
COMMUNICATE WITH TARGET

Meet with Decision Makers

You have completed the strategy chart and you know who can give you what you want. You have identified who you think will be your target. You have a good idea, but you do not know for certain how the official will react until you meet and present what you want. You approach the meeting with the likely target with the hopes that you can resolve the issue, but with the understanding that the officeholder is unlikely to concede to your demands.

Approximately 3 to 8 people should attend this initial meeting with the target.

Assemble Core Group

For this first meeting, assemble the leaders of your core group organizations and other early allies willing to meet with the official. The initial meeting with the public official should involve three to eight people. Later, if the public official is unresponsive to the requests, arrange a follow-up meeting to which you bring 15 to 25 people to demonstrate your support and seriousness. Prepare fact sheets and information relevant to the urgency of the issue in the official's home district. Do not just go through the motions; the official needs to hear your best arguments and feel your power from the highest-ranking delegation you can muster. If you leave the meeting with nothing to show for it, then the official has become the "target" of the campaign; but not because you did not demonstrate your power and communicate the rational merits of the issue.

Prepare Resources to Educate Volunteers

Take the time to prepare volunteers to speak intelligently about the issue before they are expected to speak to the public or decision-makers. Resources you might provide volunteers include a policy question and answer briefing, talking points and fact sheets.

Following are a number of tools that can be adapted to local needs and used to educate volunteers.

▼ Policy Q&A

[Tobacco Retail Licensing](#)

[Self-Service Display Ban](#)

[Sign Ordinance Limits](#)

[Land Use Restrictions/Conditional Use Permits](#)

Be prepared with fact sheets about the relevance and importance of the problem locally.

▼ Talking Points

Following are suggested talking points to reference when speaking to reporters and community members about tobacco-related issues at the retailer level and The STORE Campaign activities. Modify and customize these messages with details about your community. Remember, when being interviewed by a reporter, keep your statements brief and to the point. Always state your key message point first and repeat it often during an interview.

Despite many successes in tobacco control, California recognizes that more needs to be done. Tobacco use in California continues to take a physical, emotional and financial toll on all its residents.

- Tobacco use remains the number one preventable cause of death in California, killing more people each year than all those killed by alcohol, AIDS, car accidents, illegal drugs, murders and suicides.
- California taxpayers still shoulder an unnecessary financial burden for the tragic health consequences of tobacco use.
- Too many families are devastated by tobacco's deadly impact. Grandfathers, grandmothers, moms and dads, aunts and uncles, brothers and sisters and sons and daughters are prematurely dying horrible and painful deaths from tobacco use.

For topic-specific talking points, click on the links below.

[Youth and Tobacco](#)

[Youth Access](#)

[Retailer Licensing](#)

[Zoning Ordinances to Limit Ads](#)

[Self-Service Display Bans](#)

[Smokeless Tobacco](#)

[Cigars](#)

[Zoning Ordinances to Restrict New Tobacco Retail Outlets](#)

▼ Fact Sheets

[Youth and Tobacco](#)

[Illegal Sales & Licensure](#)

[Tobacco Marketing](#)

[Enforcement](#)

▼ PowerPoint Presentations

[Youth and Tobacco](#)

[Illegal Sales & Licensure](#)

[Tobacco Marketing](#)

[Enforcement](#)

Prepare Resources for Meeting Handouts

Some of the materials prepared for outreach, education and recruitment of volunteers are appropriate to leave behind with the official after the meeting. For example, the fact sheet on the issue and the specific report on how that issue impacts the official's home district, city or county.

The report on the local impact of the issue will become one of the most important resources of the campaign. It could demonstrate, for example, a dangerously high sales rate to minors in the target's district, or that in the last two years, 75% of all new tobacco retailers have opened for business there. Data that shows an urgent need in the target's home community becomes a powerful weapon for recruiting allies and communicating the issue campaign to the media.

The report should be designed for maximum political and media impact. It should include a description of various issues, for example: What is a youth purchase survey? What is a sting? Who has responsibility for different evaluation and enforcement activities dealing with sales to minors? Then the results should be listed detailing where the data originates.

First Meeting Results

In preparing for the first meeting with the target, revisit *Menu of Tactics—Visits with Public Officials* in *Develop a Strategy* section. Request a specific action from the office holder and have a fall back demand. Also, note every commitment or question raised by the official and follow up quickly. If the official comments during the meeting that she is not inclined to support the ordinance, but she would like to know how the other cities in the county are dealing with the issue, get her this information. If no other city in the county is engaging the issue, get her the names of other cities in other counties. Return to her with more information about the seriousness of the problem and the benefits of being a leader on the issue. If appropriate, refer her to a city councilperson in another city who successfully led the effort to pass a similar ordinance.

More often than not, if you have analyzed the council and selected the proper target, nothing you say will be convincing. The savvy official will have a dozen ways to say no (e.g., making you feel that somehow you are to blame for the result, or shifting the blame to some other party). Do not be fooled, do not start second-guessing yourself or your goals. Be on the lookout for the favorite dances officials do when they are under pressure.

“I was just about to do what you want, but because you are acting like this, now I will not.”

“I never respond to pressure. I always make up my own mind.”

“I cannot vote to spend the MSA money the way you want because the Health Director has already committed it to provide medical care to the poor.”

When your delegation leaves the official’s office, you want to be certain the official is worried about what’s coming next. If you have handled the first interaction well, the official is already thinking, “what can I do to get them off my back?” While the official worries, you depart the meeting thinking “This is only the beginning. They ain’t seen nothing yet!”

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