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Stakeholder Education for Community-Wide Health Initiatives: A Focus on Teen Pregnancy Prevention

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Abstract

Teen pregnancies and births continue to decline due in part to implementation of evidence-based interventions and clinical strategies. While local stakeholder education is also thought to be critical to this success, little is known about what types of strategies work best to engage stakeholders. With the goal of identifying and describing evidence-based or best practice strategies for stakeholder education in community-based public health initiatives, we conducted a systematic literature review of strategies used for effective stakeholder education. Over 400 articles were initially retrieved; 59 articles met inclusion criteria. Strategies were grouped into four steps that communities can use to support stakeholder education efforts: identify stakeholder needs and resources, develop a plan, develop tailored and compelling messaging, and utilize implementation strategies. These strategies lay a framework for high quality stakeholder education. In future research, it is important to prioritize evaluating specific activities taken to raise awareness, educate, and engage a community in community-wide public health efforts.

INTRODUCTION:

Teen pregnancies and births continue to decline across all 50 states and across all racial and ethnic groups in the United States. From 1991 to 2014, the teen birth rate (number of births per 1,000 teen girls aged 15–19 years) has dropped 61% (Hamilton, Martin, Osterman, & Curtin, 2015). However, rates are still higher than in other industrialized countries, and in 2010, the costs associated with teen pregnancy and childbirth in the United States were estimated at \$9.4 billion (The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, 2014a, 2014b). A number of evidence-based strategies that have a positive impact on preventing teen pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections, or sexual risk behaviors, now exist (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2015). However, implementation of these strategies is uneven (Brindis, 2017). Reasons could include lack of

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knowledge about evidence-based strategies among the public and key stakeholders, and potential fear of addressing a controversial and sensitive topic such as teen pregnancy. Efforts to engage and educate key stakeholders (e.g. policymakers; leaders from business, education, and health and human service sectors, parents, and the faith community) are critical to increase the use of evidence-based strategies to prevent teen pregnancy. However, little has been published on how to effectively reach, educate, and engage key stakeholders in teen pregnancy prevention and other important public health efforts.

BACKGROUND:

In 2010, as part of the President's Teen Pregnancy Prevention Initiative, CDC and the Offices of Adolescent Health (OAH) and Population Affairs (OPA) launched a 5-year collaborative initiative to prevent teen pregnancy and reduce ethnic and racial disparities in teen pregnancy and birth rates: Integrating Services, Programs, and Strategies through Community-wide Initiatives (http://www.cdc.gov/teenpregnancy/prevent-teen-pregnancy). The purpose of these initiatives was to demonstrate the effectiveness of innovative, multicomponent, community-wide approaches in reducing rates of teen pregnancy and births in communities with the highest rates, with a focus on reaching African American and Latino/Hispanic youth aged 15–19 years. (CDC, 2015). CDC/OAH/OPA funded five national training and technical assistance organizations and nine community-based organizations.

There were five components to the initiatives: 1) community mobilization and sustainability; 2) evidence-based interventions; 3) increasing youth access to contraceptive and reproductive health care services; 4) stakeholder education; and 5) working with diverse communities. The overall initiative was guided by the Interactive Systems Framework (ISF) for Dissemination and Implementation (Wandersman, A. et., al., 2008). Specifically, the framework was developed to address the "how to" gap that exists between scientific evidence from research manuscripts and recommendations from professional organizations and governmental agencies, and the translation of this scientific evidence into public health practice (i.e., how to work with stakeholders to support implementation of evidence-based teen pregnancy prevention programs and provision of evidence-based, youth-friendly reproductive health services). The model consists of three systems, each with a distinct purpose. The Prevention Synthesis and Translation System distills information about innovations and prepares them for implementation; the Prevention Support System supports the work of those who implement the actual programs, and the Prevention Delivery System implements the actual programs (Figure 1).

The national organization responsible for the stakeholder education component, coordinated and provided leadership and support on the topic, building capacity for state and community grantees and their local partners to educate and engage a broad and diverse set of stakeholders (community leaders, parents, and other constituents). The goal of the stakeholder education component was to support local informed decision-making on strategies for preventing teen pregnancy. The goal was accomplished through training and technical assistance to build grantee capacity to 1) educate stakeholders about relevant

evidence-based or evidence-informed strategies and 2) communicate data on community needs and resources, thus engaging stakeholders in the initiative.

Stakeholder education is important for successful and sustainable community-based public health efforts (Rudolph, Caplan, Ben-Moshe, & Dillon, 2013); however, during the initiative, few published resources were available that comprehensively examined the best strategies for *how* to effectively educate and engage stakeholders. We therefore conducted a systematic review of the literature with the goal of identifying recommended strategies for how to educate and engage stakeholders in community-based public health efforts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Methodology

A systematic review of peer-reviewed literature was conducted using LionSearch from Penn State University. LionSearch searches hundreds of databases simultaneously at Penn State University Libraries (including, for example, PubMed, PsychINFO, and Ebsco electronic books). A full list of the databases included in LionSearch is available at: https:// www.libraries.psu.edu/psul/databases.html#. We limited the search to articles published from 2000 through 2012, and conducted a general search using terms for stakeholder education (e.g. partnership, collaboration, education, awareness), and public health (e.g. public health, community health, adolescent health, teen pregnancy) to focus results on relevant public health-related efforts (see the Appendix). In an effort to improve specificity of our search, we conducted additional, distinct searches for four priority audiences: 1) faithbased community, 2) parents, 3) staff or administrators within child welfare/foster care organizations, and 4) staff or administrators from post-secondary institutions or colleges (see the Appendix). During the first two years of the initiatives, these four audiences emerged as key priorities for stakeholder education in the funded communities based on two factors: 1) their key roles in building community support for adolescent health, and 2) their access to underserved and high-risk populations (such as youth in foster care or teens aged 18–19). Secondary schools and community-based organizations are the entities most often engaged in teen pregnancy prevention efforts, yet child welfare and foster care organizations and post-secondary institutions, which often serve teen populations at higher risk of pregnancy, are less frequently engaged and were the focus of this review (Dworsky, 2010 and Bradburn, 2002). Corresponding search terms for each of the respective audiences included: 1) faith leaders, faith organizations, faith communities, faith-based; 2) parent, trusted adult, guardian, mother, father; 3) foster care, case workers, social workers; and 4) college, postsecondary, technical school, vocational school, community college. Search terms looked for keywords, title, and abstract. If a term appeared in any form, it pulled similar terms. For example, by including "parent" this would also allow us to see stepparent, foster parent, etc. A full matrix of the search terms can be found in Appendix 1.

The search results yielded a total of 410 articles for title and abstract review. Authors and team members from the national organization responsible for the stakeholder education component reviewed the initial titles and abstracts and applied retrieval criteria. We did not retrieve a full article if it involved work outside of the United States or was written in a language other than English. For example, we did not retrieve an article titled *Engaging*

Italian and Australian Social Workers in Evaluation. We retrieved full articles that appeared to meet these criteria: addressing general stakeholder education strategies in public health initiatives or discussing strategies for specifically engaging one of the four priority audiences in public-health related initiatives. We identified 106 of the 410 for full-article review. After full-article review, we applied inclusion criteria. We excluded articles that focused on why partnerships were important instead of providing strategies for how to engage stakeholders. We also excluded articles that focused on an intervention without mention of strategies to build partnerships, education, or awareness or of lessons learned. For example an article titled Improving Understanding and Collaboration between Campus Ministers and College Counseling Center Personnel. Journal of College Counseling, focused exclusively on intracollege relationships and did not offer additional strategies for stakeholder education, thus was excluded. The term "strategies" here is defined as a plan, method, or series of activities for obtaining a specific goal or result, i.e. educated or engaged stakeholders; the phrase "lessons learned" is defined as knowledge shared that has been gained through experience. The authors determined whether each article met the inclusion criteria; two additional subject matter experts reviewed the reasons for inclusion and exclusion. Final decisions were made when all reviewers reached consensus. More specifically, all reviewers held at least one meeting to discuss until full agreement was reached for inclusion/exclusion.

To reduce the chance of missing valuable articles, we also conducted the same search using Google and GoogleScholar, applied the same inclusion criteria described above (focus on *how* to engage stakeholders and specific strategies or lessons learned), and the criterion that any non-peer reviewed papers must be from reputable organizations such as government agencies at the federal and state level, along with national nonprofit organizations with expertise in the topic. While Google Scholar was included in LionSearch, we re-ran this search to ensure we did not miss any articles. We did not find any new peer-reviewed articles from this search. Google was used with the aim of finding non-peer reviewed resources from the field. The Google search did discover non-peer reviewed articles which we separately reviewed for inclusion in this literature review as described above.

From the articles, we extracted strategies and lessons learned for educating or engaging stakeholders. Strategies and lessons were then grouped according to theme and organized into a step-wise process that could be practically followed and implemented.

RESULTS

The search resulted in 59 articles, 49 peer-reviewed and 10 non-peer reviewed: 18 from the general search, 23 related to faith-based audiences, 5 related to child welfare/foster care administrators, 9 related to parent audiences, and 4 related to post-secondary/community college administrators (Table 1).

Overall, we identified many strategies and lessons learned for stakeholder education. Within the articles related to engaging parents, we identified 35 strategies/lessons learned; within the articles related to engaging faith-based organizations, we identified 43; within the articles related to engaging child welfare administrators, we identified 13; and within the articles for engaging college and community college administrators, we identified 21. These

strategies and lessons learned included insight about stakeholder identification and engagement and covered such topics as planning and logistics, communication, capacity-building, instilling confidence and trust, staffing and resource allocation, and cultural competency. There was tremendous overlap of the strategies across the audiences. To develop a concise and comprehensive list, the authors organized the strategies into themes (see Table 2).

Identification of stakeholder needs and resources

We found a focus on identifying key stakeholders and their values as well as understanding the community's needs and resources; this theme was underscored in 25 of the 59 articles reviewed. Strategies in this theme included keeping stakeholders in mind when conducting needs and resource assessments, gathering information about key stakeholder groups to have a better understanding of their interests and influence, and identifying language and concepts that can be used to build partnerships and establish a two-way dialogue and knowledge exchange. For example, one project, which focused on engaging faith communities to address health, determined that assessment of the community at the beginning of the project was critical. In particular, assessments to determine the norms and values of the faith-based organizations and the communities they serve and to identify common ground on which to build a partnership were important for authentic engagement from the beginning (Corbie-Smith, Goldmon, Isler, Washington, Ammerman & Bunton, 2010). Another study, which explored facilitators and barriers to effective public and private partnership, found that trust was lower and communication more challenging when local health departments engaged community members in the planning process, but then made their own decisions without explaining how the input of key stakeholders was or was not used to inform those decisions (Stajura, et al., 2012).

Development of a plan for stakeholder education

We found that developing a plan for stakeholder education and/or including stakeholder education as a component of the overall project plan was important to a project's success. Thirty-one of the 59 articles included strategies related to this theme. Multiple articles discussed planning, setting key goals, and implementing project activities according to timelines. Articles also cited the importance of delineating measureable outcomes and providing adequate resources to the stakeholder education activities. For example, a project in New York that was designed to develop effective community partnerships to address youth development found that allocating sufficient time and resources to establish collaboration was critical, as was engaging partners in the visioning and planning process, so that partners and stakeholders were invested in the outcomes (Dotterweich, 2006). Another study found that including strategies that are already familiar to the stakeholder group, such as prayer and music, could be included in programmatic strategies to better engage the faith community (Adkinson-Bradley, Johnson, Sanders, Duncan, Holcomb-McCoy, 2005).

Clear, tailored, and compelling messaging

The use of clear, tailored, and compelling messages that addresses the audience's needs was another theme mentioned. Seven of the 59 articles reviewed provided insight related to this theme. Articles discussed the importance of using knowledge gained from audience

assessment to ensure that the message resonates with that particular audience. We also found emphasis on educational processes with stakeholders that are interactive, encouraging, responsive, reciprocal, objective, inclusive, and flexible. For example, Parvanta and colleagues suggest that when exploring the potential for social marketing to reach particular individuals, a thorough understanding of the other messages provided to the same target audience is helpful for developing a communications campaign that will be noticed (Parvanta, Nelson, Parvanta, & Harner, 2010). Successful stakeholder engagement activities involve communicating in ways that are clear, culturally relevant, ongoing, frequent, transparent, and respectful.

Implementation strategies

This review identified several implementation strategies when executing a plan to engage stakeholders. Twenty-six of the 59 articles reviewed mentioned activities related to this implementation theme. Allowing for flexibility and change, enlisting stakeholders for support in the implementation phase were found to be important. For example, one study in North Carolina found that pastors were very willing to share messages to help reduce stigma related to HIV/AIDS. The pastors benefited from training about how to talk about HIV/AIDS and from materials and resources that were developed for them to easily disseminate (Moore, Onsomu, Timmons, Abuya, Moore, 2012). Other articles indicated that continuous and active dissemination of materials and resources was essential to keep funders and other key stakeholders engaged (Dötterweich, 2006; Jeffery, 2009; The Finance Project, 2002).

Our review also indicated that strategies and lessons learned were guided by several predominant behavioral theories, including the Stages of Change/Transtheoretical Model of Change, Health Marketing Theory, and the Ecological Model. The Stages of Change model relates to anticipating and understanding a particular stakeholder's "stage of readiness" and meeting the stakeholder where they are, including tailoring the message to fit the stakeholder's stage of readiness (Edberg, 2007). Health Marketing Theory involves "creating, communicating, and delivering health information and interventions using consumer-centered and science-based strategies to protect and promote the health of diverse populations," as defined by CDC (Bernhardt, 2006). The Ecological Model approaches teen pregnancy prevention using a multi-level approach that considers the influence of and interactions among environmental, societal, organizational, policy, and individual factors (including predisposing, reinforcing, and enabling factors) (Parvanta et al., 2010). Implicit in these behavioral theories is a natural connection between and among efforts to promote stakeholder education, community mobilization, and working with diverse communities, and these theories provide the backbone for the strategies listed in this guide.

To synthesize the numerous strategies, we identified the aforementioned themes. To make this information more readily usable for practitioners engaging in similar public health efforts, we translated these themes into four steps, each with certain strategies (Figure 1).

DISCUSSION

Our review fills a gap in published findings about educating and engaging stakeholders. Previously, there were no articles that summarized tested strategies for how to best educate

and engage stakeholders. In our review, we found helpful strategies addressing four themes: (1) identification of stakeholder needs and resources; (2) development of a strategic plan for stakeholder education; (3) clear, tailored and compelling messaging; and (4) implementation strategies. The search focused on faith-based audiences proved to be the most fruitful, as there were many publications following the establishment of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives in 2001 (https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2001-01-31/pdf/01-2852.pdf), which sought to strengthen faith-based and community organizations and expand their capacity to provide federally funded social services. As a result, there are articles which specifically mention this faith-based effort and discuss challenges and successes in forming partnerships and working with faith-based organizations.

We identified a number of strategies for educating stakeholders. Many of these strategies were repeated across the literature and across different audiences. Importantly, we found no conflicting recommendations among the articles, suggesting that while these techniques may not have been rigorously evaluated, they are well accepted and complementary.

In summary, our review suggests that practitioners should approach stakeholder education similar to the way other program and project activities are approached and evaluated: with assessment, planning, careful implementation, and adaptation as necessary.

LIMITATIONS

The first limitation of this research is the lack of rigorous studies that compared techniques for conducting stakeholder education. Due to this limitation, we relied on published articles from experienced practitioners who had implemented relevant health interventions and campaigns in communities, gleaning their strategies and lessons learned. We found no articles that described activities that were unsuccessful, which may be due in part to publication bias. Therefore, the strategies described in this review are based on expert opinion and descriptions of practitioner experiences. To advance knowledge and practice related to community-wide interventions and stakeholder education in particular, it is important that research be conducted to compare strategies used in stakeholder education and engagement and their impact on outcomes.

Second, we found a small number of articles on partnering with foster care/child welfare agencies and most of those were related to new interventions and the assessment of those interventions. Among the articles we did identify, we found a focus on how to improve social workers' skills in assisting or providing services to youth in foster care and foster care parents; few articles included examples about efforts to forge partnerships with these agencies. As emphasis on and requirements to use evidence-based teen pregnancy prevention interventions grow it is essential that researchers in the fields of adolescent and public health prioritize evaluation methods used to engaging foster care/child welfare agencies.

We are also limited by the dates of publications for which the review was conducted. Limited resources prevent conducting an updated search and review, but to our knowledge,

articles addressing stakeholder education strategies in the community-based public health efforts since 2012 have been limited. One notable exception is several articles that address stakeholder education and community mobilization in the Journal of Adolescent Health supplement, "Implementing Community-Wide Teen Pregnancy Prevention Initiatives" [citation] which, unsurprisingly, align with the findings of this review.

CONCLUSION

While many of the strategies included in this review may appear intuitive in any stakeholder education and engagement effort, we found no articles that synthesized the various steps and activities necessary for a successful effort. With regard to teen pregnancy prevention and other resource-limited community-wide health efforts, careful attention and planning are needed to successfully promote a message and engage a community. High-quality stakeholder education is an important aspect of mobilizing diverse communities. The literature suggests that a full understanding of community and stakeholder needs and priorities is critical to implementing successful interventions and programs at the community level. In addition, it is important to involve stakeholders at the beginning of the effort, including providing input into the program plan, all of which facilitates stakeholder investment in program efforts and communicates the value of the community voice. The strategies identified through this systematic review help lay an initial framework for educating and engaging stakeholders. The grey literature that stems from this review, Stakeholder Education: Strategies Guided by Best Practice, can be used as a tool as the evidence base continues to grow. We hope that future research will continue to study successful public health interventions, but also to document specific steps taken to raise awareness, educate, and engage a community in the effort.

Supplementary Material

Refer to Web version on PubMed Central for supplementary material.

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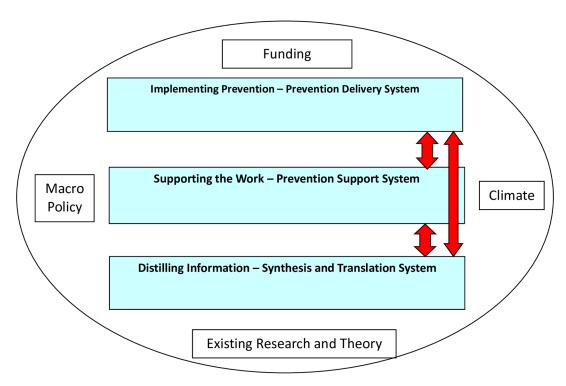


Figure 1. Interactive Systems Framework

Table 1:

Literature review search results: number of articles retrieved, fully reviewed, and included in final review, overall and by target audience.

Target Audience	Total Number of Articles Retrieved	Number of Articles Given Full Review	Number of Articles Included in Final Literature Review
Faith Community	74	40	23
Child welfare or Foster Care	115	21	5
Parents	114	31	9
Post-Secondary or Community College	107	17	4
General		18	18
Totals	410	127	59

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Table 2.

Step-by-step guide of strategies and lessons learned regarding stakeholder education

Steps	Strategies	References
Identify	Assess opportunities and challenges	Jeffery, 2009; Parvanta, et al. 2010
Stakeholders	 Conduct an Organization's Wants and Needs from Stakeholders (OWANS) or a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) analysis. 	
	Conduct a community needs assessment	Aten, Topping, Denney, & Bayne, 2010; Corbie- Smith at al 2010: Employ Bodoner Welhungin &
	 Recognize competing priorities among stakeholders and assess their readiness to engage. 	Davis, 2008; Moore, et al., 2012; Taylor, Buckner, Walker, & Blumenthal, 2011; Williams et al., 2011
	 Identify key stakeholders and understand their knowledge of teen pregnancy prevention, attitudes, beliefs, needs, and priorities. Leam their organization's culture, structure, norms, values, policies, and other unique characteristics. 	Corbie-Smith et al., 2010; Kreulen et al., 2008; Skiff, Horwitz, LaRussa-Trott, Pearson, & Santiago, 2008; Williams et al., 2011
	Identify strong and dedicated leaders and decision makers	Butler-Ajibade, Booth, & Burwell, 2012; Corbie-
	Identify gatekeepers within key groups and actively engage them.	Smith et al., 2010; Johnson, Zorn, Tam, Lamontagne, & Johnson, 2003; Kreulen et al., 2008; Massey & Szente, 2007; Mizrahi & Rosenthal, 2001; Queener & Mattin, 2001; Skiff et al., 2008; Stajura et al., 2012; Taylor et al., 2011
	Map out demographics and key characteristics of stakeholder groups	Jeffery, 2009; Skiff et al., 2008; The Finance Project,
	 Ensure that stakeholders represent different sex, age, race, class, sexual orientation, education, religion, and/or other key dimensions. Understand how these factors affect your goal. 	2002
	Include nontraditional, diverse, and hard to reach stakeholder groups	Parvanta et al., 2010; Skiff et al., 2008
	 Include the priority population among your stakeholder group (i.e. for teen pregnancy prevention, engage teens in the community planning process). 	
	- Work toward a common understanding of purpose and two-way flow of knowledge	Corbie-Smith et al., 2010; Dötterweich, 2006;
	• Successful efforts note that building a trusting relationship is of utmost importance.	Jarsky, McDonougn, & Nunez, 2009; Kreuten et al., 2008; Skiff et al., 2008; Taylor et al., 2011; Williams et al., 2011
Develop Plan	Develop a strategic plan including goals, activities, timelines, and measurable outcomes	Davidson & Sturza, 2006
	 Provide opportunities to involve stakeholders in the planning process for a new project or initiative. Consider adding them to leadership roles or creating small working groups or committees. Tailor the role knowing the unique skills, expertise, and interests of the stakeholder group. 	
	Provide time and other supporting resources to ensure that relationships with key stakeholders can be built.	Dötterweich, 2006; Johnson et al., 2003

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Steps	Strategies	References
	 Consider how strategies already employed within existing structures can be integrated into your efforts. For example, if many parents attend back to school night activities, seek opportunities to provide educational materials to parents at that time. 	Adkison-Bradley et al., 2005; Butler-Ajibade et al., 2012
	Work to develop knowledge and skills of key stakeholders so they can provide leadership and build support for your effort in the community.	Jeffery, 2009; Moore et al., 2012; The Finance Project, 2002
	Develop a proactive means of communicating with stakeholders Use a variety of educational and marketing tools relevant to the audience, including: fact sheets, information sharing (emails, blogs, and newsletters), surveys, polls, workshops, expert panels, public meetings, interviews, and online discussion boards and dedicated group pages.	Johnson et al., 2003
	Engage senior leadership at your own organization in the process	Jeffery, 2009
Develop Message	Itailor the message to fit the appropriate stakeholder group Consider competing messages that may exist and how you will address them. For example, policymakers may be concerned about the cost of evidence-based teen pregnancy prevention activities. Consider providing education on the cost of evidence-based teen pregnancy prevention activities as well as what the community might save by working to reduce teen pregnancy.	Evans & McCormack, 2008; Parvanta et al., 2010.
	Combine facts/data with an emotional appeal • For example, consider engaging youth to provide their perspective.	The National Partnership for Women and Families, 2009
	Communicate a results-driven approach Use data to show the need for the program and how the program is making a difference in the community. This might include local data and local stories of needs and successes.	Parvanta et al., 2010; The Finance Project, 2002
	• Pre-test concepts, messages, materials, and media strategies.	Parvanta et al., 2010
	Be clear, culturally relevant, transparent, respectfut, and flexible to change • Be aware of and reduce acronyms or jargon in all outreach and educational materials.	Jeffery, 2009
	Communicate and educate in ways that respect and are responsive to the community's needs, wants, culture, and values.	Johnson et al., 2003
Implement	Develop talking points or provide skill-building sessions for stakeholders • Consider providing "blurbs" and logos for partner websites to include information about the project.	Moore et al., 2012; The Finance Project, 2002
	Be visible in the community	Dötterweich, 2006; Jeffery, 2009; The Finance Project, 2002

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Steps	Strategies	References
	Use mass media, celebrate successes, and connect with the public.	
	 Actively disseminate information to the community, funders, and other key stakeholders. 	
	Use a range of techniques to engage stakeholders.	Moore et al., 2012
	Address stakeholder concerns and interests	Adkison-Bradley et al., 2005; Axford, Lehtonen, Kaoukji, Tobin, & Berry, 2012; Corbie-Smith et al., 2010; Jeffery, 2009; Kreulen et al., 2008; Moore et al., 2012
	Provide tangible incentives when possible and when appropriate at educational events or sessions, e.g. community summit or town hall meeting, but encourage voluntary participation. Consider location, time, and intensity.	Axford, et al., 2012; Kreulen et al., 2008; Wolfenden et al., 2012