

Tobacco Mass Reach Communications

Mass Reach Communications Are Effective In Reducing Tobacco Use In Communities

You know as experts that tobacco users have more success quitting when the environment is supportive. By putting out mass media messages that constantly nudge people to quit, it becomes more likely that they will stay quit. Mass media messages about quitting tobacco broadcast through diverse communications channels that reach tobacco users where they are at is a proven strategy known to boost quit rates.

Mass Reach Communications Strategies Can Help CCOs Meet Their Tobacco Reduction Goals

Coordinated Care Organizations (CCOs) and other health care partners can use mass reach communications campaigns as a complement to clinically-focused cessation strategies to help patients quit. Quit rates have been shown to increase by 2-5 % using this strategy ⁽¹⁾. Mass reach communications efforts can help CCOs and other health care partners boost quit rates, improve overall health, reduce tobacco-related health costs, and better meet their tobacco-related incentive metrics.

What Are Mass Reach Communications?

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) states that “Mass-reach health communication interventions target large audiences through television and radio broadcasts, print media (e.g., newspaper), out-of-home placements (e.g., billboards, movie theaters, point-of-sale), and digital media to change knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors affecting tobacco use.” ⁽²⁾

Mass reach communications are a key component of a comprehensive tobacco control programs. Mass reach campaigns can:

- Reduce tobacco use
- Counter industry promotions
- Support other policy and program goals
- Shift tobacco use social norms
- Reduce health disparities
- Result in significant cost savings

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Mass reach communications includes:

- Paid media (spending money to market a message on TV, radio, billboards)
- Earned media (media earned through promotion like letters to the editor or public service announcements)
- Social media
- Program communications

Mass Reach Communications Promote Equity

Mass reach health communication efforts are effective across population groups with varied racial, ethnic, educational, and socioeconomic backgrounds, and should be an important component of efforts to reduce disparities in tobacco use and tobacco-related diseases. In fact, new technologies mean that we can focus-in communication efforts for population groups better than ever before, so we don't need to communicate to the "general public". This means more effective use of resources where they can make the biggest difference in attitudes and behaviors for those experiencing health inequities related to tobacco use.

Bright Spot: New York State Tobacco Program

New York is one state that has had an extremely successful mass reach communications campaign centered around health care partners. Their approach includes two main strategies

1. Ads that encourage patients to talk to their doctors
2. Other ads that encourage doctors to talk to their patients

They run the ads in multiple media channels and supplement the campaigns with resources for health care providers to support cessation efforts.

Research from NY state shows that directing tobacco users to their health care providers works; they were able to increase the Medicaid cessation benefit utilization by almost 10% in four years. In Oregon, this strategy will ultimately require partnership with CCOs and their network of providers to coordinate and align with statewide and local public health efforts.

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Oregon Health Authority Health Promotion And Chronic Disease Prevention Section Invests in Statewide Mass Reach Communications

The Oregon Health Authority (OHA) Health Promotion and Chronic Disease Prevention Section (HPCDP) uses paid media to create statewide Smokefree Oregon campaigns and CCOs and health care partners have the opportunity to leverage this campaign for greater impact. Periodically, OHA/HPCDP creates statewide campaign that may include TV ads, fact sheets in multiple languages or images that can be posted on social media sites and websites. The campaigns are often tailored to a specific important issue. Recently, they had campaigns on youth vaping and the links between tobacco use and COVID.

CCOs and Health Care Partners Can Leverage Statewide Campaigns To Boost Impact

OHA/HPCDP invites CCOs and health care partners to join them in statewide campaigns. When health care partners leverage these opportunities to reinforce messages among their patients, members, and providers they can advance their progress toward tobacco cessation incentive metric.

Mass reach communications campaigns that use messages targeted to health care partners in particular have been shown to be very effective. Studies show a majority of tobacco users expect their doctor to talk to them about quitting, and hearing from their health care provider greatly increases the chances that they will quit.

How specifically can CCOs and health care partners participate in statewide campaigns?

1. CCOs and other health care partners can help amplify campaign messages and use their own communications channels to better reach their members and offer them quitting resources. When members and patients hear a message from multiple channels—for example, TV, billboard, doctors office, newspapers, the likelihood that they will take action to quit increases greatly. CCOs and other health care partners know their members and patients best, and so are best suited to know where and how their members prefer to receive information, and in what formats and languages.

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2. CCOs and other health care partners can also leverage statewide paid media campaigns to garner local earned media. For example, by issuing a press release that aligns with a statewide paid cessation campaign or purchasing additional broadcast time on local TV channels that expand to specific community members can add value.

When CCOs and other health care providers participate in statewide campaigns, the impact is magnified across the state. It increases awareness among tobacco users about the resources available for quitting, and it works. Calls to the tobacco quitline increase during these times.

In short, CCOs and other health care partners can focus on placement of materials, not creation of materials. Both the CDC and the OHA/HPCDP have a wealth of content that can be adapted and used, so local Tobacco Prevention and Education Programs (TPEP), CCOs and health care partners do not need to invest in creating new content or resources.

Strategies for Local Health Care Partners to Engage in Tobacco Mass Reach Communications

Here are some specific ways that CCOs and other health care partners can leverage statewide campaigns for maximum impact:

- Stay updated on the timing of OHA/HPCDP's statewide media campaigns
- Talk with OHA/HPCDP, their local TPEP partner or local culturally-specific organizations and other community-based organizations about creating a mass reach communications strategy that will reach CCO members that are experiencing the greatest tobacco inequities. Consider the media channels that community members most frequently access. Do they read local newspapers? Watch certain local TV channels? Also consider the languages that materials should be translated into to best reach communities of priority members. Consider the frequency, reach and duration that would align with state efforts and create the most impact
- Access promotional materials on the OHA website and download/print them for use in clinics, websites and other CCO member communications channels
- Consider additional television ad buys and print media buys using statewide content in local markets

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- Communicate with health care providers to make them aware of the campaign and provide them with resources and information they may need to initiate conversations with patients and respond to the increased interest in quitting
- Evaluate the success of efforts by tracking how often and how many people visit websites, click through social media, call the quitline, etc and adjust effort as needed.

Bright Spot: Trillium CCO & Lane County

Some CCOs have already seen success with this mass communications approach. Based upon the success of the 2015 Smokefree Oregon tobacco cessation campaign, Trillium CCO and Lane County Health Department approached OHA/HPCDP about expanding the Smokefree Oregon cessation campaign in Lane County. They sponsored a January-March 2016 campaign that used Trillium funds to expand the existing campaign in Lane County.

The campaign was based upon CDC best practices for comprehensive tobacco control programs. The campaign was implemented to reach every Lane County resident who uses tobacco multiple times as efficiently and effectively as possible, and messages for the campaign were tested for audience effectiveness. The campaign used television, radio, print, and digital media to reach Lane County residents and Trillium members who use tobacco.

The initiative resulted in a 24% increase in total Quit Line callers (from 352 to 435) compared to the year-earlier period. About one-third of the callers participated in the Trillium Health Plan. In contrast, Linn and Lincoln counties, which did not receive any tobacco cessation media in 2016, had fewer callers in January-March 2016 than in 2015, declining from 250 to 164 calls.

References

1. The Community Guide. Tobacco Use: Mass Reach Health Communication Interventions. <https://www.thecommunityguide.org/findings/tobacco-use-mass-reach-health-communication-interventions>
2. The Community Guide. Community Preventive Services Task Force Tobacco Findings <https://www.thecommunityguide.org/content/task-force-findings-tobacco>