

How to create a campaign

Sexual Assault Awareness Month is a great opportunity to create a community-wide campaign and strengthen local partnerships and coalitions. Public education campaigns play an important role in changing social norms by sharing basic facts with members of the community. The following steps are for planning a successful campaign to inform and engage the public:

Step 1: Identify your audience

Research shows that choosing a specific audience and tailoring your message to that audience is the most effective method to raise awareness about an issue.

Your community has many potential audiences: youth, parents and caregivers, policymakers, media, teachers, law enforcement, health care providers, students, employers and workers, and more. It may be helpful to consider groups that may have the most impact in preventing sexual violence from occurring in the first place, or are at highest risk for perpetrating sexual violence. It is important to partner with diverse groups and community leaders to help ensure any program or campaign is relevant to the community you are engaging.

If your organization has the capacity to invest in a long-term strategy to learn about your community's needs in preventing sexual violence, consider conducting a needs assessment. A needs assessment can help to determine which audience would benefit most from your campaign by reviewing existing data, conducting surveys or focus groups, and reaching out to community forums and key informants.

For information on needs assessments, visit:

- **The Community Tool Box**

<http://ctb.ku.edu/en/default.aspx>

- **Iowa State University Extension**

<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/communities/assess>

- **The University of Arizona Extension**

<http://extension.arizona.edu/evaluation/content/needs-assessment>

If you are unable to do a needs assessment at this time, you can look into existing information about sexual violence in your community. Learn about rates of sexual violence by accessing crime statistics and existing research. Find out what has been done already to prevent sexual violence and the outcomes of those efforts. Talk to stakeholders who were involved. Ask them what the strengths and challenges associated with those strategies. You can also tap into your knowledge of the community and your organization's resources and goals to develop an effective strategy for your campaign.

Step 2: Identify objectives

This step goes hand-in-hand with choosing a target audience. In planning a public education campaign, it is critical to clearly explain why this campaign is necessary and important. It is often helpful to outline objectives. Detail the specific

change or outcome you wish to see in your selected audience. Please note your objectives should be unique to your community needs. Here are some sample objectives:

Objective 1: Community members will be able to describe sexual violence as a spectrum – or range – of attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors.

Objective 2: Community members will be able to talk about the services provided by the local sexual assault center and the importance of the organization's services.

Objective 3: Community members will be able to list or identify ways they can challenge or change unhealthy social norms related to sexual violence.

Step 3: Develop messages

If you were able to conduct a needs assessment of your target audience, you should have a clear understanding of their specific knowledge gaps in relation to the objectives of this campaign. Alternatively, if you have learned that many people understand that sexual assault is a problem, but don't know how to help someone who has been victimized, choose to provide information about community services and victims' rights.

If a needs assessment wasn't possible, see if you can locate other research about community-wide attitudes and beliefs toward sexual violence. For example, perhaps a local college has conducted independent research on this topic that you could use. If your program does peer education, inquire about any pre- and post-test surveys that might provide insight about beliefs and attitudes.

Additionally, national research like *American Perceptions of Sexual Violence: A FrameWorks Research Report* can help to inform your understanding of gaps in public knowledge and general trends. (Report available at http://www.frameworksinstitute.org/assets/files/PDF_sexualviolence/AmericanPerceptionsOfSexualViolence.pdf)

It is important the messages you choose resonate with your audience. Research has shown that when the audience can identify with the image they are more likely to absorb the message than if they are unable to relate to the people, location, and scenarios in the image (Potter, Moynihan & Stapleton, 2011). Ultimately, you will have to choose three to five facts or messages to convey to your target audience.

If you were able to conduct a needs assessment, touch base with some of the community members that participated and use surveys or focus groups to get feedback on the campaign. Conducting focus groups can feel overwhelming because of scheduling and budget limitations. One option may be to partner with other organizations and attend their meetings to get feedback and spread awareness. These interactions can be informal; the goal is to obtain insights about your messages from the people you are trying to reach.

Conducting focus groups will help to determine if the messages you plan to use are effective with your audience. Share the facts you want to include and ask for reactions. Would this fact make sense if they read it on a poster? Is it something your audience doesn't know? Questions like this will help you decide what to ultimately include in your educational materials.

Step 4: Devise strategies

Strategies will help you bring your objectives to life. Examples include:

- Write a “Letter to the Editor” for your local newspaper or organize a letter-writing campaign with supporters and volunteers.
- Invite speakers to talk about community involvement in preventing and/or responding to sexual violence.
- Create and distribute posters, brochures, and/or cards with information about sexual violence to individuals and/or businesses at sporting events, concerts and events.
- Create public service announcements (PSAs).
- Distribute campaign messages via social media.
- Host a theater performance or arts event.

Select strategies that are relevant to your audience and are realistic for your organization based on your resources and timeline. If you plan to develop something that requires graphic design, such as a poster or brochure, consider talking with a local art school or college to find students or faculty willing to create artwork at no cost. Likewise, research other organizations that have developed similar campaigns and messages.

Step 5: Go back to the audience

Set aside some time to test your campaign materials again with your target audience. After all your hard work and planning, you’ll want to feel confident in your messaging and materials. Make changes to better meet the needs of your audience. Ultimately, your campaign will only be effective if your audience pays attention to your message, so this is a crucial step.

SAAM CAMPAIGN MATERIALS

Use SAAM materials as a part of your campaign strategy. The following are available:

- Letter to the Editor
- Events listing
- Proclamation
- Social media toolkit
- Video PSAs
- Online calendar
- Free NSVRC informational resources
- Promotional SAAM products for purchase

Find materials at: www.nsvrc.org/saam

Step 6: Implement strategically

After making necessary revisions to your materials, consider how and where you’ll distribute them. Ask staff at hospitals, libraries, malls, universities and gyms about posting materials on their bulletin boards. Reach online audiences through email and social networking. SAAM campaign materials can support your outreach, planning and evaluation. Learn more at www.nsvrc.org/saam

Step 7: Evaluate & assess

Effective evaluation is an important element of any public education campaign. Some simple steps for evaluation include keeping track of the number of materials you distribute or how many times a PSA was shown. Data collection and evaluation will help shape future campaigns and assist you in using resources judiciously. If passing out brochures was not successful this year, redirect your staff to do something different for next year’s campaign.

It's helpful to compare your audience's knowledge and awareness before and after the campaign was launched. Conducting a pre- and post-campaign survey is one way to determine effectiveness. Connect with experts in your community who may be willing to volunteer.

Step 8: Timeline

Begin planning your campaign several months before the launch date. You will need a month or two to collect information about sexual violence in your community and identify gaps in knowledge to help you select your audience. It may take you a few weeks to come up with your main messages based on your audience and objectives.

Allow approximately a month to recruit focus group participants and obtain feedback on your messages. Creating campaign materials can take anywhere from two weeks to two months. If you are working with a professional designer, factor in more time for brainstorming and revisions. If you are working with someone within your agency, you may be able to move through this stage more quickly. Try to obtain high-resolution art files such as your agency's logo early in the process so you'll have them on hand for future projects.

Once you have materials in hand to show your audience, allow up to four weeks to hold another focus group. Depending on the feedback

you receive, you may need to make significant changes to your materials. Give yourself up to three weeks to make changes and finalize everything before printing. Evaluation should be factored in throughout the process, but particularly if you plan to have pre- and post-tests. You will need about a month to administer and evaluate pre/post-test data at the beginning and end of the campaign. Other evaluation measures may not take much time, such as checking data regarding website traffic.

If you are unable to start planning your campaign far in advance, consider how you might be able to break up the work into a multi-year effort, with background research and planning during year one and implementation during year two. Or, work on the campaign in smaller pieces over a longer period of time when you, your staff and volunteers have breaks in the workload. While it is important that you follow the steps outlined in this guide for maximum effectiveness, there are many creative ways to plan and implement a flexible campaign.

References

Potter, S. J., Moynihan, M. M & Stapleton, J. G. (2011). Using social self-identification in social marketing materials aimed at reducing violence against women on campus. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 26, 971-990. doi:10.1177/0886260510365870