How to Improve Pedestrian Safety in San Francisco

A Handbook for Advocates

Traffic Safety Programs
SFDPH Community Health Education Section
http://www.dph.sf.ca.us/traffic_safety/
San Francisco is a walker’s city.
It has colorful neighborhoods, beautiful views, and scenic destinations like the Golden Gate Bridge, Twin Peaks, and the Embarcadero. It is a relatively compact city with much of the residential housing located within easy walking distance of shopping, entertainment and other walkable destinations. It is also a city well-served by public transit, which can encourage a combination of walking and transit to reach more distant destinations. Tourists come from all over the world to enjoy our great city. Residents and tourists alike walk in San Francisco to see our attractions, our landmark Victorian homes, our murals and our vibrant communities.

There are many reasons why people walk in San Francisco. We walk because it is a convenient way to get around, for exercise, and as a social activity. Walking promotes local business and helps develop a sense of community. We need to walk in order get on Muni or BART. Walking is also a social justice issue. For many children, seniors, the blind and visually disabled, walking is the only mode of transportation they can do independently. People with less money own fewer cars and live in neighborhoods with high-speed roads, which make it less safe to walk.

For all these reasons, it’s important to promote the best possible conditions for pedestrian safety. Unfortunately, San Francisco currently has some of the highest numbers of pedestrian fatalities and injuries in the nation. Of all deaths related to motor vehicle crashes, pedestrian fatalities account for 49% – that’s almost half! In comparison, pedestrian fatalities account for only 18% of motor vehicle injuries in California and 11% in the United States overall.

What can we do to improve pedestrian safety in our beautiful city? There are many things we can do, but three effective strategies are to organize our communities, conduct educational campaigns, and carry out media advocacy campaigns. This booklet will talk about how you can use these approaches to make your neighborhood safer for walking.
How to Use this Booklet

Community Organizing:
If you want to build support and mobilize people to get pedestrian safety improvements in your neighborhood, turn to page 2.

If you want to read an example on community organizing, please turn to page 11 to read about the San Jose/Guerrero Coalition to Save our Streets Coalition.

Educational Campaigns:
If you want to educate people about pedestrian safety, turn to page 16.

If you want to read an example on educational/media campaigns, please turn to page 21 to read about the Bar Nights Campaign by the San Francisco Department of Public Health.

Media Advocacy:
If you want to use the media to get pedestrian safety improvements in your neighborhood, turn to page 23.

If you want to read an example on media advocacy, please turn to page 34 to read about Senior Action Network.
Community Organizing

Community organizing is a process by which people come together in organizations or groups to act jointly in the interest of their communities or to work towards some common good. Ideally, people involved in community organizing groups learn how to take greater responsibility for the future of their communities, gain mutual respect and achieve growth as individuals.

The central ingredient of all effective community organizing is building power. Community organizing builds power and works for change most often to achieve social justice with and for those who are disadvantaged in society. With respect to pedestrian and traffic safety, community organizing is a method that moves away from focusing solely on changing individuals’ attitudes and behaviors when driving or walking to an approach that mobilizes community members to change local environmental factors for the benefit of all. Public health studies in issues like tobacco control show that involvement in such environmental efforts turns out to also be one of the most effective means of changing the individual attitudes and behaviors.

The following steps can help you organize your community to address pedestrian and traffic safety problems in your area:

**Identify the Problem**

It’s important to start with a clear idea of what the specific pedestrian safety issues are. Do drivers speed at excessive rates? Are there seniors that live in the neighborhood and do not have enough time to cross the street safely? Being able to clearly state the pedestrian safety problems in your community will help you identify some potential solutions.

**Build Support**

Securing long-term pedestrian safety improvements takes a lot of work from a lot of people. It’s best to build support for proposed improvements. Think of who else might be interested in this issue and partner up with them. Join an existing coalition or start your own.

Be sure to partner with as many different stakeholders as possible that live in or represent the area in which you are working. Individual residents, neighborhood associations, business owners, faith
leaders, school officials, senior groups, youth leaders, advocates for the disabled, and non-profit agencies serving various ethnic groups – they can all play an important role in advocating for safe, walkable streets. Leaflets, flyers, and articles in local neighborhood papers can ensure that your neighbors know about your concerns. But nothing is as effective as talking one-on-one with people.

It’s best to make alliances as early as possible with policymakers in charge of decisions regarding pedestrian safety. This also applies to people who were decision-makers in the past because they have the knowledge to guide your efforts. These people can often help point out what are the specific potential solutions or challenges for your street or neighborhood.

Some examples of individuals to build relationships with include the officers with the Traffic Company at the San Francisco Police Department (SFPD), traffic planners and engineers at the Municipal Transportation Agency (MTA), the San Francisco County Transportation Authority, the ADA Coordinator at the Department of Public Works (DPW), the Pedestrian Safety Project at the Department of Public Health (DPH), and your City Supervisor. If you build positive relationships with these people early, they can often facilitate changes to improve pedestrian safety.

**Train Participants**

It’s important that the stakeholders involved in improving pedestrian safety understand the factors involved. Training participants on the issues is an essential step.
First, it’s helpful to learn about the classification of your street. Engineers classify streets according to five categories: residential, collector, arterial, state highway, and interstate. Each is designed for a specific purpose, amount and type of traffic, and level of access. The MTA has jurisdiction over residential, collector, and arterial streets. The California Department of Transportation has jurisdiction over state highways and interstates. MTA traffic engineers and planners can help identify your street classification.

To get started on pedestrian safety, participants should have a basic understanding of the general issues in their community and how pedestrian safety is related to these issues (e.g., the history of the neighborhood, major stakeholders such as schools, faith-based organizations, businesses, and hospitals). Introductory trainings can be conducted on the history of the neighborhood with a special focus on transportation. For example, when was your neighborhood established? What were the main modes of transportation over time? How did that impact the walking environment? What has happened to the streets and sidewalks since then? For example, in the 1940s-1960s, the City and County of San Francisco decided to widen streets at the expense of sidewalks to accommodate the predicted influx of automobiles. This policy significantly shortened sidewalk space available to pedestrians. Many examples of shortened sidewalks still exist in San Francisco today.

Participants would also benefit greatly by learning about the factors that most frequently contribute to pedestrian injuries. Some of these factors include speeding, driving while impaired, current traffic engineering measures in the neighborhood or lack thereof, and
the needs of individuals such as seniors, children, and disabled people when using existing pedestrian facilities. The Pedestrian Safety Project at the Department of Public Health can assist with this information. This information is also available on the Internet. Some excellent websites are:

- Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center - [http://www.walkinginfo.org/](http://www.walkinginfo.org/)
- SF Department of Public Health Traffic Safety Program - [http://www.dph.sf.ca.us/traffic_safety/](http://www.dph.sf.ca.us/traffic_safety/)
- The Traffic Safety Center at the University of California, Berkeley - [http://www.tsc.berkeley.edu/html/home.html](http://www.tsc.berkeley.edu/html/home.html)

Trainings do not have to exclusively occur in the beginning of your project. Some other trainings that may be useful to participants as the project develops are:

- Managing Group Dynamics/Facilitation
- Traffic Calming 101
- Fundraising and Grantwriting

**Do Research**

Your argument for changes will be stronger if you have research to support your case. You don’t have to be a scientist or traffic engineer to do this research. You and your community partners can complete a survey or “walkability audit” of your neighborhood. An example of walkability audits can be found at [http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/walkability/Walkability_Audit_Tool.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/walkability/Walkability_Audit_Tool.pdf). Also, you can create your own survey addressing specific needs of your community. For examples of surveys from local coalitions, contact the DPH Pedestrian and Traffic Safety Project at (415) 581-2400.

An important piece of data to gather is the number of collisions that occurred in your neighborhood. It’s best to get data on all traffic collisions as well as those that result in an injury or death to a pedestrian. The California Highway Patrol (CHP) collects and compiles such data statewide, which is called the State-Wide Integrated Traffic Records System (SWITRS). This data is also broken down by county. This data is published annually. At the time of this publication, the latest data available was from 2002. You can access this data at [http://www.chp.ca.gov/html/switrs2002.html](http://www.chp.ca.gov/html/switrs2002.html).
Good sources for local collision and pedestrian injury data include your local police station, planners and engineers at the MTA, or the Pedestrian Safety Project at the DPH. Most likely, these agencies are responsible for keeping track of such data. Some of these agencies even plot these collisions and injuries on a map so individuals can easily see where the problem areas are. If the data isn’t mapped, you can do it yourself by getting information on when and where the collisions and injuries occurred as well as the severity of the injury. It will be even more helpful if you can also get the age and race of the person injured or killed. Examples of traffic injury data for San Francisco neighborhoods can be found at http://www.dph.sf.ca.us/traffic_safety/traffic-related_injury_data.htm.

Observing pedestrian activity can enable you to identify the frequency of “pedestrian-vehicle conflicts.” These are cases where the pedestrian or vehicle had to take some action to avoid a collision (i.e., slow down or change direction at the last minute). These are sometimes called “near misses.” If possible, document these observations with video so you can view these observations repeatedly.

Other ways to research pedestrian safety issues in your neighborhood are to:
- Take pictures of the traffic and people crossing the street;
- Count the number of pedestrians and vehicles at certain times (rush hour, school drop-off/pick-off times, etc);
- Interview pedestrians on the sidewalk;
- Tally the number of traffic measures on the street (i.e., signals, crosswalks, stop signs, etc);
- Ask the police or transportation departments to evaluate
the “effective” speed at which people drive down the street (otherwise known as the 85% percentile);
♦ Count the number of seconds it takes to cross the street versus the number of seconds the signal allows for pedestrians to cross; and
♦ Research existing laws or policies that can be implemented or enforced in your neighborhood (e.g., school zones, bus stops, or double parking).

Once you’ve gathered and analyzed all this data, write a brief report or fact sheet summarizing your findings. This will make it easier for you and your supporters to work with influential policymakers and the media in order to get solutions.

Take Action and Propose Solutions

Now that you have done all that work, this is the step in which you will start to see some results. Propose solutions to the appropriate policymakers regarding the identified problems in the research you and your supporters conducted. It is especially helpful to work with the allies that you’ve already made to help get these solutions put into place!

It’s best to propose both short-term and long-term solutions. For example, if speeding on a particular corridor is a problem, ask your local police station to start enforcing the speed limit as a short-term solution. For a long-term solution, ask the Municipal Transportation Agency to change the streets in a way that compels people to drive at the speed limit (i.e., road diet, traffic circles, traffic signal timing, speed humps, etc).
In the beginning, it’s best to advocate for or implement solutions that are simple, small, and inexpensive. Success stories at the start will help create momentum for the larger scale projects that take more time and money. Also, be patient when it comes to the implementation of long-term solutions. Changes to the streets and the transportation infrastructure take a long time. That’s why it’s best to identify short-term solutions as well.

When proposing solutions, there are 3 main criteria you want to fulfill. First, be sure the proposed solution is achievable. Second, strive for the long-term, sustainable solutions. Short-term solutions are necessary but should not be the only ones completed. In the previously mentioned example, it’s good to have the police enforce speeding but after the police stop enforcement, drivers’ speeding behavior will return. Ultimately, it’s safer in the long-run when the streets are designed so that drivers will naturally drive at the speed limit.

Third, make sure your proposed changes improve the well-being of all. Consider the impact of changes on other neighborhoods or people who use the road, such as bicyclists, emergency vehicles, and people who have to use a wheelchair or walker. If you try to improve pedestrian safety in your neighborhood at the expense of others, you will encounter more opposition. Problems will tend to be passed back and forth, not solved.

If you are proposing changes to the streets, think tactically about timing. Often, it’s best to ask for traffic engineering changes when street design or work is already planned for that particular street. Examples of street work are street resurfacing, new construction, utility work (such as undergrounding), or sidewalk repair. Find out the schedule of proposed work and ask for the solutions you want as early as you can in the process. A good place to start your investigation of upcoming roadway work is at DPW’s Street Construction Coordination Center - http://209.77.149.9/sfdpw/sccc/sccc.asp.

Build More Support and Get Attention

Occasionally, there may be obstacles in getting your proposed solutions put into place. If this is the case, rally your supporters or coalition members and start talking to people with the power to implement what you want. An excellent first step is to talk to your Supervisor. Also, write letters to the directors of the city or state agencies responsible for the proposed changes. Hold a rally or other media event on the intersection that is most dangerous to pedestrians. Write a letter to the editor to the Chronicle, the Examiner, or your local neighborhood paper presenting the research
you’ve done and why it’s important to get the changes you want. The more attention you and your supporters receive, the easier it will be to get the changes needed to make your neighborhood safe for pedestrians (see Media Advocacy under Media/Educational Campaigns).

Be sure to record all your advocacy efforts. Make copies of all letters, save all newspaper articles, and tape all TV news stories. If you have conversations with people, write a follow-up letter to that individual, thanking them for their time and summarizing the conversation. Not only does this help build relationships, but the letters serve as a record of the conversation. Date all documents and keep them in an organized file. This is very useful when you need to refer to them several years into the future. Also, you may want to consider sending copies of documentation to your Supervisor so they have evidence of your efforts.

**Celebrate Your Success**

If you and your group succeed in getting the changes you want, throw a party and celebrate all the hard work you’ve done! You deserve it! Invite your supporters, the people that helped get those changes in place (i.e., your traffic engineer or police officer) and local community members. It’s important to recognize the great achievement you’ve won for your community.

Don’t forget to write thank-you letters to the people that implemented those solutions! This will facilitate working with these people in the future if you need to work with them again. Everyone likes to be praised.
Maintain Your Momentum

You want to ensure that the solutions you worked so hard to achieve are maintained. If the solutions included a policy or change in organizational practices, make certain that it is implemented, enforced and maintained. Often, this involves building on previous work. Ask your coalition members to follow-up with key policymakers to find out how your solutions are being maintained or enforced. Do this on a repeated basis as necessary. Also, include maintenance and/or enforcement as part of your evaluation.

Evaluate Your Hard Work

It’s essential to evaluate your work and see if your efforts helped improve pedestrian safety. The evaluation results will serve several functions. At the very least, it will help:

1) Demonstrate whether your neighborhood is truly safer for pedestrians;
2) Plan for any additional efforts to further improve pedestrian safety;
3) Build additional momentum for future efforts;
4) Obtain funding; and
5) Organize others do similar work in their communities.

Do the same research you did before the solutions were implemented and compare the pre- and post-results. Research organizations such as universities may be able to assist with the evaluation. Share results with your supporters, policymakers, community-based organizations, and the media.

As you organize your community, please keep in mind the following:

- **Be patient.** Organizing people can be a complicated process. And changing the environment to improve pedestrian safety in the long-term can take awhile.
- **Keep an open mind.** Don’t assume there is one right way to do things. And don’t get defensive if you are confronted with different ideas and solutions. By nature, community organizing means listening to different people with distinct ideas. You may be surprised at how creative and successful these ideas can be.
Case Study

The San Jose/ Guerrero Coalition to Save our Streets

Gillian Gillett and Jeff Goldberg wanted to be able to take their young daughter out for walks. But they found that taking a walk with her in the stroller was a dangerous undertaking in their neighborhood. They live on Guerrero Street, at the time a six-lane arterial street that drivers treated as an extension of I-280. Because of their difficulties, they contacted staff from City agencies to try to make Guerrero Street and San Jose Avenue safer to cross. Shortly thereafter, a neighbor was stabbed to death at approximately 6am. The police officers told Gillian that most likely, the noise and speed of the traffic made neighbors “sitting ducks” for crime. As a result, no one heard the neighbor’s cries for help. That’s when Gillian and Jeff decided to take action.

Gillian and Jeff discovered that there was an existing coalition in their neighborhood called the San Jose Avenue Coalition to Save our Streets. They decided to join after the Coalition agreed to include Guerrero Street as part of their target area. Gillian and Jeff also asked their neighbors to join the Coalition. With the power of this larger group, the Coalition developed relationships with key stakeholders and invited them to join as well.

Soon, their coalition included Fair Oaks Neighbors, Northwest Bernal Alliance, Senior Action Network, SF Bicycle Coalition, SF Clean City Coalition, Southwest Mission Neighborhood Association, Transportation for a Livable City, and Walk San Francisco. Local elementary schools, local businesses and St. Luke’s Hospital also joined the Coalition because they recognized the need for school-children, parents, caregivers, patrons and patients to walk to their locations safely. Soon, Coalition members found there was strength in numbers and policymakers were starting to pay attention to them.
The Coalition made key alliances with staff from City agencies in its efforts to calm traffic on Guerrero Street and San Jose Avenue. The Coalition contacted Supervisors Bevan Dufty and Tom Ammiano and secured their support for the San Jose/Guerrero Coalition's goals. They talked to the traffic planners and engineers at the Livable Streets Program at the SF Department of Parking and Traffic (now part of the Municipal Transportation Agency). Also, they contacted staff at the SF Department of Public Works to learn about adding street trees and plantings as well as improving sidewalk conditions and access for some of their disabled neighbors. These alliances proved invaluable as the coalition’s work evolved.

Gillian researched the history of her neighborhood and learned that both San Jose Avenue and Guerrero Street were expanded from 4 to 6 lanes in the 1950s to accommodate future automobile traffic. Many of the houses on these streets were literally moved back onto their own back yards, and the sidewalks were severely cut back to incorporate extra lanes for automobiles.

Coalition members also started conducting research on the current traffic conditions in their neighborhood. The police department told them that 105 collisions occurred in their neighborhood between 1997 and 2003. Of those collisions, 101 resulted in injuries, and 11 of those injuries were to pedestrians and bicyclists. At their request, SFPD and DPT measured the speed of traffic and found that 15% of traffic moves faster than 35 mph (the speed limit on Guerrero is 25mph)! Over time, DPT and Caltrans also gave them traffic counts of their local streets. As a result, the
Coalition found that approximately 31,000 cars travel through the center of their neighborhood every day.

Because of the number of children, seniors, and disabled people that live in the neighborhood, they also wanted to know how much time was allotted for crossing Guerrero Street and San Jose Avenue. They found out that the amount of time provided to cross these arterial streets was 33 seconds – approximately 2.5 seconds per foot. This timing was too little for seniors, children, and the disabled to cross safely. They compiled enough research to show decision-makers that conditions for pedestrians were very dangerous in their neighborhood.

They also talked to their neighbors and found out that 5 houses on Guerrero Street just south of Cesar Chavez Street were hit by speeding drivers - 4 of them more than once! Worse still, a man was killed inside his house when a car rammed into it. These personal stories provided compelling testimony as to why the conditions on Guerrero Street and San Jose Avenue needed to change.

Jeff and Gillian built a website to act as a resource for the community. On it, they published the Coalition’s historical research, traffic laws, events, plans and proposals. They also promoted the website as a way to organize the community and provide a consistent communications tool.

To get a simple, small success for their Coalition, it partnered with the DPH Pedestrian Safety Project on a street banner project. DPH developed street banners with a picture of three children and the
slogan, “We live here! Please slow down” in English and Spanish. These banners were placed on Cesar Chavez Street from Guerrero to Bryant Streets. Gillian and Jeff raised enough money from their neighbors, local schools, and St. Luke’s Hospital to purchase additional banners to be placed along Guerrero Street and San Jose Avenue.

After the banners were up, the Coalition held a demonstration at the intersection of Cesar Chavez and Guerrero Streets to protest the speed of traffic and unsafe pedestrian conditions. Over 100 people came to the demonstration, including neighbors, Supervisors Dufty and Ammiano, representatives from key stakeholder organizations, and staff from City agencies. The event was covered by English, Spanish, and Chinese language television news as well as print media.

Because of the Coalition’s comprehensive efforts, it asked Supervisors Ammiano and Dufty to introduce legislation to improve pedestrian safety conditions on local streets. In July 2004, Supervisors Dufty and Ammiano introduced legislation to calm traffic on Guerrero Street, San Jose Avenue, and Cesar Chavez Street. This legislation was unanimously approved by the Board of Supervisors on October 22, 2004. Because of this policy and the Coalition’s hard work, DPT and DPW:

♦ Reduced vehicle traffic from six lanes to four lanes on Guerrero Street and San Jose Avenue south of Cesar Chavez Street;
♦ Created bicycle lanes in the place of the eliminated traffic
lanes;
♦ Established four-foot wide, crosshatched, painted medians on both sides of the center medians on San Jose Avenue and Guerrero Street;
♦ Installed a traffic signal light at the intersection of Duncan and Guerrero Streets;
♦ Changed rush-hour tow-away zones into parking; and
♦ Reduced two multiple turn lanes – one from 3 to 2 lanes and another from 2 lanes to 1.

These initial improvements have only spurred the Coalition to do more. They secured over $120,000 in grants to help create a detailed plan to further improve traffic safety and the neighborhood. At the time of this publication, Coalition members and the San Jose/Guerrero neighborhood were halfway through their community planning process.

For more information, visit http://www.sanjoseguerrero.com, email the Coalition at contact@sanjoseguerrero.com, or call (415) 285-8188.
Changing risky driving behaviors is not easy. However, it is doable through a comprehensive approach that focuses both on individual behaviors (e.g., accelerating at yellow signals, multi-tasking while driving, speeding, impaired safety judgment) and the environmental context that supports or encourages risky driving (visibility of traffic signal, public accountability, peer pressure to drive safely). A key focus for this approach is to change social norms by creating a social environment where unsafe driving is unacceptable. One of the ways to change social norms is through the use of messages and images in the media.

Public education campaigns raise awareness about the need for pedestrian and traffic safety; encourage safe behaviors; and contribute to changing attitudes and motivating individuals to adopt recommended behaviors. Campaigns have traditionally relied on mass communication channels such as public service announcements (PSAs) on television, radio, newspapers, and billboards. Printed materials such as flyers, brochures, and posters are also common methods of informing the public about traffic safety. Increasingly, recent campaigns are taking advantage of technologies such as CD-ROMs and the World Wide Web as well as developing creative materials specific to the campaign.

Community groups and neighborhood associations can develop their own campaigns to educate people about pedestrian and traffic safety in their area. You don’t have to work at a public relations firm to develop an effective campaign. Just keep in mind the following steps:

**Do Some Research**

There are many different kinds of research to do before you implement your campaign. The following explains some of the necessary research that needs to be done.

**Strategic Planning Research** - You’d like to educate people on pedestrian safety but don’t know what exactly to highlight. If that’s the case, review the available data on pedestrian injuries. For example, you may find that speeding or DUI was a contributing factor in most of the injuries. You may find that most injuries oc-
urred to seniors or Asian-Americans. This kind of data will help define the main concept or theme of your campaign. Incorporating this data in all campaign materials also provides a compelling reason why people should pay attention.

Be sure to identify your target audience. People of diverse backgrounds have different preferences in educational material formats, channels of communication, and context. This is particularly relevant for racial and ethnic populations, who may have different languages and sources of information. In these cases, be sure to work with people with specific knowledge of the cultural characteristics, media habits, and language preferences of your target audience.

Direct translation of traffic safety information should be avoided. Rather, develop materials that reflect the cultural beliefs, ethnicity, primary language, education and income levels. Additional considerations include gender, age, sexual orientation, and attitudes toward transportation and traffic safety.

Determine what are the most useful media channels or educational formats based on the identified themes and target audience. Some media channels or educational formats are:

- Public service announcements
- Print, TV, or radio news coverage
- Brochures
- Posters
- Creative ideas of your own
- Billboards
- Websites
- Flyers
- Postcards
Be sure to take into account the preferences of your target audience. Your messages are most likely to reach your intended audience if you use the format most often used and trusted by them.

**Needs Assessment** – Collect information that estimates what is needed to design, distribute and evaluate your campaign. How much money will the campaign cost? What information should be included? What skills will be needed? These are essential pieces of information that will define the scope of your campaign.

**Formative Evaluation** - Now that you’ve identified the specific aspects of your campaign, you need to find out which messages will most likely be heard. Develop some sample slogans and ideas and test them out. Do informal “focus groups” and ask family, friends, and neighbors what they think. Make sure you test your materials on some people who are representatives of your primary target audience. Their feedback will prove to be invaluable. Be sure to incorporate their opinions, even if that means changing the focus of the campaign. Often, their opinions will reflect the best messages on which to base your educational efforts. They will also help identify what materials you should develop (i.e., PSAs, posters, flyers).

Research for any educational campaign is essential. Whatever you do, do not skip this step. Research you do will determine how well your campaign is created, distributed and received.

**Develop Your Content**
Once you have the main ideas, do some additional research to help shape the content of your educational campaign. For example, if family and friends tell you that they would drive safer after getting some expensive tickets, review the California Motor Vehicle Code. Identify the infractions related to pedestrians. Ask the DMV, SFPD, or California Highway Patrol how much each of those infractions cost.

**Design Your Educational Materials**
Design your educational campaign materials based on the strategic planning, needs assessment and formative evaluation you’ve done.

The design of educational materials matters almost as much as its content. If a poster, brochure, or PSA is poorly designed, it’s unlikely to draw anyone’s attention. If possible, hire a public relations professional to help design your materials. Perhaps someone in your neighborhood or organization has these skills. If you do not have sufficient funds to hire a PR firm, they will often do some pro-bono work. If you are just developing print materials,
you can hire a graphic designer or find one that will volunteer his or her services. In the past few years, more and more people are learning to use publishing and design-related software (i.e., Microsoft Publisher, Photoshop, Illustrator, etc). You may learn how to use this software or ask knowledgeable people to help.

**Do More Focus Groups**

Once your educational materials are designed, get some samples and test them out. Ask people you know for their opinions. What is their reaction? What is the take-away message they get? Do they like the text and pictures used in the materials? Do they have any suggestions for improvements? It’s best to get feedback now so you can incorporate edits before you distribute your materials.

For example, DPH developed street banners to encourage drivers to slow down. Before printing and hanging these expensive banners, DPH staff asked for input from Mission and Tenderloin residents. The feedback regarding the proposed picture of three generations of male Latinos was overwhelmingly negative. As a result, DPH changed the picture to one of three children, of both genders and different racial groups, which were better received. Asking for feedback saved DPH lots of time and money by avoiding having to redesign and reprint banners that would not have been appropriate for the target audience and unacceptable to community residents.
Distribute Materials
Now that your campaign is well researched and designed, publish the materials and distribute them to your target audience. If possible, kick off the launch of the campaign with a media event. Your message will reach more people if you have media coverage.

In fact, for small campaigns without a lot of money, publicity about the campaign can sometimes reach more people than the campaign itself. It can draw people’s attention, which is then reinforced by the campaign materials (i.e., posters, postcards, etc). A news article might lead to an editorial or column. This can be further supported by a letter-writing campaign. Seeing an issue mentioned several times in a newspaper or on TV creates a strong sense that something of interest is happening.

If you do get some press, be sure to keep copies of newspaper clippings and video of TV news. This will be useful for future media or community organizing efforts.

Evaluate Your Hard Work
Again, it’s important to evaluate your efforts. At the very least, determine when, where, how often, and to whom campaign materials were distributed to, shown, or aired. This is called a process evaluation. You should also do an outcome evaluation. This is research designed to answer questions about the effects of your campaign, especially if there was any attitudinal or behavioral change as a direct result of your campaign. A simple survey before and after a campaign can give initial feedback. Research organizations such as universities may be able to assist with the outcome evaluation.
The San Francisco Department of Public Health (DPH) sought to create an educational campaign to prevent driving under the influence (DUI). The challenge was to develop a DUI prevention campaign that was novel and appealing to the public.

To achieve this, DPH staff conducted focus groups with first-time DUI offenders and asked them what they learned from their experience that would most likely prevent others from doing the same. Overwhelmingly, focus group participants said that if they had known how much a DUI would cost them in terms of time, money and emotional strain, they would not have committed a DUI. They also said the slogan “Friends don’t let friends drive drunk” was stale and no longer effective. Based on this feedback, DPH launched the Bar Nights campaign, which educated residents on the financial and emotional risks of driving under the influence (DUI).
Specifically, the *Bar Nights* campaign reached bar-goers with strong visual messages about the total cost of a DUI. Volunteers went to bars and distributed cocktail napkins (right) to patrons. Printed on these napkins were estimates of the “hidden” costs of a DUI, including jail costs, license reinstatement, DUI classes, attorney’s fees, and car insurance rates. The napkin highlights the total cost of a DUI.

Posters were also put up in bathrooms, which stated the cost of receiving a DUI versus the cost of taking a taxi (previous page). Volunteers also handed out wallet-sized laminated cards with the telephone numbers of all eleven taxicab companies in San Francisco (below).

This campaign was enthusiastically received by bar owners and their patrons. It also received media coverage in the SF Chronicle, the SF Examiner, KTVU Channel 2 news, and several radio stations. Because of this coverage, the prevention messages of the campaign were not just received by the bar patrons but by all those who watched the TV news, read the paper, or listened to the radio.
News has a powerful influence on people’s perceptions of the world. The media can provide visibility, legitimacy, and credibility to an issue. The news media can communicate to opinion leaders and influential people, as well as the general public. It frames issues by suggesting what issues people should think about, how they should think about them, and who has worthwhile things to say about the issues.

The purpose of media advocacy on issues such as traffic safety is to change policy or influence decision-makers to improve conditions. The general idea is to raise awareness, increase community support and mobilize community action through the use of the media with the goal of enacting or changing policies to improve pedestrian and traffic safety. Similar to community organizing, media advocacy shifts the focus from the health of the individual to the health of the community as a whole. It also shifts the focus from a “blaming the victim” perspective to one on shared responsibility and social accountability. Using the media as an advocacy tool also makes an issue more visible, sets a public agenda and shapes the actions of policy makers to take a specific action.

Community groups and advocates can utilize media advocacy to influence policymakers to improve traffic and pedestrian safety in their neighborhood. Just keep in mind the following steps:

**Develop Your Strategy**

With limited resources, advocates need to focus their attention on a small number of key policymakers and opinion leaders. This means that you need to be strategic. Always assess your use of media in relation to, and in support of, other approaches. You should always use community organizing in conjunction with media advocacy in order to build support for the changes you want (see Community Organizing).

Media advocacy is ultimately about creating positive changes for your community. Therefore, you must identify what those changes are before you start to engage the media. There’s no sense in talking to journalists if you and your community are not clear about which changes you want.
When developing your strategy, you should address five questions that help form your overall strategy and where media advocacy would be appropriate. These questions are:

1. What is the problem?
2. What is the solution?
3. Who has the power to make the necessary change(s)?
4. Who must be mobilized to apply pressure for change(s)?
5. What message would convince those with the power to make the necessary change(s)?

Again, if you are using media advocacy, focus on social accountability and improving the health of the community as a whole. Here’s an example of how these questions can be answered from 2 different perspectives:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is the problem?</th>
<th>Individual approach (Educational Campaigns)</th>
<th>Community approach (Media Advocacy)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People driving at excessive speeds</td>
<td>Roads are designed to encourage speeding</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is the solution?</th>
<th>Individual approach (Educational Campaigns)</th>
<th>Community approach (Media Advocacy)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educate drivers about hazards of speeding</td>
<td>Get traffic calming measures on streets to encourage drivers to slow down</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who has the power to make the necessary change(s)?</th>
<th>Individual approach (Educational Campaigns)</th>
<th>Community approach (Media Advocacy)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drivers themselves</td>
<td>Elected officials, local transportation and public works departments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who must be mobilized to apply pressure for change(s)?</th>
<th>Individual approach (Educational Campaigns)</th>
<th>Community approach (Media Advocacy)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Media and safety groups, to deliver and reinforce educational messages</td>
<td>Community groups and neighborhood residents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What message would convince those with the power to make the necessary change(s)?</th>
<th>Individual approach (Educational Campaigns)</th>
<th>Community approach (Media Advocacy)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Radio public service announcements during rush hour educating drivers about hazards of speeding</td>
<td>Press conference at local intersection highlighting road conditions that encourage speeding and how the roads should be changed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It must be noted that both approaches are useful and necessary. People won’t be able to change their behavior if they don’t have the proper knowledge AND if the environmental context doesn’t support it. However, these approaches should be used alternately depending on the ultimate goal. And sometimes, both approaches are used simultaneously to achieve the desired change.

**Develop Your News Stories**

Now that you know who the focus of your advocacy effort is and what you want them to do, you can start developing the stories that will help convince them. This is the pre-planning that you will need to do in order to be prepared for a media event. Keep in mind a few points:

- **Identify your 3 key points.** These 3 points should be 1) what is the pedestrian safety problem; 2) why is this problem important; and 3) what should be done to address the problems. Some of the bullets below elaborate on what these points should incorporate.

- **Develop media “bites.”** Keep it short and simple – 15 seconds maximum. Figure out how to say what you want in a way that will make it more likely to be quoted. (Of course, this means that you know what you want to say first before you decide how to say it.)

- **Translate the individual problem into a social issue.** This means emphasizing social problems and broader contributing causes in addition to individual choices.

- **Stress why is it important to improve traffic safety.** Journalists and their audiences will not pay attention to your story unless they are presented with a clear reason why it is important to a broad audience.

- **Provide data.** News stories are more likely to get coverage when you provide journalists with 1-3 statistics. Also, consider using “social math.” This is a way to make large statistical numbers clear and compelling by placing them in a social context that provides meaning. See the example below.

- **Present a solution.** Without a clear solution to advance, getting media attention to your issue may be difficult or even counterproductive. Present both practical and moral reasons why your proposed solutions should be enacted.

- **Consider who would be the most effective spokespeople.** Credibility and legitimacy of the people giving the message is critical. The spokesperson may also change if you need to appeal to different audiences, particularly if you are reaching out to media outlets that target different language groups.
♦ Recruit people to tell their personal story. Reporters need to have a personal account to illustrate the story. It is a critical requirement for the news. Often, people who have been injured or are related to someone that died of a traffic-related injury have unique power to shape news coverage.

♦ Develop compelling visuals. TV news must have good visuals and newspapers often utilize photographs and graphics as well.

**Plan a Media Event** 3,9

Before holding a media event (i.e., press conference or demonstration), be sure that you are using your resources wisely. Putting on a media event takes lots of time and energy so you want to be certain that the media event is worthwhile. Ask yourself the following questions:

♦ Why do you want to have this media event?
♦ Is a news event the best way to reach those goals?
♦ What is the objective of the media event?
♦ Why should the media be interested in covering your event?

If the answers to these questions indicate the need for a media event, then plan carefully to ensure good media coverage. Consider the following:

**Before the event**

♦ *Decide on the best time and location.* On weekday mornings, the best time to plan an event that is most convenient to journalists’ schedules is 10 a.m. Hold your event at central, easy to find locations. Let journalists know in advance
about parking availability. Select a photogenic location with adequate room for media and participants.

- **Time your event well.** Try to avoid conflicting with other prominent events (such as a local election or a jury giving a verdict to a well-known trial). You don’t want to compete with other stories that journalists may give more priority to. You may also link the timing of an event to an anniversary or holiday that increases the newsworthy-ness of your story. For example, there is usually a spike in pedestrian injuries when daylight savings time ends in the fall. This may be a good time to highlight environmental changes for pedestrian safety so that walkers are more visible to drivers.

- **Write press release and media advisory.** See Writing a Media Advisory and Writing a Press Release on pages 30-31.

- **Start media outreach early.** Fax a media advisory or news release 3-7 days before your event. Don’t start too early because your efforts will not register with journalists. They usually plan no more than a few days in advance.

- **Follow up.** One to two days before the event, follow up your faxed news release with phone calls to journalists you are most interested in coming to the event. Make sure your release was received and offer to answer any questions prior to the event.

- **Prepare media kits and an agenda for the event.** The point of the media kit is to have all the key information in one
place in order to make the journalists’ jobs as easy as possible. These kits typically include your press release, fact sheet, and other background information. Make sure you identify a contact person for journalists and have their phone number and email address on the media kits.

♦ **Choose and train speakers for the event.** These speakers are ideally your spokespeople and people personally affected by the specific issue. Speakers should be informed and knowledgeable about the issue. They should be able to state your prepared media bites, tell their personal stories, and advocate for the policies you want.

At the event

♦ **Check on location logistics.** Provide microphones for speakers if necessary. If you are going to show video or audio-tapes, make sure the equipment is working. Confirm there are enough electrical outlets and extension cords for cameras and lights.

♦ **Set up a check-in table near the entrance of the location where you can greet journalists.** Have a sign-in sheet so you can keep track of all media representatives. Distribute media kits and agendas.

♦ **Simplify the issue you are advocating for.** Advocacy issues are often complicated, which goes against a journalist’s training to tell simple stories. Simplify your issue as much as possible to make their job easier. Tell your story the way they would present it to the general public. In-
corporate your media bites, data and proposed solutions. Above all, be sure to state your 3 key points. Also, see Tips for Talking to Reporters at a Media Event below.

♦ Help reporters identify the right people to interview. Be sure to introduce reporters to spokespeople or have speakers available for interviews afterwards.

♦ Provide interesting visuals. Television news in particular must incorporate visuals into their story. If you want TV news coverage, visuals are mandatory.

After the event

♦ Follow up with journalists. You should contact all those who attended your event to see if they need any further information. Send media kits to journalists that did not come and call them to see if they want an interview.

Tips for Talking to Reporters at a Media Event

• You don’t have to respond to every question, especially if you feel like the question doesn’t address the social problems and broader contributing causes. Instead you can say, “The real issue is…”

• Repeat your 3 key points. You can always change the subject to talk about your issue.

• Never answer questions that you don’t understand. Rather, ask the reporter to restate it.

• If you don’t know the answer, say so. Don’t ever bluff. Offer to find out information after the press conference. Contact the reporter once you do have the information.

• Pause. Think before you speak.

• Explain but don’t argue.

• Give information instead of denials.

• If a reporter is confrontational or attacks you, stay calm and reasonable. Don’t take the attack personally.

• Don’t reveal more than you want to. The reporter will ask follow-up questions based on what you say.
Writing a Media Advisory

A media advisory is basically an invitation to your event. It contains the main information journalists need to know. You can fax or email the media advisory anytime from 3 to 5 days before your event. Be sure to follow up with a more detailed press release.

The following is the standard format for a media advisory. It includes all the necessary elements and a brief description of the information you should provide. Put this advisory on organizational letterhead before sending it out.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: (Name)
(Today’s date)          (Phone No. & Email Address)

HEADLINE: Keep it short and in all capital letters and bold font
WHAT:  (two to three sentences on what is happening)
WHEN:  (date and time)
WHERE: (address)
WHO:   (names of people or organizations involved)
WHY:   (two to three sentences that emphasize why this event is newsworthy and important)

# # #
(center alignment; do not omit – this signals the end of the advisory)
Writing a Press Release

A press release is much more detailed than an advisory. It is written like a news story, including a headline, lead paragraph, background facts, quotes, and details on the issue for which you are advocating.

The following is the standard format for a press release. Each paragraph should be no longer than 4-5 lines. Keep the release to two pages at the most. Put this advisory on organizational letterhead before sending it out. Follow up with phone calls and include your press release in your media kits.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: (Name)
(Today’s date)          (Phone No. & Email Address)

HEADLINE: Keep it short, make it attention-getting, and write in all capital letters and bold font

SAN FRANCISCO, CA – (list location of story in bold before start of first paragraph)

1st paragraph: What is happening, who is involved, where and when. This is the most important paragraph of the press release. Write it well but keep it brief. If done correctly, this will grab the journalists’ attention.

2nd paragraph: Why this event is important and newsworthy

3rd paragraph: Quote from an expert involved that emphasizes how significant this event is

4th paragraph: More details on where and when the event is happening

5th and all paragraphs afterwards: Other relevant details, including:
• Further quotes from other spokespeople
• Description of visual opportunities

Final Paragraph One sentence “boilerplate” description of the organization(s) involved in the event

If release goes onto a second page, type the word “MORE” at the bottom of the first page in bold font and center alignment

OR

# # # (to signal the end of the release)
Write to the Editorial Pages

Instead of doing a media event, you can write an op-ed piece or letter to the editor. The editorial pages of a newspaper are the most frequently read after the front page. In fact, this is probably your best chance to present your argument to reach the decision-makers you are targeting. Policymakers turn to these pages often to quickly assess what the hot issues are.

Writing an Op-Ed Piece

An op-ed piece gives you an opportunity to expand on your ideas, tell a personal story, or give the background on your issue. Because these pages are so popular, it can be hard to get published.

Don’t write too much – approximately 650-700 words at the maximum. Develop one idea, support it with concrete examples, tell personal stories when possible, and propose a solution. The editors of these pages particularly look for submissions from “everyday” people who can personalize an issue.

Writing Letters to the Editor

A letter to the editor provides a forum for community members to express their point of view on current events. Ask your friends and colleagues to also write letters because the number of letters submitted will indicate the importance of the topic.

If you see a newspaper article that you want to respond to, send your letter to the editor within 24 hours. Mention your reason for writing in the first sentence. If you are responding to an article, include the headline and publication date. If you are commenting on a local current event, be specific about the event.

Keep your letter to 3 paragraphs and a total of approximately 250 words. Be as direct and to the point as you can. Focus on one message you want to get across to readers. Take a strong position on that message. If you can, use a compelling fact that shows the urgency or importance of your issue.

Be sure to start your letter with the date and “Dear Editor.” Include your name, address, phone number, and email address. Editors may call to verify your submission. You can put your letter on letterhead if your organization permits you.
At the very beginning of your letter, include an inside address. Similar to a business letter, an inside address looks like:

Letters to the Editor
[Newspaper name]
[Newspaper address, fax, or email]

And lastly, get the name and contact information of the correct editor to whom you should send the letter, which is usually included in the masthead of the editorial pages. You want to make sure your letter reaches the right person.

Evaluate Your Hard Work
Regardless of what kind of media advocacy methods you employ – be it a press conference, demonstration, op-ed piece, or letter to the editor – you should evaluate your efforts. This doesn’t have to be complicated – a simple reflection on your work will do. How did you do? Did you achieve what you intended? Was your issue covered by the media that your target decision-makers watch or read? Was your story told in the way that you wanted? Did your media work help you build community support for your overall goal?

Some ways to evaluate your media efforts include:
♦ Document how the media covered your efforts. Keep copies of articles or videos.
♦ Do some follow up with reporters and ask why they did or did not cover your issue.
♦ Track the media stories on pedestrian and traffic safety and see whether they cover the story differently after your efforts.
♦ Ask policymakers if and how your media efforts affected their decision making.
♦ Ask colleagues and reporters for suggestions to improve your effectiveness.
Often, the main mode of transportation for seniors is walking. Unfortunately, seniors hit by automobiles in San Francisco are four times as likely to be killed as younger people. To improve environmental conditions for older residents who walk, Senior Action Network (SAN) became heavily involved in pedestrian safety initiatives beginning in the 1990s. Today, they are one of the foremost community-based organizations working on pedestrian safety.

In the early 1990s, many of SAN’s members were very concerned about the dangers they faced when walking in San Francisco. In response, SAN mobilized its membership to work on this issue. They created their Pedestrian Safety Platform, which serves as a list of needed improvements as well as an overall strategy to guide their efforts. This platform demands that San Francisco city officials carry out specific educational, engineering, enforcement, and policy measures to improve pedestrian safety.

Some of these demands include banning the use of hand-held cell phones while driving, banning right turns on red, and timing crosswalk signals to provide a minimum of 1 second of crossing time for every 2.5 feet of width on the street. SAN also created a list of the Terrible Two Dozen, a list of intersections seniors considered the most dangerous throughout the city.
SAN members decided the best way to achieve the improvements they wanted was to generate stories in the media on pedestrian safety, thereby getting policymakers’ attention. Once their overall Pedestrian Safety Platform was developed, SAN put together elements for its news stories. First and foremost, SAN identified its 3 key points. These were: 1) seniors were at higher risk for pedestrian injury, 2) it was important to ensure that seniors were able to walk safely in order to get around, 3) and specific engineering, education, and enforcement measures identified in the SAN Pedestrian Safety Platform should be instituted.

They emphasized the broader contributing factors related to senior pedestrian injury – seniors take a longer time to cross the street than younger people, seniors may not be able to recover from injuries due to fragile bones and other age-related issues, and yet seniors need to walk as a main mode of transportation as they get older. In short, walking was a social justice issue for seniors and conditions needed to be improved. SAN considered the main social problem to be the lack of pedestrian facilities available in San Francisco neighborhoods. Improving the walking environment would increase the safety of seniors and all other residents walking in the neighborhood.

To garner the media’s attention, SAN held demonstrations at a number of intersections listed in their Terrible Two Dozen to highlight the need for pedestrian safety. Prior to demonstrations, SAN frequently conducted Senior University classes, which trained attendees on community organizing, public speaking, and media relations techniques. These trainings provided a number of spokespersons who were able to give interviews in English, Spanish, Chinese, and other languages as necessary.

For each demonstration, SAN wrote a press release highlighting the reasons why it considered the specific intersection dangerous. Most demonstrations were held at 10 a.m. to accommodate journalists’ schedules. SAN developed clever themes and media soundbites prior to the demonstration that highlighted its concerns. For example, at the intersection of Van Ness Avenue and Market Street, SAN members chanted “Don’t Mow Us Down” while crossing the street with lawnmowers. They also recruited the SF City Attorney to push a lawnmower across Market Street. This provided excellent soundbites and visuals for the media that attended.

Often, SAN scheduled a demonstration to coincide with a holiday. For example, one Halloween, SAN members dressed in costumes at the intersection of Third and Palou Streets with signs such as
“I Will HOWL if You Hit Me” and “Don’t Hit Your Grand-Mummy.” During the holidays, SAN held a demonstration at the intersection of Bayshore and Arleta. Seniors in Santa hats sang Christmas carols with altered lyrics on pedestrian safety and held signs such as “Jingle Bells – Run Like Hell.” These were creative, brilliant ways to attract media to get SAN’s message across to policymakers.

These strategies worked. SAN garnered a lot of press coverage for each demonstration it held, which caught the attention of policymakers. The Board of Supervisors responded quite positively to SAN’s Pedestrian Safety Platform. DPH, SFPD, and DPT (now the MTA) responded by implementing education, enforcement and traffic engineering measures. Due to SAN’s successful media advocacy efforts, its members are now able to talk to policymakers directly on desired pedestrian safety improvements.
REFERENCES:


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Find out more about our injury data, community-based projects, media campaigns, and general information at:
http://www.dph.sf.ca.us/traffic_safety/

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