# Messaging to Keep Kids Coverage on the Agenda

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Elizabeth Curwen & Anna Hasselblad July 31, 2013



### **The Narrative Project**



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### Results

- Policy wins
- Message resonance
- Increased capacity and impact



NUMBER 4

### **EVALUATION BRIEF**

JULY 2012

#### The Narrative Communications Project: Takeaway Findings on a Message-Framing Approach

Sheila Hoag, Victoria Peebles, and Christopher Trenholm, Foreword by Gene Lewit, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation

#### **Executive Summary**

In 2004, staff from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation—recognizing both opportunities for, and risks to, children's health insurance coverage in states—began developing a grant program with a strategic communications firm, Spitfire Strategies. Using input from a number of nationally recognized experts to inform the effort, the program was designed to help state-based advocates promote children's health insurance coverage and coverage expansion more effectively and build the consensus needed to accelerate progress on children's health insurance coverage. This collaboration resulted in the Narrative Commuications (Narrative) Project, a communications capacity-building grant project sponsored by the Packard Foundation and implemented in partnership with Spitfire. Implemented across an initial 11 states in 2006, the Narrative Project combined modest grant support to state-based advocates with intensive, targeted technical assistance to grantees on effective communications and messaging.

To document key lessons from the Narrative Project and whether/how the grant program may have affected the work of the state-based advocates, researchers from Mathematica and the Urban Institute conducted semistructured interviewers with staff from 15 of the 16 Narrative grantee projects. Findings from the study offer substantial evidence that it achieved these aims by strengthening grantees' capacity for, and effectiveness at, advocating for children's coverage. All 15 Narrative grantees interviewed reported that they achieved the broad aims of the Narrative, and 73 percent cited specific policy wins as evidence. These wins included helping to stymie efforts to cut children's coverage in their state and to promote successful expansions in coverage. Eight of the 15 grantees also reported that the Narrative had helped them shift the media and public discourse on children's coverage in their state to a more positive framing of the issue, enabling them to talk about how coverage programs were working, rather than where they were weak. Twothirds of respondents believed that their organizations have been able to sustain at least some of the communications capacities built through the project, continuing the growth in advocacy capacity on children's issues that it had begun.

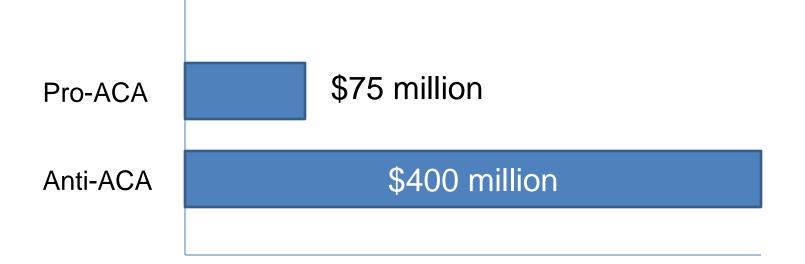
The economy is still in recovery, and the implementation of the Affordable Care Act is imminent. Therefore, many continue to believe that effective state-based advocacy is vital to ensuring that all children and adults have access to quality health care coverage (Grantmakers in Health 2010; Community Catalyst 2012; Strong et al. 2011). Findings from this study of the Narrative show the importance of strategic investments in making such advocacy possible, as well as lessons for advocates and funders in the value of message framing and an advocacy strategy rooted in a positive, "glass-half-full" approach.

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**Paid Messages in the Media** 

### **Television Ad Spending Since 2010**

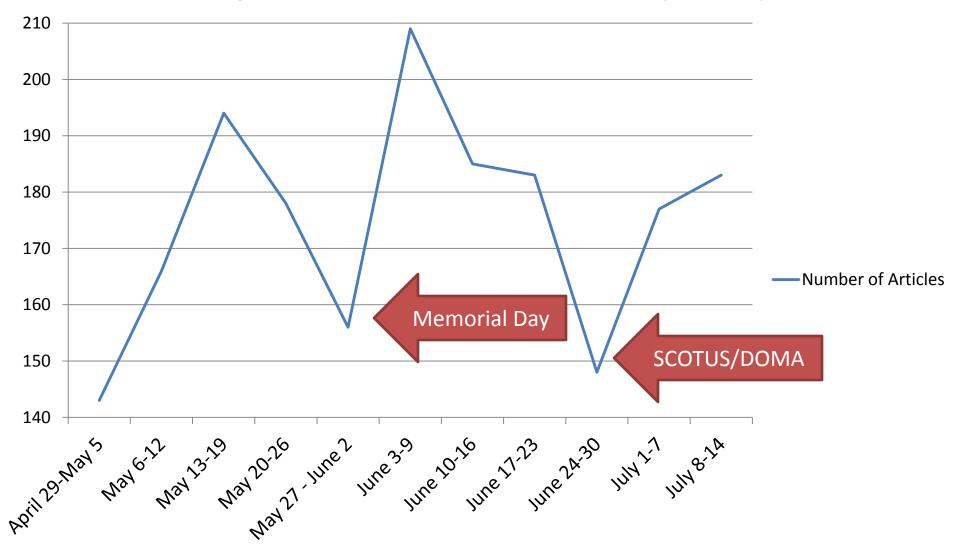


### Tone of Earned Media Coverage

- Generally positive
- Coverage of Administration's perspective
- Negative articles allow for rebuttal
- Continually highlights political nature

### **Volume of Media Coverage**

### **Coverage of "Affordable Care Act" in Top 50 Papers**



### **Positive Coverage**

## The New York Times

"Congressional Democrats said Wednesday that they expected to see more delays and snags in President Obama's efforts to carry out the new health care law, but they affirmed their strong support for the overarching goal of expanded coverage."

July 10, 2013

## **Positive Coverage**

"[HHS will] be prepared for the fact that things aren't going to be absolutely perfect right out of the gate... but over the course of time we will get there and we are mobilized to try to address whatever issues will come up."



NPR, July 12, 2013

### **Coverage as a Political Wedge**

"There's been no other law we can think of that has been the focus of this much ad spending immediately following its passage...The gap between enactment and implementation has created an opening for this to continue to be a point of attack for its critics."



July 10, 2013

### **Negative Coverage**



"I just see a huge **train wreck** coming down...I'm very concerned that not enough is being done so far — very concerned."

The Hill, April 17, 2013

### **Media Coverage of Public Opinion Polling**

"Many of those who need to know about the individual mandate just don't. Four out of five Americans are aware of the mandate, a recent Gallup poll found — but only 43 percent of the uninsured know about it."

Politico, July 13, 2013



### **Need for Proactive Messaging**



"Obama and his party have been playing defense on health care. He needs to turn the tables and challenge those who would obstruct the law's enactment and block the flow of its benefits. Implementation needs to be transformed from a dry bureaucratic chore into an element of a larger crusade for economic security."

Denver Post editorial, June 6, 2013

### **Reactive Messaging**

"I don't think it can be fixed...The only solution is to repeal it, root and branch."





"Listen, this is statute. The president's not going to sign a repeal bill. I think it's prudent to try to make changes."

"The reality of the ACA ... is it's going to begin collapsing under its own weight. I'm not so sure there's enough individual fixes to make the law more manageable."



### **Proactive Messaging**



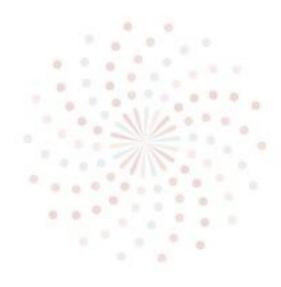
"We had people who were one layoff away from having no insurance at all...That is devastating to everybody, including the business community."

"[This is a] nihilistic effort by Republicans to undermine [ACA]. If that effort succeeds millions of Americans will be deprived of access to insurance and the benefits of the law."





## What is Your Split? Proactive vs. Reactive Messaging



## **Refreshing the Narrative**

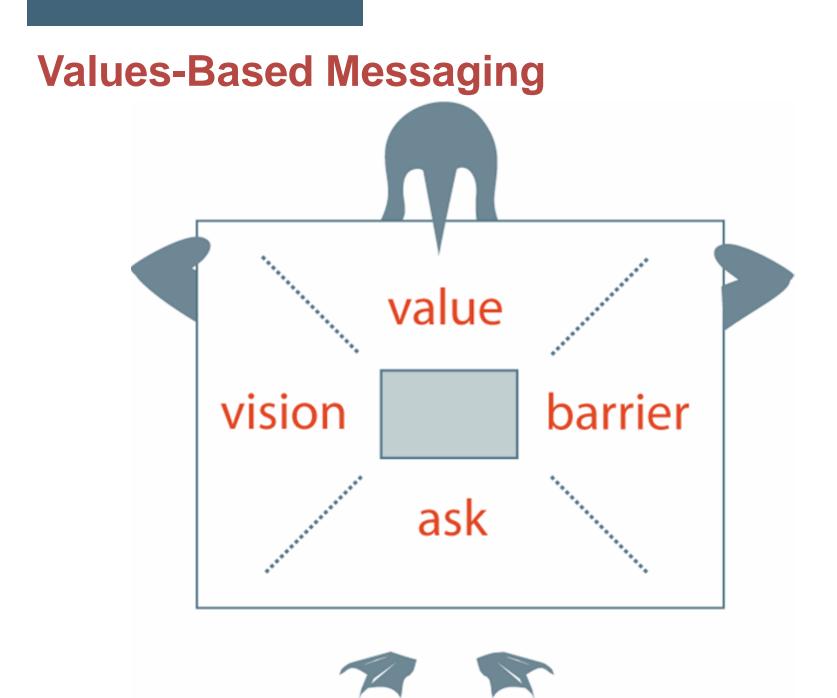
### **Child Success**

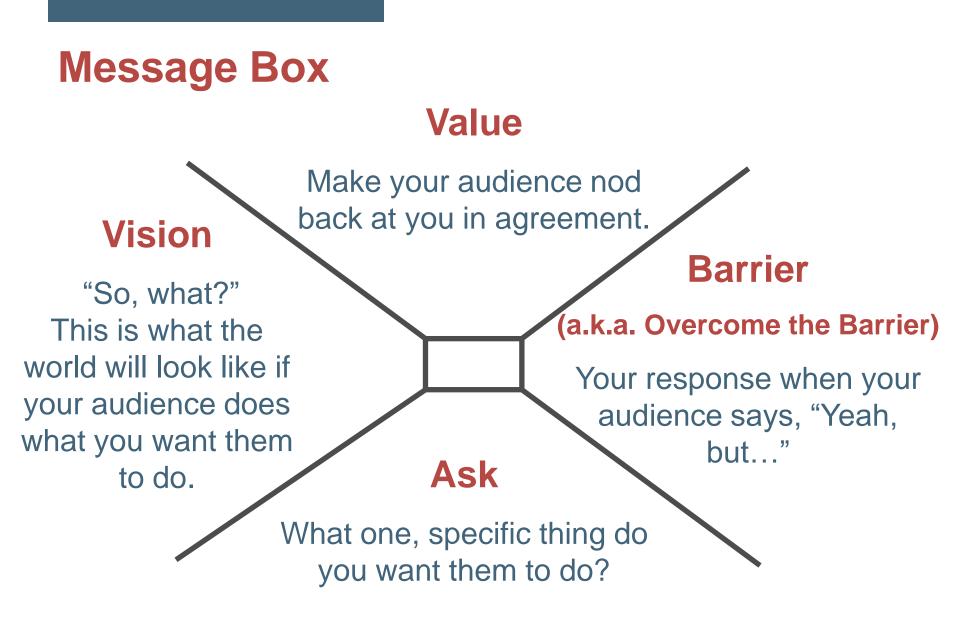
**Family Coverage** 

**Family Economic Security** 

## What's in the Messaging Document?

- Overarching Message Platform
- Implementation
- Path to Coverage
- Affordability of Coverage
- Benefits of Coverage
- Access to Care
- Responding to Critics





### **New Health Insurance Marketplaces**

[STATE] is making it easier to obtain and afford health insurance coverage for children and their families.

Bringing all children and their families into coverage will pave the way toward a better future for everyone in

[STATE].

New coverage options will increase the economic security of working families and reduce burdens on our health care system.

Our health care system is strengthened by every family that gets covered so it's vital to [insert policy priority].

## **Message Support**

- Data
  - Number of eligible families
  - Polling numbers
  - Economic benefits/job creation
- Stories
  - Uninsured child, parent or guardian
  - Family impacted by medical debt
- Solutions
  - Policy priority, e.g., outreach and enrollment, Navigators

### **Premiums and Cost-Sharing**

Families juggle home budget priorities, including rent, groceries, gas and doctor's visits every day.

We can find a way to make sure every working family with a tight budget can afford quality health insurance.

Federal tax credits will help many families afford coverage, but they may not be enough for some.

Our leaders at the state and federal level should address these concerns so children aren't locked out of coverage.

### **Message Channels**

- Offline
  - Issue papers, fact sheets, letters, comments
  - Speeches, testimony, interviews, meetings
  - Press releases, statements
  - Events
- Online
  - Website, blog, e-newsletter
  - Videos, images, infographics
  - Social media platforms

## **Joining an Existing Conversation Online**

- Hashtags
  - #healthinsurance
  - #healthcare
  - #ACA
  - #Medicaid
  - #[STATE]
  - #investinkids
  - #[STATE LEGISLATURE]
- Mentions
  - @[EXCHANGE]
  - @[STATE LEADER]

### tweetreach.com



## **Messaging in Action**



### **California Coverage & Health Initiatives**

The CMS Blog The official blog for the Centers

The official blog for the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) responsible for Medicare, Medicaid and CHIP. For more information, please visit www.cms.gov

California is the most populous state in the union and home to more than 13 percent of the nation's uninsured children. Since coverage is essential for making sure children reach their full potential, California Coverage & Health Initiatives (CCHI) is honored to receive a \$750,900 Connecting Kids to Coverage Outreach and Enrollment Grant that will help us bring more lowincome, eligible California children into health coverage.

GO

CCHI has been working for over a decade to ensure children and families have the security of coverage and access to quality care. Our member organizations reach Californians in over 90% of California counties, helping to promote a robust culture of coverage and expand coverage to all children and families in our state. This <u>video</u> highlights who we are and why we are committed to this work.

### **California Coverage & Health Initiatives**

**California Coverage & Health Initiatives Expands Reach to Connect Kids to Coverage** *New federal grant funds will target uninsured Latinos in Central Valley, Inland Empire* 

Sacramento, CA (July 2, 2013) – California Coverage & Health Initiatives (CCHI) announced today that it has been awarded a \$750,900 Connecting Kids to Coverage Outreach and Enrollment Grant by the U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). This major new funding will help CCHI harness the reach and passion of its member organizations to reduce the number of uninsured children and families in California.

"Providing children with health care sets them up for success in life by keeping children healthy, shielding their families from the burden of medical debt and making sure they enter school ready to learn," says Suzie Shupe, executive director of CCHI. "California has the most eligible but unenrolled children in the nation – this grant presents an unprecedented opportunity for us to give more families the chance to thrive and put our state on a path toward a brighter future."

### Your Turn

### **Tailoring Your Message**

- What is your objective?
- Who is your audience?
- What do they value?
- What supports your message?

## **Final Thoughts**



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