Strengthening capacity for communicating about MCAH in California

MCAH Action
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Today’s goals

• Identify framing challenges and strategies for communicating about areas/programs that improve maternal, child and adolescent health.
• Practice developing messages for MCAH issue areas that speak to core values and highlight solutions.
• Work with members and partners in MCAH Action to develop common understanding, language, and tools for successful communications strategies.

Communications comparison

Social Marketing
Individual Focus
Warns & Informs
Personal Change
Message
Information Gap

Media Advocacy
Issue Focus
Pressures & Mobilizes
Policy Change
Voice
Power Gap

Public health starting points

The data: We document the distribution and burden of disease and see the patterns of underlying social inequities.

The authority: We have the obligation to act on the data to improve and protect the public’s health.

Opening question

If the only way decision-makers in your county got information about your issue was from the news, what would they know? What wouldn’t they know?
**Talking about health equity**

Before you can know what to say about health equity, you have to know what you’re going to do about health equity.

**Message is never first**

- What do you want to change in the world?
- How will you change it?
- Why do you want it to be changed?

**Layers of strategy**

| • Overall strategy |
| • Media strategy |
| • Message strategy |
| • Access strategy |

**Developing strategy**

- What is the problem or issue?

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- What is the problem or issue?
- What is the solution or policy?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Developing strategy</th>
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<td>• What is the problem or issue?</td>
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<td>• Who has the power to make the necessary change?</td>
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<td>• Who must be mobilized to apply the necessary pressure?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• What do the targets need to hear?</td>
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</table>

\[solution\] \[power\] \[mobilized\]
## Overall strategy example

![Image](image1.png)

## Frames as mental structures

![Image](image2.png)

## Frame definition

Frames are mental structures that help people understand the world.

## Just a few cues…

**HEALTH EQUITY**

## …might surprise you

**HFAJ TH FOUJTV**

## The Need to Reframe

![Image](image3.png)
News frames are more often portraits than landscapes

The Need to Reframe

What’s on the slate?
Competing values

Market Justice
Social Justice

A mashup of Daniel Beauchamp 1976 & Jared Bernstein 2006

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**Competing stories: obesity**

- You Are What You Eat
  - Poor parenting
  - Bad habits & personal choices
  - Overactive thumbs, underactive legs
  - Exercise, and exercise willpower

- What Surrounds Us Shapes Us
  - Junk food marketing
  - Neighborhood connectivity & safety (transit, recreation)
  - No time for physical activity in school
  - Local, state, & federal policy (taxes, advertising, zoning, etc.)

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**Competing stories: Violence**

- **Violence as a Beast**
  - Preying & lurking
  - Hunt down & trap the beast
  - Enact harsher laws
  - Catch and jail criminals

- **Violence as a Virus**
  - Preying & lurking
  - Infecting & plaguing
  - Enact harsher laws
  - Catch and jail criminals

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--Thibodeau and Boroditsky, 2011

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**Competing stories: MCAH**

- **Good moms grow healthy babies**
  - Decisions while pregnant determine baby’s health
  - Avoid stress, tobacco & alcohol; eat well; get prenatal check-ups
  - Healthy behaviors make healthy babies

- **Good societies produce healthy babies**
  - Supportive, non-discriminatory environments determine health
  - Healthy food, prenatal care, housing, etc., is accessible and affordable for all
  - Babies are record keepers of societal decisions

Adapted from: Winett et. al, 2016.
Avoiding mommy-blame can be harder than it seems!

Be explicit about race?

Good people disagree

*But most agree that*
- It’s patterns among institutions, not bad apples, that matter most
- Cue structural racism
- It’s a strategic decision about when

Structural racism

“Explaining the bird’s inability to take flight requires that we recognize the connectedness of multiple bars, each reinforcing the rigidity of the others. In confronting racism we must similarly account for multiple, intersecting and often mutually reinforcing disadvantages, and develop corresponding response strategies.”

- Andrew Grant-Thomas & John Powell

Based on Marilyn Frye

What can we do?

- Understand how the issue is currently framed.
- Translate individual problem to a social issue.
- Assign responsibility for a policy solution.
- Articulate values.
- Illustrate the landscape with story elements.

Message strategy

- Message: what we say
- Messenger: who says it
- Target: who we want to hear it

Lakoff’s conceptual levels

Level 1: overarching values like fairness, responsibility
Level 2: issues like immigration, children’s health, food, living wage
Level 3: specific strategies like counselors in schools, health insurance for kids & families, the Dream Act

Thanks to the Rockridge Institute
Components of a message

- Problem statement
  *What's wrong?*
- Policy objective
  *What should be done?*
- Values dimension
  *Why does it matter?*

Express your values

"The people baking the pie ought to be the ones to have a decent slice of it."

-- Heather McGhee
Demos

"Shame on a state with Cadillac prisons and jalopy schools."

— Delaine Eastin
Former Superintendent of Public Instruction

Table facilitator introductions

*Use table facilitator presentations to decide which group to work in*

Small group work

- Task #1: What's your policy goal? Who's your target?
- Task #2: Develop your 3-part message
  - What's the problem?
  - What's the solution?
  - Why does it matter?

Brainstorm tough questions

- Count off at your table 1-__
- Find the table with your number on it
- Work in the group to brainstorm:
  A. Tough questions about MCAH in general
  B. Tough questions people ask you about your specific area

College bowl

- Game show hosts will select a question
- Work in teams to brainstorm an answer
- Buzz in when ready to respond!
- Applause-o-meter will determine points
In summary

Develop strategy:
• Message is never first or foremost.
• Know what you want & how to get it.
• Prepare your partners.

Frame the debate:
• Illustrate the landscape.
• Connect your values to solutions.
• Talk to your allies too.

Thank you!
bmsg.org