



NATIONAL COALITION FOR SEXUAL HEALTH

Communications Action Group Meeting

February 1, 2013 / 9:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Partnership for Prevention

1015 18th Street, NW, Suite 300 Washington, D.C. 20036

Objectives

- Provide brief overview of National Coalition for Sexual Health (NCSH): goals, objectives, and current activities
- Brainstorm and define role and activities of the Communications Action Group
- Present refined message concepts for consumer definition and obtain group feedback
- Brainstorm ideas for audience/issue briefs and national media outreach

Agenda

9:00 a.m.	Optional: Informal meet and greet with coffee and light breakfast
9:30 a.m.	Welcome, introductions, and overview of NCSH
9:50 a.m.	The Communications Action Group: brainstorm role and activities. Select priorities
10:30 a.m.	Presentation: refined message concepts for consumer definition of sexual health (including definitions, action steps, benefits/motivators)
10:45 a.m.	Group feedback: action steps
11:15 a.m.	Break
11:30 a.m.	Group feedback: benefits/motivators
12:00 p.m.	Group feedback: one sentence definition
12:30 p.m.	Get lunch; discuss audience/research briefs
12:50 p.m.	Next steps and close meeting

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Communications Action Group Meeting
February 1, 2013

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Draft Ideas for Roles and Activities: Communications Action Group Planning February 1, 2013

The National Coalition for Sexual Health will convene an action group dedicated to improving sexual health communications. The group will include 10-15 individuals who have expertise in sexual health, traditional and social media, public relations, market research, and specific target audiences.

Possible Roles:

This group could work together to:

- Promote awareness and acceptance of sexual health as a core element of overall health and well-being, along with the concrete steps consumers can take to achieve it and the related benefits.
- Promote and normalize conversations around sexual health among partners, parents and children, and patients and health care providers.
- Provide a solid foundation and tools to help organizations create effective sexual health communications.
- Encourage a wide variety of organizations, particularly the media and commercial outlets/manufacturers, to include sexual health on their agendas and to take action.

The Communications Action Group will meet to discuss, refine, and recommend one or more of the priority activities that are described below. Final selection of initiatives will be based on available staff time, resources, and the interest of Coalition members.

Possible Activities

1. **Translate sexual health into a household concept that is widely understood and embraced by consumers (general public).**
 - **Create accessible and action-oriented language and messages** for consumers. The messages will describe sexual health; the key action steps consumers can take to achieve it; and the benefits of good sexual health.
 - Design the methodology and **pre-test messages** among selected consumer audiences to ensure relevance, clarity, and appeal.
 - **Equip and train Coalition members** to use this common and consistent message platform. Initial products to be developed could include: “How to talk to consumers about sexual health: a message platform and guidelines,” a report on pre-testing results, a training session at the Coalition’s national meeting, a feature story for the Coalition website, and/or a webinar.

- **Develop a dissemination strategy** to reach other relevant and interested organizations with products described above (e.g. health care provider groups, media, manufacturers, commercial outlets).
2. **Provide a common foundation and leadership to help organizations develop effective sexual health communications.**
- **Create a series of audience briefs** to provide an overview of knowledge, attitudes, behaviors and skills relating to sexual health across audience segments. The briefs will include a summary of data relating to sexuality, demographics, knowledge of sexual health and safe behaviors, sexual health status (physical and emotional), use of sexual health care services, relationships, and communications skills.
 - Produce a series of **issue briefs** on key topics, such as how to promote healthy relationships; how to promote and improve communication skills; etc.
 - Guide an analysis to identify and summarize **channels of communication** and influence for reaching various audiences.
 - Identify and **profile existing sexual health communications** campaigns, websites, and resources, with a focus on national efforts. Also could include notable local and international campaigns.
 - Identify, summarize, and disseminate **evidence-based approaches to sexual health communications** through research briefs.
 - Provide input into the development of the **Coalition's website** and strategies to promote the products described above.
3. **To help promote and normalize sexual health, conduct an ongoing national media relations initiative.**
- **Brainstorm big ideas and create a plan to promote** sexual health through traditional and social media. The plan will include proactive strategies, such as the launch of the new patient guide to sexual health care services, and reactive/opportunistic strategies, such as the placement of a sexual health expert when a new study is released. The plan will include a variety of media angles and hooks to help generate coverage throughout the year.
 - **Create a series of message platforms:** one to promote consumer messages relating to sexual health; one to promote the need for and value of a sexual health approach; and one to describe purpose and need for the Coalition.
 - **Develop a speaker's bureau of Coalition** members who can participate in media events, interviews, and deliver presentations at relevant events and meetings. Create fact sheets and talking points relating to sexual health.
 - **Conduct national media launch** to promote new patient guide to sexual health care services, along with sexual health in general.

Message Content: Feedback on Concept Paper

Provided below is a summary of feedback from Communication Action Group (CAG) members relating to the consumer definition, action steps, and benefits. This feedback is extremely helpful as we further develop and refine our message concepts.

1. Overview

The concept paper was distributed to 18 individuals for review: 13 CAG members and three Partnership staff provided feedback. Overall, the response to the approach was very positive in terms of proposed content and methodology, especially given the limited budget. While a few respondents created new, alternative definitions and/or language, reviewers did not identify any other existing consumer-oriented definitions for us to consider.

Some general suggestions and questions about approach and methodology included:

1. In addition to length, we need to be concerned about readability level. Are we aiming for 5th to 8th grade?
2. We should consider developing visuals to accompany/communicate our messages (e.g. like the food pyramid).
3. There was some confusion (from two reviewers) about use of the word “consumer.” To clarify, for us “consumer” means general public or layperson.
4. We should take a look at audience segmentation for the research to make sure we’re hitting the mark. Also, consider relationship status rather than marital status.
5. When we talk about sexual health, make sure we include those who might choose not to have sex; partnered and non-partnered sex; and encounters, short term, and long term relationships.
6. Make sure we include pleasure and sex in our messages.
7. Another commented, “ don’t make it more lengthy or complex.”
8. Finally, “It’s a fresh way to think about these issues – what are the steps to getting there and what are the benefits? And developing a simple frame we can use with reporters is an excellent approach to ensuring we’re communicating succinctly.”

2. What is Sexual Health or Being Sexually Healthy? (One Sentence Description)

One-sentence definitions: options and CAG comments

a. Being sexually healthy means having healthy relationships, a healthy body, and a worry-free mind when it comes to sex. (Draft idea).

Comments: most popular (favored by three); one concerned that “healthy body” could exclude those with illnesses. Another said it communicated knowledge, comfort, communication and safety. One concerned about “worry-free.” Is peace of mind better?

b. “Sexual health is the experience of enjoying our sexuality – both emotionally and physically – throughout our lives.” (Trojan Definition).

Comments: two liked it; one disliked due to narrow focus on pleasure. One favored “enjoying your sexuality” since it’s broad and neutral (partnered or not; active or not). Other concerned “sexuality” might not be well understood, or limited to sexual orientation.

c. “A healthy, happy, and fulfilling sexual life that is fantastic for you and for everyone else in it.” (S.E.X., Heather Corinna).

No comments on this option from the group.

d. “Sexual health means having a happy, healthy, and satisfying sexual life.”

A new option to consider based on *definition c* (above).

e. “Sexual health is the ability to embrace and enjoy our sexuality throughout our lives. It is an important part of our physical and emotional health.” (New ASHA definition).

Comments: this was recently developed by ASHA and tested with members/others online.

f. “Good sexual health results from feeling good and supported about one’s choices regarding sex and sexuality; engaging in a caring and ethical way with one’s partners; taking steps to prevent harm or unplanned events from occurring as a result of sexual activity; and having a relationship with a medical provider who helps to build a satisfying and healthy sexual life.”

Comments: This was suggested by a CAG member. I think this might fit better under section 2, “Action Steps.”

g. “A definition should include: feeling comfortable with your body, gender and sexual orientation; foster mutually respectful and pleasurable relationships; and taking steps to keep yourself healthy and protected from infections and unplanned pregnancies.”

Comments: Components suggested by a CAG member. Is this a definition or action steps?

Overall CAG comments:

- Where is the sex and pleasure in sexual health? We should include pleasure, excitement.
- Are we talking about sex in a context of choice, including the decision to not have sex?
- Are we only talking about partnered sex? How do we encompass non-partnered sex?
- Consider including elements from “Circles of Sexuality” Model, such as body image, intimacy, etc.
- Should we frame as “sexual health is...” or “being sexually healthy means...”? Could be “being sexually healthy means having a pleasurable, healthy, and safe sexual life that is good for you (and your partners or anyone else in it.)”
- Be sure to include freely chosen, consent, or some language around a sexual life according to your own personal values/preferences?

Other Issues to Consider:

- Do we want to talk about sexual life? Sexuality? Sexual health and well-being? Sexually healthy? Sexual relationships? Sexually healthy lives?
- Should our definition focus on the positive outcomes of good sexual health? That will define key components of sexual health and the benefits at the same time.
- Consider adding language about pleasure.
- Consider adding concept of self-determination/or sexual life based on own values and preferences (implies individual control, empowerment, rights, and consent).
- Embrace body and sexuality. Sexual health and pleasure are a fundamental part of being human.
- Achieving a personal sense of sexual health and well-being.
- Being concerned for health of self and of others.

3. Action Steps to Good Sexual Health

Original List of Action Steps and CAG Comments

a. Learn about your body and stay informed

- Change to “Learn about your body and take steps to protect and preserve your sexual health and reproductive system.” Move beyond being informed to taking action.
- “Understand your body.”
- “Know your body.”
- “Love your body and get to know what is normal for you, gives you pleasure? Know thyself.”

b. Think about your values and determine what is right for you when it comes to sex

- Is the word values too vague? Test the concept of values versus thoughts and feelings, or other variations.
- Add, to “when it comes to sex”... “relationships, and how to express yourself.”
- What does sex mean? Should we say sexual behaviors? Sex might imply intercourse only.
- “Explore your values and their origin, do they make sense? Have you just developed your values without reflecting on why and how they fit within your lifespan?” These might change based on differences across the lifespan, relationships, etc.

c. Build good relationships (learn how to communicate, negotiate, set limits)

- Is this too preachy?
- Need to include something about consent but probably use different language.
- Consider separating relationships from communicating effectively. The current version seems to imply communication only within the context of sexual/romantic relationships. We should broaden communications to include family, friends, and providers.
- Increase emphasis on building healthy relationships (build trust, have a good time, share in decision-making on all important matters).
- Too much emphasis on avoiding trouble rather than creative positive sexual (romantic) relationships
- How about adding open and honest communications? Learn how to communicate effectively, negotiate; set boundaries.
- “Have open conversations about sex and sexual health with their friends and colleagues in the same way we talk about heart health and exercise.”
- “Establish healthy relationships – intimate and otherwise, understand and assert your rights.”

d. Practice safer sex and use contraceptives effectively

- Expand to include about planning (if and when) you want children.
- “Practice safer sex and use contraceptives consistently and correctly.”
- Address prevention of unintended pregnancies, AND STIs, alcohol/drug use, violence, and abusive relationships.

e. Get regular sexual healthcare check-ups

- “Obtain regular sexual...” in place of “get regular.”
- Be sure to reference most recent screening recommendations and EPT, where appropriate.

Other CAG Suggestions for Action Steps

- Know your body; be comfortable with yourself (sexuality, talking, accessing services); be confident/respectful.
- Sexual health should be planned for in a “cold state” not just before sex
- Understanding and accepting that humans are sexual beings
- Need to include something about consent
- Respect your own sexual rights and the rights of others
- Enjoy sexual pleasure, satisfaction, and intimacy (is this a benefit or action?)
- Greater emphasis on creating healthy (even romantic) relationships
- Are risk, responsibilities, boundaries and consequences too negative? Disease-oriented?
- Another possible list from a CAG member: “Develop and stay true to a set of ethics about how to engage sexually with others; understand the benefits and risks of being sexually active; access resources to help engage in sex the prevents harm or unplanned events from/to oneself and others. Insist that medical providers are non-judgmental about their sexuality and sexual choices, and provide all services needed to assure a satisfying and healthy sex life; feel good about enjoying a satisfying sex life, and even deciding not to be sexually active.”
- Consider elements of Amy Schalet’s model for adolescent sexual health which contains the “A, B, C and D” approach: A for **sexual autonomy** (understand, recognize, and control), it includes knowing about sexual desire, recognizing and articulating sexual wishes and boundaries, and learning to anticipate and prepare for sexual acts. They can then own their own sexual decision-making. Can help them move slowly, assess desires and comfort levels. (See attached article).

B for **Building good romantic relationships** – equal and nourishing. What are the positive elements of healthy relationships and the skills needed to build them? Getting to know each other, building trust over time; dealing with conflict; striving for equality; and having fun. Good romantic relationships lead to good sexual relationships. Safe, wanted, and gratifying.

C for Connectedness with parents and other caregivers; and D for Diversities, recognizing them and reducing disparities.

Existing Lists of Action Steps From Other Organizations:

A. Trojan Steps:

Being sexually healthy contributes to an overall healthy life and involves:

- Understanding that we are sexual by nature
- Taking care of our sexual and reproductive systems
- Being able to experience sexual pleasure, satisfaction and intimacy when ready
- Protecting and respecting ourselves and others

B. Act for Youth: NEW YORK STATE

Definition of Sexual Health: This is what it takes for me to be sexually healthy:

- I am **comfortable with my body** and my sexuality.
- I can **talk effectively** with my peers, family, and partners.
- **I know my body** and how it functions.
- **I understand the risks, responsibilities, and consequences** of sexual behavior.
- I am able to **recognize risks and ways to reduce them**.
- I know how to **access and use health care services** and information.
- I am able to **set boundaries** when it comes to sex and sexual relationships.
- **I act responsibly** according to my **personal values**.
- I am able to form and maintain **healthy relationships**.

C. ASHA

Being sexually healthy means:

- Understanding that sexuality is a natural part of life and involves more than sexual behavior.
- Recognizing and respecting the sexual rights we all share.
- Having access to sexual health information, education, and care.
- Making an effort to prevent unintended pregnancies and STDs and seek care and treatment when needed.
- Being able to experience sexual pleasure, satisfaction, and intimacy when desired.
- Being able to communicate about sexual health with others including sexual partners and healthcare providers.

4. Benefits of Good Sexual Health

Original List of Benefits

- a. Find and express intimacy, joy, and pleasure
- b. Healthy and satisfying relationships
- c. Be physically healthy
- d. Reduce risk of sexually transmitted infections
- e. Have planned pregnancies
- f. Peace of mind /worry-free
- g. Put your mind at ease -- integrate/harmonize personal values into sexual life.

Comments from CAG:

- Overall, reviewers responded very favorably to the draft list presented in the concept paper. Some suggested additional benefits that are listed below.
- One thought “peace of mind” might be better than “worry-free” which could be perceived as permission to engage in irresponsible behavior.
- Create a general category “Be physically healthy, “ and make STIs and planned pregnancies a subset.
- Add “ability to meet our life goals.”
- Add “ ability to make better, more confident decisions through knowledge.”
- Add something about avoiding infertility.
- Add self-respect and self-confidence (as benefit or action?)
- Always start list with emotional/mental benefits rather than physical
- Favorable response to “put your mind at ease.”
- Focus on positives (not so much on disease avoidance). Build good, romantic relationships.
- Add “Respect for self and for others.”
- Add “greater happiness, freedom, ability to thrive.”
- Another suggested list: “pleasure, positive relationships and intimacy, good health and absence of harm, peace of mind and the absence of worry, community.”