” Think about the relationship among underage drinking, workforce development and business news, for instance. Traffic safety stories might be covered by someone who also reports on transportation, health, law enforcement, or local government.

Farris, former Executive Director of the Safe and Sober Youth (SASY) program in Chesterfield County, Virginia, transformed a potential media relations problem into a continuing, successful relationship with a reporter at *The Richmond Times-Dispatch*.

When Ms. Farris discovered that a local parent was angry that area high schools were spending money on post-prom parties and was urging a reporter to write a story criticizing the efforts, she decided to step in. She contacted the reporter and explained the importance of the post-prom parties and the message they send to parents throughout the community. She also invited the reporter to attend a post-prom activity planning meeting and to see how much energy and dedication the parents and sponsors commit to the events. The resulting story praised the post-prom program, listed all of the post-prom events planned for area schools and contained several quotes from Ms. Farris.

- Praise reporters for doing a good job. If you see a good story on impaired driving in the newspaper write the reporter and let him or her know you appreciated the effort. Use the opportunity to tell them a little about your organization and the issue, but be brief. If you write a ten-page letter, they are unlikely to read it. Help the reporter to see how your topic relates to their work and offer to meet or talk with them at their convenience. Although they may not respond, the letter will introduce you to them and may be the beginning of a relationship. This strategy can be especially helpful if you are planning to hold an event or launch a program shortly after you write — your note may make the reporter more willing to cover your story when it comes up.
- Do not be discouraged if reporters don’t call you or talk to you on “background” (to provide information without being quoted). If you are informed and persuasive, eventually they will see you as an important source for information.

Be as helpful as possible. If you do not know an answer, offer to find it for them or give them the names and phone numbers of other sources.

Develop a good, clean press list

- A good, clean press list with up-to-date information is your first priority. A news organization is not likely to attend your event if you send the information to the wrong person or the news organization's address is listed incorrectly.
- Make a list of newspapers (daily or weekly) in your community and a list of television and radio stations.
- Input the media list into your computer and use a "broadcast fax" program to distribute news advisories and releases. Many reporters today also have e-mail addresses to which you can send correspondence or releases.
- Make sure your press list includes the phone number for the newsroom — not just the main number for the station or paper. If you need to reach a reporter after hours or on the weekend, the main switchboard may be shut down, but the newsroom may be functioning.
- Update a press list at least once a year by contacting news organizations in your community to verify that your information is correct.
- Identify reporters who cover your issue. Also send your advisories and releases to "The Assignment Editor" or "The Editor." Assignments sometimes change and reporters get sick or go on vacation. If your materials are marked for just one person's attention and that person is not available, your event or story could go unreported. Don't take that chance.
- Most television stations have assignment editors who funnel stories to general assignment reporters. The assignment editors are the gatekeepers at the stations. Call them to determine whether your information was received. These editors receive hundreds of advisories each day, and your call may remind them of your event.
- Public affairs directors for television and radio stations generally do not work in the newsroom and have different phone and fax numbers. Keep them on a separate list.
- In some communities, the United Way or other organizations compile a media directory. There may be one available in your community. Do not assume that every bit of information is up-to date, even in a recently published directory. Verify the information!

- Take a copy of your press list home with you. If a crash or other unexpected event happens at night or on the weekend, taking time to get to your office and get your list will consume valuable time. Make sure the list is always available to you.

Link your issue to issues already high in the public consciousness

- It is much easier to get media attention when the public, and consequently the media, is already concerned about your issue. Today, crime, violence, and aggressive driving are “hot” topics. Inform the media about the link between illegal underage drinking and violence at parties or date rape. Connect impaired driving, speeding, and occupant protection to a story about road rage to highlight the number of deaths caused by motor vehicle crashes.
- Concentrate your efforts during the times of the year when the public and the media are predisposed to think about impaired driving. Those times include prom and graduation season, July 4th, homecoming and other sports events and the December holidays.

The Travis County Underage Drinking Prevention Program in Austin, Texas (See *Pilot Projects*) successfully linked stories about the perils of underage drinking to times of the year when the focus is on children: back-to-school and prom season. “Media is a powerful partner in a community education campaign,” says Gloria Souhami, coordinator of the Travis County Underage Drinking Prevention Program. “Creating partnerships with the news media benefits both parties, especially during prevention campaigns and high-risk times. All media, from local television stations to small community weekly newspapers, play a vital role in bringing credibility to an issue and they act as a vehicle to bring the issue before the public.”

Be creative

- Make your issue as visual and interesting as possible. The news media includes both print and broadcast outlets. Television stations will be most likely to air your story if it is visually interesting. Following are some suggestions for making underage drinking stories more visual and interesting.
- Involve young people in stories about underage drinking and make them available to comment on the problems they face when confronted with the issue of drinking.
- Hold a news conference at a location where a crash involving teen drinking has occurred.
- Arrange for people at a news conference to sign a large pledge board indicating their support for reducing underage drinking.
- Use large charts, banners, posters and other graphic materials to create visual interest for participants and to create good backgrounds for photos and video.

- Law enforcement officers in uniform can create a strong visual impression, particularly if several of them are standing together.
- If you are reporting on the results of compliance checks or “stings”, consider stacking up alcohol purchased by decoys during the checks and using the alcohol as a backdrop for speakers. The old maxim is true: sometimes a picture is worth a thousand words.
- Pack news events with members of your coalition. Invite the board of directors, young people, schools, and community activists to attend. A room full of people makes the event more visual. It gives the cameras something to shoot after they have taped clips of people talking at the podium. Being visually interesting is crucial — especially for television.

Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) used the increase in youth alcohol-related motor vehicle fatalities to launch a 2000 X 2000 campaign. The campaign aimed to reduce the number of youth killed in alcohol-related crashes to 2,000 by the Year 2000. At a kick-off news conference, 232 young people were hidden by black poster board to depict the 232 young people (15-20) who died in July 1996 from alcohol-related incidents. They called it “the black hole” and asked the media to visual how large a black hole it would be to depict the 2,315 young people who died in alcohol-related incidents during that entire year.

Groups promoting other aspects of traffic safety could conduct child safety seat checks, using a large tractor-trailer as a backdrop with a banner bearing the group’s message on the trailer or a demonstration of the ways that alcohol impairs driving skills.

Choose speakers at news conferences carefully

- Remarks should be brief and to the point. Speakers must enunciate clearly and distinctly.
- Chose words and phrasing carefully. Do not use complicated, thousand dollar words that the audience will not understand. Refrain from using internal jargon. For instance, say, “National Highway Traffic Safety Administration,” not NHTSA, the first time the name is used. The abbreviation may be used later if it is properly explained the first time.
- Master the sound bite for remarks at news conferences or for use during interviews. A sound bite is a brief, pithy statement that is quotable. “The teen’s death was a wake up call for parents!” “We live in an age of drive-by parenting.” are good sound bites that were both used in underage drinking prevention news conferences. Great quotes may sound spontaneous, but they are often planned ahead. Take time to formulate a great quote for your story or several quotes to be used later. Most importantly, make sure the sound bite conveys your message.
- Insure that your speakers are prepared and will stay on message.

The Washington Regional Alcohol Program (WRAP), an anti-drinking and driving and underage drinking prevention coalition in the Washington, DC area, generated a great deal of media attention for its effort to reduce underage drinking. After a crash that killed a high school senior in Fairfax, Virginia, The Washington Post² called to solicit WRAP's reaction. When the executive director was asked what she thought about the crash, she replied, "It was a wake up call for parents." That quote appeared in the headline and provided the writer with a focus for the story.

Use statistics to capture the media's attention

- Provide local statistics whenever possible to demonstrate the seriousness of the problem in your community. If you have charts or graphs, include them in your press kit for use by newspapers. (See the *Community How To Guide on Needs Assessment and Strategic Planning* for more information about developing a strong baseline of data for your community.)
- Present statistics in an interesting form. *Appendix #1* is a *Crime/Crash Clock* which depicts the seriousness of the motor vehicle crash problem. The clock shows that one murder occurs in this country every 34 minutes, while a motor vehicle crash fatality occurs every 13 minutes.
- Compare local statistics to a national survey. Each year, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration publishes "*Youth Fatal Crash and Alcohol Facts*," which includes national trends in the area of youth drinking and driving. In addition, the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) releases "*Monitoring the Future*" better known as the national high school senior survey. The survey includes national statistics about alcohol use by young people. If you have local statistics, which can be compared to the national numbers, contact the local media and let them know. You can provide the local "spin" on the national story and have an opportunity to highlight the importance of the issue locally. Information on how to access the NHTSA report and *The Monitoring the Future* survey is included in the resource section of this booklet.

In Omaha, Nebraska, Project Extra Mile (see *Pilot Projects*) used statistics for a retail store compliance check to highlight the need for changes in the sanctions for stores, which sell to minors. Project Extra Mile worked with area law enforcement officials to coordinate the compliance check, held a news conference to release the results and secured extensive coverage of the issue.

The Governor's Highway Safety Representative in Nebraska says, "The media attention Project Extra Mile attracted reinforced the community's interest in the problem of underage drinking. Project Extra Mile has also become a valuable source of information for the media. Whenever reporters want to know something about underage drinking, they know they can get the answer from Project Extra Mile."

Tools of Communication

The basic tools for initiating communication to the media are telephone calls, news advisories and releases, and letters from your organization to the press. Each of these can be effective, but none are guaranteed to generate coverage.

Telephone Calls

Calling a newspaper, television or radio station to introduce yourself or to suggest a story is often a useful way to garner the media's interest, but understanding a few "rules of the road" will help you be successful.

- When contacting reporters or editors, it is generally advisable to assume they are in a hurry. Always ask the reporter or editor if they are on deadline.
- If a reporter is on a deadline and your conversation is not urgent, ask the reporter when it would be convenient for him/her to talk and volunteer to call back. The reporter will probably appreciate your consideration, and be more likely to devote time to you and your story later. (Afternoon papers are usually on deadline in the late morning; morning papers are on deadline in the late afternoon. TV stations are usually rushed in the late afternoon.)
- Have your ideas or "pitch" well thought out in advance. Remember that reporters work in a fast-paced, deadline-sensitive environment. Do not waste their time with a rambling story. Know what you want them to do and say it as succinctly as possible. Practice your "pitch" first to make sure you are brief, but clear.
- Fresh ideas and specific stories are more likely to spark an interest than "let's do something about underage drinking." You should be prepared with concrete suggestions. The reporter may generate another idea, but you should have something to offer.
- If you call the press about a story which may deserve immediate coverage, be prepared with all the facts — names, dates, times, places. An articulate teenager, parent, teacher, nurse, or law enforcement officer could add a compelling dimension to your story.

Appendix #2 is a *Sample Telephone Pitch* which coalitions and organizations can use in the media efforts.

The News Advisory

A news advisory is an "invitation" to the press to cover an upcoming event or story. Shorter than a news release, the news advisory is written to snag the reader's interest, tell him/her where and when the event will occur and provide a phone number for more

information. A strong news advisory is especially important for securing on-site coverage of an event.

- The news advisory can be mailed, faxed, hand-delivered, or e-mailed. It should be in the media's hands two days before an event, but could arrive closer to the event if that is impossible.
- News advisories should be followed by a phone call to the assignment editor or reporter at each of the media outlets that received the advisory. People calling on behalf of your coalition should say they are following up to be sure the advisory arrived and to see if they can provide any more information about the event. This is an opportunity to "sell" the story further and often results in coverage that would otherwise have been lost. Again, remember that reporters and editors are busy, so be prepared to be compelling and succinct!
- Make sure your news advisory has a media "hook." This "hook" is what makes the story compelling. It could be the release of new statistics, the availability of youth or an impaired driving victim for interviews, or the involvement of a prominent member of the community, such as an elected official.

Appendix #3 is a *Sample News Advisory* which coalitions and organizations can use in their media relations efforts.

News Releases

The news release is the basic tool of communication used to make a statement or to tell the story of an event. Standard rules for construction of a news release are the following:

- Releases should be on letterhead with the date of issue and either "For Immediate Release" or "For Release on (date)" in the upper left to indicate the day material may be printed or broadcast. The name and telephone number of a contact person who is available to provide more information should appear in the upper right.
- Text of the release should be typed, double-spaced, with wide margins.
- When writing a news release, follow the old journalist's formula of answering six key questions about the story in the first paragraph of the release. The questions are: Who? What? When? Where? Why? and How? Editors and reporters often receive scores of news releases each day, so capturing their attention in the first paragraph is essential. Don't bury your lead.
- News releases should be written in the inverted pyramid style, with the most important information in the first paragraph and less important information following. (Many editors "cut" stories from the bottom up.)
- At the end of the release, center either "30" or "#" to indicate that you have finished.

- News releases may be mailed, faxed or hand delivered. If you are holding an event, have releases available to press who attend and fax or mail to those who do not come.

Appendix #4 is a Sample News Release to be used in media relations efforts.

Letters to the Editor

You may write letters to the editor of newspapers or magazines about stories or editorials, which have appeared or issues, which you believe, should be covered.

- Letters to the editor should be concise and specific, and no more than one page (single spaced) or a page and a half (double spaced). Look at the letters to the editor in your own newspaper and notice the length. Find out if your local paper limits the length of letters to the editor. Remember whenever you are writing a letter to the editor, the general rule is shorter is better.
- If the letter refers to a previous article, the letter should cite its title, author and date of publication.
- Publications often print letters critical of pieces, which they have run earlier, but it is vital that the letter be well-written, and to the point.

Appendix #5 is a Sample Letter to the Editor.

“Op-Ed” Articles

“Op-Ed” pieces are by-lined articles, which generally appear on the page “opposite the editorials” or on some other page separate from the news.

- “Op-Ed” pieces are more like an essay than a letter and run anywhere from 500 to 2,000 words, depending upon the publication.
- These pieces usually focus on one idea and endeavor to leave the viewer with a new perspective or analysis of an issue.
- A strong lead paragraph, which clearly states the theme, is essential. Subsequent paragraphs should contain supporting facts or new ideas.

Appendix #6 is a Sample Op-Ed piece.

Broadcast Guest Editorials or Editorial Replies

Broadcast media generally try to give fair exposure to both sides of controversial issues in the community. Editorial directors are sometimes burdened by having to seek out

suitable spokespersons on various issues and may welcome suggestions from viewers or listeners.

- Write or call your station's editorial director and persuade him or her that a particular issue deserves editorial coverage or that you would like to reply to a position voiced by the station or another group.
- If you are offered the opportunity to tape an editorial reply, the station will tell you how much time you have and what the parameters are.
- Remember to keep the copy simple and to the point. Cut out all extraneous words and phrases.
- Rehearse thoroughly. Practice on videotape if possible. After the reply is recorded, review the tape. Could it be improved? If so, ask the director if it may be re-recorded. (Generally, you will have only one opportunity to record.)
- Be sure to thank the station for the opportunity to present your point of view.

Public Affairs Programming

Television and radio stations sometimes allocate portions of their airtime to public service programming. They may run public service announcements, air public service talk shows, or provide other services.

- You can determine how each station allots its public service air time by contacting the director of public or community affairs at each station in your area. You might suggest a theme for public service programming such as alcohol-free proms or holiday and offer to assist the station in selecting spokespersons or panelists for programs. When suggesting such an event, you should be prepared with strong arguments supporting the importance of the issue.
- If, for instance, you are suggesting that the station adopt an alcohol-free prom season as a theme for programming, you should be able to cite local statistics about alcohol-related crashes involving young people and alcohol-related problems such as date rape and violence. You should be prepared to tell the station how many young people in your area are expected to attend proms, what the dates are and what other community efforts are in place to prevent illegal alcohol use. Make your case!
- Ask the station to consider producing a public service announcement to air during prom season or to focus on the issue during their other public service programming.
- You may also consider inviting a member of your coalition or organization — a young person, doctor, judge, or a police officer — to appear on the public affairs news program. It makes the show more interesting for the station and helps

solidify relationships between your organization and the individuals who are members.

Interviews

Whether appearing on a talk show, being interviewed by a broadcast reporter or talking with a newspaper reporter over the phone remember that an interview is not a social conversation. A reporter is asking questions because he or she wants a good story and you are presenting your organization's point of view. A bit of preparation before you are interviewed can result in a better presentation and an improved story.

1. Develop your message. Appendix #7 is a Message Development Sheet coalitions and organizations can use to develop their message.
 - Know exactly what points you want to convey. Determine which three key points about your issue you will focus on and find ways to weave them into the interview. Watch the Sunday morning network news programs where top reporters grill government officials. Study how the reporters quiz their subjects and how the interviewees respond. You will find that sometimes the people being interviewed choose not to respond to the question that was asked. They often respond by making their key points (staying "on message") and ignore or redirect the subject of the question. Politicians are particularly good at this practice. They know what they want to convey and no matter what they are asked, they make those points.
 - Anticipate key questions and prepare your answers. It is sometimes difficult to "think on your feet" during an interview. Spend some time developing answers that clearly and succinctly convey your perspective on an issue. For each topic, try to develop a very short general statement (sound bites are measured in seconds, not minutes.) If it is possible to support your statement with statistics, be prepared to state them. A relevant anecdote can help to illustrate your point.

To illustrate that underage drinking is a serious problem in your community, you might use local statistics about the nature and extent of drinking and relate an anecdote about a young person who was killed or injured as the result of underage drinking to make your point.
 - Keep notes of your key points and supporting facts in a file that you can easily access if contacted by a reporter.
2. Refrain from getting angry with a reporter. Remain composed and pause before answering, even if they say something unexpected. A reporter may try to anger you to get you to say something inflammatory — don't get trapped! Remember it

is never wise to argue with someone who buys paper by the ton and ink by the barrel.

- Don't hesitate to answer a question with "I don't know." Unguarded comments or half-thought-out responses have a way of coming back to haunt the person who uttered them. Don't be nervous if you pause and the reporter waits for you to say more. Sometimes reporters will try to play upon an interviewee's natural instinct to fill empty time with words. Don't fall victim to that tactic. If you pause in a taped interview, those pauses will be removed when the story is edited back at the station so you will not look foolish if you remain silent.
3. Listen carefully to the questions you are being asked. If necessary, request clarification of the question.
 4. Don't repeat negative statements or buzzwords which may be unflattering to your message or your coalition. If someone says, "is it true that you are neo-prohibitionists?" Don't respond by saying, "No, we are not neo-prohibitionists." Instead, say "T—is organization has a strong zero tolerance policy for alcohol use by youth." Say something positive, but don't repeat the negative, even to deny it.
 5. Remember that the average sound bite is 7.3 seconds! Be clear, be memorable and be brief!
 6. If possible, interview the interviewer to find out what they want. If they are not on deadline, ask if you can call them right back to give you time to prepare your response, or after the interview tell them you will fax them additional information for their story.
 7. If you are interviewed in your office, don't leave anything on your desk that you don't wish a reporter to read or see. Remember that they are reporters and it is their job to investigate. Don't give them reason to investigate you or your organization.
 8. If you are conducting a radio or print interview over the phone — stand up. This will often make you sound more energized and focused.
 9. Try to avoid saying "no comment," which sometimes conveys the impression that the speaker has something to conceal. You can say other things that have the same effect without using those words, such as "We have not taken a position on that issue."

Television Interviews

Because television is a visual medium, following are some simple tips for TV interviews.

- Body language is important when talking with a reporter. Don't slouch in your chair. Sit up straight and lean forward slightly. This will convey your interest in what you are doing.
- Where appropriate, take time to smile. People respond to people they like, and even when talking about very serious and tragic circumstances like impaired driving, find an opportunity to appear "warm" and caring.
- Do not wear wild patterns, which cause the televised image to jump or be fuzzy. For men, a dark suit and light blue shirt is best, and for women, royal blue is a good color.
- Women should not wear heavy bracelets that will jangle or clank during an interview. Necklaces should also be avoided if the person has a tendency to unconsciously "play" with it, particularly when they are nervous.
- Keep hand movements to a minimum. In television, the image is usually only the upper half of a person's body. Large hand gestures can lead to "flying hands" syndrome, which appears disjointed and out of place.
- Be yourself and don't try to sound like someone else. Speak in your normal tone of voice, but be clear and don't mumble.
- Use words with which you are familiar. Don't try to sound like more of an expert by using thousand dollar words. Nothing will make a person look sillier than being asked the meaning of a word and not having a clue what it means.
- Sometimes, in hostile interview settings, the reporter will try to make the interviewee seem defensive by walking up close and pushing the microphone in their face. The natural reaction is to step back, making you appear to be defensive. Hold your ground and perhaps even move forward. That will cause the reporter to back off.
- Always talk to the reporter and not the camera, unless you are doing a remote or "Nightline" style interview where the reporter is back at the station. In remote interviews, you will be asked to talk directly to the camera. Imagine the camera is a real person and talk to it accordingly. When talking either to camera or a reporter, however, maintain eye contact. Moving your eyes back and forth will be much more pronounced on TV and makes you appear dishonest. Assume that you are on camera until the

director, cameraman or reporter indicates otherwise. Your image may be on camera even when you are not speaking, so don't scratch your nose or roll your eyes until you know it's safe!

- Don't say anything you don't want reported at any time when members of the media are present, including camera people. Anyone on a news crew should be considered a journalist who is likely to report your remarks.

News Conferences

Calling a press conference should be reserved for truly newsworthy events. If you determine that the story is important enough to warrant a news conference, you should do the following:

- Select the site for your event carefully. Do not have it in such a remote location that the media will be unable to find it.
- Make sure the event is scheduled at a good time for the media. The best time for a news conference is Monday morning about 10 a.m. Mondays are usually slow news days and reporters may be more likely to attend the event than on busier days. Tuesday mornings are also an acceptable time. It is often difficult to get reporters to attend late afternoon or evening events, unless they are related to "breaking" stories. Reporters may already be filing their stories or, in the case of broadcast outlets, they may be on the air during late afternoon and early evening events. If your community has a weekly newspaper and you want them to cover your story, find out what their deadline is for the week.
- Send a news advisory alerting media to the event. Make sure you follow up the news advisory with a phone call to "pitch" your story and to try to find out if anyone will be covering the event. (See *Appendix #2 — Sample Pitch*)
- Prepare a press kit with copies of news releases, background material and lists of speakers, etc., for each member of the press. The list of speakers with their names, titles and organizations is important so the editor can identify them later and put the information on the screen or in the paper.
- Make the event as visual as possible. Nothing is more boring than talking heads. If possible, arrange for photo enlargements of crashes, large charts with statistics that the cameras can photograph or a dramatic illustration of the impact of your story.

You might, for instance, use an empty pair of shoes to represent each young person who has been killed in an alcohol-related crash in your community during the last several years. Or you could use uncollected diplomas to illustrate the number of youth killed before they could graduate from high school.

- Know your media market. In Washington, DC, for instance, world news is local news so a breaking or important story happening overseas will sometimes kill coverage of a local event. Whenever possible, find out if there are other major news events occurring on the same day your event is planned.
- Make an agenda for the news conference and make sure individual speakers know how much time they have and that they stick to the schedule.
- Be certain that each speaker is thoroughly prepared with succinct statements and answers to possible questions.
- If your news conference is directly related to youth, you may have young speakers and arrange to have other youth in the audience who are available for media interviews. Often the media will be interested in hearing their comments in addition to the prepared remarks. If youth are being used for possible interviews, make sure they are well prepared in advance. Teach them basic interview skills and be certain that you know what they will say and that it will support your message.
- Hold the news conference in a room, which makes it easy for the press to get good photos — be sure there is enough light on speakers. Broadcast reporters often attach microphones to podiums — be certain that you have a podium or other stationary piece of furniture appropriate for microphones.
- Have a press sign-in sheet so that you know who came and can follow up with news outlets, which were not represented.
- If the media does not cover your event, don't be disappointed. Building a rapport with the media takes hard work and patience. If you know a reporter or public relations executive, explain to them what you did and ask how you can improve on your performance.

Ideas for Media Coverage

Following are some of the ideas that have generated media attention for an underage drinking prevention story.

NHTSA's "Zero Tolerance Means Zero Chances"

In 1994, NHTSA was issued a challenge to develop a long-term, national program that would reduce the incidence of alcohol-related driving fatalities and prioritize the issue of impaired driving in the nation's agenda. In support of that goal, NHTSA initiated its "You Drink & Drive. You Lose" campaign, which features nationwide enforcement periods targeting impaired drivers. The youth component of this effort, conducted in the spring, is entitled "Zero Tolerance Means Zero Chances." Youth are sent the message that driving with any amount of alcohol in their system will result in zero chances of keeping their license.

Prom/Graduation Season

In order to re-energize schools, communities and the media on the issue of teen drinking during the prom/graduation season, The Washington Regional Alcohol Program (WRAP) allowed young people to develop their own public information/education campaign. A specific school system was selected to serve as "host" and approximately 25 young people, selected at random, were the creative force for the effort. The young people developed the campaign theme and designed posters and other collateral material that were distributed to schools throughout the Washington, DC metropolitan area. The youth also developed the idea for a 30-second television public service announcement (PSA) and served as co-producers and directors.

In order to maximize coverage, members of the media were invited to attend the filming of the television PSA. The media not only shot exciting visual material when they attended the PSA tapings, they also were able to talk to students who were totally committed to the idea of preventing teen drinking and who had developed ideas on how to prevent it.

Halloween

In Salt Lake City, Utah, the Save Our Youth coalition participated in a "Hands Off Halloween" news conference. The program was designed to ask area retailers not to use displays that linked Halloween images and alcohol. The event was also used to release new figures on youth and adult behavior and attitudes toward underage drinking in the state. (For more information on creating a "Hands Off Halloween" program in your community, see the Resource section of this guide.)

Speakers

The Safe and Sober Youth (SASY) coalition in Richmond, Virginia generated media coverage about individuals who spoke to high school students in their community. In partnership with The Century Council and U.S. Representative Thomas Bliley, SASY sponsored presentations by Brandon Silveria and his father Tony. Brandon is a young man who is permanently disabled following an alcohol-related traffic crash. His appearance sparked both print and broadcast media coverage.

Local Programming

The Travis County Underage Drinking Prevention Project in Austin, Texas has its own cable television show, which is taped monthly. The show targets an issue relevant to youth and runs several times during a 30 day period. The underage drinking prevention effort has been the primary focus of the show and has enabled project coordinator and show host Gloria Souhami to feature a wealth of material and ideas. Ms. Souhami has interviewed community leaders and prevention specialists on the program throughout the Travis County area.

Enforcement Activities

ûhe Montgomery County, Maryland’s “Drawing the Line on Underage Alcohol Use,” successfully used the news media to highlight enforcement efforts. Members of the media were invited to accompany officers when they broke up teen parties, when they engaged in compliance checks of licensed establishments, during the “Cops In Shops” program when undercover officers were placed in licensed establishments throughout the region and at sobriety checkpoints during holidays and prom season. The faces of any und[rage youth or arrestees were obscured to protect confidentiality and stay within the law.

Legislative Initiatives

During the legislative fight to pass keg registration in Maryland, the Maryland Underage Drinking Prevention Coalition arranged for young people to carry a casket, a keg and a sign that read, “Too Many Kegs = Too Many Caskets” at a rally to generate support for passage of the keg registration law. The presence of the casket and the youth created a powerful visual image that appeared on TV stations and in other media across the state and throughout the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area that borders Maryland.

In Omaha, Nebraska, Project Extra Mile used information from their compliance checks to highlight a loophole in the alcohol beverage control law. Based on the coverage the compliance checks received, the state’s legislature reviewed the state’s laws and made changes to tighten the law and increase penalties for retailers.

Survey Information

Detroit, Michigan used survey information to dramatically illustrate the amount of alcohol advertising in the city. Volunteers counted the number of billboards and then determined the percentage that was devoted to alcohol advertising. Their efforts to reduce the number of alcohol billboard advertising won national recognition for the City Council’s Task Force on Substance Abuse. The Task Force also developed a “Denounce the 40 Ounce” campaign to combat the sale and consumption of 40 ounce bottles of alcohol. The campaign included media efforts, community mobilization and community education.

Center For Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP) Teen Drinking Initiative

In 1992, the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP) selected eight medium-sized cities to receive grants to develop ideas and community support for reducing teen drinking.

In Albuquerque, New Mexico, a local group used the funding to have a “drug-free” day at the New Mexico State Fair. The theme, “A Day Free From Alcohol is Fair,” was printed on tee-shirts worn by program supporters. To dramatize their goal, the group decided to literally “draw a line” around the state fair grounds by forming a human chain of youth and adults. The media was invited to attend the event, which also featured young speakers and the presentation of petitions to support an alcohol-free day. The creative use of visuals resulted in substantial media coverage and, ultimately, in a day at the fair that was totally free from alcohol.

Charleston, South Carolina undertook a variety of initiatives, including a kickoff event on Inauguration Day, called “An Inaugural Event.” They also sponsored a Legislative Forum, which emphasized the need for strict enforcement of existing laws and a program called, “We’re Free for the Weekend,” which encouraged parents to spend a weekend with their children doing various activities. All events received media coverage and the project staff and youth appeared on radio talk and call-in shows to reinforce their message.

All of these groups emphasized the need for some type of kick-off event that helped to organize the community and generate media attention. They worked hard to develop a media “hook” for these events or something novel to insure the event was newsworthy.

Developing a Tragedy Plan

Although everyone hopes that they will never face another alcohol-related tragedy in their community, the unfortunate reality is that most communities will, at some time in the future, suffer at least one alcohol-related death or dramatic injury. The death may result from intoxication, in an alcohol-related crash or because an intoxicated young person falls from a balcony or dies in some other “incident.”

Generally, when a dramatic alcohol-related event occurs in a community, public and media interest in the issue surges for a little while and members of the community ask the perennial question, “How could it happen here?” Local underage drinking prevention organizations should be prepared to respond to these events and help to transform grief and distress into action.

Every local underage drinking prevention organization should be prepared to respond quickly and appropriately to unexpected tragedies in their own community. Although a tragedy sparks new interest in the issue, that interest does not last long unless it is harnessed and used to prevent future tragedies.

How would your organization respond to a death by intoxication, for instance? What would you say to the press? What would your message be for parents? For law enforcement? For policy makers?

On Labor Day weekend in 1994, four young teenage girls went out one night to “party.” The girls were traveling in a BMW, which the driver had received as a birthday gift from her parents. Intoxicated and driving at high speed, the driver hit a tree and the impact actually split the BMW in half. Two of the girls — including the driver — were killed and two were injured.

The crash generated enormous community concern and stimulated heartfelt mourning among the girls’ many friends and fellow students, but the mourning seemed to focus on the crash as the result of “fate” or an inevitable event.

In response to the crash and the community reaction, organizers of Drawing the Line on Underage Alcohol Use in Montgomery County and the Washington Regional Alcohol Program held a joint news conference to convey one overarching message: that underage drinking and its consequences are “preventable and not inevitable.” The event, which included remarks by police officers investigating the crash, county officials and prevention specialists, highlighted the continuing need for all segments of the community to work together to prevent future tragedies and offered specific steps that parents and others could take to be proactive.

The news event helped to convert coverage of the crash into coverage of the larger issues related to underage drinking, including easy access to alcohol. As a follow up, *The Washington Post* featured a multi-part investigative report on how the teens in the crash obtained alcohol and a discussion of some of the other factors that contributed to their deaths.

Health Promotion, Policy Changes and the Media

During the last fifty years, American society has become increasingly media-dependent. It is common for American homes to contain several televisions linked to cable or satellite systems as well as radios, magazines, newspapers, VCRs, DVDs and computers with internet links to media sites. Thanks to the internet, it is possible to sit in one’s living room and read newspapers on line from around the nation and the world.

Advocates for health, including substance abuse prevention, are becoming increasingly sophisticated in using the media to achieve their goals, whether they are to change law and policies or to change behavior. Social marketing and media advocacy are increasingly popular strategies for using the media to improve health and wellbeing in our society. Following is a brief overview of social marketing and media advocacy. The resource section of this how to guide contains information about how you can learn about these strategies.

Social Marketing

Marketing is the planned process of exercising influence on consumer behavior. In commercial marketing, companies seek to influence purchasing behavior. In public health marketing campaigns, the product and the desired outcome are more abstract.

Social marketing uses a consumer or sales-based model to stress how the benefits of behavioral change outweigh the costs. Like programs market cereal or automobiles, social marketing focuses on reaching targeted consumers with messages that will influence their behavior. Social marketing strategies must be research-based and founded on the wants, needs and characteristics of the target audience.

Social marketing can be used in wide range of situations to provide information to the public or to encourage specific target groups to take specific actions. The familiar “Friends Don’t Let Friends Drive Drunk” campaign focused on the influencers or associates of potential impaired drivers, not on the drivers.

Like commercial marketing, social marketing’s focuses on the “four P’s”:

- Product
- Price
- Promotion
- Place

In social marketing, the “four P’s” may be defined as:

Product — The knowledge, attitudes or behavior you want the audience to adopt or what the program is trying to change.

Price — What the consumer must give up in order to receive the program’s benefits. These costs may be intangible (e.g., changes in beliefs) or tangible (time, money).

Promotion — How the behavior is packaged to show that the benefits outweigh the costs and the appeals that can be used to sway behavior.

Place — How the message is disseminated to the target audience (electronic or print media, billboards, community programs, etc. Promotional strategies may include media relations, advertising, personal outreach and entertainment).

Social marketing campaigns using the “social norms” approach have demonstrated some success in combating binge drinking and underage drinking among college students. These campaigns are designed to change the perception that all college students binge drink and to promote the concept that binge drinking is not a normal part of college life, nor is it as common as students may believe. Campus campaigns, like other social marketing campaigns, must be tailored to the particular population of students on that

campus. (For more information on social marketing and social marketing to reduce drinking on campuses, see the resource section of this guide.)

Media Advocacy

Media advocacy campaigns are designed to influence the media's selection and presentation of topics and to shape discussion about these topics. Media advocacy focuses on public health and emphasizes the economic, social, cultural and political context of national and local health problems like underage drinking. It emphasizes policy changes rather than program development and shifts the focus from defining the problem at an individual level to a long term focus on policy development.

The smoking prevention community has employed media advocacy very effectively to shift the national focus from preventing individuals from smoking to preventing the tobacco industry from marketing a lethal product to young people and forcing tobacco companies to acknowledge that their product is addictive and dangerous. Smoking prevention advocates refocused attention from the smoker to the industry by "re-framing" the tobacco issue. Anti-tobacco groups re-framed the industry as "drug pushers" and secretive, unjust individuals that knowingly market tobacco to minors.

"Framing" and "re-framing" issues are fundamental tools of media advocacy campaigns. Framing is the package in which the media advocate's message is delivered, supported and understood. Successful framing helps the media advocate to determine the terms of public discussion about an issue and typically focuses attention on practices rather than individual behavior. MADD re-framed the impaired driving issue when they replaced the word "accident" with "crash" in reference to impaired driving.

Issues may be re-framed for two general purposes: access and content. Framing for access helps to stimulate media interest in a particular issue and framing for content is designed to help to shape the debate about the issue.

Strategies for framing to gain media attention (framing for access) may include seasonal stories, localizing national stories, announcing breakthroughs, marking the anniversaries of specific events, linking the issue to a victim or personality and announcing the results of new research.

Framing for content places the emphasis on the social aspects of the problem, reaffirms the problem's link to policy, is audience-specific and is solution oriented. To obtain more information on media advocacy, including framing, please see the Resource Section of this guide.

Media Literacy

Media literacy programs are designed to help adults and youth to "filter" and understand the media messages that bombard them daily. Media literacy programs help adults and youth to analyze the information being presented to them, understand the intent of the

information and evaluate how the information is being used. Media literacy training can be especially effective for adolescents who are developing their critical thinking skills and learning how to apply those as they make decisions.

Media literacy training can help young people to recognize and understand messages delivered through commercials, lyrics, advertisements, and entertainment on TV, the internet or the movies and “themed” jewelry or clothing.

In media literacy training, young people learn to deconstruct and analyze the images imbedded within commercials, for instance, and to understand how certain symbols are used within those commercials to sell products. They learn how music, camera angles, words and images come together to sell a product or idea. Media literacy also teaches young people to see how marketers use sex, the desire to be “in” and the desire to be loved to sell products and ideas.

Coalitions can present media literacy programs and publicize them as a way of calling public attention to the way alcohol is marketed and to help young people to become more sophisticated in their understanding of the messages that are targeted at shaping their attitudes and behavior.

To obtain more information about social marketing, media advocacy and media literacy, see the Resource section of this booklet.

Advertising

Free or low-cost ads in the local media—including television and radio, newspapers, and billboards—can help community coalitions create visibility and awareness for their efforts and message(s). According to Jack Farris, General Manager, Cole and Weber Advertising in Seattle, WA, advertising agencies are willing to provide pro bono advertising for a variety of reasons ranging from self-serving to altruistic. Following are his tips on finding an ad agency that can help your coalition.

- Ask your board members and colleagues to identify ad agencies that are generous with their time in pro bono efforts.
- Talk to their clients to find out how the relationship works.
- Talk to your corporate funders to see whether their ad agencies might be appropriate, but don't seek to have them pressure their agencies to do the work. You want the relationship to be voluntary.
- Try to make sure that there is someone in the ad agency that is personally committed to your issue.
- Have the agency spend some time with you and learn about your program before making a commitment.

- Once you have a relationship with an ad agency, communicate openly, be frank with criticism, generous with praise and have fun together.

According to a recent survey, nearly two-thirds of television stations said they provided more airtime for public service announcements in 1999 than they did in 1996 or are providing the same amount. Some stations say they have increased the airtime as a community service and others say the time was available because advertisers had not purchased it. See the Resource Section of this guide for information on obtaining a copy of the survey.

The National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign, sponsored by the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), includes paid media and a 100 percent in-kind public service match. Media outlets receiving paid advertising are required to match the value of those ads with in-kind public service. This “pro-bono” match can take many forms, such as free advertising space or time, newspaper inserts, broadcast programming, and sponsorship of community events.

Conclusion

There is no magic to garnering the media’s attention, but applying the basic principles of media relations and plenty of imagination can help you work more effectively with the news media in your community. Try to put yourself in the reporter’s or news editor’s place each time you are working on an event or potential story and ask yourself if it is “newsworthy”? If not, find a “hook” or angle that makes it something the press will want to cover.

The prevailing message in this booklet is that good media relations programs require planning and careful execution. Remember that to be successful you must:

- Understand the media—what it is and what it is not and what they want.
- Make what you do newsworthy. You believe what you do is valuable, but how can you make it newsworthy? In every community, other events and issues compete for a finite amount of space in the newspaper or broadcast time on the airwaves.
- Get to know reporters and position your organization as the source for information, contacts and statistics on the issue of underage drinking or traffic safety.
- Develop a good, clean press list because the quickest way to be ignored is to send your information to the wrong place.
- Link your issue to issues that are already receiving a lot of attention in the media. It is a shortcut to getting your issue before the public.

- Be creative because in today's society, people don't pay attention to something that does not grab their attention either visually or emotionally.
- Use statistics to capture the media's attention and demonstrate the seriousness of the underage drinking or traffic safety problem in your community.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 -- Crime/Crash Clock

[PDF -- Crime/Crash Clock](#)

Appendix 2 -- Sample Telephone Pitch

[PDF -- Sample Telephone Pitch](#)

Coordinator: Hello, this is Jane Smith, Executive Director of the Coalition. Do you have

a moment to talk?

Reporter: Yes, I can speak to you for a couple of minutes.

Coordinator: Thank you. Yesterday I sent you an advisory about an event our coalition is doing Monday at 10 a.m. at Edwards Senior High School in response to the alcohol-related motor vehicle crash that killed senior Kathy Jones last week.

Reporter: Yeah, I sort of remember seeing something. But, we've done a number of stories on that crash and feel we've pretty well covered it.

Coordinator: The coverage has been excellent, but on Monday we will be releasing the first comprehensive plan our coalition has developed to prevent these kinds of crashes in the future.

Reporter: Like what?

Coordinator: The _____ Coalition has developed a 12-step plan that includes a special training program for law enforcement officers, more alcohol-free activities for youth, and recommendations for tougher penalties for underage drinking offenses.

Reporter: Sounds interesting, but why do you need a training program for police officers?

Coordinator: Youth don't drink at the same times or in the same places as adults and they manifest the effects of alcohol differently when they drive. Surprisingly, some police officers don't know that.

We are inviting a nationally-recognized team who are experts in these areas to train our local officers. I can also provide you with some interesting local and national statistics. If you attend the event, we can link you with some of the youth and the officers who can tell you about the problem in their own words.

Reporter: Sounds good. We may want to cover the event and maybe even the law enforcement training program. I'll bring it up at our news meeting this afternoon. And, you did say we could interview some kids?

Coordinator: Yes, there will be several young people who will be available for interviews.

Reporter: Where is your event again?

Coordinator: Monday morning, (date) at 10:00 a.m. at Edwards Senior High School, 112 Main Street, in the auditorium. I appreciate your taking time to talk with me and your interest in the story. You can reach me at (phone number) if you have any questions before the event. We hope to see you there. Thank you.

Appendix 3 -- Sample News Advisory

[PDF -- Sample News Advisory](#)

NEWS From:

STOP Underage Drinking Now
112 Main Street, Edgarville, VA 20745
804-235-4678, Fax: 804-235-4679
E-mail: stopud@safety.org
Web site: <http://www.safety.org/stopud>

NEWS ADVISORY

Thursday, September 9, 1999
Contact: Alice Whitley
804-235-4678

Governor Joins Local Group to Release Report Card, New Statistics On Illegal Underage Drinking

Is Edgarville “Making the Grade”?

WHAT:

Governor Ralph Blinker will join members of the STOP Underage Drinking Coalition to release a “report card” on underage drinking and new statistics at a news conference.

WHEN:

Monday, September 13, 1999
10:00 a.m.

WHERE:

Edgarville High School
211 South Edgar Road
Edgarville, VA 20746
804-437-9876

WHY:

The STOP Underage Drinking Coalition’s “report card” will rank Edgarville’s efforts to prevent underage drinking, including enforcement of underage drinking laws and regulations, swift and sure consequences for all violators, and effective prevention and education efforts.

New area statistics about how many youth are drinking, at what age they start and how

many have died will be released by officials from the coalition, which has just completed a three-month review of the “state of underage drinking” in the community.

Governor Blinker and The STOP Underage Drinking Coalition will also propose an array of solutions for the problem, jointly agreed to by a diverse group of community members.

High school students from around the area will be available for interviews.

Appendix 4 -- Sample News Release

[PDF -- Sample News Release](#)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Monday, September 13, 1999

Contact: Alice Whitley

804-235-4678

GOVERNOR AND STOP UNDERAGE DRINKING COALITION RELEASE REPORT CARD AND PLAN TO COMBAT UNDERAGE DRINKING

EDGARVILLE, VA — The STOP Underage Drinking Coalition and Governor Ralph Blinker today released a report card on underage drinking in the Edgarville effort.

“I applaud the efforts of this community, particularly given the significant underage drinking problem they face,” Blinker said at a 10 a.m. news conference held before an assembly of students from Edgarville High School. “Their findings confirm what is happening across this state ... young people are drinking in greater numbers at earlier ages.” Blinker cited the area’s willingness to take formal action on the problem as a model for other areas. For the past three months, the STOP Underage Drinking Coalition has been studying underage drinking in the region.

“Seventy-five percent of youth in the region have consumed alcohol and the average age of first use was 12,” said Fred Walters, the STOP Underage Drinking Coalition’s Chair and Vice President of First Savings Bank. “These findings ought to scare the daylights out of any parent of a teenager,” he said. Walters further noted the lack of effective underage drinking laws in the state. “Right now, there is no penalty for an underage youth to purchase alcohol and that is an outrage,” he said.

David Freedman, President of the Edgarville City Council, agreed. “The first action we must take is to reduce accessibility to alcohol for underage youth,” he said. “I call on the alcohol industry to join with us in making it difficult, if not impossible, for underage youth to purchase alcohol.”

In the Edgarville area, the project found 12 youth died in alcohol-related motor vehicle fatalities in 1997 and 1998 and over 173 were arrested for drunk driving. Despite these numbers, the project determined there is only one alcohol beverage control agent who regulates the over 100 establishments in the area that sell alcohol. "It is no wonder only three of these establishments were cited for sales to minors violations in a two-year period," said Walters.

Sample News Release continued

The STOP Underage Drinking Coalition has developed over 20 recommendations on ways to reduce underage drinking. The recommendations focus on three key areas: Enforcement, Prevention and Education, and Public Policy. "To change youth behavior, we must go after a young person's most prized possession ... the driver's license," said David Freedman. "We currently have a law which places certain license restrictions for underage drinking offenses. Now is the time to enforce it," he said.

Other recommendations include increased enforcement, more parental involvement and awareness, additional funding and resources to fight the problem, and more support and recognition for youth who do not use alcohol or other drugs. Blinker agreed with these recommendations and stated that as Governor he would work with the coalition and others across the state to convince all residents that underage drinking is "illegal, unhealthy and unacceptable."

Appendix 5 -- Sample Letter to the Editor

[PDF -- Sample Letter to the Editor](#)

Dear Editor,

Fred Brew totally misstated both the nature and the consequences of underage drinking in his January 20, 1999 article, "Teens and Booze." Mr. Brew wrote that underage drinking is a "rite of passage" which young people will inevitably outgrow. The tragic reality is that drinking is dangerous — and often deadly — for young people.

Alcohol affects young people, whose bodies are continuing to mature, very differently than adults. According to a study by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, young people who begin drinking before age 15 are four times more likely to develop alcohol dependence than those who begin drinking at age 21. Nationally, twenty-two percent of eighth graders report drinking monthly.

There are serious public health consequences if we continue to view underage drinking as simply a "rite of passage" because the passage may be to an emergency room or even a

morgue. The leading cause of death among young people is traffic crashes. Last year in our community, ____ (insert number) young people died in alcohol-related motor vehicle crashes. How many will there be this year if we continue to turn a blind eye to this serious problem?

Auto crashes are not the only dangers associated with underage drinking. That eighth grade student who starts drinking today may become the alcoholic of tomorrow, increasing the health risks to themselves and others. Young people who have been drinking are more likely to be involved in date rapes as both victims and perpetrators, to commit or suffer other crimes, to drown or to be injured in a fall or other accident. Students who are heavy drinkers often fare poorly academically and may disrupt classes or school activities.

Concerned adults and youth in our community have joined together to form the _____ Coalition to prevent underage drinking and its potentially devastating consequences. We urge young people, parents, business and religious leaders, educators, enforcement officials, medical professionals and anyone else interested in this issue to join us in working to keep our youth safe and sober. We owe it to them.

Sincerely,

Jane Smith
Executive Director
The _____ Coalition

Appendix 6 -- Sample Op-Ed Article

[PDF -- Sample Op-Ed Article](#)

Our Tolerance for Underage Drinking Must Be Zero

by Jane Smith, Executive Director, The _____ Coalition

For only the third time in the last 14 years, alcohol-related motor vehicle fatalities involving youth (ages 15 through 20) increased, despite a decrease in those fatalities for all other age groups. In addition, after 11 years of steady decline, the number of high school seniors who report daily drinking has increased the last four years in a row.

When confronted with these figures, many adults look confused. “Haven’t we won that battle? Don’t most kids understand the dangers, particularly of drinking and driving?” The answer is NO. The battle to reduce the serious consequences of underage drinking is

a long term campaign that requires a unified, community approach.

The _____ Coalition is making headway because it views the problem of underage drinking from multiple perspectives: education for youth and adults, tougher enforcement and stronger laws and regulations.

One of the most effective tools in the fight to prevent underage drinking is zero tolerance. A zero tolerance law makes it illegal per se (in and of itself) for anyone under the age of 21 to drive with any measurable amount of alcohol in their blood.

In most states, blood alcohol levels (BAC) of .08 or .10 signify driving under the influence or driving while intoxicated for adults. In recognition of the seriousness of youthful drinking and driving, however, all 50 states and the District of Columbia have established zero tolerance levels for underage drivers. (Some of the states enacted the .01 or .02 BAC to allow for variation in alcohol testing instruments and for the possible ingestion of any substance which is not an alcoholic beverage but could cause a slight increase in BAC.)

An effective zero tolerance law must allow a police officer to require a breath test from a driver under age 21 if the officer has probable cause to believe the driver has been drinking. If the youthful driver refuses the test or the test reveals a BAC in violation of the law, then the driver should be subject to sanctions, including the loss or suspension of his or her driver's license. The zero tolerance approach is certainly strict, but it is also potentially life-saving. We should have both the courage and the resolve to implement it in our state.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration evaluated the effects of Maryland's .02 law. The study revealed an 11 percent decrease in the number of drivers under age 21 who were involved in crashes and had, according to the police report, "been drinking."

A study of four other zero tolerance states (New Mexico, North Carolina, Maine and Wisconsin) revealed a 34 percent decline in adolescent fatal crashes at night during the years after the law was implemented, compared to only a seven percent decrease in fatal adult crashes at night. States with the lower BAC limits also demonstrated a 16 percent decrease in single vehicle nighttime fatal crashes among underage drivers, while the same kind of crashes rose one percent among drivers of the same ages when compared with drivers among the same age group in other states where the laws remained unchanged.

Understanding the nature of youthful drinking helps to clarify one of the reasons why zero tolerance is so important. When young people drink, most of them drink for the "buzz" and the peer acceptance, not the taste. Appallingly, more than three-quarters of high school seniors drink alcohol and about one-third are "binge" drinkers, which means they consume five or more drinks on one occasion. If teens begin to drink, many of them will become intoxicated. We must, therefore, prevent them from drinking at all, but that requires commitment from the entire community — legislators, enforcement officials, the judiciary and all of the other adults who shape the environment in which our young

people live. Passing and enforcing the zero tolerance law is one of the ways we adults can show that we really care.

Appendix 7 -- Message Development Sheet

[PDF -- Message Development Sheet](#)

RESOURCES

Resources Cited In How To Guide

Drawing the Line on Underage Alcohol Use

Department of Family Resources
Montgomery County Government
8630 Fenton Street, 10th Floor
Silver Spring, MD 20910
240-777-1123
Fax: 240-777-3054
Web site: <http://www.co.mo.md.us/services/hhs/publth/dtl/dtl.html>
E-mail: nancy.rea@co.mo.md.us

Maryland Underage Drinking Prevention Coalition

Executive Director
Governor's Office of Crime Control & Prevention
300 East Joppa Road, Suite 1105
Baltimore, MD 21286-3016
410-321-3521
Fax: 410-321-3116
Web site: <http://www.cesear.umd.edu/goccp/drinking/drinking.htm>

Monitoring The Future

National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)
6001 Executive Boulevard, Room 5213
MSC 9561
Bethesda, MD 20892
301-443-6245
Web site: <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/exit.cfm?link=http://www.nida.nih.gov>

Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD)

511 East John Carpenter Freeway, Suite 700

Irving, TX 75062
214- 744-6233
800-GET-MADD
Web site: <http://www.madd.org>

Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP)

<http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/exit.cfm?link=http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov>

Project Extra Mile

Executive Director
302 South 36th Street, Suite 214
Omaha, NE 68131
402-345-5000
Fax: 402-231-4307
E-mail: driibe@alltel.net

Remove Intoxicated Drivers (RID)

P.O. Box 520
Schenectady, NY 12301
518-372-0034
Fax: 518-370-4917
Web site: <http://www.crisny.org/not-for-profit/rid>

Safe and Sober Youth Coalition (SASY)

Children At Risk Today (CART)
Executive Director
14005 Staplestone Drive
Midlothian, VA 23113
804-378-7752
Fax: 804-378-7752

Save Our Youth Coalition

Office of Highway Safety
Department of Public Safety
5263 South 300 West, Suite 202
Salt Lake City, UT 84107
801-293-2682
Fax: 801-293-2497
E-mail: pshs.jdame@state.ut.us

Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD)

P.O. Box 800
Marlboro, MA 01752
508-481-3568
Fax: 508-481-5759
Products: 800-886-2972

Web site: <http://www.nat-sadd.org>

Teen Drinking Initiative

Center for Substance Abuse Prevention

5600 Fishers Lane, Rockwall II

Rockville, MD 20857

301-443-0365

Web site: <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/exit.cfm?link=http://www.samhsa.gov/csap>

Travis County Underage Drinking

Prevention Project

Project Coordinator

P.O. Box 1748

Austin, TX 78767

512-473-4229

Fax: 512-473-9316

E-mail: gloria.souhami@co.travis.tx.us

Washington Regional Alcohol Program (WRAP)

8027 Leesburg Pike, Suite 314

Vienna, VA 22182

703-893-0461

Fax: 703-893-0465

Web site: <http://www.wrap.org>

Youth Fatal Crash and Alcohol Facts

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

Traffic Safety Programs (NHTSA)

400 Seventh St., SW

Washington, D.C. 20590

202-366-9588

Fax: 202-366-2766

Web site: <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/>

Other Media Relations Resources

The Benton Foundation

1800 K Street, NW, 2nd Floor

Washington, DC 20006

202-638-5770

Fax: 202-638-5771

Web site: <http://www.benton.org>

The Benton Foundation helps to educate community groups on how to use

communications tools to solve social problems. Benton focuses on how groups can do this as effectively as possible given the current information age and the technology that is available. Benton also strives to promote communications tools, applications, and policies that will further not only the individual group's work but also the broader public interest. Their web site has information, advice, examples and publications that can help the organization make sense of emerging technology and stay on top of the latest trends in communication methods.

Center for Media Literacy

4727 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 403

Los Angeles, CA 90010

323-931-4177

Fax: 323-931-4474

Web site: <http://www.medialit.org>

A national nonprofit project that develops and distributes educational materials and programs that promote critical thinking about the media: from television to tee shirts, from billboards to the Internet. Includes links to upcoming conferences and training sessions.

Garcia Consulting

3203 Woodland Drive, SW

Olympia, WA 98512

360-705-9661 (phone and fax)

E-mail: mariposas@prodigy.com

Garcia Consulting is a firm that specializes in media literacy and conducts training sessions throughout the country. Fred Garcia was formerly with the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) and is now Chief of Prevention and Treatment Services for the State of Washington. Nancy Garcia is currently teaching a class in media literacy at the South Puget Sound Community College. She was formerly a public health advisor at Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP) and headed up a media literacy initiative with several federal agencies. She also was in charge of agency's teen drinking prevention program.

Getting Media Attention

by Ernestine I. Jackson with Laura McGrath

Community Information Exchange

Neighborhood Reinvestment Corp.

1325 G Street, NW, Suite 800

Washington, DC 20005

Web site: <http://www.cominfoexch.org>

This booklet advises community organizations on ways to win the attention of the press and publicize their cause.

How to Create Powerful Newsletters

by Peggy Nelson

Precept Press

Bonus Books, Inc.

160 East Illinois Street, Suite 300

Chicago, IL 60611

312-467-0424 or 800-225-3775

Fax: 312-467-9271

Web site: <http://www.bonusbooks.com>

This book argues that too many newsletters focus solely on promoting the charity or organization and show little concern for what interests readers. This guide aims to help non-profits develop a blend of editorial and promotional articles that will appeal to a broader range of people — and help the organization do a better job of getting its message across.

International Association of Business Communicators

One Hallidie Plaza, Suite 600

San Francisco, CA 94102

415-544-4700

Fax: 415-544-4747

Web site: <http://www.iabc.com>

The International Association of Business Communicators provides products, services, activities and networking opportunities to help people and organizations think strategically and meet their organizational objectives. Their web site has information, publications, products and an online database to find members in the organization's area. Currently 90 chapters are located in cities across the U.S.

Leonard Communications

15713 Cherry Blossom Lane

North Potomac, MD 20878

301-948-4879

Fax: 301-948-3736

E-mail: trina@erols.com

Making Health Communications Work: A Planner's Guide

National Cancer Institute

NCI Public Inquiries Office Building 31, Room 10A03

31 Center Drive, MSC 2580

Bethesda, MD 20892-2580

301-435-3848

Web site: <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/exit.cfm?link=http://www.nci.nih.gov>

This book includes the key principles and steps for developing and evaluating health communication programs for the public, patients, and health professionals. Better use of

existing health knowledge requires communication among health care and social service professionals, related organizations, government agencies, the private sector, and individual citizens. Health communication programs can be designed to inform, influence, and motivate institutional or public audiences.

Making Video: A Practical Guide for Non-profits

by Eloise Payne and Neal Sacharow
Benton Foundation/Communications Policy & Practice
1800 K Street, NW, 2nd Floor
Washington, DC 20006
202-638-5770
Fax: 202-638-5771
E-mail: cpp@benton.org
Web site: <http://www.benton.org/cpphome.html>

Explains video production from conception through distribution and evaluation, including grant proposals and budgets for each phase. The 27-minute accompanying videotape includes a series of excerpts from videotapes and television programs that deal with social issues.

Marketing Social Change: Changing Behavior to Promote Health, Social Development and the Environment

by Alan R. Andreasen
Jossey-Bass Publishers
350 Sansome Street
San Francisco, CA 94104
888-378-2537 800-956-7739
Web site: <http://www.josseybass.com>

This book shows how to use marketing principles to persuade people to stop doing things that endanger their health and welfare. It explains how to conduct research on the people who are most likely to benefit from such a campaign and tailor efforts to promote good habits to the intended audience.

Media Advocacy: Reframing Public Debate

by Michael Pertshuk and Phillip Wilbur
Benton Foundation/Communications Policy & Practice
1800 K Street, NW, 2nd Floor
Washington, DC 20006
202-638-5770
Fax: 202-638-5771
E-mail: cpp@benton.org
Web site: <http://www.benton.org/cpphome.html>

This booklet shows organizations how to promote their work and their issues to the press

in ways that will increase the coverage they receive. It recommends ways to win access to reporters and editors and influence the direction a story takes.

PMB Communications

1114 North Illinois Street
Arlington, VA 22205
703-237-5532
Fax: 703-237-8831
E-mail: PMBEER@worldnet.att.net

Public Relations Society of America

33 Irving Place
New York, NY 10003-2376
212-995-2230
Web site: <http://www.prsa.org>

The Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) is the world's largest professional organization for public relations practitioners. The Society's almost 20,000 members represent business and industry, counseling firms, government, associations, hospitals, schools, professional services firms and nonprofit organizations. The web site has information on their services and publications to assist organizations in their work. There are currently 115 chapters across the U.S.

Reality Check

E-mail: rcheck@health.org
Web site: <http://www.health.org/reality/communitykit/medilit.htm>

The Reality Check community kit, "Media Literacy: What You Should Know," includes information to assist communities in developing a media literacy program.

Social Marketing for Public Health

by D.C. Walsh
Health Affairs, Summer 1993
P.O. Box 148
Congers, NY 10920
800-765-7514
Fax: 914-267-3479
E-mail: healthaffairs@projhope.org
Web site: <http://www.projhope.org/HA>

This article discusses how social marketing can be used to further the goals and objectives of improving public health.

Social Marketing: Its Place in Public Health

by J.C. Ling, B.A.K. Franking, J.F. Lindsteadt, S.A.N. Gearon
Annual Review of Public Health

Vol. 13, 1992

Social marketers use consumer-based models to design behavior change messages for target populations. Studies indicate that social marketing proves beneficial in selling “products”-prevention messages-to specific “consumer” groups-populations at risk for substance abuse. While prevention professionals may not be familiar with social marketing theory and principles, their work often demonstrates its practical application. When community leaders develop programs based on their intrinsic knowledge of local populations, this method reflects the social marketing approach.

Social Marketing Strategies for Campus Prevention of Alcohol and Other Drug Problems

The Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention
Education Development Center, Inc.

55 Chapel Street

Newton, MA 02158-1060

800-676-1730

Fax: 617-928-1537

E-mail: HigherEdCtr@edc.org

Web site: <http://www.edc.org/hec/>

As one piece of its comprehensive approach, the Center has prepared Social Marketing Strategies for Campus Prevention of Alcohol and Other Drug Problems. It is intended for a broad campus audience, such as the members of a campus coalition or task force staff, who might include faculty, alcohol and other drug (AOD) prevention coordinators, deans of students, resident life directors, students, law enforcement, and health services. It examines both how social marketing draws on the lessons learned from commercial marketing and how the two differ, and it illustrates, through the experiences of ten colleges and universities, the benefits of a social marketing campaign.