

Getting Your Message Heard
Preparing for National Adoption Awareness Month



Adoption Awareness Month Opportunities

- Adoption is on the radar *now* in preparation – get your foot in the door
- Rally your network
- Connect with finalization events
- Develop a state or county strategy
- Do forget about federal opportunities
 - Voice for Adoption Adoption Portrait Project



Decide on Your Purpose

- Advocacy
- Recruitment
- Public Awareness
- Support
- Normalizing the experience



Venues and Audiences

- Local community papers
- Community television
- State House events
- Adoption finalization events
- School papers
- Thanksgiving events
- Support group events
- Legislators
- Administrators
- Child welfare staff
- Educators
- Mental and medical health providers
- Community service providers
- Broader community
- Parents and youth



Know Your Audience

- Always make it personal, but...
 - Legislators want data and solutions
 - Child welfare wants recruitment and sustainability
 - Potential resource families want hope and inspiration
 - Current families want support and strategies
 - The public wants to have their interest piqued
- Your messages can be adapted for all of these purposes



Developing Messages



- Make it personal.
- Every child matters – no exceptions.
- Positive impact grabs attention...but negative consequences drive action.
- Results, not efforts, matter most.

Developing Messages

- Define your goals
- Define the audience
- Appeal to values: Why do I care?
- Offer solutions
- Address the urgency of the problem and the consequences of action and inaction
- Give people something to do
- Use an anecdote or story, including images
- Anticipate pushback
- Repeat



Developing Messages

- True
- Believable
- Emotional
- Supported by the facts, but not just facts
- Framed to gain support and win
- Aligned with cultural values and priority issues
- Supported by visuals for videos, photos, and web sites
- Repeated



The Importance of Messaging

- Language matters and shapes others' perceptions
- Be thoughtful about how you talk and write
- The way we talk among ourselves matters too
 - The words and phrases we use as "short-hand" become our go-to words and phrases
- Speaking in a unified voice lends power to a message



Put Children First

- Frame your messages around children, even if you're talking about a family's support need.
- Make sure children, youth, or kids are in your headline or first sentence.
- Make sure you talk about how your viewpoint helps children thrive.



Use People-First Language

- Put the person first.
- Use friendly, familiar language.
- Tell stories that paint a picture about real children or families to make their needs come alive. Whenever possible, use names (even if you have to change the name).



Be Positive

- Emphasize that children and youth are currently thriving in kinship, foster, and adoptive placements.
- Avoid putting down other types of families.
- Make it clear that supports and services help children and youth heal from past trauma and make a tremendous difference for families.
- Highlight successes.



Make Connections

- Help people understand that we're talking about children just like those they know and care about.
- When talking about children who have serious disabilities or other challenges, emphasize that they are children like our daughters, sons, nieces, nephews, and neighborhood kids.
- Use pictures and words that tell a story.



Keep It Simple

- Avoid jargon and acronyms. Use plain, positive language.
- Accept that most people don't understand the child welfare system and don't really need to for you to succeed.
- Remember that you know too much. Don't provide more details than are needed.
- Weave together stories and data.



Successful Messaging

- Every child and youth has a right to have a lifelong family.
- We all want what's best for children. Children and youth do best in a family.
- Family placements result in permanency for children.
- Too many children are placed in group care instead of families.
- Children who have experienced trauma face challenges, but their families can be successful when they have support.
- Placing children and youth in families saves government and other funds.
- Federal law requires that children be placed into families whenever possible.



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Talking Points:

- Supporting kinship, foster, and adoptive families enables children to heal from past trauma, helps keep the families together, and improves outcomes for all.
- A lack of support may make parents or caregivers fear that they will not be able to meet a child's needs.
- Kinship, foster, and adoptive parents need information and support to help them address the needs of children who can't remain with their birth parents.

Research/Data:

- A study showed that the amount of support a parent received had a statistically significant impact on increasing stability of foster placements.
- A national study of children and teens in the child welfare system found more than 70 percent of the children had experienced chronic or repeated trauma.
- Complex trauma can affect children's ability to express and control emotions, concentrate, handle conflict, and form healthy relationships.
- Researchers have found that the "amount and quality of support that adoptive families receive when parenting a child with a history of abuse or neglect is an important factor that contributes to family permanency . . ." Forty percent of the families who leave foster parenting do so primarily because of inadequate agency support.

<https://www.nacac.org/advocate/how-to-advocate/messaging-strategies/messaging-memo/>



Working with the Media

- Develop a list of media contacts
- Build relationships
- Offer a variety of stories
- News hook
- Make connections to other news
- Offer something unique
- Identify media spokesperson(s)
- Create a press kit

<https://www.nacac.org/advocate/how-to-advocate/messaging-strategies/quick-tips-for-working-with-the-media/>



- Call between 10 am and 2 pm
- Return calls immediately
- Speak in sound bites
- Be prepared and strategic
- Don't make up an answer, but research and respond quickly
- Assume that you are always on the record

<https://www.nacac.org/advocate/how-to-advocate/messaging-strategies/building-relationships-with-the-media-to-get-your-message-across/>



FOSTER PARENT

NACAC
North American Council
on Adoptable Children

EQSTFB PARENT

NACAC
North American Council
on Adoptable Children

Contact Information

- Kim Stevens
kimstevens@nacac.org
- <https://www.nacac.org/advocate/how-to-advocate/messaging-strategies>
- NACAC www.nacac.org
- NACAC Facebook page:
<https://www.facebook.com/pg/NACACadoption/posts/>
- Parent Leadership Facebook page:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/312330685781760/>
- Youth Empowerment Facebook page:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/394645990650808/>

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