

a step-by-step guide:
creating an outreach plan



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DEFINITION

Outreach can be described as using a specific message to communicate between your group and the public for mutual benefit. Creating and implementing a basic outreach plan for your parents' group will help you create awareness, recruit members, and gain resources. This step-by-step guide is intended to be used as a tool to help you create your own outreach plan.

STEP 1: DEFINE YOUR GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goals should be unique to your group and are general statements that express a broad focus. They may include increasing membership, gaining community recognition, or encouraging action among your neighbors. *Objectives* should be more specific and measurable (for example, increasing membership by 20% in the next six months).

STEP 2: IDENTIFY YOUR TARGET(S)

Your target audience is the group of people you want to reach. You should break them down into small groups so that you can create a message that will resonate specifically with each group. Remember to be inclusive of *all* loving families (you will create multiple target groups). Some criteria for defining your target audience may include age, parental status, LGBTQ people of color, transgender parents, geographic location, etc. Use your mission statement to help define the key groups you wish to reach.

STEP 3: CREATE YOUR MESSAGE

After understanding who your target group is, you can craft a message designed to achieve your objective(s). The message should be attention-grabbing, specific, and tied directly to something your target audience values (for example: Joining the XYZ Group will help you gain access to legal counsel regarding same-sex couples).

Keep in mind that not everyone has access to the same things. The key is to meet each target group where they're already at. Different messages (and messengers) will be relevant to different groups (i.e. lower-income people often do not have access to the internet; place flyers where lower income and/or urban parents spend time, such as a Laundromat or park).

Make sure you provide means for your target audience to receive additional information; through a telephone number, website, or meeting time/place (remember that not everyone may have access to a telephone or computer).



STEP 4: PACKAGE YOUR MESSAGE

You've determined your objective, assessed the target group, and created the message. Now, it's time to determine the best packaging for the message. Packaging can have *many* forms, including flyers, a script using a phone tree, and an op-ed or advertisement in a local paper. Brainstorm with the rest of the group about what form you want your message to take. Keep in mind the resources that you may already have available (for example, someone in the group may work at a place that will provide discounts for photocopying). Here are some questions to consider:

- What is most cost-effective?
- Do you have existing resources to create it?
- Is it understandable and accessible to your target?
- Will it accomplish the objective?
- Does it capture attention?

Once you've decided what format will be best, decide as a group how best to prepare your message and get it out. Set deadlines for each task to be completed.

STEP 5: DISTRIBUTE YOUR MESSAGE

Once your message has been produced according to your group's needs, it's time to get the word out. Depending on how your message has been packaged, there are a variety of ways to distribute it. Take a close look at the level of time, resources, and work required for distributing the message. Who is going to hang flyers? Is your phone tree prepared? Have you received permission to hang posters in public places?

After engaging your audience and exposing them to your message, you can provide more information. It's wise, however, to let them know first what their *direct benefits* will be. (Studies show that positive messages tend to be more effective in changing people's habits than negative ones).



STEP 6: YOUR OUTREACH PLAN

Take a second look at your notes. Use this space to create your outreach plan.

This image shows a full page of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page, providing a template for handwriting practice or general writing. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the page.

STEP 7: EVALUATE YOUR PLAN

By evaluating your outreach plan at the end of it, you can determine what worked or did not work, and what adjustments need to be made for the future. There are many different tools to assess your plan. Some messages will have obvious ways to measure results. For example, if you used the outreach plan to organize a winter coat drive, the number of coats you got back is an evident way to determine how successful you were). Talk with your group about how your results compare to your objective, how they think people responded to your message, and what needs to change to make it more effective.