



HEALTHCARE IS A HUMAN RIGHT CAMPAIGN

How to be a SPOKESPERSON:

getting our Campaign covered in the press, sticking to our message, and engaging and dealing with reporters!

GOALS

- Deepening the understanding of the HCHR message and policy
- Be able to answer common questions from the press
- Be ready to deal with common difficult questions
- Be prepared for upcoming events and press interviews, and try to make more opportunities to get our message out!

TYPES OF COMMUNICATION WE USE IN OUR CAMPAIGN:

One-on-one or small group (talking to your neighbors, friends, co-workers, family)

- **Goals:** urge people to get involved and why, asking them to come to events, answering questions, addressing fears about change

Talking to your legislators

- **Goals:** Illustrate how the current system is harming people, explain our goals for universal, publicly financed healthcare, ask legislators to take specific action in support of the Campaign

Public speaking (testifying, speaking at public events, etc):

- **Goals:** Connecting with people to get them involved and to act, highlight the central talking points from the Campaign, speak to how your personal connection relates to the political analysis

Talking to the press (interviews at events, comments on developing events, editorial board meetings, profiles of individual spokespeople):

- **Goals:** Getting the Campaign message across accurately!

Q: What is different about talking to the press?

What is unique about that type of communication? What is similar to other forms of communication we use?

Similarities

- Trying to convey the Campaign message
- Has the ability to persuade lots of people
- Can help frame the public conversation

Differences

- Reporters aren't accountable to us like our elected officials, and don't have relationships with us as our neighbors/co-workers; reporters aren't interested in what you say, they will use what you say so that it fits with their story - so its ok to use them to get your message across
- Not a conversation, but strategic communication
- Speaking in sound bytes: U.S. TV average = 5-13 seconds; U.S. print average = 5-25 words

Craft and Discipline your Message (SPIN PROJECT)

The SPIN Project recommends a message made of the following three-part framework. Each part should be no longer than 35 words.

Problem

Introduce your frame. Describe how your issue affects your audience and its broader impacts.

Solution

Speak broadly about the change you wish to see. Speak to peoples' hearts with values-rich language and images.

Action

Call on your audience to do something specific.

- Make sure key people in your organization buy into this message.
- Craft your message to be appealing to journalists and convincing to your target audience.
- Brainstorm soundbites, or spoken language that expresses much or all of your message in 7-12 seconds.

What is our message?

Overall Campaign Message

- The market-based healthcare “system” has caused a human rights crisis. Many people are suffering because they can't get the healthcare they need—those without insurance, the underinsured, people with high deductibles and medical debt
- Healthcare is a human right and a public good, not a market commodity
- Our healthcare system must meet the principles of universality, equity, participation, transparency and accountability
- Healthcare must be treated as a public good, available to all

Talking Points on this Legislative Session (2011):

- This is a historic time in Vermont, and Vermont can lead the country in creating a universal healthcare system that works for everyone
- What's happening now in the legislature is a result of three years of Vermont residents coming together and demanding change
- The current bill (H. 202/S. 57) is a good first step, but still needs to do more in order to satisfy human rights principles and to move us toward treating healthcare as a human right.
- We must ensure that this bill creates a publicly financed healthcare system, which provides healthcare as a public good for all.

Messaging Mistakes

Learning how to talk to the press takes practice!

Here are some messaging mistakes to look out for:

1. Only talking about the cost savings of universal healthcare - instead, make this an issue of people's values
2. Heavily using the word single payer - thus making the cost and payment issue the frame and the solution. Instead: use human rights as a frame and the principles of universality, equity, and public good as a solution
3. Saying that private insurance is ok if held in check. Companies that are limiting our access to care for private gain shouldn't have a role in a new system that provides care as a public good.

4. Only focusing on the problem, and not offering a solution - we want universal, equitably financed healthcare and we want the reader/listener to advocate for this solution.

5. Talking about “citizens,” “Vermonters,” “Americans” - since healthcare is a human right, this applies to everyone, including all immigrants

6. Talking only about “working” or “hard working” or “middle class” families: many people are unemployed these days, and many are poor, so let's use inclusive language when possible, such as “people”, “everyone.” It's ok exclude rich/wealthy people, so you could say: “those of us who are not rich”, “unless you're rich.”

Take Control Of The Story

Do the advance work: Find out who the reporter is, what outlet and their spin. Ask the reporter what's their story & who have they talked to? Correct their false assumptions with re-framing.

Frame the Story

Tactics vs. Issue – don't tell the media what you are doing, tell them why. Make sure your sound byte frames the story. Structure your story: (1) problem (2) solution (3) action. Speak with the language of values.

Not A Conversation

Don't answer the question – respond! Get your message out regardless of what questions the reporter ask.

SPOKESPERSON TIPS From Smart Meme (cont)

Message Discipline

Know your message and practice. Repeat your message. There is no “off the record”

ABC = A.cknowledge the question and B.ridge back to your
C.ontent (the message)

Sample Bridges:

“...I think the important issue”

“...I think the real point is”

“...I think the larger question is”

“...the reason I'm here is”

Be Quotable

Be a character in the story – establish your connection to the issue. Frequently the media asks name, age, profession - be prepared. Give sound bytes.

SPOKESPERSON TIPS From Smart Meme (cont)

The Truth Is On Your Side So Be Accurate

It's okay to say I don't know the answer to that or I'll get back to you on that... Don't say "No comment" – it makes you look guilty Do not lie or make stuff up EVER! Back up your arguments with facts.

Don't Distract from Your Message

Relax. If you can't, at least try to appear relaxed (take deep breaths). Be Polite but firm. Use accessible language.

Dealing with Difficult Questions

Often it can feel really scary talking to reporters, and many of us worry about looking stupid if they ask us a question we can't answer or don't want to answer. Here are some techniques to deal with these situations:

- Remember that talking to a reporter is not like having a conversation with your legislator or neighbor! It's ok to be repetitive and to stick to the message. You might not be in control of what they ask, but we are all in control of our answer!
- Use the bridging technique:
 - Acknowledge question
 - Use a bridging phrase
 - Return to the HCHR message

PRACTICE

- We will divide you all into groups of 2
- Imagine we're at the May 1st rally, and a reporter walks up to you
- Reporter--Ask the following questions:
 - Answer using the messages and techniques we've gone over
 - In 3 minutes, switch roles
 - Give each other feedback

Reaching Out to Local Papers & Reporters

- * Now is the time that we really need get the HCHR Campaign message out into all the local papers!
 - * Many of you have contacts at local papers, or know someone who knows someone. We need to start contacting those people, and try to get interviews with local papers
 - * How to set up a meeting (resources for this process will be emailed out in a tool kit)
1. Call/email with pitch
 2. Follow up and try to get a time to talk
 3. If you can get a interview, contact Megan or James before the meeting to get prepped
 4. If appropriate, get other people from the Campaign to join

The pitch:

How to make the pitch: