

MESSAGING STRATEGY

State and Federal Health Care Reform

Building Public Awareness: Building Public Will

***healthcare4every1* Toolkit**

Connecticut's Challenge & Opportunity

Universal Health Care Foundation of Connecticut is in the process of conducting a statewide poll to learn how residents feel and what they think about the new federal health care law, as well as, what they may or may not know about “SustiNet,” the new state health care reform law passed in 2009. The Foundation conducted three consumer focus groups in May as part of the polling work.

Preliminary findings of the groups suggest residents in Connecticut generally have the same sentiments about health reform as the rest of the nation. People are weary, skeptical and confused. Residents are unfamiliar with the new state health care reform law, what it means for them and the state, and how it's tied to federal reform. Similar to the findings of post-passage national polls like those conducted by Herndon Alliance, residents are unconvinced that federal reform will benefit them and fear it could contain negative consequences such as higher expenses and costs.

Key themes repeated throughout the focus groups:

- ☆ Residents are tired of the rhetoric and scare tactics.
- ☆ People want the facts about reform.
- ☆ They want clear, specific information.

Preliminary findings of the focus group work and findings of polls such as a recent tracking poll by Kaiser Health indicate that the more the public learns about the actual components of health reform, the more they support it and understand the benefits. The Foundation has launched a public awareness campaign through its statewide ***healthcare4every1*** advocacy effort aimed at ensuring Connecticut residents get the information they need on federal and state health reform.

Goals of the *healthcare4every1* public awareness campaign:

- ☆ Inform and empower health reform supporters to speak out and train others to speak out on behalf of state and federal reforms.
- ☆ Make sure families and residents get the information they need about state and federal reforms to make important life decisions.
- ☆ Deepen and broaden support so SustiNet is properly implemented in the context of the new federal reforms.
- ☆ Proactively neutralize negative messaging and misinformation campaigns.

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KEY MESSAGES

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Three Key Messages

1. SustiNet, the new state health care law, means better health care choices for everyone
2. It promotes good health while it controls costs
3. It uniquely prepares CT to benefit from federal reform

Key Messages and Sub-Messages

1. SustiNet, the new state health care law, means better health care choices for everyone

- ☆ It streamlines state employees', HUSKY and Medicaid plans into SustiNet, increasing the state's ability to control costs, and improve quality and choices
- ☆ Starting in 2012, the state offers SustiNet as an affordable health care choice
- ☆ Participation is voluntary and people can keep their existing plans
- ☆ Premiums are based on a sliding scale determined by income
- ☆ The benefits package is comparable to that of a typical large employer in CT
- ☆ Enrollment is open regardless of pre-existing conditions, job status, divorce or other life changes
- ☆ Uninsured residents, people with inadequate coverage, small businesses, the self-employed, nonprofits, and cities and towns, all are eligible to participate

2. It promotes good health while it controls costs

- ☆ Prevention and more effective treatment of chronic illnesses save money
- ☆ Every person's care is coordinated by a qualified health care professional
- ☆ Care coordination is enhanced by electronic medical records, avoiding costly duplication and miscommunication
- ☆ Offers public health programs to reduce obesity and tobacco use
- ☆ Reduces disparities in care based on race, ethnicity and income
- ☆ Invests in the health care workforce so CT has adequate number of doctors
- ☆ The SustiNet-insured residents form a critical mass, providing the state leverage to control costs and improve the way health care is delivered
- ☆ Its bargaining power expands as it opens to more residents and businesses

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KEY MESSAGES (cont)

3. It uniquely prepares CT to benefit from new federal reform

Federal law takes care of important issues for Sustinet

Starting in 2010:

- ☆ It allows parents to keep children up to age 26 on their health insurance
- ☆ Requires all insurers to cover regular exams and preventative treatments
- ☆ Provides small businesses with health care tax credits of up to 35 percent of the employers' costs to help purchase health insurance for employees
- ☆ Helps seniors with high prescription drug co-pays by giving them a \$250 rebate this year and phasing out the gap in Medicare prescription drug coverage known as "the donut hole"

Starting in 2014:

- ☆ Eliminates the ability of insurance companies to exclude treatments based on pre-existing conditions
- ☆ Opens up "health insurance exchanges" in the state that allow residents a chance for one-stop comparison shopping for affordable health coverage
- ☆ Mandates that everyone have health insurance and provides tax credits to help people of all incomes afford coverage
- ☆ Eliminates the ability of insurers to charge higher premium rates based on gender or health status

Sustinet works with federal reform to benefit the state

- ☆ It positions the state to leverage new federal dollars
- ☆ It gives CT a competitive advantage over other states
- ☆ Its voluntary Sustinet health plan will be available in 2012, prior to the federal mandate requiring everyone to have insurance



MESSAGING TIPS

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Overcoming the Noise

The competition for people's attention is increasingly challenging in the rapidly changing world of communications. The average American hears more than 3,000 advertising messages a day. Add to that messages in the news, on talk radio, direct mailing from candidates, social media and any of the other multiple ways people get their information, and the competition for the public mind share intensifies. There's a reason the average ad spot runs 30 seconds. Communications and cognitive scientists tell us that's about how long a person can listen to a message before the human mind fills with "noise" – the internal conversations everyone has in their own heads.

Effective messages are a powerful advocacy tool in overcoming the barriers that mental noise creates. Here are some quick tips to help you and your organization as you sharpen your messaging skills and strategies.

DO

- ✓ Identify your key audience(s)
- ✓ Anticipate your audiences questions and concerns before they are raised
- ✓ Develop messages rooted in shared values such as fairness
- ✓ Stick to three key messages
- ✓ Acknowledge feelings such as frustration and weariness
- ✓ Be clear – avoid jargon and break messages down into plain terms
- ✓ Maintain a sincere tone and be authentic
- ✓ Create a central repository of consistent messages
- ✓ Practice message discipline – speak with one voice
- ✓ Develop sub-messages for each key message that provide greater detail
- ✓ Use personal stories to illustrate a point
- ✓ Cite credible third party sources

DON'T

- × Be defensive or negative
- × Repeat a false negative or false information
- × Use words like "no," "not," "never," "nothing" and "none"
- × Rely on slogans and catch phrases

