



Mass Communication

The mass media, media advocacy, and public relations allow us not only to get healthy eating and physical activity messages out to large groups of people but also to frame issues and focus on policy and systems change. Through the media, people become aware of the resources available to help them and are shown how making healthy changes can improve their lives. When we research media messages properly and present them effectively, those messages can alter the community's attitudes toward healthy practices, which ultimately can lead to changes in public policy as well.

RATIONALE

For major shifts in a population's behavior and norms, utilizing the process and the tools of marketing and mass communication are essential. Mass media interventions can reach almost

every member of a society. They can help to unify social action and drive consumer demand for healthy eating, physical activity services, and changes in the environment and public policy. Media interventions support community programs, raise visibility, and help sustain behavior change. Media and marketing are essential tools in the overall comprehensive approach. Communication plans must be based on consumer research for the segments of interest, using surveys, focus groups, and other qualitative research directed at the intended audiences.

SAMPLE ACTIVITIES

1. Qualitative and quantitative research identifies information about the problem to be addressed, the target audience, knowledge, attitudes, behavior, relevant social issues, and the larger context.

2. Mass media campaigns emphasize healthful eating and physical activity patterns, a shift in social norms, and a systems/policy change.

3. Paid, cooperative, and public service advertising (e.g., broadcast, print, outdoor, transit) increases public awareness in the general market and the targeted market segments that include ethnic- and income-specific groups, and children and youth.

4. Public relations activities support partner activities, generate free media coverage, and secure premium placement of public service advertising.

5. Seasonal or theme promotions generate fresh interest and organize action for institutional or consumer behavior change.

6. Media advocacy and civic journalism drive policy change.

7. Social science, communication, and marketing theory guide message development, audience, and channel selection.

8. Deliver pretested strategies and messages to members of the audience.

9. Evaluate message dissemination for reach, frequency, and duration with the target audience as compared against goals for target rating points.

10. Use multimedia, including the Internet, toll-free numbers, small media, brochures, posters, and fillers.

11. Use awards and recognition for socially responsible advertising practices by media outlets, food and physical activity companies, and other partners.

Sample Practices and Programs

1% or Less Campaign—Multiple messages and activities are used to influence communities to increase consumption of low-fat milk. A feature of the campaign is the *1% or Less School Kit*, which contains materials for primary and secondary school students: idea sheets, fact sheets, marketing strategies, model press releases, handouts, posters, and instructions for conducting taste tests. **Contact:** Cen-

ter for Science in the Public Interest, www.cspinet.org/kids, 202-332-9110.

5-a-Day for Better Health—These campaigns, implemented in most states, increase public awareness of the importance of eating more fruits and vegetables for better health. Offered through a collaboration between NIH and the Produce for Better Health Foundation, components include a retailer point-of-purchase educational program, a food service educational program, and a national media program. The national 5-a-Day program will undergo significant expansion in 2002. **Contact:** National Cancer Institute, www.5aday.gov, Produce for Better Health Foundation, www.5aday.com, 302-738-7100.

Eat Smart, Play Hard—This campaign is designed to foster positive changes in eating and physical activity behaviors targeting children ages 2 to 18 and their caregivers. The campaign themes focus on breakfast, snacks, balance, and physical activity. Suggested activities are consistent with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and the Food Guide Pyramid. **Contact:** USDA Food and Nutrition Service, www.fns.usda.gov/FNS/mascot/mascot.htm.

REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

1. Making Health Communication Programs Work: A Planner's Guide. NIH Publication 89-1493:131.
2. Carroll, A, Craypo, L, Samuels, S. Evaluating Nutrition and Physical Activity Social Marketing Campaigns: A Review of the Literature for Use in Community Campaigns. Center for Advanced Studies in Nutrition and Social Marketing, University of California at Davis, 2000.
3. Sims, LS, Randell, JS, Haas, E. Comprehensive Review of the Effectiveness of Nutrition Education Interventions with Target Audiences. *The Journal of Nutrition Education*, 1995; 27(6).
4. Building Media Skills for Better Nutrition. Videoconference Guide, CDC, 1994: 1-35.
5. Contento, I, et al. Theoretical Frameworks or Models for Nutrition Education. *The Journal of Nutrition Education*, 1995; 27 (6).