

# Social Norms Marketing Guidance

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The purpose of this document is to ensure social norms marketing (SNM) campaigns are implemented to fidelity and achieve positive outcomes.

The intent of SNM is to promote accurate and healthy norms that are often underestimated. According to the social norms approach, when individuals *incorrectly* perceive that most of their peers (or other community members) engage in problem behaviors such as substance use then they do as well. Social norms messages aim to correct misperceptions related to the frequency and/or extent of problem behaviors and close the gap between perceived and actual norms. As a result, problem behaviors may decrease and engagement in healthy behaviors may increase.

DBHR prevention contractors should use the following guidance in developing and implementing SNM campaigns.

- When using DBHR funding, SNM should be designated as CSAP strategy “Information Dissemination<sup>1</sup>” for all documents (e.g., strategic plans, action plans, budgets, A-19s), and reporting should reflect this designation.
- SNM campaigns must adhere to specific training and implementation criteria (**see checklist below**)<sup>2</sup>. While other tools are available to enhance your work, contractors using DBHR funds must adhere to the below checklist.

## SNM Implementation Checklist

- Train a minimum of one key leader/coalition staff member involved in the local SNM effort in at least 18 hours of training on designing and implementing SNM campaigns.
- Utilize local data and the approved strategic plan to identify an outcome (e.g., reduce youth marijuana use) and gaps related to the outcome based on community-specific perceived and actual norms related to the targeted risk behaviors.
  - Identify information about perceived and actual norms for the target audience(s) (e.g., parents, youth, adults in the community) using existing baseline data or conduct a survey to gather data on the gap between perceived and actual norms.
- Collaborate with community members to assess the data and confirm that a SNM campaign is the best strategy for impacting the gap between actual and perceived norms.
- Collect information (e.g., interviews, focus groups) to identify characteristics of the target audience(s) relevant to message design and dissemination.
  - Pilot test messages (text, graphics, tone) with the target audience(s).
- Develop a communications plan to determine the message “dose” and mode(s) of message delivery to impact misperceptions of norms.
- Develop an evaluation plan including follow-up surveys or the analysis of follow-up data on community behaviors and perceptions/attitudes to determine if the gap between perceived and actual norms has changed. Pre-and post-test measures should be based on the identified outcome and baseline data should be gathered prior to campaign implementation. The Community Survey is a suggested resource to implement this data collection.

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<sup>1</sup> SNM is not classified as CSAP strategy “Environmental” and therefore cannot be used to fulfill associated DBHR requirements.

<sup>2</sup> DCA funds may be used for SNM campaigns that meet **all** the checklist criteria. These campaigns are considered “Promising Programs” with an Information Dissemination CSAP strategy (*not* Environmental).

## Data Considerations for SNM Campaigns

This section outlines key information to consider about your data sources as you work through the above SNM Implementation Checklist. It also offers practical guidance based on key factors such as the geographical level of the data, participation rates, sample sizes, and the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The examples and prompts below primarily use Washington State’s Healthy Youth Survey (HYS) as a base due to its wide availability, but communities are not limited to using the HYS as a sole source of data for norming campaigns.

### Questions to ask while reviewing data

**1. What is the geographic level of the data, such as state, ESD, county, school district, etc.?**

- When designing your message, be sure to match the language to the locality of the data and note that some data sets may extend beyond your service area. For example, a norm for a data set of a specific school district should read “80% of Wheatland School District 8<sup>th</sup> graders did not use tobacco,” while a statewide data set would have a norm that should read “80% of Washington 8<sup>th</sup> graders did not use tobacco.”

**2. What was the sample size and participation rate: did a relatively small number of individuals respond to this survey, and how many individuals took the survey relative to all individuals in an area?**

*Examples that may indicate small numbers and/or low participation rates from two common data sources; note that other sources may notate these considerations in other ways:*

- In the CPWI data books, an “S” appears in lieu of a number for *Students Participating in the 2023 Survey* on the page “About the Data”, or a lowercase “d” appears next to a given percentage in a table. See the *About the Data* page and footnotes beneath all tables for details.
- In the [HYS data dashboard](#), indicators with <40% participation are suppressed and highlighted in red.

**3. Are there relevant statistically significant differences between your locality and others, or over time?**

*Examples that suggest significant differences from two common data sources; note that other sources may notate significance in other ways:*

- In the CPWI data books, a lowercase “b” or lowercase “c” appears next to a given percentage in a table. See the *About the Data* page and footnotes beneath all tables for details.
- In the [HYS data dashboard](#), significant differences are marked with triangular red or green arrows.

**4. How are we using HYS data collected during and after the COVID-19 pandemic (2021 forward)?**

- The COVID-19 pandemic led to massive changes in the lives of Washington youth. Increases and decreases in HYS 2023 data may be more a reflection of the pandemic and its effect on our lives than a change that would have happened if the pandemic had not occurred. This means trend data from before the pandemic and during/after the pandemic should be interpreted with tremendous caution.

***Please see next page for suggestions with common examples →***

## Suggestions with common examples

| Example  | Good  | Better   |
|--|---|--|
| <p>Your coalition is focusing specifically on the 2023 HYS results of your local school district, Wheatfield School District, which includes youth from the towns of Barleytown and Wheatfield. 70% or more of the 10<sup>th</sup> grade students enrolled in the school district responded to the survey.</p> | <p>Norming messages are framed with the locality, specify the grade of students surveyed, and include a footnote clarifying the source of the data, for example:</p> <hr/> <p>87% of Wheatfield area 10<sup>th</sup> graders do NOT drink alcohol<sup>1</sup></p> <p><sup>1</sup>Based on 569 responses to the 2023 Healthy Youth Survey administered to Wheatfield School District students.</p>   | <p>Norming messages are framed with the specific geographic scope of survey, specify the grade of students surveyed, and include a footnote clarifying the source of the data, for example:</p> <hr/> <p>In 2023, 87% of Wheatfield School District 10<sup>th</sup> graders did NOT drink alcohol<sup>1</sup></p> <p><sup>1</sup>Based on 569 responses to the 2023 Healthy Youth Survey administered to Wheatfield School District students.</p>  |
| Example  | Good  | Better   |
| <p>Your coalition is focusing on the 2023 HYS results as specified in the above example, <i>except 40-69% of students enrolled in 10<sup>th</sup> grade within the school district responded to the survey.</i></p>  | <p>Norming messages are framed with the name of the community, specify the grade of students surveyed, <i>include the word 'surveyed' to help capture the lower response rate</i>, and include a footnote clarifying the source of the data, for example:</p> <hr/> <p>87% of Wheatfield area 10<sup>th</sup> graders surveyed do NOT drink alcohol<sup>1</sup></p> <p><sup>1</sup>Based on 569 responses to the 2023 Healthy Youth Survey administered to Wheatfield School District students.</p> | <p>Norming messages are framed with the specific geographic areas of respondents, specify the grade of students surveyed, include the word 'surveyed' to capture the lower response rate, and include a footnote clarifying the source of the data as well as the response rate, for example:</p> <hr/> <p>87% of Wheatfield and Barleytown 10<sup>th</sup> graders surveyed in 2023 did NOT drink alcohol<sup>1</sup></p> <p><sup>1</sup>Based on 569 responses to the 2023 Healthy Youth Survey administered to Wheatfield School District students. 52% of enrolled students responded to the survey.</p> |
| <p>In the 2023 HYS for your school district, less than 30 students in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade responded to the item "How wrong do you think it is for someone in your age to use marijuana?"</p>   | <p><i>It is not recommended to develop a norming message based on a question with fewer than 30 student responses for a given grade and geographic level, as the results are not likely representative.</i></p> <p><i>Please consider using an item with more than 30 responses or consider an alternate data source.</i></p>   |  |

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| <p>Less than 40% of 10<sup>th</sup> grade students in your school district participated in the 2023 HYS.</p>   | <p><i>It is not recommended to develop a norming message based on responses from fewer than 40% of students in a given grade and geographic level because the results are likely not representative.</i></p> <p><i>Please consider developing a message using a different grade level, and/or at a broader geographic level with a greater than 40% participation rate or consider an alternate data source.</i></p> |
| <p>When comparing your county-level 2023 HYS results to state-level results, the percentage of students in your county who selected “any days” on the question “<i>During the past 30 days, on how many days did you use marijuana or hashish?</i>” is lower than the state percentage, but there is not a note or symbol indicating a statistically significant difference between your county and the state results.</p> | <p><i>When differences are not statistically significant, avoid making comparisons within norming messages.</i></p>  |