

Mesa County Department of Human Services

Strategic Communication and Outreach Plan 2002-2003



Prepared by:
Janet Rowland
Public Information Officer

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Strategic Communication and Outreach Plan for Mesa County Department of Human Services

Mission Statement

The Mission of the Department of Human Services is to help individuals and families achieve safety, independence and self sufficiency through the provision of professional, fiscally responsible quality human services in a progressive, collaborative and customer service oriented environment.

Vision Statement

The Department of Human Services is a respected partner in a healthy, safe, interconnected community where the basic needs of all are met in an environment of independence and dignity that affords opportunities for a better quality of life as determined by individual choice. The Department of Human Services values compassionate service through shared decision making while promoting responsibility and accountability in an atmosphere of respect.

Purpose

This plan is intended to serve as a road map, a guide to achieve the communication goals of the Mesa County Department of Human Services (MCDHS) over the next five years. Like every plan it constantly needs to be updated as circumstances change and goals are achieved.

Communication Core Areas

The communication efforts of the MCDHS will focus on five core areas

- Foster public awareness of and confidence in MCDHS
- Communicate role and accomplishments for MCDHS
- Recognize and reward the positive accomplishments of residents- especially those who help individuals and families achieve safety, independence and self sufficiency
- Enhance and maintain effective media relationship
- Enhance communication between MCDHS staff, County staff, County Commissioners, and County Administrator.

Guiding Principles

This plan is based on the following principles that serve to guide its overall development.

Proactive vs. Reactive

The intent of the communications program is to take a proactive approach versus a reactive approach. The idea is to plan and execute a communications program that creates the channels of communication and the communication tools necessary to achieve the goals, rather than simply to respond to inquiries.

Two-way vs. One-way

Connected with the principle of being proactive is the idea that the communications of the MCDHS need to be two-way rather than one-way, so that the MCDHS is always listening to its publics and engaging in dialogue to understand their needs and wants and their suggested solutions.

Open vs. Closed

The intent is to run an open communications system rather than one that is closed. That means information needs to be shared throughout the organization as well as throughout the community. Openness creates a sense of belonging and teamwork, whereas closed systems breed suspicion and paranoia.

Inclusive vs. Exclusive

Similarly, including everyone in the communications process builds teamwork and a feeling of belonging, breaking down the feeling of “we-they” which is common in many governments and in many relationships of government with its citizens. The goal is to include everyone who cares to participate and to motivate those who are not currently engaged.

Strongly Themed vs. Scattered Messages

A communications program built on strong themes is more effective than one with unrelated and scattered messages. The communications program should support, reinforce and reflect the goals of the MCDHS.

Target Audiences

Citizens

Citizens of Mesa County have been identified as the highest priority target public. The building of a partnership of the MCDHS with some 120,000 residents of the county is the starting point of a sound communications program. Citizens include:

- Residents
- Clients / Potential Clients
- Civic Associations
- Service Organizations
- Community Organizations
- Community Leaders
- Churches

Employees

People employed by Mesa County in its various departments and agencies are the second priority group.

- County Commissioners
- County Administrator
- County Staff
- MCHDS Staff

News media

The media are important because their coverage of the County government has a significant influence on the image of the Department of Human Services among other target publics. The media include a variety of print and broadcast.

- KJCT
- KKCO
- KREX
- KNZZ
- KSTR
- KPRN
- Daily Sentinel
- Promise Land Magazine
- Best Years Beacon
- Palisade Tribune
- Fruita Times

Other local governments within Mesa County

- City of Grand Junction
- City of Fruita
- City of Palisade

Government associations and organizations

- Mesa County Employee Association (MCEA)
- National Association of Counties (NACo)
- Child Welfare League of America (CWLA)
- Colorado Counties, Inc. (CCI)
- City, County Communication and Marketing Association (3CMA)

Key Messages

Messages about MCDHS

MCDHS is available to assist individuals, families and adults in maintaining safety, independence and self-sufficiency.

- Value: Well being for the individuals and families we serve

MCDHS is one of the agencies at the center of empowering individuals and families in the community to live healthy lives.

- Value: Well being of the individuals and families we serve
- Value: involvement in internal and external collaborative efforts.

MCDHS is proactive in addressing community issues.

- Value: involvement in internal and external collaborative efforts.
- Value: Involvement in community activities as well as involving the community in our activities

MCDHS wants to educate Mesa County residents about the workings of the MCDHS. MCDHS keeps the public informed of issues, developments, public meetings, community activities, events, problems and potential problems. This is a prime factor in developing and maintaining credibility

- Value: involvement in internal and external collaborative efforts.
- Value: Involvement in community activities as well as involving the community in our activities

MCDHS wants to work with residents and other key target groups to address common issues.

- Value: Involvement in community activities as well as involving the community in our activities

MCDHS is proud that other communities see MCDHS as an example and a model for best practice in Human Services.

- Value: (all)

MCDHS operates in a client centered, fiscally responsible manner

- Value: Exhibiting professionalism in the way we handle our job duties

MCDHS responds to community-wide economic vitality through the operation of the Workforce Center and the administration of jobs and training programs for the community. MCDHS has developed public-private partnerships to help clients move away from “welfare” and toward self-sufficiency. We are investing in the development of a well educated and competitive workforce through the operation of the Professional Services Division.

- Value: Well being of the individuals and families we serve
- Value: involvement in internal and external collaborative efforts.

MCDHS is an active participant in identifying, responding to and making efforts to prevent, domestic violence, child abuse and substance abuse.

- Value: Well being of the individuals and families we serve

MCDHS staff are accessible, approachable, knowledgeable, responsive, cooperative, professional and interested in feed back

- Value: Staff treat clients with dignity and respect.
- Value: Exhibiting professionalism in the way we handle our job duties

MCDHS shares in the county-wide responsibility for assuring sound financial practices. We maintain the highest level of fiscal accountability.

- Value: Exhibiting professionalism in the way we handle our job duties

Messages about the Community

MCDHS believes that strong families are at the center of strong communities. Everyone has a role to play in making families successful, including neighborhood organizations, businesses, nonprofits, service clubs, policy makers and families themselves.

- Value: Well being for the individuals and families we serve

MCDHS believes that families thrive when they are connected to the opportunities, networks, support and services that enable them to succeed. These “connections” include:

- Access to transportation, education, technology and quality child care;
- Opportunities to build solid financial foundations; and
- Positive social relationships within and among families, as well as quality support from community networks and institutions..
- Value: Well being for the individuals and families we serve

Objective #1

FOSTER PUBLIC AWARENESS OF AND CONFIDENCE IN MCHDS.

Strategy A : Resident Communication & Education

Existing Tactics

- Develop and distribute news releases.
- Publish brochures about the services and programs of MCDHS
- Produce Inside Mesa County episodes for Channel 12 about the services and programs of MCDHS

Future Tactics

- Continue existing tactics
- Include MCDHS information in Mesa County new resident kits (Sentinel insert- See also Objective #5)
- Enhance MCDHS web site with information and photographs about programs and services

Strategy B: Community Outreach

Existing Tactics

- Participate in community fairs with informational booths
- Participate in Child Abuse Prevention Month (April)
- Participate in Foster Parent Appreciation Month (May)
- Participate in Adoption Awareness Month (November)
- Participate in Caregivers Appreciation Month (November)
- Participate in Volunteer Appreciation Month (April)
- Participate in the Month of the Young Child (April)
- Participate in Breast Cancer Awareness Month (October)

Future Tactics

- Develop and coordinate an MCDHS Speakers Bureau
- The Quarter Pager – Monthly Sentinel ad
- Localize national news stories

Objective #2

ENHANCE RELATIONSHIPS WITH CIVIC ORGANIZATIONS, SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS, CHURCHES AND OTHER COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS.

Strategy

Develop tools for relationship building

Existing Tactics

- Produce program for channel 12 for other agencies.
- Membership and regular attendance at Human Services Council Meeting

Future Tactics

- Develop a comprehensive plan to utilize Speakers Bureau to make presentation to service clubs, civic organizations and churches on a consistent basis
- Make “Good Neighbor” Award presentations at regular service club meetings
- Send annual recognition letter to civic organizations- suitable for printing in Newsletter
- Send annual report to civic organizations, service organizations, churches and other community organizations.

Objective #3

ENHANCE AND MAINTAIN EFFECTIVE MEDIA RELATIONSHIPS

Strategy A:

Build Relationships

Existing Tactics

- Mesa County Public Information Officers Network- Media Mixers
- Early Childhood Partnership PR Committee

Future Tactics

- Participate in Sentinel's editorial board briefing quarterly
- Meet new reporters- take to lunch, give MCDHS info and contact info

Strategy B:

Interview Preparedness

Existing Tactics

- Annual training for PIO

Future Tactics

- Develop and implement a media spokesperson training for PR Committee members, Supervisors and Administrators
- Develop Fact Sheets for each team- to use as needed with Press Releases
- Complete Public Relations policies for MCDHS and train staff

Objective #4

RECOGNIZE AND REWARD THE POSITIVE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF RESIDENTS- ESPECIALLY THOSE WHO IMPROVE THE WELL BEING OF INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES IN MESA COUNTY.

Strategy:

Award and Recognition Programs

Existing Tactics

- Foster Parent Appreciation Month
- Adoption Awareness Month
- Volunteer Appreciation Month
- Colorado Cares Day- Volunteer Service Awards

Future Tactics

- Develop and implement “Good Neighbor” award program to recognize individuals who help individuals and families achieve safety, independence and self sufficiency
 - Good Neighbor categories include those who are good neighbors to:
 - Children (partner with Kiwanis- January)
 - Families (partner with Rotary – April)
 - Senior Citizens (partner with Lions Club October)
 - The Community (partner with Colorado Cares Day- July)
- Develop and implement a “Kids Who Care” award program to recognize children who help individuals and families achieve safety, independence and self sufficiency.
 - Kids Who Care award will be presented in June in conjunction with the Early Childhood Partnership

Objective #5
COMMUNICATE ROLE AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR MCDHS

Strategy:

Public relations efforts

Existing Tactics

- Submit information about programs and staff to the Achievements section of the Daily Sentinel

Future Tactics

- Submit information about programs and staff to the Achievements section of the Daily Sentinel on a more consistent basis and include photos
- Work with PR Committee to develop feature/human interest stories involving MCHDS programs
- Submit letters to the editor of the Daily Sentinel, about MCDHS programs or human services issues of importance to residents, on a regular basis
- Include MCDHS information in Mesa County new resident kits (Sentinel insert- See also Objective #1)
- Feature expanded information on the web site to include information posted in the Achievements section of the Sentinel
- Incorporate this objective into all possible strategies previously mentioned

Objective #6

ENHANCE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN MCDHS STAFF, COUNTY STAFF,
COUNTY COMMISSIONERS, AND COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR.

Strategy:

Enhance relationships between all departments of Mesa County

Existing Tactics

- Annual all staff holiday breakfast (MCDHS)
- Monthly presentations to County Commissioners

Future Tactics

- Submit articles about MCDHS to the MCEA newsletter on a regular basis
- Participate in MCDHS New Worker Orientation (MDHS)
- Participate in Mesa County New Worker Orientation (Mesa County)
- Encourage MCDHS staff participation in annual Mesa County Christmas Party (work with party organizers to include interactive activities in program)
- Annual report video