

Marketing Programs and Services: Strategic Communications and Marketing

About the Core Topic

Strategic communications and marketing help organizations reach their key audiences, such as individuals who may benefit from certain mental health services. Marketing strategies can be used to both promote services and influence positive behavioral change. Through strategic communication and marketing, organizations can deliver effective messages that engage their audiences, support practice improvements, and lead to positive mental health outcomes.

Why This Topic Matters for Implementation

Communications and marketing offer many research-based strategies that can be useful to the behavioral health field. These solutions can be applied to efforts to (a) market practices or programs to the community; (b) increase providers' motivation to implement a practice; (c) foster behavior change; (d) promote the benefits of the service or program; (e) tell compelling stories to support sustainability; and (f) engage key stakeholders in building and sustaining practices and programs.

Key Components

- **Social Marketing and Communication Planning:** Steps for creating a social marketing or communication plan include outlining key goals, identifying target audiences, developing effective messaging, planning communication channels, and evaluating impact.
- **Identity and Branding:** A brand can serve as a first impression that influences how people see an agency, program, or initiative. Creating a “brand” involves planning around names, logos, colors, fonts, taglines, and other visuals.
- **Digital Communication and Websites:** Many communications flow through websites and other digital channels. Digital communications include creating social media content, blogs, videos, podcasts, and other strategies to reach and engage your audience.
- **Media Relations:** Media relations involve strategies for partnering with others to magnify your communications. This can include traditional media (e.g., newspapers, TV) and other influential voices (e.g., influencers, podcasters, local champions) to bring your message to a broader audience.

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- **Partnership Engagement and Advocacy:** Creating system or organizational change frequently depends on engaging others around shared values and goals. Communication solutions include effective strategies for building and sustaining partnerships, as well as utilizing effective advocacy strategies to influence decision makers.
- **Internal Communication and Operations:** Communication strategies can be critical to build awareness and buy-in from an internal audience, and support implementation, continuous quality improvement, evaluation, and sustainability. Many organizations or programs may not have a communication team or designated staff, but clear operational procedures and policies allow for leveraging existing resources to support communication and social marketing goals.
- **Communication/Marketing Solutions for Implementation:** Communications and social marketing strategies are critical components of a practice implementation plan. Incorporating best practices in communications and marketing improves the likelihood of successful implementation at every stage.

How We Can Help

WHAT WE CAN DO

- Assist you in designing a communications and social marketing plan for your setting/services
- Review existing communications materials (flyers, brochures, webpages) and provide recommendations for clarity, accessibility, and audience fit ensuring thoughtful integration of effective strategies
- Support you in identifying key audiences and developing tailored messaging for each group
- Assist you in sequencing and packaging resources to roll out over time in a way that builds awareness and maintains momentum

SUPPORT WE HAVE PROVIDED

- We provided consultation to strengthen an organization's communication plan and identify priorities for improving outreach to the mental health providers they serve. Content focused on branding, messaging, email communications, social media, website strategy, and content planning. This work helped align internal messaging and clarify outreach approaches, and resulted in practical tools such as a content calendar and messaging framework.

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- We provided consultation to strengthen visual design and social media strategy for a mental health organization. The consultation focused on improving brand consistency, clarifying visual messaging, and identifying effective approaches for engaging audiences across social media platforms. This work supported the development of practical design and social media strategies to strengthen outreach and sustain ongoing communication efforts.
- We hosted a learning session to support peer support groups in strengthening how they communicate and showcase their work. The session focused on strategies for sharing impact, tailoring messages to different audiences, and using simple storytelling techniques to highlight progress without overcomplicating the message. This work helped participants identify clear, doable ways to show the value of their efforts and communicate results more effectively.

Key Resources

These practical resources are designed to help you move from planning to action:

- [***Social Marketing in Communities***](#). Center for Mental Health Implementation Support, Strategic Communications and Marketing Workgroup.
- [***Are We There Yet?***](#) Communications Network.
- [***Social Marketing Primer***](#). C+C.

To view recorded learning sessions and online courses focused on strategic communications and marketing and our other core topics, visit the [**CMHIS Learning Lab**](#).



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