

# National Poison Prevention Week 2007

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**Georgia Poison Center**



## Georgia Poison Center

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### Creating Poison Displays

Medicine/Candy Board Master

Children's Lesson Plans

Reproducible Activity Sheets

Proclamation Form

Radio Public Service Announcements

News Release

NPPW Poison Prevention Material Order Form

NPPW Participation Report Form



Each year, millions of people are unintentionally poisoned in the United States. More than half of the victims are children. The number of poisoning related deaths have dramatically decreased from several hundred per year to less than 50 per year. Although the number of deaths have decreased, there is still a lot of work to be done. Millions of lives are at risk of poisoning, and hundreds of thousands of dollars are being spent to care for poisoning victims. Community and governmental organizations and businesses across Georgia can play an important role in preventing unintentional poisonings.

During National Poison Prevention Week (NPPW), March 18-24, 2007, the Georgia Poison Center and other organizations across the country have joined together to promote poisoning prevention. This NPPW Planning Kit will help you plan and implement a variety of poison prevention activities to help educate your community about poisoning.

The Kit is organized into six steps. These steps will walk you through the planning and implementation of a variety of activities. Use the information in this kit to plan ahead so you don't run out of time. Some communities will have resources to undertake major activities suggested in this Kit. In other cases, groups will start by choosing more modest activities. No matter what you are able to do, your activities will be a vital part of the many poisoning prevention education activities implemented across the nation. *No matter what your level of experience, resources and time.....you can help reduce the number of poisonings in Georgia!*

## The SIX Poison Prevention Campaign Planning Steps are:

**STEP 1: Understanding the Problem.** This step will provide you with current poisoning facts and statistics so you will gain a better understanding of the poisoning problem.

**STEP 2: Getting to Know Your Audience.** Successful programs result when the community's needs are considered. This step will help you identify your target audience and understand the best ways to reach them with poison prevention information.

**STEP 3: Working With Others.** Get the poison prevention message out by collaborating with businesses, organizations and media in your community. This step will help you identify and work with partners to share resources and increase the number of people you reach.

**STEP 4: Selecting Your Activities.** This step provides information on a variety of activities you can use to promote poisoning prevention. A number of resources to help you implement

### Poison Prevention Campaign Planning Steps

**STEP 1: Understanding the Problem**

**STEP 2: Getting to Know Your Audience**

**STEP 3: Working With Others**

**STEP 4: Selecting Your Activities**

**STEP 5: Working with the Media**

**STEP 6: Measuring Your Success**

your activities are included in the Appendix of this Kit. These resources include:

- **Creating Poison Displays**
- **Medicine/Candy Board Master**
- **Children's Lesson Plans**
- **Reproducible Activity Sheets**
- **Sample Proclamation Form**
- **Poison Prevention Resource List**
- **NPPW Poison Prevention Material Order Form**

**STEP 5: Working with the Media:** This step will provide information to help you successfully work with the media to get your message out. The Appendix in this Kit contains a variety of helpful media resources for your use including:

- **Sample News Release**
- **Sample Radio Public Service Announcements (PSAs)**

**STEP 6: Measuring Your Success.** This step provides information to help you measure what you have accomplished. In addition, a **NPPW Participation Report Form** is included in the Appendix. You can use the Form to document your activities and report them to the GPC.

**If you have questions about this Kit or would like additional assistance,  
please contact the Georgia Poison Center Education Department at 404.616.9235.**



# STEP 1

## Understanding the Problem

### **Overview of the Poisoning Problem**

Poisoning continues to be one of the leading causes of unintentional injury and death in the United States. According to the National Safety Council, poisoning by liquids such as drugs, medicines, poisonous houseplants, cleaning products, and pesticides caused 6,300 deaths in the home in 1998 alone.<sup>1</sup> The number of poisoning related deaths have dramatically decreased from several hundred per year to less than 50 per year. This is attributed in part to child-resistant packaging and partly to the life-saving services of poison centers. Although the number of deaths have decreased, nonfatal poisonings remain a significant problem.

Over two million human poison exposure cases were reported by poison centers to the American Association of Poison Control Centers (AAPCC)<sup>2</sup> during 2003. It is important to note that many poisonings go unreported to poison centers. Instead of calling poison centers, victims may seek help at emergency departments, physician offices, or remain at home without care. As a result, the number of poisonings reported to the AAPCC and poison centers throughout the nation is not a complete picture of the poisoning problem. It is estimated that 5-7 million people are poisoned in the U.S. every year.

In 2006, the Georgia Poison Center (GPC) received and advised on a total of 118,252 poison exposure calls.

Besides being a leading cause of injury, poisoning is also a major problem in terms of health care costs. Medical treatment for poisoning victims cost \$3 billion in 1992. Studies suggest that nearly 75% of the poisonings reported to poison centers can be handled at home safely by telephone consultation with a poison center. This eliminates unnecessary emergency room visits, ambulance use, hospital admissions and treatment delays. It is estimated that the average poisoning consultation with a poison center costs \$29.97. The cost to the health care system for treatment in an emergency department ranges from \$95 to over \$400. Studies suggest that every dollar spent on a poison center saves \$7 in unnecessary health care expenditures<sup>4</sup>.

### **The Victims of Poisoning**

Greater than fifty percent of the poisonings reported to the GPC involved children six and younger<sup>5</sup>. Poisonings were most common in children ages one and two.

Few people realize that adults get poisoned too. Some 40% of the calls the GPC receives involve adults<sup>6</sup>. Adult poisonings result in more deaths and serious injuries than any other age group. Pets get poisoned too. Like children, dogs and cats are curious. They have the natural instinct to lick and chew. Substances poisonous to humans can also be poisonous to animals.

### **Reasons Why People are Poisoned**

There are a number of factors that place children at greatest risk of unintentional poisoning.

These factors include:

- **Lack of supervision of children**

Children who are left alone, even for a few moments, are at greatest risk of poisoning. Studies suggest that poisonings are frequent during meal times, when caretakers are busy preparing meals and children are hungry.

- **Improper storage of potential poisons**

Poisons left within the reach and sight of children place them at risk of poisoning. Poisons must be stored in locked cabinets out of the reach and sight of children. Poisons that are improperly stored are often mistaken by children for something good to eat or drink. For example, household cleaners are mistaken for juices and medicine is mistaken for candy. Removing a potential poison from its original container can have deadly consequences as well! Often poisons are placed in a container associated with drinking such as a soda bottle or milk jug. This practice can fool children and even adults!

- **A child's curious nature**

Children are curious. They love to explore. This is the way they learn. Children place everything they find into their mouths - even if it does not taste good! Young children can not tell the difference between items safe and unsafe to eat and drink. The colorful bottles, labels and liquids are very inviting to the curious child. Medicines are often mistaken for candy and household chemicals can easily be mistaken for things that are good to drink.

- **A child's desire to mimic adult behavior**

Children often mimic the behavior of adults and siblings. If for example, a child sees a parent taking medicine, he or she may be tempted to take some.

Adults are also at risk of poisoning. Failing to read and follow directions for using household chemicals and medicine are common reasons adults are poisoned. Like children, adults are also easily fooled to think a poison is something good to eat or drink.

## **Common Poisons**

A poison is anything that can make you sick or kill you if you eat it (ingestion), breath it (inhalation), get it in your eyes (ocular exposure), or on your skin (dermal exposure).

Most poisonings are the result of the ingestion (swallowing a poison) of a poisonous substance. The GPC also treats ocular exposures (exposures in the eye); dermal exposures (poisons on the skin); inhalations (breathing a poison); and insect, snake, spider, and animal bites.

The Poison Center also gets calls about food poisoning; animal, insect, spider, tick and snake bites; gases and vapors; and industrial products.

**Medicines** account for nearly 50% of the poisonings reported to the Georgia Poison Center<sup>7</sup>. Both over-the-counter (OTC) and prescription medicines can be dangerous if used incorrectly. Medicines commonly involved with poisonings include analgesics (pain killers), cough/cold medicines, antidepressants, and vitamins with iron. All medicine should be stored out of the reach of children in a locked cabinet and in tightly closed child-resistant containers.

**Household products** such as cleaning, home maintenance, laundry, automobile, and gardening products, as well as cosmetics, personal hygiene and art/hobby supplies can be extremely dangerous. ALL household products should be stored out of the reach of children in a locked cabinet.

**Plants**, both indoor and outdoor, can cause severe injury and even death if swallowed by humans and animals. Plants are one of the leading causes of poisonings in children and pets. Children are especially curious about mushrooms and berries. Children should be taught not to eat any part of a plant, shrub, tree, berry or mushroom.

## **National Poison Emergency Telephone Hotline**

In January of 2001, the Georgia Poison Center joined poison centers across the country and the American Association of Poison Control Centers (AAPCC) to introduce a new, poison emergency national toll-free hotline. The new number, 1-800-222-1222, allows callers to get free, confidential advice from a poison expert 24-hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year anywhere in the country.

In February 2000, President Clinton signed the Poison Control Center Enhancement and Awareness Act (PL 106-174) to ensure every U.S. resident has access to a certified regional poison center. Funding was provided to create a single toll-free number to be shared by poison centers across the country. The Center for Injury Control and Prevention of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Maternal Child Health Bureau of the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) are providing funding for the new number.

## **Top 10 Substances Most Frequently Involved in Poisonings, 2000**

Substance	Number	Percent*
Analgesics	227,738	10.5
Cleaning Substance	206,636	9.5
Cosmetics and Personal Care Products	203,736	9.4
Foreign Bodies	107,832	5.0
Plants	106,385	4.9
Cough and Cold Preparations	98,009	4.5
Bites/Envenomations	90,784	4.2
Sedatives/Hypnotics/Antipsychotics	89,761	4.1
Topicals	89,458	4.1
Pesticides	86,880	4.0

\*Percentages based on the total number of human exposures rather than the total number of substances.

*American Association of Poison Control Centers, 2002*

By calling the new number, callers reach their local poison center where specially trained health care specialists – nurses, pharmacists and doctors - are available to provide help with poison emergencies or answers to poison-related questions. The new national number works on the same principle as 911. It automatically and immediately identifies the caller's location, then connect the caller to the closest local poison center. All services are free and confidential, and are available for the hearing impaired and for those who speak languages other than English.

You can now call the Georgia Poison Center by dialing the new toll-free number outside of the Metro-Atlanta Area at 1-800-222-1222. Residents of Metro-Atlanta can continue to reach the Center by calling the current local area number 404-616-9000. The current teletype for the deaf and hearing impaired, 404-616-9287, will continue to be used as well.

### **The Georgia Poison Center**

Since 1970, the Georgia Poison Center (GPC) has operated the 24-hour poison emergency treatment information service providing assistance and expertise in the medical diagnosis and management of human and animal poisonings. The GPC offers a continuum of services to the residents of Georgia. These services include:

- Poison emergency telephone service
- Rabies treatment information service
- Occupational and environmental toxicology information service
- Professional education
- Public education
- Research and data collection

The Georgia Department of Human Resources (DHR) designated the GPC as the official state poison center in 1976, providing primary funding for the Center's nonprofit operation. The GPC is certified by the American Association of Poison Control Centers (AAPCC) and is the only poison center in Georgia. The Center is located at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta at Hughes Spalding Hospital and operates under the medical supervision of the Department of Pediatrics, Emory University School of Medicine.

The emergency telephone information service is accessible throughout Georgia, 24-hours a day, 7 days a week, through a local area number and the national toll-free number. The Center provides a teletype line for the deaf and hearing impaired (TDD) and has access to translators for more than 140 languages through the AT&T Language Line®. The 24-hour phone lines are answered by highly trained Specialists in Poison Information (SPIs), mostly registered nurses and pharmacists, and Poison Information Providers (PIPs). In addition, board certified medical toxicologists are on call 24-hours a day. The staff of the GPC can provide safe and effective poison treatment advice for human and animal poisonings. In addition, the staff can answer most questions about the safe use, storage and disposal of potentially dangerous substances.

The GPC is also the official statewide resource for treatment advice and prevention information regarding rabies and animal bites. This service is being provided in collaboration with the Georgia Department of Human Resources, Division of Public Health,



### **Emergency Response and First Aid for Poisonings**

If you think someone has been poisoned, call the Georgia Poison Center right away. Do not wait for the victim to look or feel sick!

#### **In case of a poisoning, follow these first-aid steps:**

##### **For Swallowed Poisons:**

- Call the Georgia Poison Center right away.
- Before giving the victim anything to eat or drink, call the Poison Center or a doctor first. Syrup of Ipecac is **no longer** recommended for home use.

##### **For Inhaled (Breathed) Poisons:**

- Get the victim to fresh air right away.
- Call the Georgia Poison Center.

##### **For Poisons on the Skin:**

- Take off any clothing that has poison on it.
- Rinse the victim's skin with water for 10 minutes.
- Call the Georgia Poison Center.

##### **For Poisons in the Eye:**

- Flush the victim's eye with lukewarm water for about 20 minutes, using a large cup held 2-4 inches from the eye.
- Call the Georgia Poison Center.

### **Calling the Poison Center**

When you call the Georgia Poison Center, take the poison with you to the phone. You may be asked to read information from the bottle's label. You also will be asked to give:

- your name, phone number, county, and zip code
- the victim's age and weight
- any symptoms the victim has related to the poisoning
- the time the poisoning took place
- the name of the substance or poison
- the amount of the substance or poison
- any current health problems the victim has
- any medicines the victim is taking

### **Tips for Preventing Poisoning**

You can help keep your family safe from poisons by following the safety tips below.

#### **1. Store Poisons Safely**

- Store poisons in locked cabinets out of the reach and sight of your children and pets.
- Keep poisons stored in the bottles they came in. Make sure the bottles are clearly labeled.
- Never store poisons in drink or food bottles.

#### **24-Hour Poison Emergency Phone Numbers**

In Metro Atlanta Call:  
**404.616.9000**

Outside of Metro Atlanta Call:  
**1.800.222.1222**

Teletype for the deaf and hearing  
impaired only:  
**(TDD) 404.616.9287**

- Keep medicines and vitamins in bottles with child-safety caps (child-resistant packaging).
- Make sure the caps are on tight at all times! Remember, child-safety caps are not child proof! Some children can open these caps. This is why it is important to keep medicines and vitamins locked up!

## **2. Use Poisons Safely**

- Before you use a poison, read the label on the bottle.
- While you are using a poison, never leave it out where a child may find it.
- After you use a poison, put it back in a locked cabinet. Make sure the bottle is closed tightly.
- Never call medicine “candy”. Your child may eat the medicine thinking it is candy.
- Do not take medicine in front of your child or give medicine to one child while another is watching. Children are natural mimics. They may be tempted to take the medicine later, when you are not around.

## **3. Know What To Do In A Poison Emergency**

- Keep the telephone number of the Georgia Poison Center on or near your telephones.
- If you think someone has been poisoned, call the Georgia Poison Center right away!

## **Sources**

- 1 Reported in National Safety Council’s How to Prevent Poisonings in Your Home 2005, NCS.org.
- 2 2000 Annual Report of the American Association of Poison Control Centers Toxic Exposure Surveillance System.
- 3 Georgia Poison Center, 2006.
- 4 Policy Statement: Poison Control Centers. Washington DC: American Association of Poison Control Centers: 1994.
- 5 2000 Annual Report of the American Association of Poison Control Centers Toxic Exposure Surveillance System.
- 6 Georgia Poison Center, 2006.
- 7 Georgia Poison Center, 2006.



## STEP 2

# Getting to Know Your Audience

When planning poison prevention activities or a full blown campaign, you will need to consider who you are trying to reach and influence with your activities. Identifying and getting to know your audience(s) is one of the most important steps in planning a successful activity or campaign.

Educating the public and professionals about the dangers of poisoning is our strongest link to preventing poisoning. When planning your poison prevention activities, the first thing you need to consider is ***who you are trying to reach?***

Because children ages under the age of six are at greatest risk of poisoning, it reasons that we should target people who are responsible for a child's safety and care. These audiences should include:

- **school-aged children**
- **teenagers/babysitters**
- **parents**
- **grand parents**
- **child care providers**

Another target audience you may want to reach are professional audiences, such as health care providers and the media. Parents and other caretakers of children often seek information and support from sources they deem reliable and credible such as doctors and pharmacists. Health care professionals are often in the position to disseminate health related information to their clients. Examples of professional audiences you may want to target include:

- **pharmacists**
- **nurses**
- **pediatricians**
- **emergency service personnel (EMTs, Paramedics, police, fire)**
- **child care providers**
- **business owners**
- **media (radio, television, newspaper, magazines and other publications)**

Identifying your target audience(s) and understanding their needs, interests and habits will help you determine the best methods to reach them with your poison prevention messages.



## STEP 3

### Working with Others

Partnering with other organizations in your community will enable you to reach more members of your target audience, share ideas and expand your resource pool. No one person or organization can do everything needed to educate a community about poisoning, but a community working together can have a major impact.

#### Partnerships can help you:

- **Increase attention to the poisoning problem in your community.**
- **Raise funds to conduct poisoning prevention activities.**
- **Reach more of your target audience.**
- **Plan and implement your poisoning prevention activities.**

Teaming up with a variety of groups and organizations in your community will help you get poison prevention information to your target audience. Partners may include entities that provide services to your target audience or share your concern about the poisoning problem. You should also work with members of your target audience. Who knows a community better than its members?

You may want to consider forming a planning or advisory committee to help you plan and implement your campaign. Ask representatives from the agencies listed below as well as members of your target audience to join the committee.

**Below is a list of potential partners:**

#### Community Organizations

Big Brothers/Big Sisters  
Churches and religious organizations  
civic groups  
Elks  
fraternities and sororities  
Junior Leagues  
Kiwanis  
Lions  
libraries  
neighborhood associations  
recreation leagues and organizations  
SAFE KIDS  
scout troupes  
United Way  
YMCA, YWCA

#### Education-Related Organizations

adult education programs  
Board of Education  
day care centers  
college and universities  
GED classes  
home school programs  
preschools  
parent-teacher associations (PTAs)  
trade school

#### Government Agencies/Programs

child welfare agency  
elected officials  
foster care programs  
Head Starts  
housing authorities

maternal child health programs  
refugee centers  
rural health clinics  
rural, migrant and immigrant health programs  
WIC (Women, Infant and Children)

### **Medical/Public Health and Emergency Service Groups**

American Red Cross  
doctors  
emergency medical services (police, fire, ambulance)  
health departments  
hospital health education, public relations and community outreach programs  
hospital labor and delivery/maternity units  
hospital auxiliary groups  
managed care organizations  
nurses  
paramedics  
parenting classes  
pharmacies  
pediatricians  
prenatal health programs

### **Businesses**

baby product stores  
banks  
chamber of commerce  
children's clothing stores  
drug stores  
fast food restaurants  
grocery stores  
ice cream/yogurt shops  
laundry mats  
maternity stores  
pharmacies  
shopping malls  
toy stores  
video rental stores

billboard companies  
local magazines  
articles  
regular columns or features  
public access cable TV  
public and private transportation  
advertisement in buses, taxis  
television and radio stations  
local news and talk shows  
broadcast editorials  
public service announcements  
call-in shows  
public affairs and health programs  
weekly and daily newspapers  
news items  
feature articles  
health sections  
editorials  
columns  
print ads  
letters to the editor  
op-ed articles

### **Media**



## STEP 4

### Selecting Your Activities

Now that you know your audience and have teamed up with others in your community...you are ready to go! There are a variety of activities you can implement to reach your target audience with poison prevention messages.

Remember, when selecting your activities consider your budget, time, and manpower. Most importantly, consider what activities will work with your target audience. This is why it is important to involve members of your target audience in your planning efforts, so they can tell you what will work and won't work.

**The following is a list of poison prevention activities you can consider:**

#### When Funding Is An Issue

You may need to find resources outside your own organization. Potential sources of support include businesses, media and voluntary organizations. They may be able to help you not only with funds, but also with in-kind donations. For example, a printer might agree to reproduce materials or an advertiser might agree to donate a billboard for your program. You may also want to consider working with local high school, university and college teachers and students to help develop and implement your activities.

If you need extra funds to accomplish what you want to do, consider applying for small grants from local corporations or foundations. Volunteer and civic groups and even retailers - such as pharmacists or baby product stores - may provide small donations, especially if your program's publicity can acknowledge their contribution.

- ❑ **Conduct poison prevention programs.** NPPW is an excellent time to implement poison prevention activities for children and adults. The **Children's Lesson Plans** contained in the Appendix of this Planning Kit contains lesson plans, activity ideas, and reproducible activity sheets for children's programs. Poison prevention programs can be conducted at schools, scout meetings, child care centers and other places children gather.

You can also speak to adults at their place of employment, PTA meetings, neighborhood association meetings, civic and community, and volunteer organization meetings. Use the information in **STEP 2: Getting to Know the Problem** to put together a presentation for adults.

You can also contact the GPC to see if a member of the GPC Speaker's Bureau is available to do a talk for children or adults in your community.

☐ **Place information in Newsletters.**

Use the information about poisoning and poison prevention found in **STEP 2: Getting to Know the Problem** in this Kit to produce articles for submission to various organizational and employer newsletters, community calendars, apartment or PTA updates, and church bulletins.

☐ **Set up poison prevention displays and exhibits.**

NPPW is an excellent time to host a health and safety fair or to set up a display. Bulletin boards, look-a-like displays, display cases and posters are great, inexpensive methods to promote poison safety. Ask high school clubs and art classes to design and construct banners or displays.

Displays and exhibits can be set up at hospitals, clinics, shopping malls, baby stores, libraries, pharmacies, schools and other locations frequented by your target audience.

- ☐ **Creating Poison Displays** included in the Appendix of this Planning Kit can help you create your displays. You can use the **Medicine/Candy Board Master Sheet** to create your own Medicine/Candy Look-a-Like Board.

**Ideas for Distributing Poison Prevention Materials**

- ✓ Ask pharmacists, nurses, physicians and other health care providers to distribute literature and/or counsel their patients about poisoning prevention.
- ✓ Ask employers/businesses to place information in payroll or bills.
- ✓ Ask local businesses to help print materials for distribution.
- ✓ Put posters or information on bulletin boards or in windows of locations frequented by your target audience.
- ✓ Ask merchants to display posters and tent cards, use bag stuffers for customers, include a poison safety message on store receipts or make loud speaker announcements.
- ✓ Work with local area fast-food restaurants or chains to heighten awareness by printing up table tents and/or tray place mats.

- ☐ **Distribute poison prevention materials.** Distributing poison prevention materials at locations visited by your target audience is a great method to get the word out. The GPC offers a variety of poison prevention materials including emergency phone stickers, brochures, posters, medicine/candy boards, and videos. See the **Poison Prevention Resource List** and **NPPW Poison Prevention Material Order Form** contained in the Appendix of this Planning Kit for ordering information.

- ☐ **Arrange a National Poison Prevention Week Proclamation signing.**

In 1961, Public Law 87-139; 75 Stat. 681 (H. J. Res. 358) was passed authorizing the President of the United States to issue annually a proclamation designating the third week of March as National Poison Prevention Week. Proclamations are a great way to bring

attention to important issues. Have your Mayor, County Commissioner, and/or Council sign a resolution proclaiming March 18-24, 2007 "National Poison Prevention Week" in your city or county. To get a proclamation signed in your community, contact a member of your City Council or County Commissioner. They should be able to guide you through the steps of a Proclamation Signing.

You may use the sample **Proclamation Form** contained in the Appendix of this Planning Kit as the basis for the Proclamation. Be sure to ask if you may be present at the signing and/or take photographs at the signing. These photographs can then be forwarded with press releases to the media announcing the Proclamation Signing.

☐ **Conduct a media campaign.**

For a successful awareness campaign it is essential to work with the media. Use the information in **STEP 5: Working With The Media** to conduct a media campaign.





## STEP 5

# Working With The Media

For a successful poison prevention campaign, you must reach your audience. Mass media can be an integral part of your poison prevention campaign. Publicity can extend the impact of your activities by reaching a larger audience. Whether you are writing a press release, holding a news conference, or giving an interview, you must establish a working relationship with the media. The following information will help you work with the media successfully.

### 1. Identify Your Media Outlets

No matter where you live, you will be able to find media outlets to convey your messages. Keep in mind your target audience when selecting media outlets to work with. Try to select media outlets that speak directly to your audience. Here is a list of media outlets you should consider contacting:

- billboard companies
- local magazines
- public access cable TV
- public and private transportation
- radio stations
- television stations
- weekly and daily newspapers

The GPC will be conducting media activities throughout the state. If you would like to work with the GPC on media-related activities, **contact GPC Education Department at 404.616.9235**

Be sure to contact specialized media, such as minority newspapers and radio stations. Other specialty media that you may want to work with include: university/college newspapers; small community papers or neighborhood newsletters; and publications produced by local organizations, such as businesses; hospitals; women's centers; health care clinics; professional associations; churches and other religious institutions; drug stores; and local clubs.

### 2. Start a Media Contact List

In order to "sell" your story to the media, you must know who is most likely to "buy" it. You should send materials and news releases directly to those most likely to use them.

Make a list of media contacts in your community including: the names; titles; mailing address; telephone and FAX numbers; e-mail addresses; deadlines and special interests of journalists in your community so you can send them materials and news releases directly to them.

To start your list, scan newspapers and monitor radio and TV

#### Media Contact List

- name
- title
- mailing address
- telephone numbers
- fax numbers
- e-mail addresses
- deadlines

shows to learn the names of reporters who cover health related topics. You can also call the media outlets directly or refer to media directories which are available at libraries.

### **3. Make Initial Contacts**

Whenever you can, arrange to meet face-to-face with reporters, editors and producers. Bring the materials and information you want them to use. Emphasize the importance of poisoning prevention to the community. Use this opportunity to offer your services and the Georgia Poison Center, if appropriate, as an expert resource on poisoning prevention. Be sure to leave them your card or phone number in addition to the number of the Georgia Poison Center.

If you send materials to your contacts, allow 4-7 days for the materials to arrive. Then call them and follow up. Ask if they have any questions about the materials, offer to answer any questions, and emphasize the important points related to your community.

### **4. Choose Your Outreach Method**

There are a number of different methods you can use to reach your audience. The following is a list of methods. Samples of some of these methods are provided in the Appendix for your use.

- **Media Advisory**

*What?* Media advisories are used to “sell” your event to the media. They tell the media the *who, what, when, where and why* of your event in a concise manner. Media advisories can be in the form of a memo.

*Who?* Editors, Producers and Reporters

*When?* Send at least three days before an event.

*Note:* Follow up with phone calls to make sure that assignment desks and reporters received your advisory and know about your event. Be sure to mention in the advisory a person the reporter can interview about the topic.

- **News Release**

*What?* News releases tell your story. A newspaper editor may run the release as written, but is likely to assign a reporter to conduct interviews based on the information contained in the release and then write an original story.

*Who?* For weekly newspapers submit the news release to the Editor. For daily newspapers match the story with the appropriate Editor (City Desk, Feature, Health, etc.).

*When?* Send 4 weeks before the event.

*Note:* Reporters and editors receive many news releases each week. To draw attention to your news release, format it professionally and send it to your established contacts. Keep in mind reporters’ and editors’ needs as you write the release. You may want to follow up later by telephone.

- **Letter to the Editor**

*What?* A letter to the editor is an appeal to the public. It is usually less than 300 words and is signed by an individual from the community. Often, this individual writes as a representative of an organization. A letter to the editor is often written in response to an event or an article in the newspaper in which it will appear. The

## Principles of Writing a News Release

Give most important details first. Begin with a headline that summarizes the release. The first paragraph should answer the five questions: “who, what, where, when, and why?”

Keep it short and simple. News releases should be no more than two pages and double-spaced. The type face should be clean and easy to read.

Format the release correctly. Include the date, contact information, and a headline. Type your news release on letterhead.

Begin the news release with the name of your city and the date.

If the release is longer than one page, type “-more-” at the bottom of each page, except the last. Signify the end of the release by typing “###” or “-30-” centered after the last sentence.

Be careful with language. Avoid using slang or technical terms.

Use quotes generously. Quotes keep it real.

Check for accuracy. Be sure to verify all spelling, facts, statistics, names and titles.

Keep it factual. Don’t say anything you can not back up with verifiable facts.

Address the release correctly. Make sure you have the right person and that their name is spelled correctly.

letter should express an opinion, clarify a point, or emphasize a message.

*Who?* Editorial page editor. In a smaller newspaper, address it to the editor-in-chief.

*When?* Send the letter approximately 10 days to two weeks before your activity takes place.

*Note:*

- **Opinion-Editorial (op-ed)**

*What?* Newspapers generally publish a page of opinion columns and letters opposite the editorial page, hence the term “opposite editorial” or “op-ed”. The op-ed pages are the area in which ideas and issues are debated. Writing an op-ed places you in the role of columnist allowing you to express your expert point of view on a specific topic. An op-ed article is usually 500-8000 words long.

*Who?* Newspaper editorial staff

*When?* Send seven to 10 days before your event.

*Note:* Make sure your arguments and tone are logical and persuasive. Provide background information, copies of recent news releases, or stories about your program to convince editors that your op-ed is important to the community. Ask for and follow style guidelines and delivered your piece before the deadline.

- **Print Public Service Announcements (PSAs)**

*What?* Newspapers will print PSAs as part of their community obligation. Placement of PSAs in the weeks prior to your event will help raise awareness of the problem.

*Who?*

*When?* Send PSAs along with a “pitch” letter to newspapers about two to three weeks prior to your event.

*Note:*

- **Radio Station Public Service Announcement (PSA) Scripts**

*What?* Radio stations have an obligation to broadcast public service messages. A radio PSA qualifies for free air time if it is used to promote a nonprofit organization or public service. Stations often accept pre-written scripts from organizations to convey a public service message that benefits members of the community. The station can read these scripts live over the air. You can send these scripts to radio stations with a letter explaining the poisoning problem in your community.

*Who?* Call and ask for the contact information of the Public Service, Public Affairs Coordinator or ask for the person in charge of PSAs.

*When?* Call and ask about deadlines for submitting information.

*Note:* Make sure to always include a contact name, organization and phone number with each piece of information you send a radio station. Place a follow-up call to the station to ensure they received the scripts.

- **Interviews**

*What?* Talk shows, call-in shows, and public affair programs all provide publicity opportunities, often in the format of interviews.

*Who?* Producer or editor

*When?*

*Note:* Send a letter to the producer or editor explaining why you would like to talk about poisoning and why an interview would be of interest to readers or viewers. Follow up the letter with a phone call. Send briefing information to the interviewer or producer, including the interviewees credentials as an expert. Send a thank you note afterwards.

### Preparing for an Interview

- Organize your information. Write important points on note cards.
- Prepare to make simple, direct, easy-to-understand statements to fit questions you may be asked.
- If you don't have the answer to a question, be honest with the reporter and say you don't know the answer but you will get back to them as soon as possible.
- After the event, stay available. Encourage the media to contact you with follow-up questions.

- **Billboard and Transit Ads**

*What?* Billboards and advertisement cards on buses and subways are great way to get the message out. Unsold billboard space may be available for public service campaigns. Often companies that own space will create a billboard as part of a public service project. In addition, most transit systems are publicly owned, and often will donate space to help you create a transit card to fill it.

*Who?* Approach billboard companies and ask for donated space.

*When?* Anytime

*Note:*

**6. Say Thanks**

If a story does appear, send a short note of thanks. If a story does not appear, send a note thanking them for their consideration and ask to be considered for future use.



## STEP 6

### Measuring Your Success

The final step in planning a poison prevention campaign is to ask yourself what you have accomplished. Evaluating your campaign will allow staff, volunteers and the rest of community to see what you have accomplished. This will help you maintain momentum and enthusiasm for poison prevention in your community.

The Georgia Poison Center would like to recognize everyone who participates in NPPW 2007. Please fill out the **NPPW Participation Report Form** found in the Appendix of this Planning Kit and return to the GPC by **April 13, 2007**.

A report summarizing our statewide poison prevention efforts will be sent to the National Poison Prevention Week Council for inclusion in the National Poison Prevention Week 200 Report.

#### Evaluation Can Help You:

- Make sure your campaign is on time, on budget, and reaching your target audience.
- Identify campaign components that are not working so you can make improvements.
- Identify campaign activities that are successful so you can embellish them in future campaigns.
- Gain recognition and credibility as a poison prevention advocate.
- Make sure partner organizations are satisfied with their roles.
- Plan future programs.



## **Georgia Poison Center**

**Creating Poison Displays**

**Medicine/Candy Board Master**

**Children's Lesson Plans**

**Reproducible Activity Sheets**

**Proclamation Form**

**Radio Public Service Announcements**

**News Release**

**NPPW Poison Prevention Material Order Form**

**NPPW Participation Report Form**