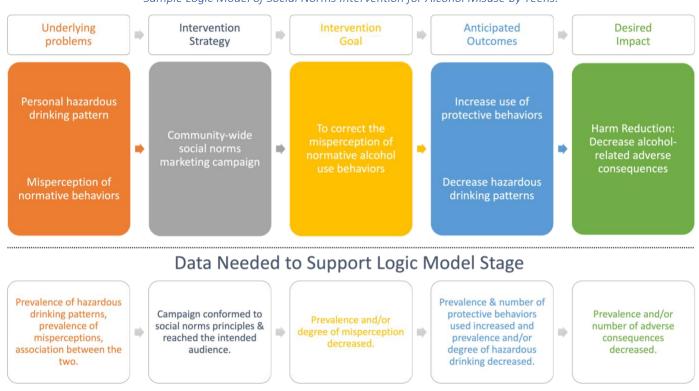**Social Norms** refers to a pattern of behavior in a particular group, community, or culture accepted as normal and to which an individual is expected to conform.

Social Norms Marketing is the use of evidence-informed marketing campaigns to educate individuals on positive social norms with the goal of correcting misconceptions and decreasing undesirable behavior. For example, teens who believe that their peers drink heavily are more likely to drink heavily themselves because of that belief, even when the belief is a misconception. Correcting that misconception of their peers' behavior can reduce hazardous drinking patterns and their related negative consequences. *Social Marketing* is a useful method for this: it relies on research about the audience(s) as well as established sociological theories to guide messaging and tactics that encourage positive, voluntary attitude and behavior change. Social marketing campaigns are evaluated for both implementation efficacy and effectiveness. Exposure to high-quality social marketing campaigns effectively changes perceptions and behaviors.

Sample Logic Model of Social Norms Intervention for Alcohol Misuse by Teens.

Underlying problems	Intervention Strategy	Intervention Goal	Anticipated Outcomes	Desired Impact
Personal hazardous drinking pattern Misperception of normative behaviors	Community-wide social norms marketing campaign	To correct the misperception of normative alcohol use behaviors	Increase use of protective behaviors Decrease hazardous drinking patterns	Harm Reduction: Decrease alcohol-related adverse consequences

Data Needed to Support Logic Model Stage

Prevalence of hazardous drinking patterns, prevalence of misperceptions, association between the two.	Campaign conformed to social norms principles & reached the intended audience.	Prevalence and/or degree of misperception decreased.	Prevalence & number of protective behaviors used increased and prevalence and/or degree of hazardous drinking decreased.	Prevalence and/or number of adverse consequences decreased.

Organizing and Conducting a Social Norms Marketing Campaign

A social norms marketing campaign involves several steps:

1) **Define** the problem – including risk and protective factors contributing to the problem

2) **Identify** the audience – who is affected and feasible to reach? This may include people demonstrating the positive behavior norm

3) **Determine readiness** and capacity to implement the program, then engage partners who can help and who care about the outcomes

4) **Develop** an implementation plan – including core messages and communication channels

5) **Implement** the social norms marketing campaign with fidelity

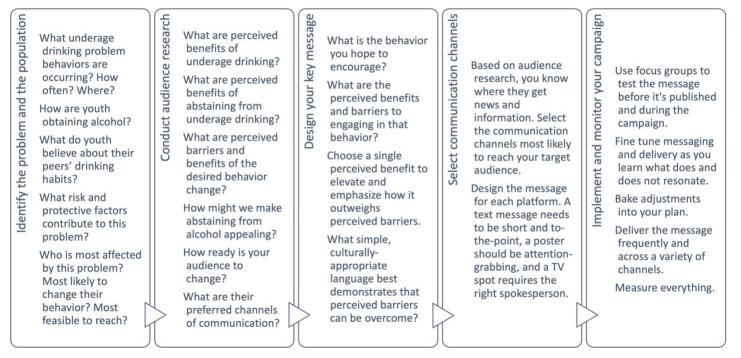6) **Assess** the impact of the campaign such as changes in attitudes and behaviors such as consumption pattern

Work with a Marketing Partner to conduct research and recommend messaging for narrow audience(s) until you build the capacity internally.

- Check their portfolio for prevention expertise and request at least one reference from the prevention field.

- Ensure their familiarity with your community, including your priority populations and substances.

- Ask about their capacity to complete the work on time.

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Collecting strong, audience-specific data is necessary to develop and implement an effective Social Norms Marketing Campaign. Your campaign will require a commitment of several months or longer. Below is a guide to collecting and using data to create an effective campaign. This outline is based on the Prevention Solutions guide found here.

Identify the problem and the population

What underage drinking problem behaviors are occurring? How often? Where?

How are youth obtaining alcohol?

What do youth believe about their peers' drinking habits?

What risk and protective factors contribute to this problem?

Who is most affected by this problem? Most likely to change their behavior? Most feasible to reach?

Conduct audience research

What are perceived benefits of underage drinking?

What are perceived benefits of abstaining from underage drinking?

What are perceived barriers and benefits of the desired behavior change?

How might we make abstaining from alcohol appealing?

How ready is your audience to change?

What are their preferred channels of communication?

Design your key message

What is the behavior you hope to encourage?

What are the perceived benefits and barriers to engaging in that behavior?

Choose a single perceived benefit to elevate and emphasize how it outweighs perceived barriers.

What simple, culturally-appropriate language best demonstrates that perceived barriers can be overcome?

Select communication channels

Based on audience research, you know where they get news and information. Select the communication channels most likely to reach your target audience.

Design the message for each platform. A text message needs to be short and to-the-point, a poster should be attention-grabbing, and a TV spot requires the right spokesperson.

Implement and monitor your campaign

Use focus groups to test the message before it's published and during the campaign.

Fine tune messaging and delivery as you learn what does and does not resonate.

Bake adjustments into your plan.

Deliver the message frequently and across a variety of channels.

Measure everything.

Evaluation is the key to knowing how well your work is, well, working. Monitoring your campaign is different than evaluating your work to ensure you're having the desired influence on your priority population. SAMHSA created an excellent tip sheet for evaluating substance use social marketing campaigns that you can find here.

Visit these resources for more information about Social Marketing and Social Norms Campaigns

- Using a Social Norms Approach to Prevent Youth Substance Use
- National Social Norms Center at Michigan State University
- Understanding Social Marketing: Encouraging Adoption and Use of Valued Products and Practices
- Conducting a Social Marketing Campaign
- SAMHSA Social Marketing Evaluation Tip Sheet
- Prevention Solutions Guide to Social Marketing Campaigns

Outcome measures

Audience understanding
Event feedback
Type and tone of media coverage

Social Norms Marketing Evaluation

Process Measures

Media coverage impressions
Social media engagement
Website visits/views
Video views

Impact Measures

These are the most difficult to measure and should be based on an evaluation framework.

Use these examples to inspire your own campaign:

- EXAMPLE: The Real Cost Campaign
- EXAMPLE: Social Marketing Campaign Research for Non-medical Use of Prescription Drugs
- EXAMPLE: VERB – A Social Marketing Campaign to Increase Physical Activity Among Youth

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