



Making Sense of the Science: Recruitment Strategies for Evidence-Based Programs

Effectively recruiting families to attend strength-based programs requires a recruitment plan that is targeted to a specific population, has clear and positive messaging, and raises community awareness of the program through diverse mechanisms. Each community is unique, and selecting a variety of engagement strategies that will appeal to intended participants is key to successful recruitment. Below are examples of strategies that can be used.

INFORMATIONAL

- Invite a few well-respected parents and/or youth to serve on an advisory committee to generate recruitment ideas.
- Mail an invitational letter or postcard to families. Having it signed by a respected community leader or local celebrity may be beneficial.
- Show a promotional video at community events.
- Make phone calls to target families to introduce them to the program.
- Submit an article to be printed in the school newsletter.
- Distribute a flier in back-to-school packets.
- Offer an announcement to be read during the school morning announcements.
- Send a letter with report cards to the target families indicating school district support.

VISUAL PROMOTION

- Distribute yard signs that include the program dates and registration contact information.
- Hang posters in community locations (e.g., libraries, schools, hair salons, youth centers, after-school programs, and grocery stores).
- Post program announcements via an email list-serve and on local websites, such as community partners, schools, or referral sources.
- Create and hang signage in highly visible locations, like staking a banner in front of a school where parents drop off and pick up their children.
- Provide items (e.g., notepads, bags, pens, pencils, or water bottle) printed with the program details and/or stuffed with a program brochure.

MEDIA

- Conduct live interviews on morning radio shows and include past participants' testimonials.
- Post announcements to community calendars, cable TV, and local guides or news sources.

- Invite reporters to attend a program session and provide a bulleted list of key points.
- Submit newspaper and radio advertisements.
- Utilize social media, such as a Facebook page or Twitter, to highlight program activities and to stay connected.

PARTNERS

Schools

- Recruit teachers from the targeted grades of the youth participants to be trained as program facilitators. Encourage them to become champions and to aid in recruitment efforts.
- Promote a competition among classes by offering an incentive for the classroom with the most registrations, such as a classroom movie party with pizza or popcorn.
- Participate in school activities (e.g., back-to-school nights, concerts, and parent-teacher conferences). Set-up a display and have informational materials available.
- Seek promotional opportunities at school sporting events, such as sponsoring a half-time basketball shooting contest.
- Share available research and information on the program's impact regarding academic performance with the school board. Become aware of the district's strategic plan and how the program can fulfill the district's objectives, such as conducting outreach to parents.

Students

- Engage student groups or clubs in recruitment efforts, such as being part of a focus group, managing social media, producing a recruitment video, or narrating a radio advertisement.
- Plan a game or activity that teaches teachers and students more about the program, such as sponsoring a word search activity in which participants use program posters to identify clues.
- Involve students in community marketing, such as designing advertisements, posters, or fliers.

Community

- Partner with existing youth program providers (e.g., Girl/Boy Scouts, 4-H, summer camps, the YMCA, and church youth groups) to promote the program or serve as host sites.
- Solicit businesses to distribute information, such as fliers in store bags, fliers on pizza boxes, or announcements on placemats.
- Set-up a display at fairs, festivals, and community events.
- Seek involvement in sporting events, such as community nights at a local minor league ballpark.
- Deliver presentations on the research and impact of the program to key stakeholders at community meetings that attract high levels of publicity (e.g., township planning meetings).

Utilize Past Participants

- Use photos of previous programs, quotes from participants, or testimonials from families or referral sources in publicity materials.
- Offer incentives to alumni who help recruit families.
- At the end of a program, ask participating families to list the contact information for friends/family members who may be interested in participating in future programs.
- Send emails to past program participants to announce new program dates and encourage them to help recruit participants.
- Give participants t-shirts with the logo to further brand the program and to create walking advertisements. A satisfied participant is the best recruiter!

Offer incentives for registration. Be certain to promote the incentives on marketing materials and in any interactions with families, schools, and communities.

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This material is the result of a partnership funded by the Department of Defense between the Office of Military Community and Family Policy and the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture through a grant/cooperative agreement with Penn State University.

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