

ANNUAL EVALUATION REPORT

November 2011

Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition of Alexandria

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Prepared by Community Systems Group, 2011

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Executive Summary

Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition of Alexandria (SAPCA) has implemented over 40 community changes since it began tracking its effort in 2009. The pace of change in the community is strong and highly focused on the goals of empowering support of youth and parents. These community changes consist of primarily new partnerships followed by the introduction of new practices and new programs. Many of these community change initiatives target two primary goals which may shift in direction at the discretion of the coalition.

The coalition supports services in the community that help build general awareness of community issues. The primary services provided are presentations and community events that are sometimes focused toward a particular sector and sometimes open to the entire community. Recently, with the start of youth mapping initiative and the parent chat groups, the coalition has begun to think more strategically in terms of the sectors and local conditions that it targets with services provided. When focused and intentionally developed to address community issues, services are more likely to have an impact on population-level outcomes and can likely be sustained by coalition partners or members providing the services rather than coalition staff.

Media is an effective tool for building awareness about issues in the community and coalition activities. The coalition engages in media through the form of op-ed pieces in local newspapers as well as receiving radio and television coverage of its activities which helps bring about awareness of the coalition and its goals. The coalition has also successfully encouraged coverage of its community youth mapping initiative as well as its social hosting initiative.

Messaging typically goes further than media by helping to shape or change perceptions and community norms. When developing messages, it is best to think about the target local condition as a product and asking “what message would it take to sell this product to our community?” It is recommended that the messaging is framed by the coalition and saturated throughout the community through various channels relevant to the intended sector or target. The coalition has engaged in the sticker shock campaign for three years which is an example of a uniform message, framed by the coalition, which targets the local condition of adults buying alcohol for minors. Saturation of this message currently depends primarily on the number of stickers placed throughout the community.

Various recommendations are made throughout each section of the report. These recommendations center on the coalition being intentional and strategic in its approach to its activities. When initiatives are recommended to or by the coalition, they should specifically state the sector and local conditions being targeted. By stating intention at the beginning of an initiative, it is much easier to evaluate if the initiative is effective and worth sustaining.

The Coalition as a Change Agent

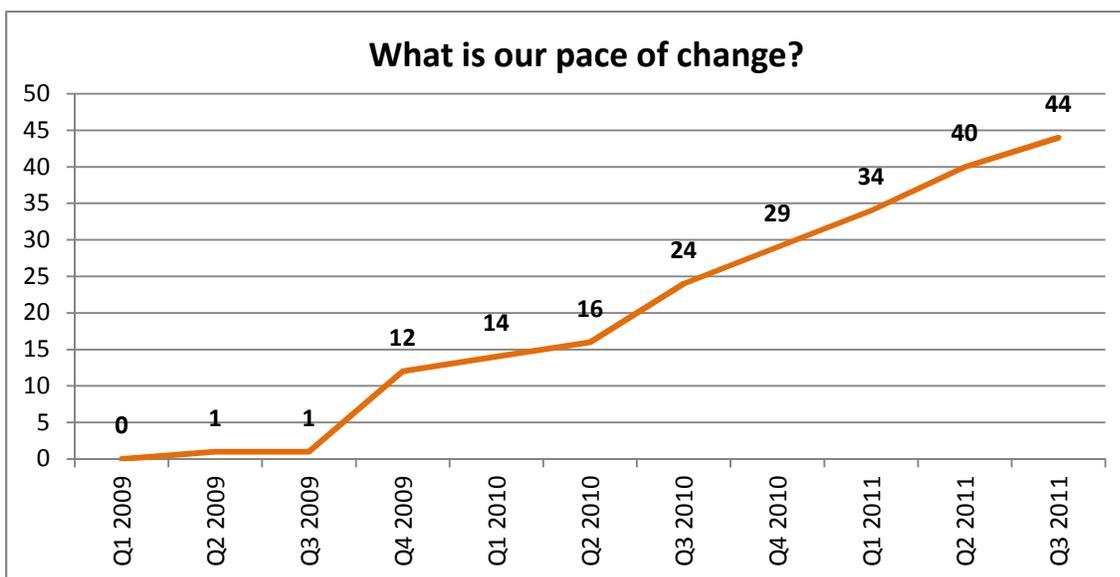
Change agents recognize when processes need to change in larger social systems and how such changes can be successful in building momentum for making a collective impact on one or more community problems. Coalitions are seen as change agents who continually assess their communities for positive changes that, when implemented, will help improve community conditions and make for positive health outcomes. This process begins with developing a common agenda using feedback from several partners and proceeds with strategically identifying activities to implement to address the community problems. This agenda is known as a strategic action plan and, when developed successfully, identifies key changes to implement in the community. The responsibility of putting this plan into action falls on coalition members who use the staff as a resource to help facilitate progress. Ultimately, a larger process is undertaken in which the coalition and its partners share the responsibility of measuring its success and contributions to positive community outcomes.

In short, for an activity to be considered a community change, it must have occurred, include community members outside of the coalition, be related to a goal or objective of the coalition, be a new or modified partnership, program, policy, or practice, and be facilitated by individuals who are members of the coalition or are acting on behalf of the coalition. Between April 2009 and September 2011, Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition of Alexandria (SAPCA) has recorded **44** instances of community change.

Pace of Change

Pace of change is an important measure to follow over time as the coalition focuses its efforts toward changing population-level outcomes. Research has shown a direct correlation between an increasing pace of change and significant changes in population level outcomes. As such, the SAPCA pace of change is strong as shown below.

Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition of Alexandria Pace of Change

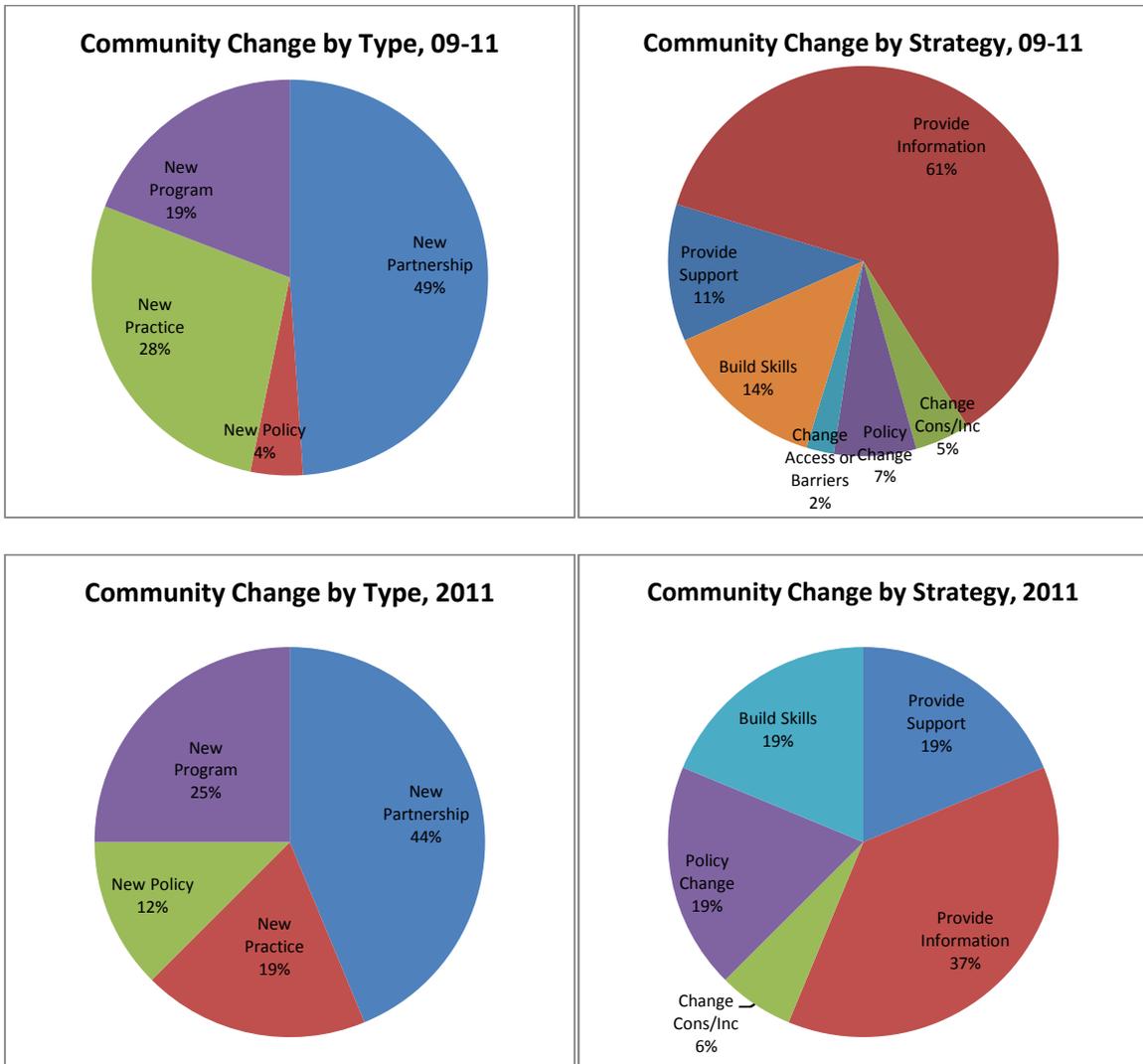


The graph above reports cumulative change where each occurrence of change is added to the previous. As such, flat lines represent periods where no change occurred.

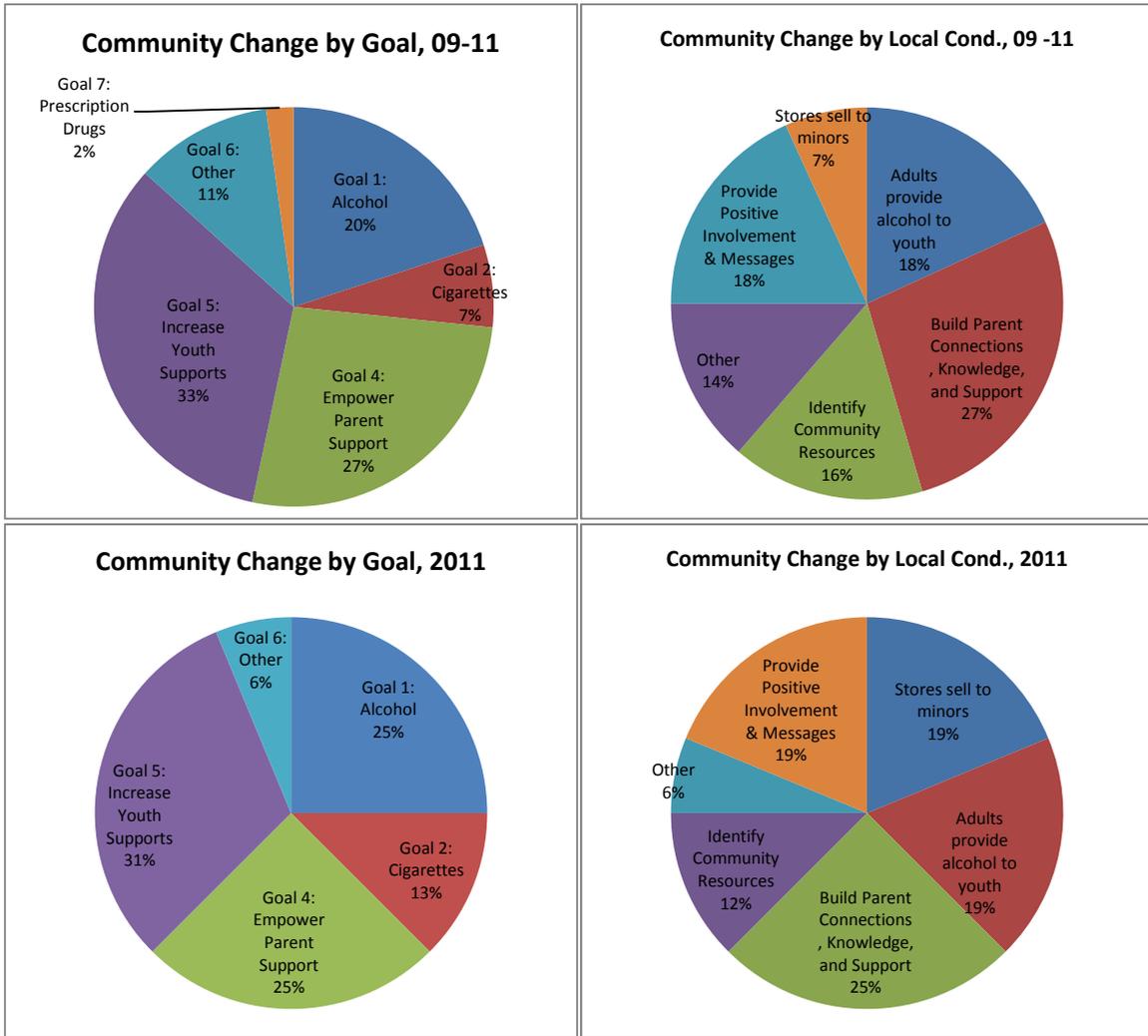
Distribution of Change

Over the past three years, SAPCA has focused its change efforts in four areas: developing new partnerships and implementing new practices, new programs, and new policies. Most coalitions begin the processes of forming with focusing heavily on developing new partnerships and, overtime, lessen the focus on partnerships directing their efforts toward new programs, practices, and policies. In 2011, new partnerships continue to be a main focus of SAPCA followed by implementation of new programs and community practices.

While the coalition has relied primarily on information-based strategies since 2009, the policy change strategy was introduced and utilized in 2011.



Over the past three years, the primary focus of community change has been around identifying and increasing youth supports in the community. A secondary goal for the coalition has been to empower and support parents by building connections among them and providing knowledge and support around substance abuse issues. These two goals were not explicitly stated but rather arose through time. These two goals accounted for 60% of all community changes. In 2011, the community change effort largely centered on these two goals as well as alcohol use by youth.

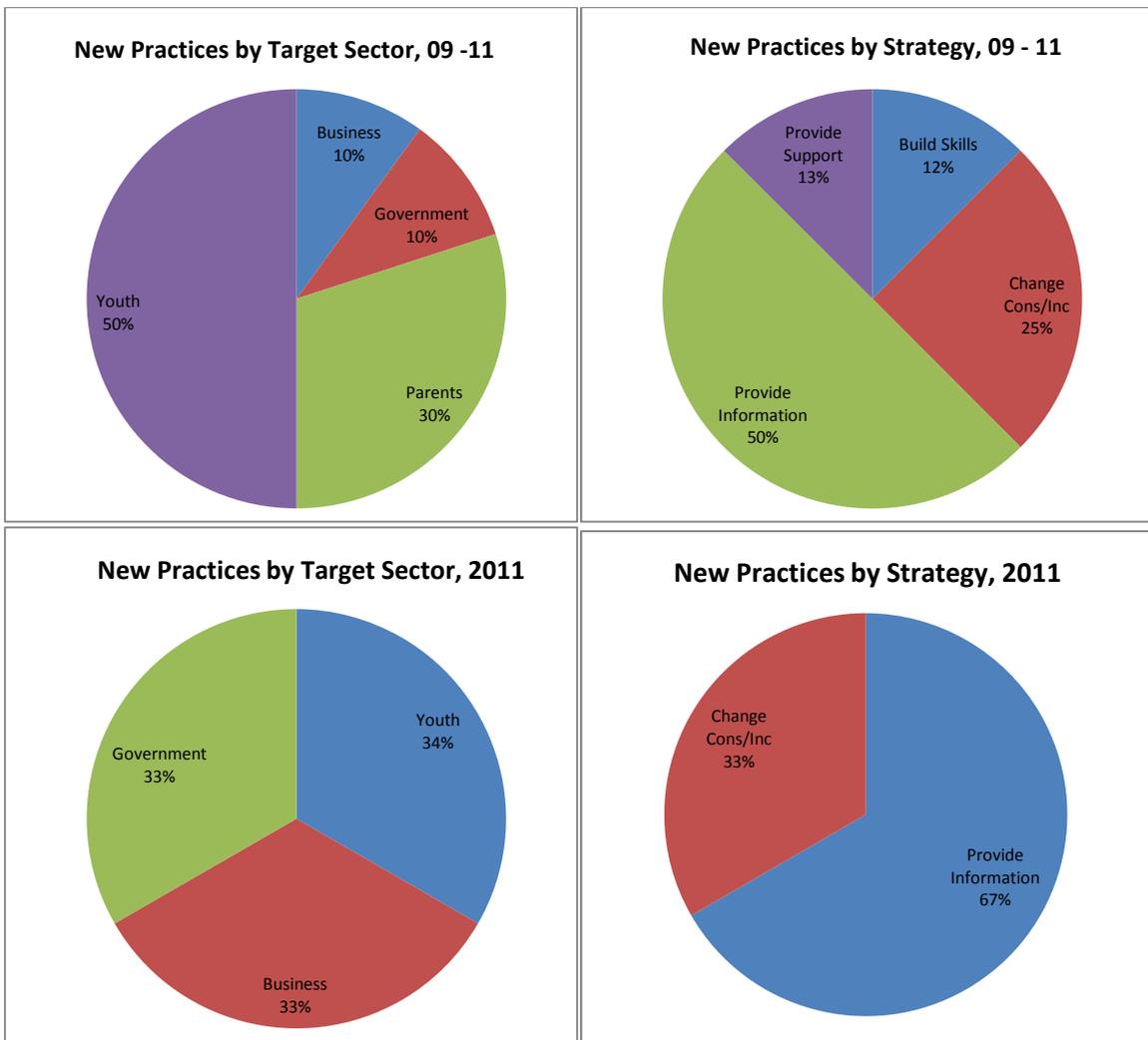


New Partnerships

Many of the new partnerships that arose in the past three years came about from collaboration on various coalition initiatives. Project Sticker Shock yielded several partnerships with neighboring counties and local governments while the “Community of Concern” events yielded partnerships with local schools and school administrators as well as parents. The recent youth mapping initiative yielded several partnerships with other youth serving organizations throughout the community. Partnerships are typically developed by utilizing the strategy of providing information to inform partners about the goals of the coalition. In other, rare cases, they can come about from providing support or jointly working together to change policy.

New Practices

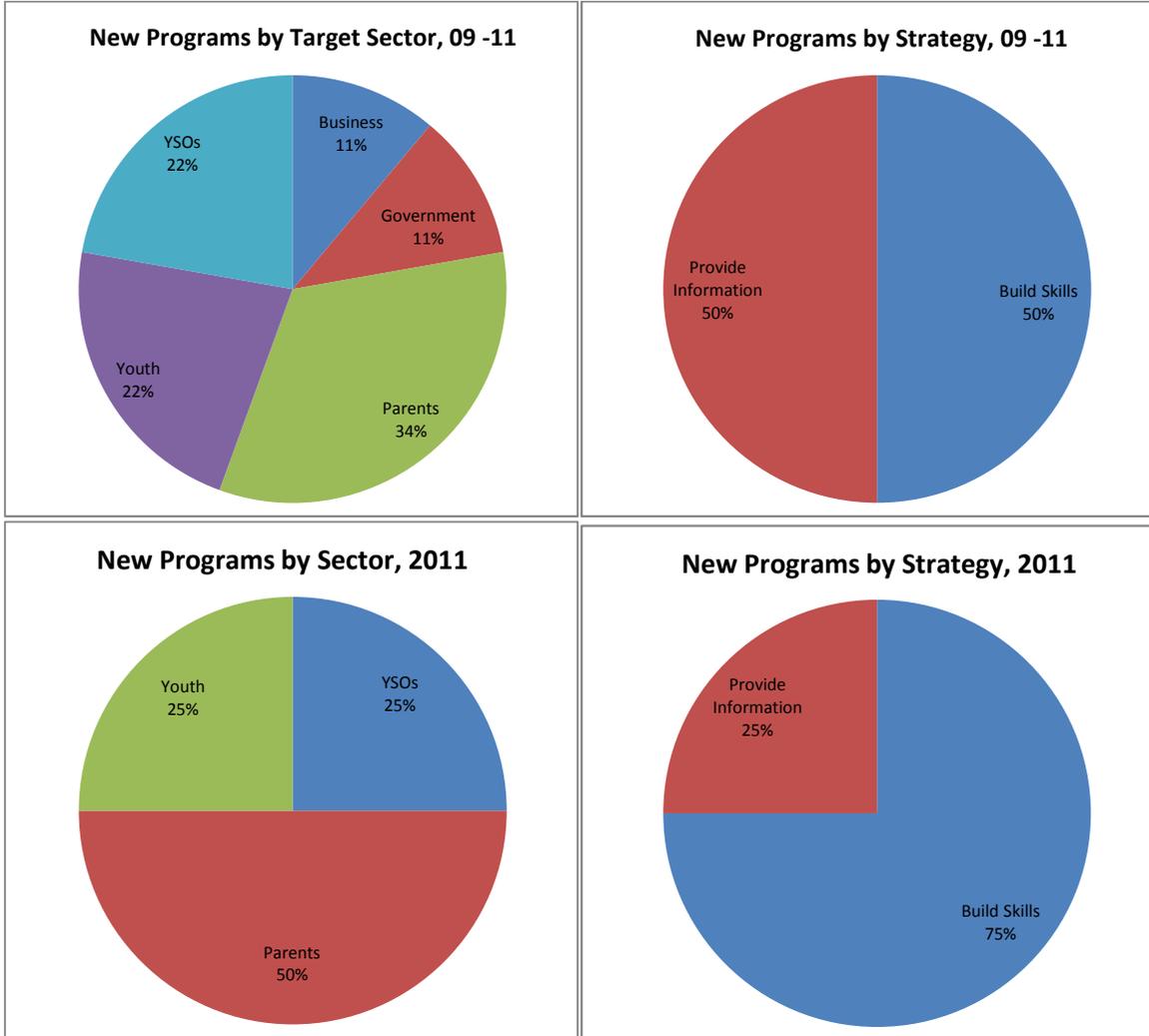
The coalition began motivating the community and its various partners to begin engaging in new practices starting in October 2010. This included the new practice of developing a brochure, available to the community, titled “Preventing Risky Behaviors”. Then, the practice of gathering parents and youth for “Community of Concern” dinners as well as a presentation from author Joseph Califano on how to raise a drug-free kid. In 2010, High school seniors were given a new opportunity to sign a pledge outlining the consequences for youth who are caught drinking at the prom and implementing a practice that gives youth the opportunity to share their YouthMapping findings with various community members and entities. In 2011, outreach efforts began such as a congratulations letter to vendors that passed compliance checks and joint outreach to neighborhoods including law enforcement and community activists.



New Programs

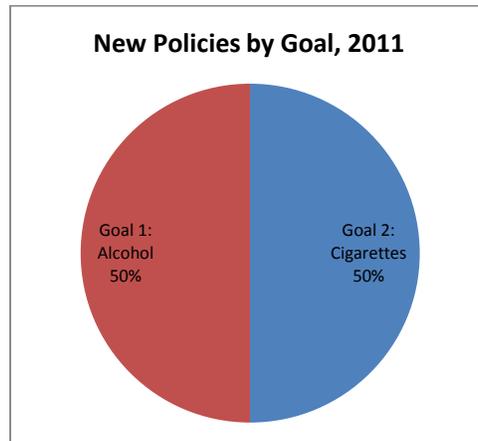
The coalition has brought new programs into the community to help address some of the root causes and local conditions of substance abuse. The programs include project sticker shock, community youth mapping, parent chat groups, national drug fact chat days, and teen dinners and presentations. The

programs themselves have covered two main strategies – providing information and building skills. These two strategies are very similar with the building skills strategy going above and beyond information sharing by providing skills to youth, parents, and community members around identifying substance abuse and ways to counteract substance abuse.



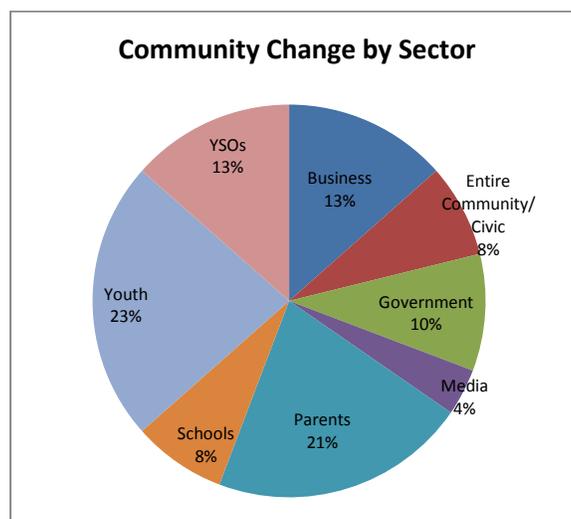
New Policies

New policies can be effective in helping communities address substance abuse. A majority of new policies take a period of time to be developed/approved but research shows that strategies, such as this one, are more likely to have a positive impact on youth outcomes because they curb and change behavior. In 2011, SAPCA organized the community to develop and implement two new policies – a bill that improves the social host law as well as a resolution to approve the use of signs to discourage smoking in public playgrounds.



Sectors Targeted Collectively for Community Change

The community change efforts have targeted several different sectors but have focused around five primary sectors: youth, parents, businesses, youth serving organizations, and government. These five sectors accounted for 80% of all community changes. While multiple sectors may be involved in an activity, the sector is coded for the target of the activity. For example, while youth, law enforcement, and businesses are involved in compliance checks, the primary target of compliance checks in businesses. Therefore, compliance check activities would be coded to the business sector.



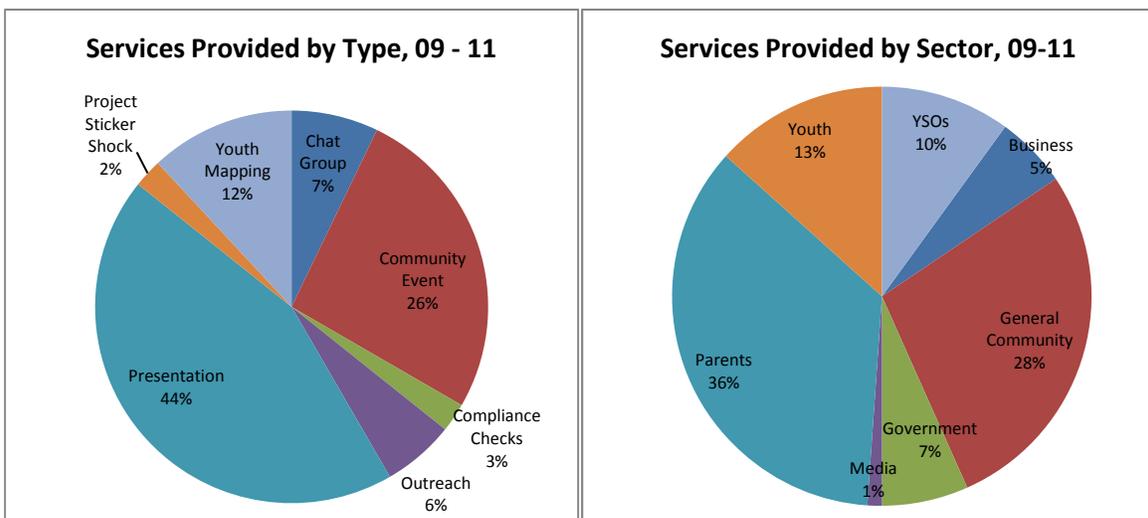
Recommendations

Two new goals and three new local conditions arose out of the coalition over the past three years. The coalition focused its efforts primarily on increasing youth supports as well as empowering and supporting parents. Furthermore, new local conditions were addressed which included identifying community resources, providing positive involvement and messages for youth, and building parents connections, knowledge and support. These youth development and community development goals go a long way in helping the community understand and begin to address the substance abuse problem. And, while these primary goals rely on the strategies of providing information and building skills, the effort is valid and warranted so long as the coalition is being intentional and has identified these as needs in the community. As a coalition, it is important to ask if these primary goals are addressing the community need toward action related to substance abuse issues. Were these activities identified upfront and strategically implemented to address substance abuse issues? Is the coalition seeing positive community outcomes from implementing the new practices and policies related to these goals?

The Coalitions as a Service Coordinator

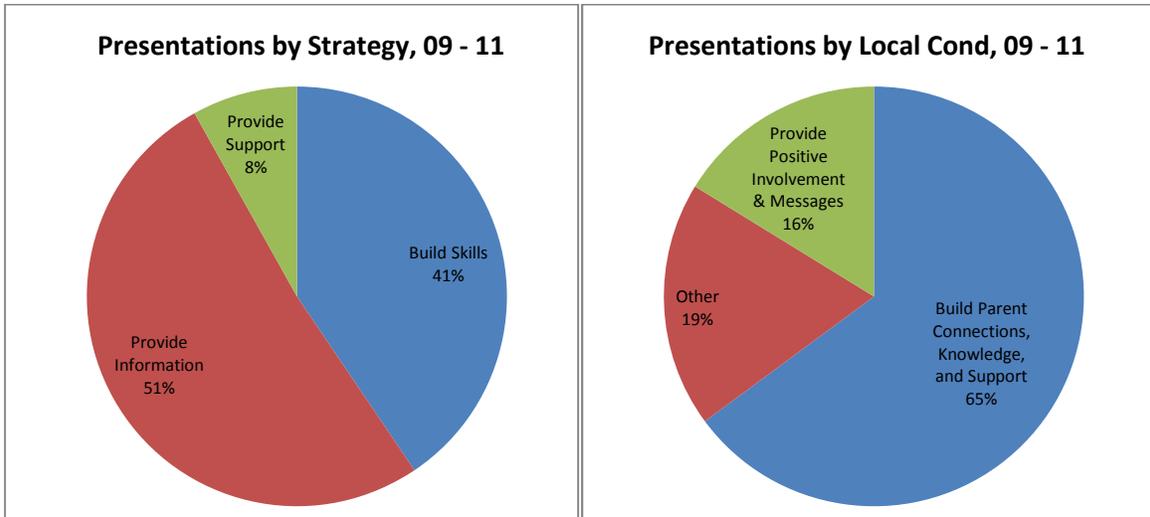
Services provided are events that are designed to provide information, instruction or to develop skills of people in the community. SAPCA has coordinated these services and provided them through a few common avenues: presentations, community events, youth mapping, and parent chat groups. It is important to note that the coalition does not always provide the service itself but rather coordinates other community partners and helps build the community's capacity to provide these services in a strategic fashion.

SAPCA has coordinated 58 services to be provided to the community through the coalition and its partners since 2009. In total, 3,097 individuals were reached by these services over a period of approximately 87 hours. A majority of these services, 70 percent, were presentations such as "Risky Behaviors" and community events such as "Community of Concern" and national night out. In general the services have been provided primarily parents, youth, and the general community.



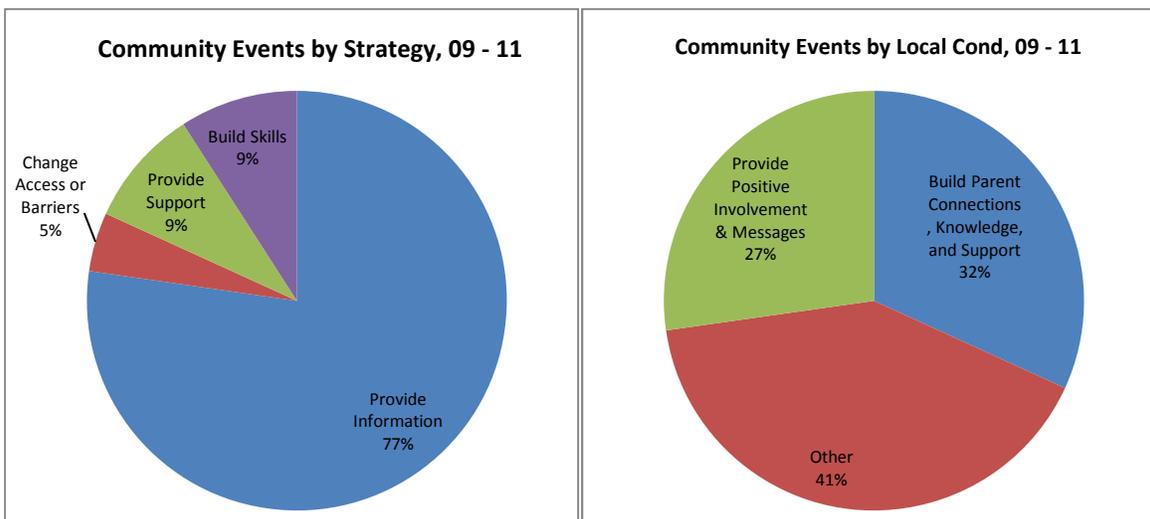
Presentations

The coalition has provided or sponsored 37 total presentations since 2009 that have primarily targeted parents and youth. Sixteen presentations were provided in the last fiscal year including “Risky Behaviors”, “Teen Brain” and various youth and community dinners involving a presentation component. Other presentations have included speaking at orientations, mentoring groups, and the viewing of “Haze”. These presentations primarily utilize the strategy of provide information or building skills. A majority of presentations target the local condition of building connections, knowledge and support for parents.



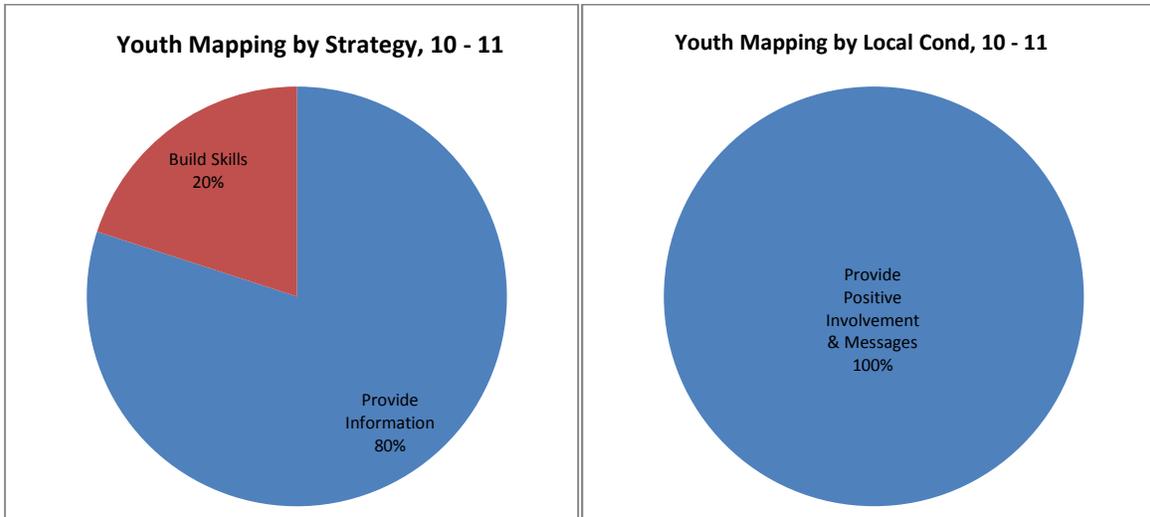
Community Events

SAPCA has engaged in 22 total community events since 2009 that have primarily targeted the community as a whole. Seven community events were held or attended by the coalition in the past fiscal year including “Family Fun Day”, prescription drug take back day, national night out and the talent showcase at Metro stage. These community events primarily use information-based strategies with the prescription drug take-back event utilizing the strategy of changing access and barriers.



Youth Mapping

Youth mapping is a structured activity that the coalition has brought into the community that has youth assess the community for resources. Youth are involved in each instance of the youth mapping activity but these activities themselves also target other sectors within the community. Youth in attendance at activities provided by youth serving organizations such as Liberty’s Promise and Community Lodgings were originally invited to participate in the activity by presentations led by coalition staff. Once the youth were assembled, they were provided with assistance in carrying out the various activities as well as given the opportunity to present findings to local organizations and local government.



Parent Chat Groups

Parent chat groups were introduced in March 2011 with parent chat groups for Spanish-speaking parents being implemented in April 2011. The chat groups help parents connect with each other while providing them with information and assists in building their skills. The sole sector targeted by these groups is the parent sector. The groups were developed to target the local condition of building parent connections, knowledge, and support. The chat groups are held at a variety of locations throughout the community such as residential houses, family centers, and business locations.

Community Outreach

The coalition participated in five community outreach efforts during the past fiscal year. These outreach efforts targeted various community locations including apartments and local businesses. The purpose of these outreach efforts was to provide information to community members at these locations about services available in the community. These outreach efforts involved various organizations and groups including the gang task force, recreation department, and community activists.

Alcohol-Selling Establishment Services

Compliance checks are services made available to the business sector and, in particular, alcohol-selling establishments. Compliance checks are conducted to determine which businesses are selling to minors. Activities like these – when conducted consistently and in an organized fashion – can go a long way in helping reduce businesses selling to minors.

Recommendations

SAPCA has implemented and maintained various services throughout the community over the past few years. These services, however, appear to be geared primarily toward building awareness to the community through presentations and community events. Recently, the coalition has begun initiatives such as parent chat groups and youth mapping which are more structured and go beyond providing information to helping build skills and provide support. CSG recommends that the coalition continue to be intentional in identifying the services that are needed to address the local conditions contributing to substance abuse in the community and work with various partners to implement these services. Services that are intentionally developed in the community to target specific sectors will go farther at addressing the local conditions contributing to substance abuse than services that target the general community.

The Coalition as a Media Engager

There are two types of media efforts facilitated by SAPCA: coalition messaging campaigns and coalition media activities. It is estimated that all media activities combined had a reach of over 3.5 million impressions. Media utilizes the sole strategy of providing information.

Coalition Messaging Campaigns

Messaging campaigns are important drivers of awareness and can, when carefully coordinated, help change community perceptions and norms. Three main components of successful messaging campaigns are:

- (1) The coalition frames the message rather than the media
- (2) The coalition delivers a uniform message
- (3) The message is delivered through channels relevant to the intended sector or audience

SAPCA has engaged in one coalition-led messaging campaign called Project Sticker Shock. In this activity, youth are mobilized to add stickers at various alcohol-selling establishments to inform the community that it is not legal to supply minors with alcohol. The effectiveness of this messaging campaign and its message depends largely on saturation – that is, how visible is the messaging and how often is the message seen by the target audience. Messaging campaigns such as these that target a specific group or local condition and are displayed in various locations throughout the community (not just a single setting such as schools) are likely to have a far higher return on investment than one-time messages or messages that are not organized to target a sector or local condition (i.e., general messages).

It is recommended that the coalition begin tracking the number of stickers placed throughout the community for trending purposes as well as any other media related to the campaign (posters, advertisements, news coverage, etc.)

Coalition Media Activities

SAPCA has had success in getting its name more visible through media carried in local newspapers as well as radio/television reports. This category of media activity is typically delivering information about the coalition and its activities. Coverage comes in the form of newspaper articles or news clips that cover events that were sponsored or facilitated by the coalition. As a result, the media does not

generally target a local condition but rather builds awareness within the community of important issues and the purpose of the coalition.

Media can be facilitated by the coalition through articles or press releases that are written by staff or coalition members. These articles or press releases are intentionally written around local conditions or local concerns the coalition wants to bring to awareness. An example of this type of media is the “Teen Drinking in Alexandria is prevalent, but preventable with your help” op-ed piece that was published in the Alexandria Times.

Recommendations

CSG recommends that SAPCA continue its effort at delivering uniform messaging to the community. The coalition may want to look at taking the message delivered through Project Sticker Shock and increase the number of media channels that are utilized to spread the message (posters, billboards, radio advertisements, etc.) Also, it is recommended that the coalition begin tracking the number of stickers placed as well as the number of impressions from other media related to Project Sticker Shock.

The coalition has successfully helped frame its message through various op-ed pieces. The coalition should continue to engage in this practice for messages that target an adult population. Any effort where the coalition is actively framing the message while targeting local conditions is worthwhile.