



MESSAGING & THE MEDIA

TOOLS FOR TELLING THE STORY OF YOUR SUCCESS

NADCP Communications Mission

1.

Ensure treatment court coverage is accurate and fair by monitoring media, proactively generating media and setting the record straight.

2.

Promote treatment courts as a vital local, state and federal solution to justice system reform.

Why Tell Our Stories?

- ▶ Effective stories advance our work, impact funding, facilitate community partnerships, support participants and alumni.
- ▶ Positive media mitigates crisis.
- ▶ The story of treatment courts is not all positive. Criticism can undermine public support and funding.

Managing the Message

Treatment court criticisms

Judges practice medicine

Deny MAT

Overly punitive

Research is faulty

No oversight

Cherry pick participants

Don't reduce incarceration

EDITORIAL

If Addiction Is a Disease, Why Is Relapsing a Crime?

By The Editorial Board

Drug courts divided on approaches to addiction recovery

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Reveal investigates an Oklahoma recovery center called Christian Alcoholics & Addicts in Recovery, or CAAIR.

The worst day of Brad McGahey's life was the day a judge decided to spare him from prison.

Why Tell Our Stories?

THE BALTIMORE SUN

Drug courts are not the answer

By Margaret Dooley-Sammuli and Nastassia Walsh
Baltimore Sun • Apr 06, 2011 at 12:00 am

Why Tell Our Stories?

THE BALTIMORE SUN

All criminal justice should be modeled on drug courts

By Dawinder S. Sidhu

Baltimore Sun • May 27, 2019 at 6:00 am

Why Tell Our Stories?

DALTON DAILY CITIZEN
SERVING NORTHWEST GEORGIA SINCE 1847

"This is not my Mom!": 20 years of life saving through the Conasauga Drug Court

By Mark Millican Special to the Dalton Daily Citizen Sep 26, 2022



Destiny Machelle Hall's daughter Presleigh, 7, tells the audience at the Conasauga Drug Court graduation how proud she is of her mother.

The Mythical Formula

Hero

Starts our ordinary or downtrodden.

Quest

Our hero is faced with a challenge and sets out on a journey.

Risk

Our hero confronts villains and/or peril along the way.

Transformation

Our hero perseveres and triumphs, usually with the help of others.



Why Tell Our Stories?

A good story creates emotional resonance.

A great story stimulates the desire to act.

The Media

For profit industry delivering information and entertainment

Constant need for content

All media is created equal

The Media

What is news?

- > Timeliness
- > Proximity
- > Controversy
- > Consequence
- > Rarity
- > Prominence
- > Human Interest



The Media

Finding the hook

- > Opioid/Addiction epidemic
- > Budget cuts
- > Elections
- > Harrowing child neglect case
- > DWI crash
- > Human interest

How Do We Tell Our Stories?

Getting your message out

- > OpEd
- > Letter to the Editor
- > Direct Pitch – Compelling participant, new innovation, milestone for program, graduation, community event.
- > NDCM

How Do We Tell Our Stories?

OpEd

- > Long (~800 words)
- > Makes compelling argument
- > Pitched or submitted cold
- > You control the message



How Do We Tell Our Stories?

Letter to the Editor

- > Short (>300 words)
- > Written in response to article
- > Submit within 5 days

The Washington Post

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Opinion | Drug court diversion is of great help in the opioid crisis

As a West Virginian and a substance use disorder clinician with more than 11 years in recovery, I read with interest the profile of my state's fight to hold drug companies accountable while still struggling to get help to families impacted by addiction [[“An easy target,”](#) front page, Oct. 21]. There is no greater tragedy of the opioid epidemic than the trauma inflicted on children. I know from firsthand experience: No program is more effective at providing treatment to families and children than drug court.

How Do We Tell Our Stories?

Direct Pitch

- > Find a hook
- > Allow plenty of time
- > Be persistent
- > Make their job easy

Statistics

Interviews

Photos

Dear XYZ,

I read your recent story about an **increase in impaired driving in our community** and wanted to reach out with a unique and timely story that I think you'll find compelling.

When Robert Smith came before the judge at the county DWI court, he was afraid he would be sent to prison for years. **Instead, Judge Taylor looked beyond Robert's crimes and recognized a need for substance use disorder treatment.** Judge Taylor and his team connected Robert with treatment; provided support, supervision, and accountability; and watched him earn back the trust of his community and, most importantly, the love and trust of his five-year-old daughter. Now Robert mentors others struggling with addiction who are coming through the same court. **A profile of Robert will help readers understand that while impaired driving is a critical issue, there are solutions in our community that make a difference.**

Robert and Judge Taylor are both available for interviews. Footage of Robert's graduation from treatment court is also available. Thanks for your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing from you

How Do We Tell Our Stories?

National Drug Court Month

- > Use the NADCP Toolkit
- > Alert media well in advance
- > Get creative
- > Team up with other programs

NATIONAL DRUG COURT MONTH

TOOLKIT

May 2022

A Celebration
of Recovery





Non-graduation Story Example:
Community Clean-up (Sacramento, CA)

Non-graduation Story Example: Sports Tournament (Beaverton, OR)



Non-graduation Story Example: Community Partnership (Nashville, TN)



The Media

Media Preparedness

- > Statistics
- > Program Summary
- > Media Point of Contact
- > Interview subjects
- > Alumni
- > Pictures
- > Templates

Family drug court celebrates "life-changing" graduations

by Zack Hedrick | Thursday, May 9th 2019



Managing the Message

Credibility – Why should audience listen to you?

Emotion/Immersion – Move the audience to feel the same thing as you

Reason – Logical argument backed by evidence

Call to Action – What can people do?

Aristotle



"Character may almost be called the most effective means of persuasion."

Managing the Message

Credibility – Why should audience listen to you?

“In my 15 years as a judge I’ve never seen anything as successful as drug court...”

“I’ve prosecuted hundreds of cases and I can tell you that outcomes in treatment court are far better...”

Managing the Message

Emotion – Move the audience to feel the same thing as you

“The best part of my job is seeing the faces of children who have gotten their mom or dad back.”

“On my first day in court I was lost and broken. I remember standing in front of the judge shaking. I thought nothing good ever happens in court. He looked me in the eye and told me he and the team were going to help me get my life back. That was the moment everything changed for me.”

Managing the Message

Reason – Logical argument backed by evidence

“Your support for funding helped our treatment court save fifty lives and over a million dollars last year.”

Managing the Message

Call to action – What can people do?

“Community support helps ensure our treatment court can continue its life-saving work and keep the community safe. Please consider making a donation to help our treatment court thrive.

Managing the Message

What is a treatment court?

Managing the Message

There is no one way to talk about your program!

Managing the Message

1. Who do treatment courts serve?
2. How do treatment courts help?
3. Why is this approach effective?

Managing the Message

Treatment courts provide an alternative to incarceration for individuals involved in the justice system with a substance use and/or mental health disorder.

By delivering individualized, evidence-based treatment, supervision, and recovery support, treatment courts save lives, save resources, and reduce crime.

Managing the Message

1. Audience

Who am I trying to reach?

2. Outlet

How am I going to reach them?

3. Message

What do they need to hear?

Managing the Message

Audience

Funders
Skeptics
General public
Discipline-specific
Colleagues
Veterans
Legislators

Outlet

Media
Community forum
Advocacy
Conferences
Grants

Messages

Lower recidivism
Restore communities
Reduce crime and make
Save lives
Save money
Reunite families
Address the opioid epidemic
Methamphetamine
Help folks get back to work
Send people back to school
Improve public health
Ensure public safety

Managing the Message

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Managing the Message

Audience – Elected Officials

- > Save Money
- > Cut Crime/Protect Public Safety
- > Accountability
- > Evidence-based practices

Managing the Message

Audience – Elected Officials

“Our drug court **saves \$13,000** for every person we serve, money that can go to **help law enforcement** focus on **violent criminals** .”

“Our drug court is an **accountability court** . We use a combination of **close supervision** and **evidence-based treatment** to hold offenders **accountable** for their actions and teach them to be **productive members of the community** .”

Managing the Message

Audience – General Public

- > Cut Crime/Protect Public Safety
- > Save lives/Restore families
- > Better use of resources

Managing the Message

Audience – General Public

“We are all impacted by **addiction in our community** .
Instead of continuing the revolving door of drugs and crime,
our treatment court **breaks the cycle** by holding individuals
accountable while ensuring they receive **treatment and
support to transform themselves into productive members
of the community.**

Managing the Message

Tell a story

The Problem – What issue did you identify?

The Journey – How did you identify a solution, what were the barriers, how did you break through?

The Solution – How did your solution solve the problem?

Managing the Message

Language Matters

- > Think about the words you use
Do they establish or diminish credibility?
- > Avoid unnecessary stigmatizing language

STUDY: Stigmatizing terms like “addict,” and “abuser” elicited negative implicit and explicit bias toward people with substance use disorders.

Managing the Message

The Interview – Rules to Live By

- > Always truthful
- > Always prepared
- > Know the reporter/angle
- > Identify audience you want to reach
- > Match the message
- > YOU are in control

Managing the Message

“If you have really low recidivism rates [in drug court participants] then it’s not really a good measure for how well you’re doing because you’re not taking the people who need it most.”

- State Chief Justice

Managing the Message

The Interview

- > Develop and practice your key message points
- > Stay positive
- > Pivot/reframe
- > Use emotion/paint a picture
- > Take it local, use your experience
- > Give them a quote

Managing the Message

Stay Positive

Q: “Some critics argue that drug courts limit the role of defense. Is that true?”

A: “Defense attorneys are critical members of the drug court team. Every participant in our program voluntarily enters with the assistance of their defense attorney and we work closely with the defense on every case. Collaboration and communications are key to our success.”

Managing the Message

Pivot

Q. There is concern that drug courts have been slow to embrace MAT. Is this true?

A. “Our focus is on ensuring all treatment courts have the latest best practices related to MAT. Here are some of the things we are doing....”

Pivots

It's important to understand...

I want to point out that...

A bigger issue is...

Our focus is....

Let's not forget that...

If we take a closer look, we see...

The evidence on this is clear...

This is a common misconception...

Managing the Message

Use emotion/paint a picture

Q. What is discussed when the drug court team meets?

A.“OK, Susie needs some help with childcare. She’s unable to get to her random drug screenings because of transportation. Do we have TARC tickets to help her with that, or do we have transportation through the Family Mentor Program to get them there? Her kids are not getting to school so let’s address it right away versus allowing her to try to figure it out while trying to figure out their recovery,” Brown continued. “It can just be so overwhelming. We believe the more support the person has, then they have more likelihood of being successful.”

Managing the Message

Take it local, use your experience

“As I travel the state and work with other treatment courts....”

“In ten years as a drug court judge here is what I have seen...”

“I recall a case that really shows why drug courts are so important...”

Interview Techniques

Give them a quote

“Our veterans signed on the dotted line to serve each and every one of us. It is our national duty to ensure that if veterans suffer as a result of that service they receive the treatment and benefits they have earned.”

“Drug courts transform the courtroom into places of hope and healing. Instead of punishment, drug courts offer treatment and compassion.”

Managing the Message

Effective messaging strengthens your program and its standing in the community and will protect your program when times are tough.

A Note on Crisis

What is a crisis?

A crisis is any situation that threatens to undermine public confidence.

Sudden crisis

Occur without warning

Smoldering crisis

Slow developing, typically begins as internal matter

The principles of crisis management apply to both large and small, sudden and smoldering crises.

A Note on Crisis

Crisis Readiness

DEVELOP POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH MEDIA

- Pro-active positive media
- Insulate against backlash
- Educate the public

DESIGNATE CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM

- Don't be caught off guard
- Develop communications plan

ANTICIPATE CRISIS

- Look at vulnerabilities: where/when is crisis most likely to occur?
- Mitigate any issue that can become a potential crisis

PREVENTION

- Adherence to best practices

Call us Anytime!

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