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 not 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.
Children who have experienced trauma face challenges, but their families can be successful when they have support.

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

Contact Information

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  https://www.facebook.com/groups/312330685781760/
- Youth Empowerment Facebook page:
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