

## Strategy 8. Social Marketing

### Definition

Social marketing is an excellent tool for promoting public health activities. It may be used to promote breastfeeding practices in community, hospital, and workplace settings; educate policy makers about issues related to breastfeeding; and educate the public about healthy infant nutrition practices and support programs. Social marketing is a systematic and strategic planning process that results in an intended practice or program.<sup>78</sup>

Many different definitions of social marketing exist, but most have these common components:

- The adoption of strategies used by commercial marketers.
- A goal of promoting voluntary behavior change (not just improved knowledge or awareness).
- An end goal of improving personal or societal welfare.
- The use of pro-health messages (for public health campaigns).

### Rationale

Increasing the number of positive messages about and images of breastfeeding, as well as the visibility of the topic, through social marketing promotes breastfeeding and helps mothers and families understand the risks of not breastfeeding. This strategy can also help to make breastfeeding seem normal, which in turn will make it seem a more feasible and attainable goal for many women.

Social marketing seeks to bring about behavior change through comprehensive, multifaceted approaches that provide coordinated interventions to specific audiences. Examples of these audiences include breastfeeding mothers and their support systems, health care providers, members of a particular community, and the general public. Social marketing can be used to encourage certain personal behaviors by mothers or interpersonal behaviors between a mother and others—for example, to encourage nurses to support a mother's choice to start breastfeeding within 1 hour of birth. It can also be used to educate decision makers—for example, by helping a hospital adopt practices or strategies to help mothers initiate breastfeeding within 1 hour of birth.

### Evidence of Effectiveness

Social marketing has been established as an effective behavioral change model for several public health issues.<sup>79</sup> In Iowa, for example, the state's WIC Program participated in a promotional campaign called *Loving Support* designed to increase breastfeeding among WIC participants and increase supporting behaviors in relatives, friends, health care providers, and WIC staff who might influence these women.

The initial evaluation of the program found that after 6 months, in-hospital and 6-month breastfeeding rates were higher among WIC participants.<sup>80</sup> In addition, women in the program reported more support from their mothers, husbands or boyfriends, friends or other relatives, and prenatal health care providers.<sup>80</sup>

Some social marketing efforts may include media campaigns. For several public health issues, such as smoking, nutrition, and child survival, media campaigns have been found to be effective in changing behaviors.<sup>81</sup> A 2000 Cochrane review suggested that media campaigns, particularly television commercials, improve attitudes toward breastfeeding and increase initiation rates.<sup>14</sup>



## Components of Social Marketing<sup>82,83</sup>

**Problem:** The problem is the health issue of concern. For potential solutions to emerge, the problem must be well defined.

**Target Audience:** The target audience is the individual or group whose behavior should change. Social marketers focus on the audience and use a variety of tools to understand it. Formative research is used to better understand the target audience and develop insight into the wants, needs, daily lives, and behaviors of its members. Insights gained through these processes help strengthen program strategies and interventions.

**Target Behavior:** The goal of social marketing is always to inform people about voluntary strategies they can use to change their behavior. This behavior change should be voluntary, and it is the planner's job to make the desired behavior an easy choice for the target audience.

**Strategies for Change:** People who work in commercial marketing use a business tool called the marketing mix or 4 Ps, which stands for product, price, place, and promotion. These variables are used to create opportunity and motivation for an audience to adopt the desired behavior over the existing behavior.

The strategies for change also incorporate two additional concepts:

- **Exchange:** This concept refers to maximizing the benefits and minimizing the costs of the new behavior (or maximizing the costs and minimizing the benefits of the existing behavior). Both benefits and costs should be determined from the perspective of the audience.
- **Competition:** This concept refers to understanding what factors compete for the time and attention of the target audience and why the target audience prefers the current behavior.

## Key Considerations

- Effective social marketing campaigns are not confined to television ads and billboards. They may require a variety of social media tools.
- Depending on the scope and reach of the social marketing campaign, existing materials may be sufficient, or new materials may need to be developed.
- Campaigns may run public service announcements, which use time and space donated by broadcast stations or advertisers. Campaigns usually have little control over when these announcements run. Paying for time and advertising space allows greater control and may ensure better reach to the target audience.
- Framing is important to consider when using social marketing. Frames are mental structures or filters that are used to integrate new information in our brains in a meaningful way.<sup>84</sup> A well-framed message incorporates values held by and information relevant to the target audience and excludes information the audience finds irrelevant.



support of family and friends, the health care system, and the community are all essential for a breastfeeding mother to be successful.

The goals of the campaign include increasing breastfeeding initiation and duration among WIC participants, increasing referrals to the WIC Program for breastfeeding support, increasing general public acceptance and support of breastfeeding, and helping WIC staff at state and local levels promote and support breastfeeding. These goals are addressed through various components, including consumer research, an extensive media campaign, and resources for WIC staff.

## Program Examples

### ***Loving Support Makes Breastfeeding Work***

*Loving Support* is the USDA's national breastfeeding promotion and support campaign for the WIC Program. This campaign was launched in 1997 as a result of Public Law 102-342, which required the Secretary of Agriculture to create a national program to promote breastfeeding as the best method of infant nutrition and to foster wider public acceptance of breastfeeding in the United States. *Loving Support* uses a social marketing approach to promote breastfeeding to WIC participants and their families by emphasizing that the

### **Mother-Friendly Worksite Program**

The Texas Department of State Health Services conducted a social marketing campaign to promote its Mother-Friendly Worksite Program. The campaign focused on educating Texas employers about mother-friendly policies in the workplace. As part of the campaign, in-depth telephone interviews were conducted with breastfeeding promoters across the country, Texas businesses that participate in the Mother-Friendly Worksite Program, and businesses that do not participate in the program. Focus groups were also conducted with business leaders, mothers, and fathers in six Texas cities.

## Action Steps

1. Identify local experts who can pitch stories that promote breastfeeding to the media.
2. Provide materials from *Loving Support*, the USDA's national breastfeeding promotion and support campaign for the WIC Program, to local doctors, schools, clinics, hospitals, and child care centers.
3. Ask local media outlets (television, radio, and print) to air or feature public service announcements from the Office on Women's Health's Babies Were Born to Be Breastfed campaign.
4. Develop and implement a public health campaign on breastfeeding that uses social marketing.



The results were used to develop messages for businesses, working mothers, and the partners of working mothers. They were also used to strengthen the Mother-Friendly Worksite Program and the state's Every Ounce Counts Campaign, which provides resources to pregnant women and new mothers.

### **Best for Babes: Champions for Moms**

The Best for Babes' Champions for Moms campaign shares information from high-profile mothers about how they overcame obstacles to childbirth and breastfeeding. These stories are meant to encourage and support pregnant and breastfeeding mothers.

### **Fathers Supporting Breastfeeding**

The USDA's Fathers Supporting Breastfeeding program uses a video, poster, and brochures to reach African American fathers so that they may positively influence a woman's decision to breastfeed. It is part of national efforts to increase breastfeeding initiation and duration rates among African American women. Project materials can also be used with men in other racial and ethnic groups.



## Resources

### **Best for Babes: Champions for Moms**

A foundation with a mission to help women overcome breastfeeding obstacles.

<http://www.bestforbabes.org>

### **Talking about Breastfeeding: Why the Health Argument Isn't Enough**

*Berkeley Media Studies Group and California WIC Association*

A report that explores ways to frame breastfeeding issues for public audiences.

[http://www.bmsg.org/pdfs/BMSG\\_Issue\\_18.pdf](http://www.bmsg.org/pdfs/BMSG_Issue_18.pdf)

### **Babies Were Born to Be Breastfed**

Materials from this national breastfeeding campaign.

<http://www.womenshealth.gov/breastfeeding/government-in-action/national-breastfeeding-campaign/index.cfm#materials>

### **Loving Support Makes Breastfeeding Work**

*U.S. Department of Agriculture*

Find out more about this social marketing campaign designed to support WIC Program recipients who want to breastfeed.

[http://www.nal.usda.gov/wicworks/Learning\\_Center/loving\\_support.html](http://www.nal.usda.gov/wicworks/Learning_Center/loving_support.html)

### **Social Marketing Resources**

*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*

Training for public health professionals on how to use social marketing to plan nutrition, physical activity, and obesity prevention programs.

<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpao/socialmarketing/training.html>





**Mother-Friendly Worksite Program**

*Texas Department of State Health Services*

Information about a Texas program that recognizes businesses that have made special efforts to accommodate breastfeeding mothers in the workplace.

<http://www.motherfriendly.com>

**Every Ounce Counts Campaign**

Media and print resources and breastfeeding information for pregnant women and new mothers in Texas.

<http://www.breastmilkcounts.com/our-new-campaign.html>

**Fathers Supporting Breastfeeding**

*U.S. Department of Agriculture*

Program information and materials.  
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/fathers/supportingbreastfeeding.htm>

**Massachusetts Breastfeeding Coalition**

Provides social marketing materials in Spanish and English that emphasize the importance of exclusive breastfeeding.

<http://www.cafepress.com/massbfc>