

**Communities United for Substance Abuse Prevention**  
**A Sullivan County Coalition**  
**Draft Communication Plan (July 22, 2009)**  
prepared by Andrea Johnston

This document has been written to serve as a tool to guide the communication and marketing efforts of Communities United for Substance Abuse Prevention (“the Coalition”) over the time period of July 1, 2009 through December 31, 2010. The mission of the Coalition is “to develop community resources to reduce Alcohol, Tobacco and Drug abuse in an effort to create a healthier and more prosperous population.” All of the communication goals and messages described here relate directly to this mission.

Clearly, the Coalition’s mission is HUGE! It involves all sectors of the community and there are many messages to communicate and a slew of tools for communicating them. In this Communication Plan an attempt has been made to focus and prioritize the Coalition’s communication efforts. The Action Plan in particular recognizes the limited resources of the Coalition. As the goals of the Coalition and this Communication Plan are realized, i.e. our capacity building work is successful and our communication building blocks are put in place, our communication efforts will expand.

This Plan includes: Communication Goals, Stakeholders and Target Audiences, Primary Messages for Internal and External Audiences, Additional Primary Messages for our Internal Audience, Communication Tools, Action Plan. Appendix I provides more detailed information for each of the primary messages.

## **COMMUNICATION GOALS**

- *Educate and raise awareness about:*
  - our local substance abuse problems
  - the concepts of substance abuse prevention
  - the existing substance abuse prevention resources in our community
  - the work of the Coalition
- *Engage the community in working together to solve our local substance abuse problems.*
- *Provide training and tools to our internal audiences so that we can effectively:*
  - communicate our messages to our external audiences
  - promote the concepts of substance abuse prevention and community engagement and collaboration
  - represent the Coalition in the community

## STAKEHOLDERS AND TARGET AUDIENCES

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>External Audiences</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Youth</li> <li>– Parents</li> <li>– Enforcement</li> <li>– Young Adults</li> <li>– Teachers</li> <li>– Schools (guidance, admin, etc.)</li> <li>– Service Providers</li> <li>– Medical and Behavioral Health Providers</li> <li>– Businesses</li> <li>– Service Organizations (Lions, Rotary)</li> <li>– Community (Fire Dept, City/Towns)</li> <li>– Government (agencies, legislators)</li> <li>– Churches (faith-based organizations)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Internal Audiences</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Coalition Members</li> <li>– Oversight Board</li> <li>– Resource and Collaboration Council Members</li> <li>– Voices for Change Council Members</li> <li>– Intervention and Treatment Council Members</li> <li>– Enforcement Council Members</li> <li>– Staff (Regular and Subcontracted)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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## PRIMARY MESSAGES FOR OUR INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL AUDIENCES

The Coalition has many messages to communicate to the various internal and external audiences. However, this communication plan provides four primary messages for the Coalition to use over the next 12-18 months. As communication tools are developed the messages will be used consistently and repetitively in order to develop the Coalition's identity in the community. The primary messages are listed below along with promotional taglines in parentheses. The promotional taglines help to simplify our messages, generate enthusiasm for a common goal and provide easy-to-remember slogans for use in all of our promotional tools.

- *There is a substance abuse problem in our community. (**SUBSTANCE ABUSE HURTS**)*
- *Substance abuse prevention work is effective; by working together, we can solve the substance abuse problem in our community. (**TOGETHER, PREVENTION WORKS**)*
- *There are existing resources/organizations in our community that are engaged in substance abuse prevention. (**PREVENTION AT WORK**)*
- *Our youth have a voice; we need to listen and include them as part of the solution. (**EMPOWER OUR YOUTH**)*

A detailed discussion of each of these messages can be found in Appendix I.

## ADDITIONAL PRIMARY MESSAGES FOR OUR INTERNAL AUDIENCE

- *You are the “Voice of Prevention” in our community. (TALK ABOUT PREVENTION)*  
Please share Coalition messages with your co-workers, your peers, the constituency you represent, your family and friends. What tools do you need to be able to do this well?
- *You make substance abuse prevention happen. (WE THANK YOU)*  
You are doing great work for the Coalition. We appreciate your time and talents. Because of your efforts the Coalition is accomplishing substance abuse prevention (we need to cite specific examples).

## COMMUNICATION TOOLS

The Coalition needs to use a wide variety of communication tools to reach the many internal and external audiences. To engage the community, it is imperative that we use tools that encourage two-way communication (e.g. surveys, participatory forums/meetings). Here is a list of potential communication tools:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Online</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– E-blasts</li> <li>– Website</li> <li>– Links on company and organization websites</li> <li>– Social Marketing (blog, podcast, MySpace, Facebook, Twitter)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <i>Print</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Direct mail</li> <li>– Published reports of results of community forums/meetings</li> <li>– School newsletters/other communications to parents</li> <li>– Company and organization newsletters (Chambers, United Way)</li> <li>– Church bulletin</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Face-to-Face</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Community forums/meetings               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Open to whole community</li> <li>Adult youth leaders in the community</li> <li>Youth forums</li> <li>Organizational meetings – e.g. service clubs, CLARRY, Partners for Health, etc.</li> <li>Legislative/governmental</li> </ul> </li> <li>– Educational programs/conferences</li> <li>– School PTA meetings</li> <li>– Teacher meetings</li> <li>– Church pulpits/events</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <i>Traditional Media</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Newspaper press releases/articles/ads</li> <li>– Local TV</li> <li>– Radio announcements/ads</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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## ACTION PLAN

### July 1, 2009 – September 30, 2009

The first step to putting this Communication Plan into action is to create some “building blocks.”

**Develop Document Describing the Local Substance Abuse Problem** – A more detailed description (talking points) of the local community’s substance abuse problem needs to be developed. It should include statistics, survey data, effects of substance abuse on families, schools, the workplace, and the community (to include source documentation). This document will help to create the content of many of our communications. In addition, it will provide our internal audience with some of the information they need to represent the Coalition.

**Create a Master Coalition Database** to include contact information for all constituents: Coalition members, Council and Oversight Board members, School/SAU, Service Providers, Churches, Enforcement, Town/County/State officials, Treatment Providers, Service/Community Organizations, Businesses, Media Outlets, Interested Individuals, etc. Fields will include name, title, organization, mailing address, phone numbers, organization descriptions and a variety of sorting fields such as Sector, Target Audience, etc. The database will be able to be sorted in a variety of ways for ease of distributing specific e-blasts, direct mail, and other communications and for creating resource lists. With the help of a River Valley Community College work-study student the database will be built as comprehensively as possible. A system will be developed for regular maintenance of the database.

**Promote and Hold Fall Conference** – The Coalition’s first major conference, “Communities that Care, Working Together”, is scheduled for Saturday, September 26. The goals of the Conference are completely aligned with the communication goals outlined in this plan. They are to:

- Raise awareness that we have a problem, it’s real and it’s local.
- Celebrate the work parents, youth, community partners are doing in ATOD prevention, intervention, treatment, law enforcement and recovery.
- Develop knowledge and skills and tips community members can use to be part of making change. Walk away with concrete ways to make a difference. Know where to go and what to do when someone has a problem.
- Learn what youth council activism is all about. a. Bring youth who are doing phenomenal stuff in their communities to share what they are doing.

**Re-Design Coalition Website** – Create a new template for the website that is inviting and engaging. Re-organize the navigation bars so that visitors are able to find what they are looking for quickly. Create a system for regular (monthly) updates.

**Plan Community Forums** – Develop a plan for quarterly community forums (open to all). Determine need and establish a plan for other forums of specific, targeted audiences/sectors throughout the year.

### **October 1, 2009 – December 31, 2009**

**Develop a comprehensive electronic Resource Guide** - Using the Master Coalition Database we will be able to begin to develop an electronic Master Resource list that can be sorted for creating on-line and printed **Resource Lists** for specific audiences (e.g. parents, youth, businesses, enforcement, etc.).

**Establish Quarterly Coalition Newsletter** – The Coalition needs a regular (“you can count on”) communication for the community. This newsletter should be in both electronic and print format so that it can be distributed by e-blast, snail mail and on the website. The goals and messages established in this Communication Plan should guide the content of this newsletter.

**Establish Plan for Other Regular Communication Tools** – The following regular communication tools are recommended for the Coalition:

- **Monthly Messages** about the local substance abuse problem, education about substance abuse prevention, promotion of existing resources, and opportunities for involvement – these messages can be distributed by e-blasts and on the website.
- **Quarterly Coalition Update for Internal Audience** – Provide a consistent message to our internal audience about our accomplishments, the big picture, a show of thanks and appreciation.

### **January 1, 2010 – June 30, 2010**

#### **Put Communication Plan In Action**

- Distribute **Quarterly Coalition Newsletters**
- Implement other regular communication tools, e.g. **Monthly Messages, Quarterly Coalition Update, other.**
- Hold **Community Forums.**
- Maintain and update **Master Coalition Database.**
- Maintain and update **Resource Lists.**
- Maintain and update **Coalition Website.**

### **July 1, 2010 – September 30, 2010**

#### **Continue to put communication Plan in Action**

**Assess the Success of the Communication Effort** - What is going well? What could be improved? Are the messages still relevant? Are there new messages that should be a priority? What tools are working best?

**Revise the Communication Plan as needed.**

## Appendix I – Primary Messages - Details

**Special thanks to the members of the Resource and Collaboration Council who spent time brainstorming and categorizing these messages.**

**Main Message (professional): There is a substance abuse problem in our community.**

**Short Tagline (promotional): *SUBSTANCE ABUSE HURTS*** (the individual, their family & friends, their school, their co-workers, and the community)

**Target Audiences:** All

**Detailed Message for All:** In Sullivan County there is a serious substance abuse problem that has many detrimental effects on our communities but is especially harmful to our youth. The problem is real and it's local. We cannot pretend that it does not exist. Here is a short summary of the problem as described in the Coalition's Strategic Plan:

There is community-wide acceptance of alcohol use by underage youth and young adults. This wide-spread acceptance causes additional problems such as social access to alcohol, lack of enforcement throughout the community, and possibly a lack of youth perception of the risks of alcohol use. There is also a high rate of multigenerational substance abuse problems leading to acceptance within families. Multigenerational substance abuse problems result in low-resiliency youth, abused or neglected, and lacking in strong parental support. Many of our youth experience problems with alcohol and drugs, the criminal justice system, low educational attainment, mental health concerns, and low self-esteem. If not addressed, the cycle of addiction will continue and the costs to the region for criminal justice and social services will increase; and, youth and families who are resilient will continue to move away, taking their skills and resources with them.

A more detailed description of the local substance abuse problem needs to be developed as part of the implementation of this plan.

**Main Message (professional): Substance abuse prevention work is effective; by working together, we can solve the substance abuse problem in our community.**

**Short Tagline (promotional): Together, Prevention Works**

**Detailed Message for All:** Substance abuse prevention is an aggregation of activities used to ... There are proven, best practices ...SAMSHA, CADCA...

Many organizations in our community are doing substance abuse prevention work already. However, by working together, collaborating, sharing resources we can accomplish a community-wide solution to a community-wide problem.

- Healthy communities support healthy families, healthy families build healthy communities.
- Invest money in programs for adolescents as they are your future.
- Here's what you can do to reduce substance abuse. (Need a list: Join our Coalition, Attend a community forum, etc, etc)
- Join the community efforts that interest you. Volunteer!
- Here's how to get help for yourself, a friend or a member of your family: (Need a list of resources)

**Specific Messages to Enforcement :** We are looking to you to let us know what the laws are and to enforce those laws. But we don't believe that enforcement alone will solve the problem. We need a focus on prevention. Let's educate our young first offenders about the reasons their offenses are wrong and the consequences with the goal of preventing future offenses. Let's provide these youth with support and guided opportunities for second chances. Let's work with families and other service providers in the community to develop solutions. Here are some tools that we can offer to help you to provide support and prevention on the front line: printed resource guide to prevention services in our community, training on how to offer referrals to prevention services, facilitation of discussions with community groups about substance abuse problems and potential solutions. What other tools could we provide you that would help you to include prevention in your work?

**Specific Messages to Parents:**

- Take time to learn good parenting skills. (Need to provide a list of these resources)
- Be a role model to your children.
- Help your children to make good and healthy choices (even if these are different than the choices you made or are currently making)
- Know where your children are, who their friends are, and how they are spending their time.
- Take responsibility for your children. Set appropriate limits and boundaries.
- Listen to your kids; be there.
- Children are a gift; they need to be cherished and nurtured.
- Here's how to get help for yourself, a friend or a member of your family: (Need a list of resources)
- Here's what you as a parent can do to help prevent substance abuse in our community. (Need to provide a list of these ideas: volunteer for an organization that provides services for youth; attend one of our Coalition's community forums, etc. etc.)

**Specific Messages to Youth:**

- You are terrific just as you are. You are valued.
- Live your life to the fullest.
- Life is only beginning for you. You have the choice to decide where it goes and how you live it. What you do today impacts tomorrow, next week, next month, next year and forever. Choose wisely! There is no "reset" button in life, the consequences of your decisions follow you forever.
- Be aware of opportunities and possibilities.
- It's never that bad – please ask for help.
- Be accountable to your parents.
- Getting pregnant isn't cool – it's a lot of responsibility.
- Just because someone you know is doing it, doesn't make it safe or OK.
- Utilize peer pressure constructively.
- Here's how to get help for yourself, a friend or a member of your family: (Need a list of resources)
- It's a life-saving decision to work in prevention. Here's what you can do to reduce substance abuse (Need to provide list: Join Voices for Change, attend a Youth Leadership Conference, etc.etc.)
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**Main Message (professional):** There are existing resources/organizations in our community that are engaged in substance abuse prevention.

**Short Tagline (promotional): Prevention At Work**

**Detailed Message for All:**

Celebrate the work parents, youth, community partners are doing in ATOD prevention, intervention, treatment, law enforcement and recovery.

- These resources are available to our community. (Need to provide resource list).
- There are healthy alternatives/places for kids to go. (Need to provide resource list).
- There is help for parents who need it. (Need to provide resource list).
- Here are helpful tools for youth in our community. (Need to provide resource list).

**Main Message (professional): Our youth have a voice; we need to listen and include them as part of the solution.**

**Short Tagline (promotional): Empower Our Youth.**

**Detailed Message for All:**

Learn what youth council activism is all about. a. Bring youth who are doing phenomenal stuff in their communities to share what they are doing.

**Specific messages to Enforcement (police/courts):**

- Teenagers are valuable members of the community.
- Youth need to see police/courts as people who are approachable if they're going to talk to you.
- Engage our youth, don't threaten them.

**Specific messages to the community:**

- Teenagers are valuable members of the community.
- We need to engage youth through community events.
- Understanding, awareness, making the connection with the future of youth (Parents)

**Specific messages to our youth:**

- You are valued members of your community.
- You can make a huge difference by getting involved.
- How can we help you to make a difference in our community?
- We want to know you and show you that we care.
- What are your hopes and dreams for your life?
- What are your opinions about substance abuse and prevention.