

covering kids[™] & families

Evaluating Communications and Outreach

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Why Evaluate?

Why is it important to evaluate the results of your campaign? Evaluation will allow you to:

- ◆ **Measure the results of your efforts:** You, your staff and members of your coalition will expend time, energy and funds to plan and implement activities designed to increase awareness about available health care coverage programs among families with eligible, uninsured children. These activities will generate measurable results. You will want to be able to identify what happens as a result of your efforts.
- ◆ **Demonstrate your success:** Positive results will demonstrate to your team, the coalition and the community that the campaign has been a success. Success is a strong motivator for further involvement. You may also use the evidence of success to engage additional business and organizational partners to participate in future activities.
- ◆ **Adjust future communications strategies:** By collecting information from hotline data and media coverage, your coalition can learn important lessons that will enhance and inform future efforts. You will be able to determine which aspects of your plan worked well and which might be improved for the next time around.
- ◆ **Seek additional media coverage:** You may choose to announce the success of your efforts to the public, businesses, opinion leaders and policy-makers in order to get additional media coverage. This is an opportunity to broadcast the positive effect that you, the coalition, and *Covering Kids & Families* are having on the lives of uninsured children and their families.

What Should Be Measured?

For many, the key evaluation question is: “How many children have you enrolled through your effort?” Consistent enrollment data can be difficult to collect and link back to a communications campaign. Since the primary goal of a communications effort is to increase calls to the hotline from parents of children who are uninsured and may be eligible for Medicaid or the State Children’s Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), you should use measurements that more directly link to your outreach efforts. If you have the capability to collect and analyze enrollment-related data, such as applications sent and/or received, we encourage you to do so.

There are several other methods you can use to measure the success of your campaign, some of which are more direct and immediate than others. The methods you choose will depend in part on the type of information and resources that are available to you.

Hotline Calls

Tracking the change in the number of calls to your hotline is the simplest and most direct measure of the results of your activities since a hotline number is promoted in your activities as well as in any advertising and on campaign materials.

Available hotline data vary from state to state, so you should work with the agency that manages the hotline to find out what data can be provided.

- ◆ **Number of calls coming into the hotline:** This is the most basic data collection, but limits what you can learn, as explained below.
- ◆ **Type of calls:** Does the hotline handle only children’s health care coverage or other types of calls as well (e.g., adult Medicaid or provider questions)? If the hotline handles various types of calls can you get tallies of calls related to children’s health care coverage?

- ◆ **Regional breakdown of calls:** Are the calls reported on a statewide basis or are regional breakdowns available, such as by county or ZIP code? This specificity will be important if your ads and outreach are limited to certain geographic areas. The most applicable data will be the number of calls received from the areas where the ads and activities occurred.
- ◆ **How callers heard about the hotline:** Are callers asked how they heard about the hotline? Are these data reported? If not, can this question be added during the campaign period? By understanding how callers heard about the hotline (e.g., radio, TV or print advertising; word of mouth; promotion at an event or in schools) you will be able to judge the success of various aspects of your campaign.
- ◆ **Frequency of the reports:** How frequently are the reports available (e.g., weekly, monthly)?
- ◆ **Number of parents who say they intend to apply:** Can callers be asked during the period of your campaign whether they intend to apply?

Try to coordinate the timing of data collection with the timing of your activities, including your event/press conference, advertising/PSAs, and any outreach efforts. It is important to collect data for a period of at least two weeks before any activities begin and at least one month after they end. In this way, you can identify any changes that occur during the time of your activities.

Ideally, you should also gather data for the same time period during the previous year. Using the previous year as a comparison, you will be in a better position to say that changes resulted from your activities and not from a naturally occurring seasonal variation.

News Coverage

Tracking the number of television, radio and print stories resulting from your communications effort is another way of measuring the success of your activities.

Rather than simply counting the number of stories, you should also look at the content of the media coverage. Identify whether news stories included *Covering Kids & Families* key messages, such as:

- ◆ The availability of low-cost and free health care coverage for kids
- ◆ The benefits of Medicaid and SCHIP
- ◆ Testimonials from families about the ease of enrolling and the peace of mind that the coverage brings to their lives
- ◆ Information on how families can learn more about enrollment (i.e., local or toll-free hotlines)

By identifying the content of the news coverage, you can make adjustments to future media outreach strategies (e.g., provide media training for spokespersons, recruit more spokespersons, or recruit other types of family spokespersons to help ensure that media coverage is as effective as possible).

Other Evaluation Options

Look at the goals of your campaign to determine whether there are other types of information you can use for evaluation, such as:

- ◆ Number of activities you held
- ◆ Number of people or families that participated
- ◆ Elected officials involved, their position and the type of involvement (e.g., speaker at an event)

- ◆ Schools and organizations involved, their satisfaction with the efforts, and their willingness to participate in future efforts
- ◆ Business participation, the estimated reach resulting from their involvement, and their willingness to collaborate in the future



How Do I Get Started?

It is important to plan campaign tracking as a part of your overall communications planning.

Plan to evaluate

- ◆ As you begin planning your communications activities, discuss evaluation too. Identify realistic outcomes.
- ◆ If possible, include those who will be responsible for providing you with data, such as the hotline manager.
- ◆ Discuss ideas about measuring the success of your campaign and determine the data that you can realistically track.
- ◆ Consider inviting an evaluation expert to join your team to assist in planning.

Determine what you want to measure

- ◆ Assess available resources for evaluation and the results you anticipate. For example, changes in the number of calls to the state hotline can help you track the number of people who have been prompted by your efforts to get more information about children's health coverage programs and apply for coverage.
- ◆ If your purpose is to determine which outreach and communication methods are most effective, you might consider collecting information about how the callers learned about the hotline phone number.
- ◆ Counting the number and type of news stories will help determine whether your media outreach has been successful.
- ◆ Counting the number of event attendees and applications distributed or filled out can be the easiest data to collect.

Determine how to find available data

- ◆ Ask contacts such as the hotline manager what they can provide and within what period of time.
- ◆ If you are pitching the media and you know they are planning to run a story, ask the reporter or editor you are working with to send you a copy of the piece when it airs or is published.
- ◆ Do an Internet search – it's simple and free. Google News (<http://news.google.com>) allows you to set up alerts using key words, so you know when an article is published on the subject you are tracking.
- ◆ Your local newspapers and television stations will likely post their coverage on their Web sites. If you do not know their Web site addresses, call and ask, use a search engine or go to <http://www.usnpl.com/> for links to newspapers.
- ◆ Ask members of your coalition to monitor the media, including clipping articles from the newspaper and taping news broadcasts.
- ◆ You may also consider approaching the department of communications of a local university to determine whether faculty and graduate students would assist you in collecting and analyzing local media coverage free of charge. They may find the effort worth studying.
- ◆ If your budget allows, consider using a clipping service (e.g., Burrelle's for print and Video Monitoring Service (VMS) for TV/radio).

Review samples of the data collected in your state

- ◆ Actually seeing data that are available will help you set realistic goals.

Begin collecting the data

- ◆ Make arrangements with appropriate contact or media monitoring service to send you the data on a regular basis.
- ◆ Establish a beginning date, an end date, and the frequency of collection or reporting (e.g., weekly, monthly).

Create a database

- ◆ Set up your own database and regularly enter the data. (See the samples on pages 5.)

How Can I Analyze the Results?

Take the following into consideration as you interpret the data you have collected:

- ◆ Consider when your activities took place in relation to changes in call volume and/or media coverage. Be sure to include the period of time that advertisements and other outreach activities took place.
- ◆ Be aware of any other advertising about health coverage programs that preceded or followed the data collection period. Sometimes there is a carry-over from activities, advertising or other events that might have drawn attention to the hotline number.
- ◆ Document other activities/outreach efforts that took place in the same time period that may have affected the results of your campaign. For example, if the state tax office sent out letters to all families with potentially eligible children just before your effort began, your results may not be as dramatic.
- ◆ Take note of other major news stories that may have limited or eclipsed coverage of your activities.

Hotline:

- ◆ Look for changes in call volume that can be directly linked to the timing of events and advertising.
- ◆ The number of calls may be affected by activities or ads that immediately precede your campaign.
- ◆ The more specific your data, the more accurate a measure of your campaign. For example, collect the number of hotline calls in the counties where there is advertising or events and make sure that they were specific to children's coverage, if that is your focus.

Media:

- ◆ Consider the number, length, placement and content of stories in newspapers and on newscasts. Where was your story in relation to the other stories? What was the extent of the coverage? Who was quoted? Were there follow-up stories? Did your story carry the message that you wanted delivered?
- ◆ Did an editorial appear about children's health care coverage or were you able to place a letter to the editor or an op-ed?
- ◆ Determine the potential number of people reached by the media coverage. You can contact the advertising departments of print and broadcast media outlets to get this information.

What Do I Do with the Evaluation Findings?

Prepare a report or series of short reports to share the findings. Explaining what you set out to do and what you accomplished—with the data for proof—is a good way to “make the case” for the value of your outreach. Use the report to congratulate coalition members and partners, create news, and plan future events.

Hotline Calls (Sample Chart)

(Data from counties with advertising)

Previous Year (No campaign activities)		Current Year*	
No. of Calls		No. of Calls	
Before	4,214	Before	6,248
7/1 – 9	677	7/1-8	948
7/10 – 16	1,179	7/9-15	1,239
7/17 – 23	983	7/16-22	1,270
7/24 – 31	1,375	7/23-29	1,690
		7/30-8/5	1,101
During	6,421	During	11,336
8/1 – 6	908	8/6-12	1,250
8/7 – 13	1,359	8/13-19	2,912**
8/14 – 20	1,367	8/20-26	3,612
8/21 – 27	1,120	8/27-9/2	3,562
8/28 – 31	1,665		
After	7,345	After	9,461
9/1 – 10 (10d.)	2,323	9/3-9 (7d.)	2,980
9/11 – 17	1,667	9/10-16	2,759
9/18 – 24	1,617	9/17-23	1,760
9/25 – 30	1,738	9/24-30	1,962

*Current year media event 8/13 and advertising period 8/14-9/14
 **Numbers in bold are during the radio and television advertising period

Media Coverage (Sample Chart)

Big City, State

Outlet	Article Title/ Show Name	Coverage Time/Date	Audience Reach (Est.)
Television			
NBC - KXYZ-TV	Good Morning, Big City	8/5, 6:30 a.m.	100,000
FOX - KBCA-TV	Evening news	8/5, 6 p.m.	90,000
Radio			
KNM-AM	Byrd and Jones Morning Drive	8/6, 7 a.m.	150,000
Print			
Everyday Post	Governor Spotlights Uninsured Kids	8/5	200,000
Big City Daily	Covering Kids & Families Scores	8/5	300,000



Additional *Covering Kids & Families Resources*

Log on to www.coveringkidsandfamilies.org for more information or to order or download these resources:

Toolkits and Guides

- *Covering Kids & Families* Back-to-School Action Kit
- *Covering Kids & Families* Guide to Placing Public Service Announcements
- *Covering Kids & Families* Guide to Working with the Faith Community
- *Covering Kids & Families* Interfaith Toolkit
- *Covering Kids & Families* Message Strategy Toolkit
- *Cover the Uninsured Week* Health and Enrollment Fair Planning Guide
- *Cover the Uninsured Week* State Guides to Finding Health Insurance Coverage
- Engaging the Business Community Toolkit
- Meeting the Match: A Guide to Fundraising
- Reaching American Indian and Alaska Native Families Toolkit
- Reaching Latino Families Toolkit

Outreach Materials

- Children's Health Coverage Bookmark
- Children's Health Coverage Fan
- Children's Health Coverage Flier
- Children's Health Coverage Lapel Sticker
- Children's Health Coverage Poster
- Online Photo Library

Videos and Public Service Announcements

- *Covering Kids* Public Service Announcements
- *Covering Kids & Families* Back-to-School 2005 Spanish Language Music video
- *Covering Kids & Families* Outreach Videos (available in English and Spanish)
- *Covering Kids & Families* Accomplishment Video

Reports

- Communications Strategies for SCHIP and Medicaid Retention
- Reaching Uninsured Parents: "Insights About Enrolling Uninsured, Low-Income Parents in Medicaid and SCHIP"
- Addressing the Barriers to *Covering Kids & Families*: A Values-Based Strategic Framework Research Report
- Retention Literature Review: "Retaining Eligible Children in SCHIP and Medicaid"