
Communication Plan

2019



Executive Summary

IMPORTANT NOTE:

This is a “living document” that will continually transform as different issues and trends arise.

This document outlines the internal and external communications plan for the National Children’s Advocacy Center (NCAC). Goals and strategies will be outlined. The Communications and Marketing Director will be responsible for executing the communications plan.

The NCAC is working to increase the community awareness of the organization while continuing to be the global leader in training of child abuse response professionals. The traditional media, social media, and other outreach channels play a vital role in informing the people in Madison County and beyond.

The Communications and Marketing Department staff currently consists of a Communications and Marketing Director, who also serves as the media liaison and manages social media. Two part-time graphic artists, one NCAC employee and one contract employee complete the marketing staff. The Communications and Marketing Director also works closely with the Training Director, Development Director and Community Awareness & Prevention Director.

The Communications and Marketing Director strives to create a positive perception of the NCAC, to both the general public and stakeholders, by relaying information in a timely fashion to the correct target audiences using appropriate and effective tools to build understanding, support, and positive community partnerships. This plan includes three objectives:

- Build and maintain positive public awareness of the NCAC and its ongoing efforts to prevent child abuse, assist survivors through the healing process, and train child abuse response professionals.
- Help develop and uphold the confidence and trust of our community, including those who think they have never and will never need our services. Show how the NCAC’s services impact the entire community. Show the community why it should be proud the NCAC calls Madison County home.
- Entrench the belief, internally and externally, that the NCAC provides the best services possible while providing a trauma-informed work environment for employees.

Madison County residents, businesses, government leaders, donors and prospective donors are the plan’s primary target audiences, however internal audiences – the NCAC staff and board – are an important audience and cannot be overlooked.

The NCAC’s messaging strategy going forward is made up of three words: awareness, support, leadership. Awareness of child abuse and the National Children’s Advocacy Center, support of the

survivors we serve and our organization, and our leadership as the pioneers and experts in this field. These characteristics will be embedded in all messaging from the organization.

I. Huntsville/Madison County Media Landscape

The media plays a critical role in creating public perception. While the trust in the national media has decreased in recent years, local news remains relevant in many households. The method and manner in which news is consumed has shifted to a digital platform, however the vehicle to the digital news services is nearly always through on-air coverage.

Crime reporting dominates most local and national media coverage. The reason behind this is simple. News consumers say they want “good news” stories, but the data proves otherwise. “Good news” media outlets continually fail, while organizations that cover hard news and crime see a boost in ratings, clicks, and circulation. The NCAC has an opportunity to present action items for the community when the media covers cases of child abuse.

Madison County is served by one major newspaper which has moved to a virtually all digital format. The *Huntsville Times* goes to print three times a week but updates the website al.com around the clock. The *Madison County Record*, *Redstone Rocket*, and *Speakin’ Out News* also serve the areas in and around Madison County.

The Madison County radio market has 3 major players: *Cumulus Media*, *I Heart Radio*, and *WLRH Public Radio*. *Cumulus Media* and *I Heart Radio* own multiple stations in the market. However, most of the stations do not have news departments and choose to partner with a local television station for news.

Television news is the most dominant news source in North Alabama. The market is made up of four news producing stations: WAAY, WAFF, WHNT, and WZDX. The market has no dominant leader at the moment, with WAFF and WHNT suffering significant declines and WAAY making compelling gains in the ratings race. WAAY, WAFF, and WHNT begin broadcasting at 4:30 a.m. and have multiple newscasts daily ending with a 30-minute broadcast at 10:00 p.m. WZDX recently launched a 30-minute newscast at 5:30 p.m. in addition to the station’s established 9:00 p.m. newscast. Adding to the turmoil in the local television market, WAFF was recently sold to a new management company. WHNT and WZDX are expected to change ownership in the coming months.

All four stations have moved away from traditional satellite and live trucks (although WAAY, WAFF, and WHNT will still use them when needed) and use mobile, wireless technology to transmit live reports. This gives the stations the ability to be live anywhere they can pick up a cell phone signal. The stations use this technology to report live during newscasts and on digital platforms including social media. With the exception of specialized reporters and anchors, all four stations now employ Multi-Media Journalists (MMJs) who serve as photographer, reporter, and editor for the story. These reporters are commonly referred to as one-man bands. WAAY, WAFF, and WHNT have FAA certified drone pilots and use drones on a regular basis for news gathering and commercial projects.

The NCAC has benefited from positive coverage by local and national media. However, the organization needs to prepare, in advance, for potentially damaging coverage. How we respond to a potentially detrimental story will either bolster the public's confidence in the NCAC or have a negative impact on our organization's reputation. Potentially harmful stories include, but are not limited to, the arrest of a staff or board member, a public safety emergency on campus, a fire or natural disaster impacting our ability to serve clients, etc. The public and our stakeholders need to look to us for facts instead of relying on guesses or assumptions. A Crisis Communication Plan will give clear direction on our response and actions during and after a crisis.

II. Strategies for Heightened Public Awareness

1. Nurture professional and productive relationships with media whose influence spheres include primary and tertiary audiences.
2. Develop a strategic public outreach effort to bring awareness to the issue of child abuse in our community, our need for public support, and the work we do nationally and internationally helping children heal across the globe.
3. Create and carry out strategic communications plan for NCAC stakeholders to keep the organization top of mind for local and state leaders.
4. Strengthen the NCAC's position in the community as an important part of child abuse prevention and response.
5. Extend media coverage to a national level in an effort to make sure accurate, research-based information is provided to all audiences, not just our community.

Messaging Strategy

During the next 6-9 months, the NCAC will work to keep the media and stakeholders updated on our work. It is vital that local leaders understand our impact on the community – this includes the social and financial impact.

Our focus will be on strengthening the partnerships already in place and forging new relationships with organizations and leaders who can help us maintain, and grow, our leadership in this field. Simply put, we will work to become recognized as a crown jewel in Huntsville and the surrounding areas.

Three messages will be imbedded in future public outreach: prevention, support, and leadership.

III. Tactics for Heightened Public Awareness

1. Communications and Marketing Director will invite decision makers from each newsroom for a behind the scenes tour. This will be on a Friday, during the MDT meeting, so these decision makers can see the Children's Building and Team Building – seeing a FI room

and a suspect interview room in person will help combat the stigma that CAC stories are “soft news.”

2. Communications and Marketing Director will create a list of “evergreen” stories and messages along with a pitch calendar for social media, the Executive Director Newsletter, and traditional media pitches.
3. Communications and Marketing Director will bring on a Social Media Specialist or Social Media intern to help keep the information flow current. The Communications and Marketing Director will be responsible for social media oversight and strategic planning, while the Social Media Specialist or Intern will carry out that plan. Social media and other digital channels, including the NCAC website, will serve as a virtual newsroom.
4. Communications and Marketing Director will send a monthly newsletter to targeted stakeholders. (Attachment A) This will be different from the Constant Contact email sent to our donor list. The monthly communication will include updates on caseloads, needs, therapy graduations, new initiatives, trainings, and international outreach. The NCAC staff and MDT will be included on this distribution list.
5. Communications and Marketing Director will look for monthly media opportunities. These opportunities could be on-set interviews, digital center interviews, opinion pieces, letters to the editor, video-blogs on current topics, guest blogs, Q&A sessions, Facebook Live events, and larger scale media events.
6. Executive Team will identify the staff members to act as the “face” of the NCAC. These staff members will be briefed on our key messaging. Before interviews, the staff member and Communications and Marketing Director will fill out the Message Plan Template (Attachment B) and rehearse if necessary. This will allow us to take control of the interview and keep our message focused. The Communications and Marketing Director, or a designated stand-in, will be present for all interviews.
7. Communications and Marketing Director will also begin engaging with lesser known media outlets in the area. This includes Rocket City Mom, radio stations, and smaller papers. While they may not have the reach of the larger outlets, they can help position us as a resource for under-served areas of our community and people who do not subscribe to mainstream media.
8. Communications and Marketing Director will proactively pitch stories as we move into various seasons. Opportunities may include: how to select safe summer activities for your children, disclosures after students return to school, don’t make your kid hug the “creepy relative” during the holidays, and more.
9. Communications and Marketing Director will meet with each department director to discuss changes to the website. The website needs to be easy to navigate for all stakeholders. It must be updated on a consistent basis, to keep people’s interest.
10. Communications and Marketing Director will create a “Talking Points” PowerPoint for staff members who are invited to speak to groups in our community. Before any presentation, the speaker and Marketing Manager will complete the Message Plan

Template. This will keep our messaging consistent and will prevent missed opportunities to promote fundraisers and other events.

11. All future media events (news conferences) will include a run of show (Attachment C). This will give a clear direction to all participants and prevent one speaker from stepping on another speaker's topic.
12. Communications and Marketing Director will look for opportunities to partner with other agencies and groups in our community. Opportunities include, but are not limited to, the SPEAK project for suicide prevention, the Unsafe Sleep Awareness Campaign, and the Neglect Prevention project. This will position the NCAC as the community leader for child abuse prevention and response.
13. All outreach messages will include a call to action with details about how to help and become involved with the NCAC mission.
14. Executive Team will review and suggest edits to Crisis Communication Plan. The plan, in various forms, will be distributed to the staff.

IV. Evaluation Criteria

The success of this plan will be garnered in both tangibles and intangibles. A 'successful' campaign will mean improved internal and external communication for the organization and enhanced visibility of the NCAC's mission to create a safe community, and world, for our children.

Quantifiable evaluation criteria:

1. Developing and communicating new policies and strategies
2. Enhancing media coverage – quantified through media tracking
3. Preparing and distributing internal and external information in a timely manner.
4. Expanding outreach by educating the community about child abuse prevention and responsible reaction to allegations
5. Revising website to make prevention and reporting data more readily available for the community.

Attachment A

Community Stakeholders

Attachment B

Message Plan Template

Messaging Plan for _____

TARGET AUDIENCE(S)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

SHOW OF CONCERN:

ACTION (What should people do, what are we doing?)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

PERSPECTIVE (information to help keep incident in perspective)

Hashtag:

Statistics:

Potential Questions and Answers:

Attachment C

Example “Run of Show”

Wilson Media Meet and Greet/News Conference
210 Pratt Ave, NE
Huntsville
Wednesday, June 19 at 10:30 a.m.

Wilson, NCAC Facility Dog, details:

- Wilson VI is a 2-year-old Labrador Retriever-Golden Retriever mix.
- He is part of the Canine Companions for Independence program.
- Wilson participated in his first forensic interview during his first week on the job.
- The National Children’s Advocacy Center received Wilson at no charge and received a grant from the State of Alabama Office of Prosecution Services to help offset the costs of his food, bedding, and other supplies.
- Wilson receives veterinary care, at no charge, from NCAC Board Member Dr. Mark Russell of Whitesburg Animal Hospital.

News Conference Run of Show:

11:30-11:35 – **Chris Newlin**, National Children’s Advocacy Center

- Thanks Board and Guests
- CCI commitment to finding us the right dog
- Stats on why dogs are important to CACs
- Introduces Paula Wolfteich

11:35-11:40 **Paula Wolfteich**, National Children’s Advocacy Center

- Wilson’s first month on the job
- Examples of difficult cases made easier
- Cues Wilson, Ann, and Jana

11:40-11:45 **Wilson, Ann Leith, and Jana Thomas**, National Children’s Advocacy Center

- Ann and Jana “reveal” Wilson
- Jana narrates Ann’s commands to Wilson
- Wilson poses
- Wilson slow sits
- Wilson does more “Wilson stuff”

10:15-11:50 – Q&A (all)

11:50 -12:00 – Media takes selfies with Wilson

REMARKS

11:30-11:35 – **Chris Newlin**, National Children’s Advocacy Center

- On behalf of the National Children’s Advocacy Center, we are so excited to introduce you to our new staff member. Before we bring Wilson out, I want to tell you a little more about the program, our wait to find the best facility possible, and a little about his first month on the job.
- First, we need to thank some of the folks making this happen. We waited for XX years to get this guy. He’s a part of the Canine Companions for Independence program. They are an amazing program and the training they provide the dogs and their handlers is impeccable. We did not have to pay for Wilson, but we do have to adhere to some rules in order to keep him – and we’re happy to do so because they are all in place for Wilson’s safety. I also want to thank ADECA for giving us the funding to help with Wilson’s needs. And board member Dr. Mark Russell, with Whitesburg Animal Hospital. He’s donating all of Wilson’s vet care.
- I promise, you’ll meet Wilson in a matter of minutes – but before you do I want you to hear about some of the work Wilson has done in his short stay here. Dr. Paula Wolfteich, our Intervention and Clinical Director has some really great stories to share with you.

11:35-11:40 **Paula Wolfteich**, National Children’s Advocacy Center

- Paula shares predetermined stories with no identifiable information given
- Paula introduces Ann, Jana, and Wilson
- Ann, Jana, and Wilson join from the Children’s Building.

11:40-11:45 **Wilson, Ann Leith, and Jana Thomas**, National Children’s Advocacy Center

- Jana introduces herself and Ann as the handlers
- Jana talks about the training and selection process
- Jana narrates Wilson’s demo while Ann facilitates the demo

11:45-11:50 – Q&A (all)