



NATIONAL COALITION FOR SEXUAL HEALTH

Communications Action Group Summary of September 22, 2014 Meeting

Participants

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Goals of the meeting

The goals were to:

- review and seek feedback on future CAG priorities and activities
- create an approach for fleshing out the five key action steps
- brainstorm content partnerships with media outlets and websites
- discuss plans for ongoing media outreach
- brainstorm systems change initiatives to influence media standards and practices
- discuss technical assistance materials for NCSH members

Overview of potential CAG priorities and activities

The meeting started with an overview of CAG priorities and activities that were determined during the prior CAG call held on 8/8/14.

Following this brief presentation, CAG members raised the following key points:

- Some felt that the CAG should focus its energy on promoting the tools that NCSH has already developed, such as the new guide/website to preventive sexual health services. Others felt that it was important to create new content around all five NCSH action steps, particularly since our concept of sexual health is much broader than health care services. In addition, others felt it was important to continue to offer fresh and interesting content. *In conclusion, the group agreed that we can and should do both – promote our existing products and create new content.*
- When fleshing out the action steps, keep in mind that NCSH members and others have already created lots of good sexual health content. Consider using, promoting, and/or linking to that content directly, whenever relevant.
- To amplify the national conversation about sexual health, several people suggested that the NCSH and its members increase the use of social media as part of our ongoing media strategy. We could use social media in several ways – to play off existing media stories by offering commentary and linking to our messages and tools, or by starting our own campaigns to promote core NCSH messages and tools.

Key recommendations

Several recommendations emerged from this discussion, including that the CAG should:

- **Continue to actively promote the tools that NCSH has already developed, particularly the NCSH guide/website to preventive sexual health services.** This is a great tool that should be broadly promoted to many segments of the public and to health care provider organizations. Consider a variety of channels for promotion, including social media, presentations at professional meetings of health care providers, and traditional media outreach.

- **Flesh out all of the NCSH action steps to good sexual health** so that the public can easily access practical advice, personal testimonials, and existing resources in one location. The content will be designed to motivate and empower the public to take action. Once it's developed, it could be featured in a national call-to-action to improve sexual health.
- **Pursue content partnerships with leading websites and media outlets**, such as Your Tango, which have significant reach and credibility among key target audiences. This gives the CAG an opportunity to write and place content that is important to the NCSH. Some CAG members have already volunteered to write content or to be interviewed.
- **Equip NCSH member organizations with tools to promote the work and products of the Coalition**, which could include standard slide sets and co-brandable materials for distribution at national meetings and other events.
- **Identify innovative strategies to increase and tap into the national conversation about sexual health** and to promote our core messages and tools, particularly through social media and traditional media. Strategies could include mini social media campaigns or creating a content calendar for proactive and reactive media outreach around special events, e.g. STD awareness month, Valentine's Day, Back-to-School.
- **Pursue the media standards and practices initiative to encourage leading social media sites**, such as Twitter and Google, to include comprehensive sexual health content and remove restrictions that are currently in place.

CAG Activities and Next Steps

- A. Promote NCSH guide/website to preventive sexual health services**
 The CAG agreed that it should try to drive more traffic to the new NCSH guide/website among a variety of audiences. The NCSH will continue promotion of the guide and related messages through traditional media to reach numerous audiences, with particular emphasis on teens, heterosexual men, African Americans, and Latinos. NCSH hopes to adapt and translate the guide to reach Hispanic audiences, if funds are available. In addition, the group agreed that we should work try to generate interest through social media outlets and mini social media campaigns.

Suggested Next Steps

- Create plan for ongoing promotion of the guide and related messages, which could include outreach to traditional and social media and to health care provider organizations. The plan should include audiences, media targets, story ideas, content calendar timed to coincide with key events, and sample messages.

- Implement plan, with support from Ogilvy Public Relations and NCSH members. Develop NCSH Twitter and Facebook channels, and share sample social media messaging with NCSH members for use through their own channels.

B. Flesh out all of the action steps

While the guide focuses on the action step, “make sexual health part of your health care routine,” the CAG agreed that we should develop detailed content for the other action steps. As a coalition that thinks holistically about sexual health, we will address the emotional and psychological aspects as well as the physical and clinical aspects of sexual health. And, we also need to recognize that many of these steps are interrelated. For example, choosing to use a condom has as much to do with self-esteem and relationship negotiation skills as it does with the knowledge that a condom should be used.

When brainstorming about how we could create content, some CAG members suggested that we initially group the action steps into two distinct areas -- emotional/psychological and the physical/clinical, which are described below.

- The emotional/psychological area will include three action steps: value yourself and decide what’s right for you; treat your partners well and expect them to treat you well; and build positive relationships
- The physical/clinical will address two action steps: get smart about your body and protect it, and make sexual health part of your health care routine.

The group agreed that for each individual action step, we should probably develop:

- About 5-10 tips/pieces of practical advice
- Feature personal stories/testimonials that empower the intended audience(s)
- A short list of high quality external resources (up to five) that have been vetted
- Social media pieces for each step, such as Tweets, Facebook posts, Pinterest posts, and maybe infographics

Suggested Next steps

- Develop a template for fleshing out the action steps (include overall length, possible formats, e.g. content for website, print materials).
- Determine if and how we need to tailor content for different audience segments (e.g. testimonials from men, women, different ages and sexual orientations).
- Determine how we will get the work done and timeline. Should we form subcommittees?
- Determine how we will scan for existing “best practices” relating to each step and for high quality resources. Who should do so?

- Determine how we will we establish criteria for vetting resources.

C. Increase the use of social media

The CAG recommended that NCSH increase its use of social media to amplify the national conversation about sexual health, promote our core messages, and link the public to our resources. A recent opportunity cited was the NYT article by Charles Blow about the sexual abuse he experienced, and his bisexuality. For example, NCSH could promote the piece, comment on it, and praise the author. Through social media, we can offer new content, commentary, and referrals (to curated or vetted content).

Several options for doing so were suggested:

- Create our own social media campaigns (e.g. “what’s your sexual health IQ?”)
- Promote existing media stories about sexual health, and add our commentary, key messages, and links to tools
- Develop social media copy for all of the action steps
- Share sample social media copy with all NCSH members and the NCSH “Weekly summaries of sexual health in the news”

D. Develop content partnerships with leading media outlets/websites

NCSH currently has the opportunity to place sexual health content on two leading websites: YourTango, a leading love/relationship site, and GirlZone, a lifestyle site for girls ages 13 to 18. NCSH has also created content partnerships with Kinsey Confidential and HuffPost through Coalition members.

Although we had limited time to discuss content partnerships, the group agreed that content partnerships can provide valuable opportunities for NCSH, and supported the development of content for these sites. However, the group also suggested that we:

- Explore other websites/outlets that have significant reach and credibility among our audiences. We should focus our time and energy on sites that are likely to have the biggest impact, and should also explore outlets with which NCSH members currently have relationships, such as RH Reality, Penthouse, and Men’s Health.
- Be mindful of the time required to create a lot of new content. In general, the group agreed that we should aim to create one new article per month, if placement opportunities are available. CAG and other coalition members can assist by writing content and by participating in interviews. Several CAG members have already volunteered to do so.
- In addition, Amber Madison, a leading author on sexuality and sexual health, is assisting the NCSH with content development, and is currently drafting our first piece for Your Tango. She might reach out to Coalition members to conduct interviews, and will be available to provide editorial

assistance to members who are writing articles. Amber also suggested that we might consider holding briefing(s) with the editors from leading media outlets to encourage them to provide comprehensive sexual health content.

- GirlZone would like one or more CAG members to review their existing sexual health content, and for the CAG to provide new content.

Suggested Next Steps

- Prepare first article for submission to YourTango, and, based on feedback from YourTango editors, follow-up with potential story ideas and additional articles.
- Identify CAG member(s) who would like to review GirlZone content, and potentially author new content.
- Brainstorm story content/ideas for YourTango and GirlZone with CAG during next call.
- Conduct brief analysis of leading websites/media outlets to identify other potential content partners, and share with CAG for review.

E. Create tools for Coalition members to promote NCSH

Although we had limited time to discuss the development of technical assistance materials for NCSH members, the group agreed that a standard slide set(s) about the Coalition, its work and products, along with hand out materials, would be very helpful. Members could deliver presentations at professional meetings, and share materials with participants. This should help broaden awareness of the NCSH, and hopefully increase use of NCSH resources and tools.

The content could include an overview of NCSH, our sexual health definition and action steps, results of consumer research, and overview of new guide to preventive sexual health services.

Suggested Next Steps

- Create draft content outline and share with CAG for review and discussion.
- Create draft slides and share with CAG for review, revise as needed, promote to all members, and make available through NCSH website.
- Brainstorm with CAG whether additional handout materials, besides the existing brochure (What is Sexual Health?) and postcard to promote new guide, are needed.

F. Pursue systems change: Media Standards and Practices

Last year, the CAG launched an initiative to positively influence media standards and practices around sexual health content, with a focus on social media sites, such as Twitter and Google. In the past, these sites have blocked or censored sexual health content, and often have vague and/or inconsistent

policies and practices.

Several CAG members suggested that if we could change these policies and practices, we could increase and improve the national dialogue around sexual health and leave a lasting legacy. Others suggested that given the collective power and reach of the coalition, we are more likely to be persuasive.

Last year CAG members Larry Swiader and Deb Levine, who are leading this initiative, issued a call for examples of censorship or restrictive policies from NCSH members. Very few examples were submitted. The CAG will issue another request to Coalition members to forward any examples of restrictive or contradictory policies, including screen shots, so that we can build our argument. Bill Taverner cited a recent example in which Google blocked his Safer Sex Education Toolkit since it contained a wooden instructional penis, which they erroneously labeled as a sex toy.

To provide additional support to this initiative, it might be helpful to establish a formal subcommittee and to seek additional members. In addition, to conduct an analysis of written policies, it would be very helpful to enlist an intern or graduate student from an NCSH member organization. Once this landscape analysis is completed, the committee and CAG can brainstorm constructive strategies for engaging with the outlets, and hopefully influence change.

Suggested Next Steps

- Prepare e-mail request to all NCSH members to encourage them to submit examples of censorship
- Secure intern or graduate student to conduct analysis of written policies and standards.
- Consider establishing a formal subcommittee and seek additional CAG members.
- Discuss suggestion that CAG members (Jenelle and Amber) write an article about censorship

G. CAG Next Steps

Given this extensive set of proposed activities, the CAG should discuss and set priorities and start work on developing high priority areas. The CAG tri-chairs plan to assess available resources, create a draft work plan, and develop prototypes for mini social media campaigns and the action steps, which will be shared with the CAG during the next call.