



**UCLA Center for Health Policy Research**  
**Health DATA Program**

Data • Advocacy • Technical Assistance  
**TURNING KNOWLEDGE INTO ACTION**

**Media Advocacy**  
**To Advance Public Health Policy**  
**Workshop Workbook**

## Media Advocacy Workshop Goals and Objectives

### **Goal:**

The goal of the Health DATA Media Advocacy Workshop is to build the capacity of participants to identify, understand, and apply media strategies to advocate for public health policies.

### **Objectives:**

Upon completion of this workshop participants will be able to:

#### **Section 1 – Understand Media Advocacy**

1. Identify and distinguish types of media strategies used to promote health
2. Define media advocacy, its purpose and effects on public health policy

#### **Section 2 – Develop a Media Advocacy Plan**

1. Identify key elements of media advocacy planning
2. Utilize research data to identify policy goals and target audiences
3. Assess goals and audiences to determine message content

#### **Section 3 – Develop Messages for Media Audiences**

1. Identify purpose and use of message framing techniques
2. Anticipate and prepare responses to critics
3. Apply data to enhance messages

#### **Section 4 – Present Messages Advocating Public Health Policies in the Media**

1. Apply message framing techniques to deliver messages to target audiences
2. Articulate health policy message in writing and orally

## **MEDIA ADVOCACY**

### MEDIA ADVOCACY

The strategic use of  
MEDIA & ADVOCACY

to

ADVANCE

A social or public POLICY initiative

## HOW TO PREPARE FOR A MEDIA ADVOCACY CAMPAIGN<sup>1</sup>

### Media Advocacy Planning

1. Organize a Planning Group
2. Develop a Research Plan
3. Identify Health Problem as a Policy Gap
4. Establish Policy Goals
5. Assess Organizational Readiness
6. Identify Target Audiences:
  - Stakeholders
  - Policy Makers
7. Mobilize Community

Before you begin a campaign you need to lay the foundation for media advocacy work. This section covers key elements of media advocacy that relate to planning. These are summarized below.

#### A. ORGANIZE A PLANNING GROUP

An essential first step is to organize an initial planning group to help set the direction and lay the groundwork for the campaign to grow. The Executive Director and other leaders of your organization must be involved, as they are responsible for any policy initiatives bearing the organization's endorsement. You will want to include core coalition partners you have in mind, as well as any staff, volunteers or board members you see as having a leadership role in the implementation of this campaign. A diverse grouping will provide more varied perspectives on what the campaign might mean for the organization and for the different parts of the community.

#### B. DEVELOP A RESEARCH PLAN

Strengthen your campaign with a research plan for gathering data to establish the scope of the problem and identify possible solutions. Research will help you thoroughly prepare to answer questions effectively, enable you to anticipate possible obstacles and counter claims of the opposing side.

Research sources that will be helpful to you include:

- *Literature and database reviews:* Review the research literature on the issue. Search the web and particularly, government agencies and universities for information.

- *Market research:* What is the public’s view of the issue? What will attract their attention? Focus groups or public opinion polls provide useful information about the public’s interest and concerns about the issue and possible solutions. You may test out ideas by conducting your own focus groups, surveys, or interviews with key opinion leaders. What policy is your community ready to support?
- *Epidemiological and Legal Research:* Epidemiological information relates to the frequency, location, rates and correlates of a health problem like violence. For instance, domestic violence advocates have used epidemiological information about the rates of teen relationship abuse to refocus efforts on reaching and involving youth, and changing the practices of youth-serving institutions such as schools and sports leagues. Legal research can help you identify laws and regulations that govern the issue and who has the authority to enact policy affecting the issue. The domestic violence field has been very effective in changing laws regarding arrest and prosecution of batterers. Other areas of law may be relevant to altering the root causes of the violence – laws in education, health policy, advertising, equal opportunity, etc.<sup>i</sup>

You especially want to gather data on the policymakers—how are policies adopted, what is the scope of their authority, what is their position on the issue or policy?

### C. PROBLEM AS POLICY GAP

The purpose of media advocacy is to use the media to advocate a *policy solution* to a social problem. That is, it’s about defining the problem as a “policy gap.”

Review the data you have available with your planning group. As you consider the issue you want to address, consider policies that could impact the behavior you’d like to change. Look for policies that affect the social environment or climate, not just individuals. Instead of just asking people to be accountable for their use of violence, what policies create or enforce accountability? To reach beyond educating about healthy relationships, what policies create a climate where relationships are more likely to be safe, equitable and healthy? To make a lasting change, what policy would you advocate for your community?

### D. SET POLICY GOALS

To set a policy goal, you have to first define the issue you are trying to address. It may be helpful to think in terms of the following framework:

What is the **issue** that you are currently grappling with?

An issue is a specific concern that is grounded in a place, a practice, or a current situation. It’s an aspect of the problem that is tangible, and one that can be addressed at a level you are comfortable acting – whether that is your local community, or statewide. An issue that relates to the problem of teen relationship violence would be, “It’s easy to minimize the impact of teen relationship violence because there is nobody tracking how much of that violence happens in our county.”

What is the **solution** you would like to see happen to address the specific issue?

The solution will be the guide to developing a policy proposal. For the example above, one solution might be, “The county public health department should include questions on teen relationship violence in their annual surveys of school health. In addition to the questions they ask about fighting, they need to specifically ask about abuse in relationships.”

Set goals that are winnable and objectives you can accomplish at the local level. You may have a goal of stopping date rape for instance, but there are milestones along the way to achieving the goal and what you can do in your local community.

**Example:**

**Issue:** Lack of culturally appropriate services and prevention for immigrant communities in our city.

**Policy Gap:** There is no forum for coordination and communication between the organizations that primarily serve immigrants (legal services, cultural organizations, other), the domestic violence organizations, and the relevant City offices.

**Solution:** Establish a Mayor’s Task Force including domestic violence organizations and organizations serving the immigrant community, as well as the appropriate City agencies, to integrate and expand services and prevention efforts, over a three-year period.

**Preliminary Goal:** The Mayor’s Office will convene a first meeting of the Task Force.

## **E. ASSESS ORGANIZATIONAL READINESS**

Once you have identified your policy goal, determine whether the goal is a good fit for your organization, its overall mission and work. This analysis will help you to shape the policy – refine or rework it – to increase your chances of getting it implemented.

Identifying the resources you need to carry out a media campaign is an important part of organizational readiness. Media advocacy campaigns do not have to cost a lot of money. However, communications materials will have to be duplicated and distributed. You also need to consider staff time to plan and organize, to build relationships with the media, and to implement the media strategy. You might consider building funding for a communications strategy into your grants, just as “technology” and “evaluation” is incorporated into budgets. Or you might consider how the media strategy can be woven into existing programs such as community awareness or coordinated response programs.

## **F. IDENTIFY TARGET AUDIENCES**

There are two primary audiences for your advocacy campaign—policy-makers and stakeholders.

First of all, you want to think about the POLICYMAKER, or decision-maker. This is the person or entity that has the power to enact the policy you want to see enacted.

Secondly, you want to consider the range of STAKEHOLDERS – a stakeholder is someone who cares about this issue and/or this policy solution. They are somehow affected by it. They may have something to gain, or something to lose. A stakeholder may be an ally who supports your solution to the issue, they may be in opposition, or they may be neutral.

As you begin to narrow down the policy you have in mind, ask yourself the following questions:

**Policymaker:**

- Who has the power to enact this policy?
- What do you know about their views of this issue?

**Who are likely Stakeholders for this policy proposal?**

- Allies?
- Opposition?

Which stakeholders—either allies or opposition—are most likely to influence the Policymaker you identified?

As you begin to think about mobilizing your allies, get as specific as you can about who you know and what they might be willing to do. It does no good to just identify, for example, the “faith community” or “parents” as likely sympathizers. Who among them could you ask to support your efforts? How?

**G. MOBILIZE YOUR COMMUNITY**

Organizing community support for policy change is critical to the success of any public initiative and is essential to effective media advocacy. Involving a diverse group of community representatives in planning and implementing your media campaign demonstrates that your issue is everyone’s business. A community coalition organized specifically to support a policy initiative is an endorsement that demonstrates the issue merits attention. A community coalition also brings resources needed to mount an effective effort.

<b>Resources that Coalitions can bring to Advocacy Efforts<sup>3</sup></b>		
✓ Public Credibility	✓ Space, Equipment and Postage	✓ Media Contacts and Expertise
✓ Staff Time	✓ People Directly Affected	✓ Volunteers
✓ Funding	✓ Diversity	✓ Membership Bases
✓ Advocacy Experience	✓ Access to Decision Makers	✓ Contacts with Potential Allies

Begin your mobilization effort by organizing a work group comprised of representatives of your community—these may be residents, educators, police officials, etc. You’ll also want to involve knowledgeable people, perhaps someone who has worked on policy change before, and those who are affected by the issue such as survivors or community volunteers passionate about this issue.

Community mobilization is an ongoing process. As you implement your media advocacy campaign and you gain visibility, you will stimulate community interest. Be prepared to engage community members to support your efforts and further mobilize others throughout the community.

Dangerous Promises Campaign, coalition member Leah Aldridge of LACAAW—  
“In the Dangerous Promises campaign, we visited lots of community groups and showed them the slide show of sexist alcohol advertisements that we had compiled. This raised awareness and made them want to do something about it – and we had something we wanted them to do. The clear focus we provided to the campaign made all the difference for mobilizing community groups – they didn’t have to agree with us about everything, just this issue. And we had a specific thing we wanted them to do. We asked them to sign on to the campaign, and in some cases to speak, if we held an event in their area. We didn’t expect too much, yet offered something specific they could do.”

1. Adapted from: “Media Planning Guide: Advancing prevention and intervention policies to end domestic violence.” by Peggy Toy and Janey Skinner. Marin, CA: Transforming Communities, 2001.
2. “The California Violence Prevention Initiative: Advancing policy to ban Saturday night specials,” by Lawrence Wallack, in *Health Education and Behavior*, 1999.
3. <sup>1</sup>“The Democracy Owners’ Manual” Jim Schultz, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, NJ 2002

## COMPARE MEDIA STRATEGIES

	<b>SOCIAL MARKETING</b>	<b>PUBLIC RELATIONS</b>	<b>MEDIA ADVOCACY</b>
<b>Message Focus</b>	<b>LOOK AT YOU</b> Know about risk Change your behavior	<b>LOOK AT ME</b> Enhance image Relationship w/publics	<b>LOOK AT US</b> Sets agenda Shape debate Advance policy
<b>Target Audience</b>	Individuals at risk General public	Funders Clients	Stake holders Policy makers
<b>Effect</b>	Individuals	Individuals	Social environment
<b>Benefits</b>	Motivates individual behavior change	Develops strategic relationships Generate support for cause	<b>Community change through policy</b>

**Key Elements of Media Advocacy:**

- Problem as Policy Gap
- Research and apply data
- Policy Goals
- Target audience:
  - Stakeholders
  - Policy Makers
- Mobilize Community
- Frame the Issue for Media
- Action Plan and Media Strategy
- Evaluate Success

## **MEDIA ADVOCACY PLANNING WORKSHEET**

STEP 1—Explore the research to identify goals and audiences:

1. List key data related to the health issue you researched. Who is effected? How is the community affected?
2. What policies, if any, impact the issue? What policy needs to be in place? How will the community benefit from the policy?
3. Who has a stake in these issues and what do they have to gain from supporting the policies. [schools, health departments, police, businesses, survivors, taxpayers, funders, etc.) How will your community benefit?
4. Who has the power to advance the policies you have identified, consider in particular decision-makers at the local level in your community. (City council, county boards, regulators, law enforcement, education boards, etc.)

## **MEDIA ADVOCACY PLANNING WORKSHEET**

### **STEP 2— Focusing: Establish Policy Goals and Target Audiences**

Now that you've explored the research, what policy can you advocate at the local level?

1. What is your policy goal?
2. Identify community stakeholders that you will target for support in your campaign messages.
3. Identify the policy maker you will target in your campaign to adopt the policy.

***Media Advocacy Overview:  
Framing Techniques<sup>2</sup>***

Media advocacy is the strategic use of media, particularly the news media, to influence public opinion and affect the terms of debate on public policy. News confers legitimacy; it determines “the official story,” sets the public agenda and the terms of debate. Think of times when we found ourselves talking about issues we really didn't care as much about before they were on the news. For example, the O.J. Simpson trial elevated domestic violence as a public health issue. The shooting of former President Reagan's press secretary, James Brady, mobilized support for gun control. Tobacco industry leaders denying health risks of smoking in congressional hearings provoked public interest in controlling tobacco marketing and sales.

**Framing**

One way to get on the news agenda is to frame your story specifically for the news media. Framing is the process by which facts, opinions, and images are packaged together to tell a story from a certain perspective. As the news media scans issues that merit coverage, there is no time for detail and long-term study. Framing is a form of shorthand for packaging information within the limitations of news, increasing the opportunity for attention to your issue and presenting your message as intended. You frame your story so that some facts, opinions, and images are more prominent than others. There are two framing techniques for media advocacy: framing your story to gain access to the media and framing for content, telling your story from a public health perspective.

Framing for Access

Framing a story for the media to get their attention is called *framing for access*. There are many framing techniques for getting the media's attention. Featuring celebrities is, of course, one way to attract the media. Here are some other elements of newsworthiness to consider:

***Controversy, conflict, injustice.*** The news media is in the storytelling business. Controversy stimulates interest and commands news coverage.

***Irony or uniqueness.*** An element of your story that is unusual and different; that catches the eye.

***Population of interest.*** Media outlets are businesses that must reach consumers in order to stay profitable. Oftentimes, some demographic groups (and therefore, stories that appeal to them) are of greater interest than others. Call the advertising department of your local media outlet for its package to prospective advertisers. These materials are free and often outline an outlet's target markets.

***Significant or serious.*** Although this is often subjective, any story affecting large numbers of people is usually considered significant.

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<sup>2</sup> Source: Wallack, L.; Dorfman, L; Jernigan, D.; Thema, M. *Media Advocacy and Public Health: Power for Prevention*. Newbury Park: Sage, 1993.

**Breakthrough, anniversary, milestone.** Something new and amazing -- like a discovery or new drug; or the commemoration of something important.

**Local peg, breaking news.** Piggybacking on a news story that is already getting media attention can be an effective strategy. Advocates artfully used the O.J. Simpson case to raise public awareness of the tragedy of domestic violence.

**Good pictures.** All media, including print media, need good visuals for their stories. Some groups provide balloons and beautiful backdrops. Others opt for more dramatic visuals like candlelight vigils or deteriorating neighborhoods in order to provide news media with some direct experience of the issues advocates seek to address.

## Framing for Content

Once we have the media's attention, we must actively shape the story by providing information, interviews, sources and visuals that will effectively frame the story accurately and from a public health perspective. This element of framing is known as *framing for content*. Framing for content increases the odds that the story is told in a way that reflects a public health perspective of the issue and its solutions.

One way to think of framing for content is to imagine each story as a blank comic strip. The reporter or producer must tell a story with a few words illustrated by a picture. Pitching a good story requires paying attention to the whole picture and not just your angle. It also means remembering that the goal is getting a good story. By referring other "voices" (including your opposition), you can more effectively shape the story.

### **A good framing strategy should:**

**Translate individual problem to social issue.** The first step in framing is to make sure that what you say is consistent with your approach. It's hard to justify an environmental approach to an issue if all media interviews frame it from an individual perspective. Further, a social issue is news, an individual problem is not. Translating an issue helps others to see why it is important and newsworthy.

**Social Math.** This is the creative use of data to promote a better understanding of the scope of the problem. Humanize the numbers; relate to the audience on a personal level by. "*The effects of tobacco related illnesses are comparable to two jumbo jets crashing everyday*". Make qualitative comparisons. "*Cigarette smoking causes more premature deaths than AIDS, drugs, fire, homicide and suicide combined.*" Make the numbers local, use data for your community. "*The national death toll from tobacco suggests that 150 people in Los Angeles will die as a result of tobacco use, that's one every 2.5 days.*"

**Assign primary responsibility.** Again consistency is key. If the issue is abuser accountability, it's hard to justify new laws if spokespeople assign primary responsibility for the problem to the batterer rather than lax enforcement of existing laws. Framing for content means framing your message in ways that support your policy goal and explains to others why the target you chose is the right entity to address the issue.

**Present solution.** The message should clearly articulate what the policy can address. To use abuser accountability as an example, the solution offered in this case is to strengthen enforcement and public restrictions make it harder for batterers to escape accountability.

***Make practical policy appeal.*** Your policy appeal should be communicated as practical, fair, legal, affordable and the right thing to do.

***Develop pictures and images.*** If a picture is worth a thousand words and the average media bite is seven seconds, developing compelling visuals that illustrate your perspective is critical to telling your story.

***Use authentic voices as spokespersons.*** Use people affected by the issue, authentic voices, to tell the story. Experts who have facts and evidence on the issue are also useful spokespersons.

***Tailor to audience.*** Remember to whom you are communicating in each case. Communities are fragmented with lots of different interests and concerns. Tailor your message to your target audience.

## MEDIA ADVOCACY MESSAGE WORKSHEET

**Review policy goal, stakeholders, and policymakers you identified on your policy development worksheet. Use the planning worksheet answers as a reference and complete the following.**

### 1. Message

Review your policy goal. What is your main message? Refine your message to address those who have a stake in the issue and policy makers who have the power to adopt the policy. For example, “We need the legislature to fund child care now for healthy children tomorrow.” Make your message suitable for media delivery. Is it brief, clear, memorable? Rewrite as necessary.

List two to three good short “talking points”—soundbites—that support your main message. *A sound bite should be no more than 10 seconds!*

List two to three compelling pieces of data that support your main message.

### 2. Framing Your Message for Access – Getting Media Attention

Using framing techniques, how will you frame your message to get the media’s attention? What pictures and symbols will you use to further compel media’s attraction to your message? Consider location and those involved in supporting your message.

### 3. Framing Your Message for Content – Telling Your Story

Use a content framing technique to present your message from a public health perspective. How is the community affected? What data will you use to support your policy proposal?

## MEDIA PRESENTATION WORKSHEET

### PART I - Counter Arguments/Questions and Responses

Framing your message for content considers counter arguments and how you will respond. What arguments should you expect from your critics? What questions should you expect from reporters? To help prepare to respond to opposing viewpoints, complete the following.

<b>LIST OPPOSING STATEMENTS TO YOUR MESSAGE AND DATA THAT MAY BE USED AGAINST YOU</b>	<b>LIST YOUR RESPONSE AND SUPPORTING DATA</b>

Rewrite your supporting points as necessary to address the opposition. Keep in mind what you have already prepared in terms of “framing for access” and “framing for content.” Your talking points that frame for access are strong ones for gaining the public’s attention, or establishing its relevance. Your talking points that frame for content help you shape the debate and draw attention to the substance of what you are promoting.

## **MEDIA PRESENTATION WORKSHEET**

### **PART II – Role-Play Presentation**

Next, select a main spokesperson for your group. Select one or two others who will act as supporting spokespersons addressing an aspect of your position. Plan a role-playing exercise in which spokespersons practice speaking to a “reporter” using talking points and counter arguments. Remember to use data to support your position and respond to your opponents.

It’s useful to role-play an interview several times before facing a real reporter!

## **Media Advocacy Resources**

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American Public Health Association

[http://www.apha.org/news/Media\\_Advocacy\\_Manual.pdf](http://www.apha.org/news/Media_Advocacy_Manual.pdf)

*Media Advocacy Guidebook.*

Advocacy Institute

<http://www.advocacy.org>

*Media advocacy information and tools*

Benton Foundation

<http://www.benton.org>

*Tools for accessing and working with media*

FAIR Fairness and Accuracy in Media

<http://www.fair.org/media-contact-list.html>

*Media contact lists.*

Federal Communications Network

<http://www.fcn.gov/>

*How-to guide for developing media communications materials.*

Net Action

<http://www.netaction.org/training/>

**Guide to Internet advocacy**

Tech Soup

<http://www.techsoup.org/>

*Internet communications tools for advocacy*

California Center for Health Improvement

<http://www.healthpolicycoach.org/>

*Policy and media advocacy resources*

UCLA Center for Health Policy Research

Health DATA Program

<http://www.healthdata.ucla.edu>

“News for A Change—

An Advocates Guide to Working with the Media”

Wallack, L., Woodruff, K., Dorfman, L., Diaz, I 1999

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“Media Advocacy and Public Health— Power for Prevention”

Wallack, L., Dorfman, L., Jernigan, D., & Themba, M. 1993

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