

**Suicide Prevention Coalition of Colorado
Key Messages about SPCC**

2011

The Importance of Key Messages

Key messages are the language that an organization uses to communicate with its external audiences as well as its internal audience. They are language that get to the heart of an organization's work, projects, goals, etc. Unlike mission statements, vision statements and the like, they are to be used freely, orally, online and in print. They are the short, direct messages about the organization, or, as many people refer to them, the "60-second elevator speech." Key messages should be used by all of the ambassadors of an organization when they are explaining who or what the organization is. However, they should be personalized and delivered in genuine and unique ways. Individuals can use their own stories, testimonials, etc. to personalize their messages.

Organizations generally have a primary message and handful of secondary messages, generally no more than five. The primary message provides an overview of the organization. That is, the primary message is a single statement that summarizes who the organization is. It is paramount that this is supported by secondary messages so people do not try to put too much information into a single statement. The number of key messages are kept to a minimum for simplicity. That is, a 60-second elevator speech cannot say everything an organization does, supports, wants to be, etc. Further, well-supported explanations follow when an audience's full attention is captured.

Key messages also ensure that the board, staff, grantees, partners and other organization ambassadors are speaking about an organization in the same way. If a person asks three people involved with the Suicide Prevention Coalition of Colorado what the organization does, who it is, etc., that person should receive answers that all say basically the same thing. There should not be three different or varying answers. Mixed messages can change the experience people have with the group. Consistent messaging shows a well-organized, well-run and strategic organization.

When reviewing the organization's key messages, consider the following:

- Key messages are geared toward the audience, not the speaker/writer.
- Think about the organization's unique traits (What separates it from others working in the same arena?).
- It is not imperative to memorize key messages. Understand the gist of them and use them in a way that works with the particular audience to be reached and your role with the organization.
- Keep key messages short and to-the-point.
- Support key messages with stories, details, facts, testimonials, etc., to expand on messaging as the audience's attention is gained.

SPCC's Top Audiences

Target audiences are those people who most need to know about the Suicide Prevention Coalition of Colorado or who will most likely hear or read the organization's messages. *Note: All of these audiences are potential members, and thus, funders.*

- Suicide prevention and mental health/behavioral health organization representatives, individual counselors/therapists
- Physicians, EMTs, first responders
- Survivors
- Educators (secondary and post-secondary level)
- Funders/Potential funders/Sponsors
- State policymakers
- Media
- Students, faith-based leaders, people concerned about family members/friends, etc. (This becomes your "everyone else" audience.)

Suicide Prevention Coalition of Colorado Key Messages

Primary Message

The Suicide Prevention Coalition of Colorado works around the state of Colorado to decrease suicide and its impact.

Secondary Messages

The coalition is a collaborative effort of organizations and individuals. As a coalition the organization is able to create a unified voice that is stronger, more organized and more efficient than individuals and groups working alone.

SPCC works to educate and advocate in an effort to end suicide in Colorado.

SPCC is the only statewide membership organization made up of individuals and agencies working all across Colorado to end suicide.

SPCC's board members represent nearly every region of the state and represent individuals and organizations working in the areas of mental health, suicide prevention, survivor groups, depression and more.

SPCC works to ensure that information about best practices in suicide prevention, program information and connections are shared with its network, in order to facilitate efforts, help avoid duplication of efforts and ensure financial and human resources are used effectively and efficiently.

SPCC provides a safe place for survivors of suicide to find resources, connect with other survivors and work with others who understand their unique role in suicide prevention.

Results of SPCC Work/Potential Examples of SPCC's Work

As noted, key messages are simple, direct and short. As a representative of SPCC, you will want to “personalize” your story. That is, why are you involved? What does SPCC offer that you find of value. Additional details to include when you discuss SPCC may include any of the following or none of the following.

Bridging the Divide

Webinars/Teleconferences (as these are made available)

Online resources

Network of organizations/individuals that you have found through SPCC

Organized communication around state/Efficient way to spread your message

Calendar of events

Advocacy efforts/Regional Liaisons

Town Hall of Hope

SPCC extending around state and beginning to work with other states, as possible

Number of presentations SPCC representatives have conducted each year, touching how many people

Media hits

Statewide directory of suicide prevention resources

Rural and urban reach

Statewide experts