

Communications Principles and Talking Points

March 2011

KEY FRAMING MESSAGES

- SHIP is part of our statewide **health improvement** efforts.
 - It is helpful to use SHIP as a name.
 - It is also helpful to use health improvement to remind people what SHIP is.
- Our health improvement efforts are about **preventing disease**.
 - If we are to improve health in Minnesota, we must pursue prevention efforts and not just pay for treating illness.
 - We **cannot afford not to** tackle the two largest causes of chronic disease and premature death.
 - Our health improvement initiatives are a **community effort**.
 - Our health improvement efforts will have a positive effect on our youth in the form of Safe Routes to School, Farm to School, and changing school food and activity environments in general.
- Our health improvement efforts will **help reduce unsustainable growth in health care costs**.
 - Although behavioral and environmental factors that could be addressed through prevention are responsible for approximately 70% of deaths in the U.S., only 3% of health spending goes toward prevention, compared to 97% for treatment of illness.
 - Reductions in risk factors for chronic disease could result in significant cost savings.
- **Communities are the driving force behind SHIP**.
 - SHIP strategies are implemented at the community level by the community.
 - We also succeed through a strong **State/local partnership**.
- **MDH plays a crucial role**, offering technical assistance and evaluation to local communities to ensure their health improvement efforts are successful, cost effective and sustainable.
 - MDH offers the **science base** to ensure local communities succeed.

- MDH serves as the **stewards of taxpayer money** so that our dollars are spent carefully and effectively.
 - MDH **evaluates** the progress of local health improvement efforts—an important key to success.
 - MDH works to ensure the **sustainability** of communities' health improvement efforts.
- Our health improvement efforts are **ongoing**.
 - We are not seeking new funding, but continuation of our ongoing efforts.
 - Our health improvement effort is not a “program,” but our vital, ongoing work to prevent chronic disease and premature death.
- Our health improvement efforts have been **successful**.
 - Although the community grants were awarded only a year-and-a-half ago, and health improvement statewide won't happen overnight, we are already showing results.
 - Communities around the state are working to prioritize the health as we build our communities, educate our children and work hard at our jobs.
- Through SHIP, MDH has taken a **national leadership role in transforming public health**.
 - MDH has developed some first-of-their-kind assets for SHIP, including its guides to implementation and evaluation.
 - Nationally, SHIP is seen as groundbreaking public health, with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) working closely with MDH on its implementation.
 - Many of CDC's funding streams are now requiring work on policy, systems and environmental changes just like SHIP.

OTHER MESSAGE CONSIDERATIONS

- Dominant frames appeal to:
 - Choice.
 - Youth deserve a chance to succeed.

- Our frames
 - It is up to each of us to make healthy choices, but we have to have a fighting chance to succeed.
 - Youth didn't make things the way they are, but they bear the brunt of the effects.
 - Solutions come from and are rooted in local communities.

- Language
 - Good words that are clear and understandable
 - Effective
 - Community
 - Local
 - Sustainable
 - Choice
 - Proven
 - Cost-saving
 - Freedom
 - Disease prevention
 - Ongoing
 - Evaluation

 - Words not to use because they are unclear or easily misunderstood
 - Intervention (use strategy)
 - Program (use initiatives)
 - (Depending on the audience) policy systems and environmental change (use sustainable change)

MESSAGING

Summary Points

- SHIP is about **creating healthier communities** and supporting individuals so they can make healthy choices in their daily lives.
- SHIP empowers **local communities** to make decisions about what proven strategies will work best for them.
- Instead of focusing on individual behavior change that may be hard to maintain over time, SHIP makes sustainable changes to the policies, systems and environments that **support individual choices about health**.
- SHIP focuses on creating **community, school, workplace and health care** environments that support healthy behaviors.
- Because SHIP focuses on sustainable, systemic changes, it will take time and **long-term investment** to create widespread, lasting results.
- Statewide Local Public Health objectives include the prevention and reduction of tobacco use and obesity. Local **public health agencies are committed** to this work.

Cost

- To really make a dent in health care costs, we must think in terms of preventing illness, not just treating it.
- In Minnesota, adult obesity-attributable medical expenses are approximately \$1.3 billion (2003)ⁱ and direct medical costs due to tobacco use are almost \$2.9 billion (2007).ⁱⁱ

The Problem

- The increase in obesity we see in Minnesota and nationally is a result of societal changes in our diets, how we spend our time and the built world in which we live. We need to address these root causes to make real, lasting, and sustainable change.
- Key to good health is getting enough physical activity, like walking and biking, and eating healthy foods, such as fruits and vegetables.
- It's hard to get enough physical activity if:
 - There are no sidewalks.
 - The streets are unsafe.
 - There's no safe crosswalk.
 - It's hard to bike safely.
 - It's impossible to walk or bike to school.
- It's difficult to eat healthy if:
 - There aren't any fruits and vegetables for purchase within a reasonable distance.
 - Less wholesome foods are all that is offered, for example in vending machines, as part of school lunches and at the workplace.

The Solution

- The increase in obesity we see in Minnesota and nationally is a result of societal changes in our diets, how we spend our time and the built world in which we live. We need to address these root causes to make real, lasting, and sustainable change.
- Communities throughout the state are working to make the healthy choice the easy choice.
- Local communities are working to encourage healthy living by making it possible to be more physically active, improve nutrition and decrease commercial tobacco use.
- MDH offers local communities the tools to improve health in a sustainable, long-term way.
 - Not just telling people to take a walk, communities are making it easier to go for that walk by encouraging sidewalks and safe crosswalks.
 - Not just telling people to eat more fruits and vegetables, communities are making it possible to find fresh produce nearby through farmers markets and community gardens.
 - Not just telling parents that kids need exercise, communities are making it possible for kids to walk to school and be physically active during the school day.
 - Not just telling parents that children need to eat more nutritious food, communities are making it possible by having farm to school programs and school gardens.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

GENERAL

What is SHIP?

- SHIP is Minnesota's Statewide Health Improvement Program.
- SHIP is an important part of Minnesota's Health Reform initiative.
- The goal of SHIP is to help Minnesotans live longer, better, healthier lives by reducing the burden of chronic disease.
- SHIP's focus is to reduce obesity and tobacco use and exposure throughout Minnesota.
- SHIP is modeled after Steps to a HealthierUS, a federal initiative in four Minnesota communities. Building on the success of Steps, SHIP uses proven strategies to create changes in policies, systems and environments to support healthy behaviors in the population.

What is different about SHIP?

- Instead of taking a more traditional, individual and programmatic approach to improving health, SHIP simultaneously improves the health care system and the health of the environment. SHIP focuses on policy, systems and environmental changes to make truly sustainable, lasting changes in the state's obesity and tobacco crisis.
- SHIP focuses on improving the policies, systems and environments in which we live, work, learn and play so that it is easy to be healthy and so that the next generation can be healthier.
- By concentrating on policy, systems and environmental changes, SHIP aims to transform prevention strategies.
- SHIP aims to systemize prevention, therefore making it sustainable.

What role does SHIP play in Minnesota's health reform?

- SHIP is an integral part of a significant package of health reforms in Minnesota. The reforms were passed by the Minnesota Legislature in May 2008.
- In addition to SHIP, the health reform law includes provisions to reform payment and enhance quality and transparency in health care, including the development of health care homes to improve patients' experiences and the coordination of care.
- Together the reforms seek to improve the health of the population, improve the patient experience and improve the affordability of health care.
- We can't reform health care in our state or country without investing in prevention.
- The \$47 million for SHIP was appropriated in May 2008 and remained in the budget that was passed during 2009 legislative session

How will MN spaces look different because of SHIP?

- **Physical Activity**
 - More communities will be biking and walking friendly as a result of community design (complete streets)
 - More children will be walking and biking to school (safe routes to school)
 - More employees will have the opportunity to engage in physical activity in the workplace
- **Nutrition**
 - More residents will have access to healthy foods in their communities through farmers markets, community gardens, and fruits and vegetables in corner stores
 - More children will have healthy breakfast, lunch and vending options in schools and child care settings
 - More employees will have healthy vending in their worksite
 - More health care settings will have practices that support breastfeeding
- **Tobacco**
 - More post-secondary campuses will be tobacco-free
 - More parks and outdoor recreation facilities will be tobacco-free
 - More people will be referred to cessation services in health care, worksites, and on post-secondary campuses

How will the cost of chronic disease look different because of SHIP?

- With sustained funding, by 2015 SHIP could move as much as an additional 10 percent of the adult population into a normal weight category and 6 percent of the adult population into a nonsmoking category. These reductions in risk factors could result in significant cost savings; the estimated potential savings by 2015 could be as much as \$1.9 billion, or 3.8 percent of projected health care spending without reform.

Because the Minnesota Department of Health is concentrating on SHIP, why is there a need for other health promotion programs?

- SHIP is a key part of health reform, which is important to the Minnesota Department of Health. Health Reform, however, is not MDH's only focus. There are many other efforts needed to improve the health of Minnesotans.
- Maintaining prevention efforts in other areas ensures we continue to address the many issues that affect the health of Minnesotans.
- SHIP aims to build on previous prevention efforts and move health promotion forward by improving the overall health of communities. The goal of SHIP is not to replace other prevention efforts, but to seek ways to connect that important work throughout communities, through policy, systems and environmental changes.

Is SHIP just about educating people on eating fruits and vegetables and getting more exercise?

- SHIP is about much more than education and awareness.
- SHIP takes a systematic approach to lowering the burden of chronic disease by reducing tobacco use and obesity in Minnesota.
- Instead of taking a more traditional, individual approach to improving health, we must engage in a comprehensive effort to simultaneously improve the health care system and improve the health of the environment. SHIP plays an important role, by focusing on policy, systems and environmental changes to make truly sustainable, lasting changes in the state's obesity and tobacco crisis.
- SHIP focuses on improving the policies, systems and environments in which we live, work, learn and play so that it is easy to be healthy and the next generation can be healthier.
- You can't just inform people about healthy choices. They have to have the opportunity to live those choices.
- For example, it is not enough to teach children about the importance of eating fruits and vegetables. It is vital to surround them with environments – in schools and in their communities – where they have access to healthy foods and support for physical activity.

Hasn't it been proved that prevention doesn't work?

- Some prevention programs focus on individual behavior change.
- Behavior change from programmatic efforts can be difficult to sustain beyond the life of the program or the individual's involvement in the program.
- But behavior change can be maintained if the environment supports it.
- SHIP aims to create sustainable, systemic changes that make it easier for Minnesotans to choose healthy behaviors
- Not investing in prevention can be likened to not investing in smoke detectors, fireproof building materials, and safe furnaces to prevent fires. Fighting fires is important, but it is better to prevent them.

What is policy, systems and environmental change?

- **Policy interventions** may be laws, ordinances, resolutions, mandates, regulations, or rules (both formal and informal). Examples are laws and regulations that restrict smoking in public buildings and organizational rules that provide time off during work hours for physical activity.
- **Systems interventions** are changes that impact all elements of an organization, institution, or system; they may include a policy or environmental change strategy. Two examples include a school district implementing healthy lunch menu options in all school cafeterias in the district and a health plan implementing a health reminder intervention system wide.
- **Environmental interventions** involve physical or material changes to the economic, social or physical environment. Examples are incorporating sidewalks,

walking paths and recreation areas into community development design; and a high school making healthy snacks and beverages available in all of its vending machines.

ⁱ Finkelstein EA, Fiebelkorn IC, Wang G. State-level estimates of annual medical expenditures attributable to obesity. *Obes Res.* 2004 Jan; 12(1):18-24.

ⁱⁱ Fellow, JL, Waiwaiole LA. "Smoking-attributable Mortality and Economic Costs in Minnesota, 2007, Final Report", OR: Kaiser Foundation Hospitals, Center for Health Research, 2010